

Gnosall

PARISH COUNCIL

including the Wards of Moreton and Knightley

Mission Statement

To improve the quality of life for those who live and work in the Parish of Gnosall, and those who visit it.



ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016



QUALITY
PARISH COUNCIL

Introduction

Gnosall Parish Council is a large Parish Council covering the villages of Gnosall, Knightley, Moreton, Bromstead and Outwoods. The Council has 16 members elected every four years who are split between the three wards. The Council employs four members of Staff, the Parish Clerk, the Council Support Officer and a Caretaker and Cleaner at the Grosvenor Centre. The Parish Council works in cooperation with other local authorities in the provision of local services. Full Council meetings are held on the second Monday of every month, except for the month of August; Committee meetings are generally held every quarter. A full list of meetings is available from the Parish Office and from the website. Meetings are open to the public who are able to raise questions and concerns during the first 10 minutes of every meeting. The Parish office is open on Tuesdays from 10am – 2pm and Wednesdays from 1pm – 3pm and by appointment on Mondays and Thursdays.



Civic Service as part of GFest 2015, July 2015

Report from the Chairman and Clerk of Gnosall Parish Council

The Annual Assembly is upon us once again and the Parish Council has had yet another very busy and challenging year which has continued to build on the excellent work achieved in the past.

Elections were held on 7th May 2015 and all 13 Councillors who stood for election were uncontested and therefore successfully re-elected. Prior to elections, 1 Councillor in Moreton Ward decided to stand down after serving as a Councillor for more than 50 years and 2 Gnosall Ward Councillors decided not to stand again. The Parish Council declared and advertised 3 Casual Vacancies and is pleased to confirm that 4 candidates put their names forward and following an interview process and democratic voting, 3 new Councillors were appointed to the vacancies.

During July we were all treated to an extended GFest. The varied programme of events always proves popular and is enjoyed by children and adults, but none of this would be possible without the donations we receive from our supporters and the Parish Council's continued success in securing external funding through an application process to various organisations. The amount of planning that is required to put on this type of event goes without saying, but we would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their enthusiasm, dedication and generosity in helping to make our third GFest such a brilliant success.

As Gnosall Parish Council was 120 years old last year, members from the History Group provided a fascinating talk and exhibition in celebration of the occasion which was undertaken as part of GFest. This was an opportune event to present retiring Councillor Derek Watson Jones with a token of appreciation for his 50 years as a serving Councillor.

The Best Kept Village Committee was hard at work litter picking and tidying around the village in readiness for the Best Kept Village judging panel and whilst Gnosall didn't win, we were highly commended and received very positive comments from the Judges.

The Parish Council has transformed The Acres and surrounding wetland over the last few years and more work is planned in the future. This important piece of work was recognised by the County Council who designated the area as a county Site of Biological Importance (SBO) in recognition of its protection of wildlife.

During the year, the Parish Council continued to push forward and focus on completing our Neighbourhood Plan and all the hard work undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group was spectacularly recognised in the results of a referendum that took place on 22nd October 2015 when 895 parishioners voted in favour of adopting the Plan whilst 69 'against' votes were cast. The final outcome gave an overwhelming 93% majority for a 'YES' vote. The last stage of the process required the Plan to be ratified by Stafford Borough Council for adoption and incorporation into the Plan for Stafford Borough and this was agreed and finalised at a full Stafford Borough Council meeting on 24th November 2015. Our Plan, the first in this Borough, is now fully adopted and will be used in conjunction with Stafford Borough Council's Local Plan to assist in decision making when planning applications are submitted.

Last autumn the Parish Council said goodbye to Jamie McClaren, Assistant to the Clerk, who took up new employment. The Council advertised a Council Support Officer vacancy in September which attracted a significant amount of interest. Interviews were held in November and we are pleased to announce and welcome Jeanene Walton-Sanders who took up her appointment in December. Jeanene brings a wealth of experience to the Council and we wish her well for the future.

28th November was the grand Christmas Lights switch-on where we were all able to join in with carol singing, enjoy refreshments and entertainment. The event proved to be very popular with a capacity crowd cheering on Gnosall Player's production of 'Santa's Snowed in Sleigh'.

