

Tattenhall & District Parish Council Annual Report 2022-2023

Chairman's Report - Councillor Iain Keeping

Council elections are due on May 4th this year, but the Parish Council has already been completed. Councillors were elected without contest because there were just 15 candidates for 15 places. This does not in any way diminish the democratic process nor the legitimacy of councillors. Any elector of the Parish (or even another Parish if they work here or live within 3 miles) who doubts this is free to stand at the next election in 4 years hence.

Two councillors, Doug Haynes and Lisa White decided not to stand for election this year and I thank them both for their hard work and dedication over a number of years - in Doug's case a number of decades!

Remember that our Parish Councillors are unpaid and represent their electors and not the interests of any political party. Four new councillors have been elected, Peter Clark, Dorothy Darnborough, Mike Foster and Robert Smith. With a total of 15, Tattenhall and District Parish Council has the largest number of seats in Cheshire West (jointly with Rudheath) and since all 15 have been elected we have largest number of councillors (Rudheath fell short of their complement by 7 in their uncontested election).

Only 4 out of more than 70 rural parishes in West Cheshire have contested elections this time and only 18 of the uncontested elections have their full number.

The first meeting of the new council will be on 15th May 2023 at 7:30pm, in the Barbour Institute where electors will be able attend, meet the Councillors and raise questions or issues.

The time burden for Councillors and the Clerk has been managed by reducing the number of Council meetings from twelve to six per year. Nevertheless, the year has been busy for the Council. Routine business has returned to normal following the pandemic, including:

- Scrutiny of and commenting on planning applications (Parish Councils have no power to determine an application).
- Setting the precept (well below inflation this year).
- Risk management and maintenance of Parish-owned land and property ie the Park and children's play area, the Spinney, Barn Field, Glebe Meadow, Youth Pod, Millennium Mile, War Memorial and allotments at Gatesheath.
- Awarding grants - £4,690 to 12 local organisations last year.

The Council are aware of issues of particular concern to residents and efforts have been made to address them:

Maintenance: The War Memorial was closed after sink-holes appeared after the last floods. The monument was also found to be leaning. As previously reported, extensive research and advice was taken leading to underpinning by resin injection. The contractors, Mainmark, completed the work, at an affordable cost, in time for Remembrance Day. The dogwood surrounding the monument on Mill Field has been removed to prevent damage to the walls and the project will be completed by repointing the stonework in accordance with regulations concerning this grade II listed building.

In addition to the Parish-owned property, the management of the field and pond adjacent to the Spinney has been taken on and together with volunteers from Transition Tattenhall, the maintenance of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Orchard has been taken over from the borough Council. Watering of the newly planted orchard was a particular challenge in the hot, dry summer. The Council has been helped by other volunteers including



Sea Cadets in clearance of the Mill Brook in the Spinney and Cheshire West in Glebe Meadow hedge-laying along Chester Road.

Open Spaces: Glebe Meadow is now open to the public, but it is important to preserve this unimproved grassland and wildlife area by keeping to the mown footpath and, if you take a dog with you, keeping it on a short lead and picking up after it. An ecological survey has been carried out in advance of the opening and future surveys will be used to ensure that no damage is being done. The council are currently investigating renovation of the Ha-Ha which forms the boundary between the meadow and Rookery Hall.

The Spinney is now maturing after renovation with a significant increase in wildflowers resulting from increased light levels. Management of trees in the Spinney continues to be an expensive balance between safety and preservation. As for Glebe Meadow, ecological surveys will be continued regularly.

The Neighbourhood Plan review includes a review of the designated Open Green Spaces in the Parish. This has been a significant amount of work for the working group who have identified, defined and justified, 24 spaces and wildlife areas which, if approved, will be protected from future development. The details are available on the Parish Council website in the draft document included in March 2023 Council minutes.

Litter: The Council has supported volunteer litter collection by provision of pickers, bags, collection bins and portable ash trays to encourage safe and clean cigarette end disposal. The Green Dog Walkers scheme has significantly reduced the level of fouling by dogs and free biodegradable bags, supplied by the Council are available from the Post Office and Tattenhall News. A litter-awareness session was arranged for children at the Park School. Following representation by the Council it has been agreed that some litter bins will be replaced. The bins have now been replaced by the Rectory, outside Pluto House, by the Spar bus stop, Barbour Institute, the brick bus stop and a metal bin with cover for by the Youth Shelter.

Road Safety: Following speed surveys, the Council has part-funded the signs for the new reduced limits on some of the roads leading into the village. Sadly, repeat surveys have not shown any reduction in average speeds and in some cases the speeds have increased beyond the limits. For this reason the Council will be pursuing alternative speed control measures with the highways department for the future. The Parish Council have no powers to impose speed controls, but can make requests which has been done with regards to Burwardsley Road and Birds Lane. The Council has also arranged training for volunteers in the use of community speed watch cameras.



