

Barlaston Parish Council
Chairman's Annual Report
2012/2013

The abiding feature of 2012/13 that sticks in the memory was the community spirit that was generated by the Diamond Jubilee celebrations that took place during early June. Whilst the weather over that particular week end was not fine, it was cold and wet, spirits were not dampened and all the events that the Parish Council sponsored and helped to organise were very well supported and enjoyed.

The Parish Council continued to meet monthly in the Ruth Dickson Room of the Village Hall. The Open Forums that are held immediately before the formal meetings continued to be well used with villagers taking advantage of the opportunity to bring their concerns to the attention of Councillors. Most of the issues raised were about the need to protect the local environment and the practice is to discuss the matters raised at the Open Forum in the following Council meeting and then to give a considered response to the particular villager raising an issue.

During the year Councillors Sheila Perkin and Peter Stevenson resigned from the Council and their positions as ward councillors for Barlaston East were taken by Sarah Broome and Ian MacMillan, both of Meaford Road. I am pleased to acknowledge the strong contribution that both Sheila and Peter made during their time serving on the Parish Council

The Parish Council Planning Committee, under the Chairmanship of Councillor Paul Fisher, considered 29 planning applications during the year and where appropriate made comments to the Planning Department of Stafford Borough Council. The liberalisation of the national guidelines governing planning regulations has caused some difficulties resulting in several applications that the Planning Committee opposed being approved by Stafford Borough Council. Nevertheless the committee has continued to be vigilant in its quest to preserve the essential character of the Village. The Council also had discussions on three occasions in the year with the senior management and their advisors

from WWRD on proposals to develop the Wedgwood factory site. These meetings were extremely helpful to gaining an understanding of management's development objectives even though the major planning authority involved was the City of Stoke on Trent.

The Council has continued to hold six monthly on site meetings with officers of Stafford and Rural Homes in Barlaston Park and has also met with officers of Barlaston Cricket Club to inspect the on-going management of the Council owned ground. The Council was represented at the Annual General Meeting of the Barlaston Allotment Association.

The Parish Council has continued to take the lead in the Churchyard Extension in conjunction with the Parochial Church Council in ensuring that the area is well maintained and a place suitable for quiet reflection.

Consideration has continued to be paid to whether the Parish would be best served by developing a Neighbourhood Plan. As a first step the parish has registered the parish boundary with Stafford Borough Council Planning Department and this document is currently being consulted upon. Stafford Borough Council has also commissioned a Design and Development statement on Wedgwood Memorial campus. This work is being undertaken by officers of Lichfield council and will be available to the Parish in later in 2013.

The Parish Council is acutely aware of the new development potential that currently exists within the village and is firmly resolved to ensure that any plans that are brought forward for consideration are measured against criteria agreed by a majority of the Village. One route to secure this objective might be the production of a Neighbourhood Plan but there are other options that could be considered.

The Golden Jubilee Award for 2012 was presented to Mrs Enid Ralphs for her years of service to the Village School and the Methodist Chapel with particular reference to the fundraising activities for charity at the monthly coffee mornings. The presentation was made during the Diamond Jubilee service at the Parish Church. During the year Certificates of Commendation were also presented to Miss Pam Bedford (for her work with the Silver Surfers/Tea and Talk), Ms Barbara Carter (for her work in looking after the Churchyard

Extension) and Mrs Mavis Eardley (for her work over many years with the Proscenium Players).

The Management Committee of the Village Hall has had another successful year. The Hall is extremely well used and the high level of utilisation has created some difficulties with parking and with noise. The position is kept under regular review to ensure that neighbours are not too adversely affected. It is proposed, in 2013, to modernise the kitchen facilities in the Hall and to improve the ventilation and air conditioning.

The Parish Council continues to recognise the importance of good communication. Two editions of the 'Heron' were published in the year and both were very well received by Villagers who found the content interesting and informative. The Clerk writes a regular item in the monthly Parish Magazine on matters of general interest. There is the 'Chairman's Blog' on the Parish Website and in addition the Parish has a 'Facebook' site which is well used and a 'Twitter' account.

It is intended to enter the Village into the 'Staffordshire Best Kept Village Competition' in 2013. The village has done well in this competition in the past but has not been involved for fifteen years. The work on this project is being coordinated by Councillor Patrick Linehan of Longton Road and it is hoped that participation in the Competition will further encourage the community spirit that was kindled during the Diamond Jubilee celebrations. Barlaston is a very attractive village in which to live and it will be uplifting to see it presented to its best advantage.

Grants have been awarded under Section 137 of the Local Government Act (as amended) as follows:

The Royal British Legion	£250
Barlaston Cricket Club	£200
The Samaritans	£250
Barlaston Youth Association	£58
Barlaston Boys Brigade	£250
Barlaston Boy Scouts	£150
Age Concern	£100
Barlaston PCC	£250

Total	£1508
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In conclusion I would like to thank my fellow Parish Councillors and the Parish Clerk, Neil Hemmings, for their support and input over the past year. I would also like to recognise the support given to the Village by County Councillor Ian Parry and my fellow Borough Councillor Lynne Bakker Collier.

Gareth Jones

April 2013