Most parishioners are probably already aware that a planning application to develop The Horseshoe was received and a public meeting was held on 3rd February 2016 in the Grosvenor Centre. The meeting was very well attended and all parishioners' views along with those of the Parish Council were submitted to SBC's Planning Department with a recommendation to refuse the application. A special meeting of Stafford Borough Council's Planning Committee meeting was held on 9th May and the application was unanimously refused.

Other challenges faced by the Council during the year are the loss of Library facilities and the Youth Club, neither of which could be accommodated within the new school build. Whilst the Travelling Library continues to visit the village, it is not an ideal solution. The Parish Council is looking at how we can best take this forward with a view to securing a permanent home for a library. Several volunteers have come forward and are keen assist with the running of a library and a Working Party has been set up to look at how we develop a community led library service and will formulate a business plan and subsequently bid for a library contract on behalf of the Parish Council.

Loss of Youth Club facilities in the village was a tremendous blow and the Parish Council decided to take on the challenge and see if we could facilitate finding suitable premises and enough volunteers to resurrect a Youth Club. We are proud to say that 'GG's' opened its doors on 13th April in the St John Ambulance building, which was being vacated by St John as sessions were being terminated in the village. 40 youngsters signed up on the night and had a thoroughly enjoyable time.

Some parishioners already receive a copy of the GMK, the Parish Council Newsletter, and in an effort to increase awareness of parish news, we are pleased to confirm that distribution has been increased with the next edition being delivered to over 2000 properties. The GMK is also available on the

Parish Council Website www.gnosallparishcouncil.org.uk, where you will find information about the Dog Fouling campaign, policing and other relevant topics.

The Council has plenty of projects to finalise and progress over the next twelve months and the Clerk continues to monitor our financial resources to ensure that we achieve and provide value for money in everything that we do. We will always strive to secure external funding through grants, etc wherever possible and are mindful that our budget is public money and we must spend it wisely.

On behalf of the Council we cannot stress how much importance we place on the valuable contribution we receive from our staff, colleagues in other Councils and Organisations, our dedicated volunteers and, of course, our parishioners who all help in various ways. It is only by working together that we are able to achieve what we do. Thank you to you all.

Report from Cllr Jamie Cook, Chairman of Personnel Committee

Over the past year the Personnel Committee has sought to support the staff of the Parish Council whilst still delivering value for money and adhering to new guidelines and legislation as appropriate. We have continued with the strategic approach to methods of working and staffing levels to ensure continuation of the high level of service that has helped to keep the momentum behind the many and varied projects the Council is now involved in.

The Clerk regularly holds 1-1 employee meetings as these have been extremely useful in maintaining a productive and cohesive workforce. In line with the needs of the Parish Council and to support the Clerk with an ever increasing and diverse workload the new role of Council Support Officer was developed. Applications were high and the committee took an assessment centre approach to ensure candidates had the best opportunity to showcase their skills.

The Personnel Committee is now gearing up to formally adopt an appraisal system that will allow staff to be supported and develop new skills that will be of benefit to the Council and also show that they are carrying out their roles to the best of their ability and in a way that is expected of them.

As we push to renew our quality status the committee will ensure that all elements of this procedure under its remit are efficiently completed and signed off in a timely manner.

Yet again thanks must go out to all staff, councillors and parishioners whose monumental efforts and dedication often go unsung. Without the input of these people the Parish Council would not be able to operate as effectively as it does and therefore wishes to thank the 'unsung heroes' whose dedication and determination should not be underestimated.

Report from Cllr Kenneth Ingram, Chairman of Resources Committee

The Resources Committee is responsible for overseeing the Parish Council's finances. On an annual basis it recommends to the full Parish Council the next financial year's budget. By careful management of the Parish Council's accounts and constant monitoring against the agreed budgets any areas of concern can be identified and corrective action taken. The Resources Committee can require representatives of other Parish Council Committees to attend its meetings when necessary to account for the proper control of the budget for which they are responsible and to ensure action plans are in place to meet any budget savings approved by the Council.