The junction of Newton Lane and Tattenhall Road is an increasing concern given the number of accidents witnessed recently. In March, the Council held a site meeting at the junction with representatives of the emergency services and the highways department. The danger of the junction was highlighted by witnessing 2 near-misses during the meeting! The highways department has agreed to renew the signage including white lines, but the police view is that the incidents are the result of bad driving, not the layout of the junction.

Concerns continue about parking and difficulties for pupils crossing the roads at the Park Primary School. This had been the subject of meetings with Cheshire West & Chester officers and school representatives in 2020 and 2021 resulting in adjustment of the parking restrictions on Chester Road. However, the yellow lines are routinely ignored at pick-up time. Representation to the police has been made concerning enforcement of the rules. Agreement has been made to undertake an assessment to see if the school qualifies for a crossing patrol. The assessment has been delayed due to covid regulations.

Affordable Housing: Housing in Tattenhall is amongst the most expensive in West Cheshire. 'Affordable' has a relative definition and so a property at 80% of local average price or rent is still too expensive for most. A housing needs assessment in 2018 identified a significant need for low cost properties for young people as well as for the elderly to down-size. Housing development in the last 10 years has not met this need. Despite a requirement in the Neighbourhood Plan for 35% of new housing to be affordable, the proportion of affordable in new build in the last 10 years is only 21%. In the past the Council has promoted projects at Smithfield's and Grackle Croft. More recently the Council has supported Tattenhall Community Land Trust in its project to build 4 affordable single bed units on the Keysbrook estate. Hopefully, a strengthened policy in the Neighbourhood Plan review will help, but at present the number and siting of affordable houses built is determined by negotiation between Cheshire West & Chester planners and the developer with the Parish Council excluded.

Other matters: There has been progress in replacing stiles on the most popular public-rights-of-way. Kissing gates have been purchase and with the support of the Ice Cream Farm routes will be made safer and more accessible over the coming months.

New lights have been purchased for Christmas decoration of the Village. The Events Working Group has been very busy with Christmas Children's parties, painting and willow-weaving workshops, Platinum Jubilee event on Flacca Field with Sport Tattenhall.

Finally I would like to thank all Councillors for their dedication. In particular I would like to thank Ann Wright for her unerring support without which none of the above would be possible.

Dr Iain M Keeping MD, FRCP

Accounts & Finance

Balance Brought Forward 2021-22	£67,846	
Precept 2022-2023	£59,259	
Other Income -	£141,553	Includes:
		£68,301 FCC Spinney Grant
		£51,562 Community Infrastructure Levy
		£15,352 VAT Refund
		£2,000 Neighbourhood Plan Review Grant
		£1,988 Miscellaneous
		£1,265 Jubilee
		£ 707 Interest
		£ 354 Gatesheath Allotments Rent
		£ 24 Tattenhall Book Sales
Staff Costs & Administration	£18,945	Includes:
		£712 Insurance
		£1074 Room Hire
Other Costs	£84,116	Includes:
		£23,842 Grounds Maintenance inc Tree Works & Memorial
		£16,976 Events & Community Pride
		£16,482 Projects inc. Spinney Works Management
		£10,707 Grants
		£6,820 Neighbourhood Plan
		£9,005 VAT
		£ 285 Allotments
Balance Carried Forward (2023-2024)	£165,597	



Planning

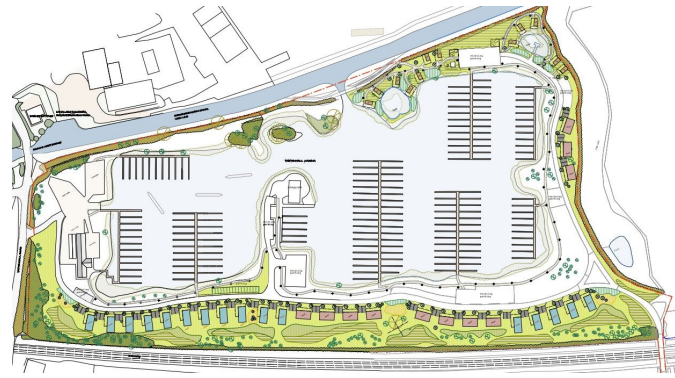
Since May last year the Parish Council has been notified of 39 planning applications, 15 were for some form of extension, 12 were for tree works, and 4 were to vary previously obtained permissions.

We received one application to build a new garage and 2 lawful development applications and 1 relating to converting Medway House into a dental practice, a further application for this has just been received.

