

Tarvin Parish Council Chairman's Report – 2023/24

I am pleased to deliver the Chairman's Report for Tarvin Parish Council ('the Council'), covering the year ended 31st March 2024.

The year started with the Council requesting a higher than inflation Precept from residents, due to the impact of high levels of cost inflation and unforeseen energy costs in the previous year. During the year, the Council has worked hard to move its finances into reasonable shape, with the aim over the next two years of holding the recommended minimum of 25% of Precept as a reserve against future years' unexpected costs.

The Council has a full compliment of eleven councillors who take part in Council meetings and the various working parties set up to manage various Council responsibilities. The quadrennial Council elections were held in May 2023 and three councillors resigned at that point, including Councillor David Cotgreave, who stood down after 54 years' service. At the January Council meeting, the Chairman presented David with the 'Freedom of the Parish' in recognition of his contribution. Three new Council members were elected and have quickly added their experience to the Council.

The responsibilities of the Council continued to be many and varied during the year, ranging from the routine (for example, maintenance of the King George V playing field and of certain parish infrastructure) to the one-off. An increasing number of items of equipment were repaired or replaced (including new goalposts and nets for the football field) and the Council also took the view that additional contributions should be made in the current and subsequent years to build up the reserve which will be used to replace items as they reach the end of their serviceable life.

The Council was able to continue making grants to Tarvin-based charitable and volunteer-led organisations which contribute to the well-being of residents. Grants were made to Tarvin Community Woodland Trust, Tarvin Community Centre, TarvinOnline, Tarvin Christmas Festival, Tarvin Village Fête and Tarvin Toddlers.

Each year, the Council identifies one or more 'special projects' aimed at addressing a specific issue or improving facilities and this year was no exception. The quality of several parish footpaths is an ongoing cause for concern due to the encroachment of the grass verges and after several reminders, Cheshire West and Chester ('CWaC') 'sided' the footpath along Tarporley Road as far as Okell's Garden Centre on our behalf. In addition, the Council paid for the refurbishment of the war memorial stone and plaques.

The council has a key role in helping to make the parish a pleasant place to live. Regular reminders regarding hedge maintenance and dog fouling are made via the Council Facebook page and the quarterly Tarvin Times newsletter. Litter picking is performed daily on the playing field and two Parish Clean Ups were carried out during the year, with a good turnout of volunteers. Car parking in the village continues to be an issue and the Council received no encouragement from the Diocese of Chester in its attempt to engage regarding the possibility of acquiring Garden Field for that purpose.

Another important aspect of the Council's work is commenting on planning applications. The majority of these are reviewed without further comment but objections or suggested changes are passed on to the local planning authority where necessary. Two key applications which generated much comment in the local social media were the approval on appeal by HM Planning Inspector of the travellers' site on Tarporley Road and enforcement of the approved trading hours of Greenacre Garage. Many of these comments revealed a lack of understanding of the Parish Council's role in commenting on planning applications and indeed on the extent of its responsibilities generally. The Council as a result has published two articles explaining our role and responsibilities which will hopefully help matters.

Where such matters are the responsibility of CWaC, the Council's efforts to achieve results have proved frustratingly limited. We have pursued the installation of a small number of Speed Indicator Signs at key points both in the village and in Oscroft, but negotiations are still ongoing. Planning enforcement is slow due to limited resources at CWaC and all residents will be painfully aware of how long it takes to get action on filling in pot holes. Where we have sought action on perceived road safety issues, progress is frustrated by national guidelines on speed restrictions and what constitutes obstructive parking.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow councillors and the Parish Clerk for their hard work and commitment to the Council during the past year. I look forward to working with them in 2024/25.

Robert Ford
15th May 2024