The accounts are internally audited at the end of the financial year and then presented to the external auditor.

The main income of the Parish Council is the "precept" which forms part of the Council Tax collected by Stafford Borough Council. By careful monitoring of the actual spend against budgeted figures it is clear there needs to be an increase in the precept if the Parish Council is to maintain its obligations and for the financial year 2016/17 we have managed to keep the increase down to just 73p per household. Our total precept per household is less than many of the surrounding parishes who provide far fewer services and facilities than Gnosall Parish Council.

Stafford Borough Council also make a payment to the Parish Council for jobs and activities that are undertaken on their behalf, which in 2015/16 amounted to £3680.00.

The main projects during 2015/16 have been developing a Neighbourhood Plan which was almost solely funded by a grant, opening GG's Youth Club for 9-11 year olds funded from monies received when Staffordshire County Council closed its youth club, paying for land to create an extension to the Burial Ground, refurbishing the Burial Ground gates, arranging a fun weekend on The Acres, purchasing new benches and producing more parish magazines.

External funding received during 2015/16

Locality Funding	Towards the cost of the Neighbourhood Plan	£6990
Staffordshire County Cllr Fund	Towards the cost of a new generator	£695
Stafford Borough Council	Towards the cost of the Christmas lights event	£545
Community paths initiative	To purchase a jet washer	£380
Awards for All	Towards GFest 2015	£2370

During 2015/16 we made grants as follows

Towards the upkeep of the Burial Grounds at St Mary's Church Moreton and Christ Church Knightley	£800
To Royal British Legion	£25
To Gnosall Scouts	£100
To support the work of the Best Kept Village Team	£1000
To support GFest 2015	£1000

Report from Cllr Tracey Simkin, Chairman of Open Spaces Committee

It has been another busy year for this committee managing the open spaces areas including The Allotments, The Acres, Play areas, Chippy jumps and equipment and facilities within the parish. A typical week can involve arranging cleaning and maintenance of play areas including health and safety inspections, monitoring and organising maintenance to the boardwalk, meeting and liaising with allotment holders to discuss allotment projects and reacting to unexpected matters such as fallen branches and trees to broken swings in the park.

The projects undertaken by the Open Spaces Committee are sometimes challenging and require a lot of hard work, time and commitment by Councillors and staff and in most cases the projects are achieved within the allocated budget. Occasionally projects have to be postponed as happened this year when the costs of realigning some allotment plots increased and as unexpected issues arose. The Parish Council has to be mindful of the small amount of money it has and in this case it was agreed the costs of the project were unaffordable.

Open Spaces Committee members have different skills and expertise that they bring to this busy Committee and as Chairman I thank them all, as well as the Clerk, for their ongoing support. The Parish Council's Handyman, Paul Prince and the Best Kept Village Team also make valuable contributions to Parish Council projects and work tirelessly keeping the parish and the facilities within it looking so good and well maintained.

Central Government is encouraging local Councils to deliver more services and play a greater part in their communities and I'm confident Gnosall Parish Council and particularly the Open Spaces Committee will continue to do their very best in providing the services and facilities for the benefit of our parishioners to the best of their abilities.

Report from Cllr Mary Booth, Chairman of Procedures Review Committee

This has been a busy year, with all the terms of reference for the Council's committees newly reviewed and adopted. Currently the latest 2016 model financial regulations are being considered, as they introduce fairly major changes in a number of areas. These will also have implications for our standing orders. The work is ongoing.

Every councillor has been issued with a pack of the governing documents of the Council, for easy reference. In order to keep the residents of the Parish informed, these documents are being made available on the Council's website as they are finalised.

I would like to thank the Committee and the Clerk for their help with recent work.

Report from Cllr Kenneth Ingram, Chairman of GFest 2015 Committee

Gnosall Festival held, in July 2015, was a tremendous success with over 40 different events for parishioners and visitors to visit or take part in. Once again there was a great atmosphere in the parish, there was a huge amount of voluntary effort and talents displayed by all ages, the entire parish was celebrated in 2015 with events held in Moreton and Knightley as well as the parish's heritage and environment.