We have received 1 application for solar panels, it will be interesting see if the number of applications for solar panels increases in the future as people seek ways to reduce their carbon footprint and power bills.

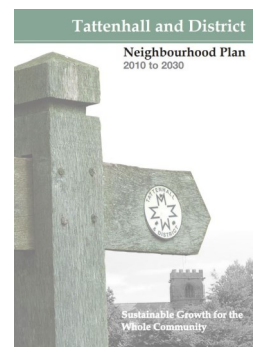
Other applications of interest include an application for 27 holiday lodges and 12 holiday pods at Tattenhall Marina (22/3890/FUL) and an application for a temporary agricultural workers dwelling and new livestock building (23/00876/FUL), at the time of writing these have not been decided by the principle authority, Cheshire West and Chester Council.

The Planning register which includes comments submitted by the Parish Council is published as part of our meetings agendas, and we post each application when received on our Facebook page.



Neighbourhood Plan Review & Design Code

The Neighbourhood Plan (NP) has been under review since late 2019. The pandemic caused significant delays, but the review is now advancing. Policies have been amended to bring the Plan into general conformity with CW&C Local Plan (LP), a requirement. The main proposed change is to Policy 1, partly to bring it into conformity with the LP and partly to strengthen the requirement for affordable housing. The original NP suggested a minimum of 35% of new housing development should be 'affordable', but the relevant Local Plan Policy is weaker, requiring developers only to "work towards a target of 30%". The reviewed NP draft policy would require "at least 30%" should be 'affordable'. It is thought that this would be in general conformity with the LP especially if there is good evidence to back up the local need for affordable housing. The 2018 Housing Needs Survey provided this evidence, but this is now 5 years old. The Parish Council has agreed to fund an update to the Housing Needs Survey which is being carried out by Cheshire Community Action.



The other main proposed change to the plan is in Policy 6, Local Green Spaces. These areas are defined and justified by the Parish Council and agreed by CW&C after which they become 'designated' and protected from future development. The original plan was deemed not to have sufficiently strong justification for the chosen areas. There are a few additional spaces bring the total to 24.

Alongside the NP, the Village Design Statement (VDS) was also reviewed. In 2020 the Government published guidance on local design codes and the working group recommended replacing the VDS with a Design Code. With support from Localities and AICOM, the Design Code is now near completion and will be presented to the Parish Council at the next meeting. The design code is prescriptive for such matters as housing density, materials and environmental protection. There is a requirement in the proposed NP for all planning applications to comply with the Design Code.

The proposed change to the NP designated area has been accepted. The new designated area now conforms to the new Parish boundary. Some residences have been removed from and some added to the designated area. Twenty in all are affected and all have been notified.

The next step in the review, once the Housing Needs Survey has been completed, is to proceed to statutory consultation before submission to CW&C. The working group does not believe that the proposed modifications change the nature of the plan sufficiently for there to be another referendum, but this decision will be made by the Examiner.

Single Use Plastic

Single use plastic plays a big part in the litter dropped on our streets. Therefore last year we embarked upon a scheme to encourage people in our village to use less single use plastic, if we succeeded we would gain the Bronze level award. In order to do this we needed to supply:

- * The names of three businesses that would reduce their use of single use plastic by three items.
- * Have ten "allies" who would start to reduce their use of single use plastic.
- * Get the Primary School involved and ask the Parish Council to corroborate what had been achieved in the village.

Contact was made with the school and they had a talk from Helen Tandy who is from a group called Eco Communities about plastic waste. They were then given the opportunity to make a large plastic monster as a reminder of the talk and promoting putting their litter in a bin! Since this talk litter pickers and bags have been supplied to the school in order that parents can litter pick the village playground area before and after school.

We have been told that we have fulfilled the criteria for the Bronze level for reduction of single use plastic and once the Parish Council have ratified the hopefully the participating businesses will receive a plaque to show their commitment to reducing plastic.

In addition we have recently had a recycling talk from Tara Dumas the Strategic waste manager from CWAC which was very informative and she is happy to work with the village on recycling.

90% of plastic is not recycled it is burnt or dumped. Single use plastic eg plastic bags, packaging, straws and plastic takeaway containers just break down into micro particles which pollute our waterways and injure and kill marine life. We can all do something to help including reusing or reducing items made from plastic. Please help us remove single use plastic from our village.

The Spinney

The Spinney has been a great success. Although some people had doubts about the project it has benefitted so many people and our wildlife. The rooks seem to be as lively and vociferous as ever and yet otherwise it is a peaceful place where the only sounds are generally from bird song. The wild Daffodils around the paths were very cheery in the Winter months and the Wood Anemones and Celandines are a picture at the moment carpeting large swathes of the ground. The increase in wildflowers has been brought about as the light levels have improved following the necessary maintenance and at least 34 varieties of wildflowers were identified last year.