Income from grants (from Awards for All, Waitrose, Gnosall Parish Council, Gnosall Parish News, Gnosall Lions, Cllr Winnington's Fund and Mr & Mrs G Turner) amounted to £4689. Donations from events totalled at least £3,130. In addition, Macmillan Cancer raised £522, which they retained for their own good causes.

It cost £4973 to run GFest 2015. This included buying some capital items which we can use at future GFest. The GFest Working Group decided to keep another £500 in the bank for the 2017 Festival. This left us with a grand total of at least £2844 for distribution to worthwhile local causes. The chosen projects to receive financial support were Gnosall Best Kept Village Group projects, Knightley Church for refurbishing the vestry and other projects, the Heritage Group, Sustrans for painting the metal benches and an omnidirectional ceiling microphone for Gnosall Players. Any residual funds will be put towards costs incurred to produce the next GFest in 2017.

I would to thank all those who made our festival such a success, especially the GFest 2015 Working Group, the Parish Clerk, the Assistant to the Clerk and our volunteer helper.

We can now look forward to similar success at GFest 2017.

Report from Cllr Mike Deegan, Chairman of Communications Committee

The committee goes from strength to strength and welcomed four new members in 2015 – including three non-councillors. Given the growing workload, the committee now meets once a month.

A Communications Strategy was formally adopted by the Parish Council in April 2015. This document outlines clear guidelines for the format and content of the Parish Council's website, newsletter, social media and press releases. To meet the requirements of the Quality Gold status, it is likely that this strategy will be reviewed and adapted to a new Communications and Engagement Strategy.

The Parish Council website has a well-maintained homepage with a growing number of user-friendly links and information. A Parish Council app for mobile use will be considered for use later in 2016.

The Parish Council newsletter (GMK) has been produced on a seasonal quarterly basis with 1000 copies professionally printed of a 12-page A4 format. Although circulation has been improved, the committee's aim has always been to reach every household in the parish. Therefore from May 2016, 2000 copies will be printed and delivered by volunteers to every house in the village and as many as possible elsewhere in the parish. Because of the increased cost of printed copies, the GMK will be produced three times a year now instead of quarterly.

Several press releases have been produced over the past 12 months, with some wonderful publicity generated for local activities and events. The Parish Council has developed closer links with the Staffordshire Newsletter and met with the editor of the Newport Advertiser to agree a regular feature in their newspaper.

Report from Cllr Roger Greatrex, Chairman of Planning Committee

The year 2015/16 has not been a contentious year regarding planning applications although the Parish Council did receive a resubmission of the application to develop Audmore Loop which in principle is no different from the one that was previously refused. The site is outside the Settlement Boundary for Gnosall as defined in Gnosall's Neighbourhood Plan which was a major factor in the Parish Council's response to the Borough Council. The Parish Council will be represented at the Planning Committee when the application comes forward.

The good news regarding planning matters is that Gnosall's Neighbourhood Plan was approved by an independent examiner, Nigel McGurk, and was then approved by the Borough Councils Cabinet Committee. In October 2015 a local referendum was held for Gnosall's parishioners to vote for or against the Neighbourhood Plan (a plan that Borough Planning Officers) have to take into consideration when approving local planning applications in Gnosall Parish. The voting was well attended with 967 votes cast 895 votes cast a YES vote and 69 votes cast a NO vote. This gave a clear majority of 97% of the electorate in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan being made a legal document. Gnosall Parish Council will refer to the Neighbourhood Plan when considering local planning applications now and in the future.

The Plan for Stafford Borough (Part 2) which includes the only fully ratified Neighbourhood Plan completed in Stafford Borough was submitted to the Secretary of State during the last week of April 2016. An examination in public is due to take place in July 2016 and the inspector's decision expected late 2016.

The Parish Council's Planning Committee meets regularly, usually one per month, in the Parish Office and members of the public are more than welcome to attend to put points of view forward on applications to be considered.

Report from Cllr Keith Abbott, Chairman of Grosvenor Centre Committee

Hiring of rooms in the centre has remained steady and targets met. Mr Nicholas Bull has been appointed Designated Premises Supervisor (DPS) for the Grosvenor Centre and he runs the Gnosall Mobile Bar together with Heather Bridge. This ensures that bar facilities are available when required for parties, events and functions.

The Parish Council has been represented on a Village Liaison Group looking at the leisure provision within the village and possible future developments. It was explained that the current Grosvenor Centre does not meet current demand – particularly in a growing village. The Parish Council are currently looking to accommodate the youth club and library. This will replace the services recently cut by the County Council and the former facilities located in the old school building.

Parish Councillors met to determine priorities for Grosvenor Centre development and provided draft requirements for a future rebuild on the site. The key facilities desired are a main hall (with stage and dressing rooms), changing rooms/showers, toilets, storage, cleaners room, plant room, parish office, Council Committee/meeting room, a fixed bar/cafe, reception, lounge area (off bar), kitchen, youth club/games rooms and library/heritage centre. A detailed report was given to the Village Liaison Group meeting that was attended by representatives of Gnosall Parish Council (GPC), Heron Brook Community Leisure (HBCL), The Memorial Village Hall, The Methodist Church and Phoenix Group.

The new modern heating system installed last year has paid dividends by substantially reducing gas consumption. Risk assessment has been undertaken and acted upon. The Grosvenor Committee has also put in place a Health and Safety Policy which could be adopted by the Parish Council.

I wish to thank all groups and organisations for their support and continuing use of the facilities. Special thanks to Brian and Mavis who maintain the very high standard of cleanliness and caretaking within the centre. Last but not least, many thanks to the Parish Council clerk, support staff and fellow councillors for all the unseen work they undertake in support of the Grosvenor Centre.

Annual Report of Mark Winnington, Cabinet Member for Economy, Environment and Transport Report for the year 2015/2016

This has been an interesting year for the village of Gnosall and its surrounding areas.

Housing Development

I was very impressed by the community support which was shown fighting housing development at the Horseshoe, hopefully the battle against refusal will now be successful.

New School

In terms of the County Council, there have been several meetings with myself and the school to ensure that the new school, which has now been completed, is an asset the village of Gnosall could be proud of for years to come.

Pool and Sporting Facilities

We still have no resolution around replacement of the pool or other sporting facilities but again the input from the community has been fantastic and work continues to try to resolve this situation.

Unfortunately while the neighbourhood plan has been a great success, it also meant that we cannot now use land belonging to the County on Lowfield Lane. A search is currently being made to find alternative sites.

Superfast Broadband

Superfast Broadband has come to the village and been well received, with many people achieving high download speeds as a result. Unfortunately properties which are more than a mile and a half from the cabinet will not benefit from this, myself being one of them. Further work is being done to address the final 5% of properties which need Superfast Broadband. I will keep residents informed.

Highways

It has been a very wet year and as a result drainage and pothole issues have been prevalent in the Gnosall and surrounding districts. I have made several visits to the area with Highways officers. I am working hard with the Highways team and Amey looking towards some sort of initiative to try and tidy-up some of the roads in the parish.

I wish everyone a happy and prosperous 2016.

Receipts and Payments Statement for Year 2015/2016 (Un-audited)

	Budget	Actual
Allotment Income	£1,000	£1,590
Council Tax & Concurrent Grant	£58,557	£58,557
Grosvenor Centre Lettings	£37,080	£34,456
Other income inc. Grants received	£8,142	£32,237
Reimbursement of VAT	£5,000	£4,784
TOTAL	£109,779	£131,624

	Budget	Actual
General Management Expenses	£58,850	£54,165
Councillors Expenses	£700	£610
Election Expenses	£2,200	£328
Open Spaces Maintenance	£25,420	£15,537
Christmas Lighting	£2,000	£1,889
Local Grants	£2,800	£12,188
Projects	£30,500	£12,963
Sec 137	£800	£95
Grosvenor Centre Expenses	£20,960	£8,017
VAT	-	£3,100
TOTAL	£144,230	£108,892