Last Summer the Opal Club had a very enjoyable picnic in the Spinney provided by the Parish Council and catered for by Alison's coffee shop. It was greatly appreciated and this is part of their thank you note,

"Thank you for your extremely kind gift of providing a picnic for us at The Spinney." "Since...the Covid epidemic we have not had the opportunity to take the members out so it was lovely to be able to just walk them down the path from the Vault at St Albans."

Sandy Bears Nursery make good use of the Spinney and as it is such a safe and central place the children are able to walk there and enjoy and learn to appreciate and care for wildlife and the environment. However it is also important for adults to be able to enjoy the Spinney as,

"Research shows that being surrounded by green spaces reduces anxiety and improves the immune system, and that regular contact with nature and green spaces promotes better mental health. " (King's College London 26 July 2022 Anna Naseem)

It is expected that the wildlife will continue to improve alongside our community and both will benefit from each other.





Queen's Platinum Jubilee

The flags were out and the bunting was up when, on Thursday 2nd June, in glorious weather, the Parish Council's Jubilee Jamboree began the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in Tattenhall.

Many hours of preparation and meetings led Parish Councillors and members of the community spending the morning putting up gazebos and directing stall holders to their pitches in time for the event to begin.

People flocked to the Flacca field where there was entertainment for all ages. The band played; there were donkey rides; souvenirs on sale; a Climbing Wall which proved very popular; Face Painting; Soft Play and even a tug of war. Children could make their own

crown and there was a fancy dress competition with the

theme being something associated with the Queen's Reign.

The bar was open; there was tea and cake; and local food



Then there was more.... Events

The Spinney Opening

Saturday 3rd September saw the Grand Opening of the Spinney. Work had been taking place throughout the year to create a boardwalk through the trees providing access to all. A pond has been dug out and a wildflower meadow sown.

There have been a variety of art projects for residents to take part: Natural materials were gathered by children to create collages and Willow weaving workshops took place to create dragon flies and butterflies, now displayed in the Spinney.

Art classes were organised in the Barbour Institute with artist John Clayton.

A large Willow Fox had been commissioned and stands proud in his new





home in the Spinney

The opening saw the large, beautifully painted Story telling Chair where children listened to stories and poems that were being told by Kirsty Williams.

There were hotdogs and Pimms on offer, plus supervised 'Marshmallow toasting' for the children.

It was also an opportunity to unveil the bench in commemoration of Councillor Georgina Blackhurst.

Remembrance

It was a pleasure to have our War Memorial repaired in time to hold the Remembrance Service once again. Refreshments were served to all

attendees as in past years.



A wonderful start to the Festive season.

Once again our village looked amazing with the addition of new star lights criss crossing the high street and with the addition of star lights on the lamp posts.

A new family of Deer lit up the lawn of Olympus house and once again the Snowman were out with their hidden letters making a Christmas word that was awarded with a Christmas selection box.

The Post Box had a new home in the Spa and Santa was busy replying to those that had written him letters.

On the evening of the 'Christmas Tree Light Switch On' a Victorian Organ arrived at the front of the Barbour Institute playing music and inducing quite a crowd. The attendance was so good this year that the free Hot Chocolate and Mulled wine ran out.

The school children sang some wonderful songs before Santa arrived on his Tractor to switch the lights on the big Tree and hand out gifts to the children. This was followed with singing from our own 'Tattenhall Singers'.

Christmas Parties for the Children of Tattenhall

This year we asked each family for a £5 deposit that was returned when the children arrived at the parties. This worked well and reduced the number of non-attendance.

The younger children once again enjoyed the Music, fun and games provided by 'Diddy dance'. There was of course a visit from Santa and a sack full of goodies.

The older children enjoyed a Christmas themed 'work dance shop' provided by Aisling Swift's 'Panache'. The children enjoyed showing their dance to their parents and a visit from Santa.



Meeting Dates 2023-2024

Monday 3rd July 2023
Monday 4th September 2023
Monday 6th November 2023

Monday 15th January 2024
Monday 4th March 2024
Tuesday 7th May 2024

The Parish Council meets on the first Monday of every other month beginning in May each year, from 7.30pm in the Barbour Institute, the agenda is published a week before the meeting and can be found on the Council's website and is displayed on the Council's notice board on the High Street.

The Council calls extraordinary meetings as required, and the agendas for these are published in the same way as schedule meetings.

All Council and Committee meetings are open to the public and include public participation.

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