Balance b/f at 1st April 2015	£53,463
Plus Receipts	£131,624
Less Payments	£108,892
Balance c/f at 31st March 2016	£76,195

Gnosall Parish Council, List of Councillors April 2014 to March 2015

NAME	ADDRESS	TEL. NO.
Keith Abbott	7 Meadow Close, Gnosall, ST20 0LT	01785 823691
Pat Alker	73 Fountain Fold, Gnosall, ST20 0DR	01785 823271
Mary Booth	The Cottage, Hollies Common, Gnosall, ST20 0JD	01785 822742
Jamie Cook	75 Fountain Fold, Gnosall, ST20 0DR	01785 822232
Mike Deegan	Prospect House, Cross Street, Gnosall, ST20 0BX	01785 824293
Chris Emsley	4 Elmwood Close, Gnosall, ST20 0RR	01785 822837
Roger Greatrex	Holly Cottage, Gorse Lane, Knightley, ST20 0JP	01785 284553
Sue Green	3 Norbury Close, Gnosall, ST20 0QR	01785 822934
Gail Gregory	Audmore Villa, Audmore, Gnosall, ST20 0HF	01785 822104
Kenneth Ingram	25 Fountain Fold, Gnosall, ST20 0DR	01785 822082
Graham Payne	14 Glendower Close, Gnosall, ST20 0BP	01785 822243
Stuart Powell	Coopers Chimney, Sellman Street, Gnosall, ST20 0EP	01785 822826
Tracey Simkin	Gable End, Sellman Street, Gnosall, ST20 0EP	01785 823911
Jennifer Tomkinson	Befcote Farm, Gnosall, ST20 0EB	01785 823473
Shirley Wallis	Old Damson Cottage, Bromstead Common, TF10 9DG	01952 691229
Doug Webb	36 Old Barn Close, Gnosall, ST20 0DY	01785 823317

OFFICERS OF THE COUNCIL:

Jayne Cooper	Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
Jeanene Walton-Sanders (from December 2015)	Assistant to the Clerk and Booking Secretary
Mavis Hill	Grosvenor Centre Cleaner
Brian Hill	Grosvenor Centre Caretaker

PARISH OFFICE:

Address:	The Grosvenor Centre, High Street, Gnosall, Stafford, ST20 0EX
Tel:	01785 822685
Opening Hours:	Monday: by appointment, Tuesday: 10am - 2pm, Wednesday 1pm to 3pm, Thursday: by appointment, Friday: office closed.
Email Address:	clerk@gnosallparishcouncil.org.uk
Website:	www.gnosallparishcouncil.org.uk

COUNTY & BOROUGH COUNCILLORS:

Cllr Mark Winnington	Woodside Farm, Gnosall, ST20 0JA	01785 822224
Cllr Mike Smith	Batchacre Cottage, Shebdon, ST20 0PX	01785 280648
Cllr Ken Williamson	12 Sharman Way, Gnosall, ST20 0LX	01785 823433

Report from Stafford Borough Councillors 2015/16

Over the last 5 years the portion of council tax you pay to the Borough council tax has not increased at all, in fact it was reduced by 2% the year before last, and for 2016/17 it has been frozen. And there will be no reduction in the Borough Council's services to you

We have done this by making major changes in the Council's organisation and methods of working. For example we share back office functions with other councils.

Keeping a cap on council tax has not stopped us investing capital in numerous projects. Our first project now a few years old was the new £15m Stafford Leisure Centre, this was followed by improvements in Victoria Park and Wildwood park destination play areas and we have recently agreed to a £6m investment in Leisure facilities in Stone.

In Stafford our new Waterside Car Park is now open and the new retail development should open this summer.

In Gnosall the Parish Council has had its Neighbourhood Plan adopted, which will ensure Gnosall gets the homes it wants, in the places it wants, and not where the developer wants to build them.

The adoption of the neighbourhood plan was a major achievement by the Parish Council, and they should be congratulated. This plan has now twice been a key factor in resisting developments considered far too excessive for the village. As Borough Councillors we were pleased to help by ensuring the Borough Council provided resources to assist the Parish Council in the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Your Borough Councillors:
Ken, and Mike.