

Staverton has faced many problems over recent years mainly due to 20 years of continuous large scale housing development. The original population of 300 has grown to over a thousand. Such a dramatic change has put huge pressures on its infrastructure and financial resources. It has gained an enviable new sports pavilion and hard court but the running and maintenance also put strain on our very limited financial resources and difficulty in getting volunteer help. The Council has just had to disband its Sports Ground Committee due to lack of support.

Over these past years the parish council was disappointed not to receive the support it should have expected from Wiltshire Council. Planners sanctioned this massive building programme but did not consider the consequences of overdevelopment and lack of parking facilities. When Persimmon Homes pulled out of Staverton last year they ceased to maintain areas still not adopted.

A complaint was issued to the Area Board in 2011 and a meeting was arranged between Bill Parks at Wiltshire Council and the Parish Clerk. This meeting promised much but delivered little. Chair Steve Figures complained yet again to the Area Board about lack of action from Wiltshire Council and after discussions with the parish clerk, Peter Dunford contacted them on our behalf and managed to clarify a few issues but unfortunately he kept hitting the same brick walls as the parish council.

The parish council was shocked when some maintenance services were withdrawn following the merger between West Wilts and Wiltshire Council and it has taken years of negotiation to get them reinstated, as Highways mistakenly stated this area had not been adopted. As a result, for three years the main entrance to Staverton marina had received virtually no maintenance at all. Grass and weeds were waist high, the wooden fencing along the canal bridge was vandalised and the posts attached to concrete bases pulled out of the ground, litter was strewn everywhere and the large roundabout landscaped by Persimmon Homes became choked with over grown bushes and weeds. It has been neglected for so long that Wiltshire Council finally admitted it would not maintain it. This forced the parish council to take over the roundabout, remodel it and take on its maintenance with its cost implications.

Road sweeping in the Marina area is patchy at best. The vehicle is often seen entering the village travelling over the canal bridge and around the roundabout and leaving again, completely ignoring the rest of the village. It is scheduled to attend 15 times per annum but it rarely happens.

It took nearly two years of pleading with Wiltshire Council to install an urgently needed sign on the B3105 directing HGVs and traffic towards Trowbridge. Sat Navs were sending traffic through the private village roads and HGVs could not turn around causing major problems.

The parish council was excluded from planning discussions with Persimmon when plans for two bus stops were drawn up within 100 yards of one another. The council asked for the bus stop at Cottles Barton to be removed and reinstated at a more convenient site along Marina Drive. After Peter's intervention this was agreed but shortly afterwards, Persimmon went ahead anyway and installed the unwanted bus stop at Cottles Barton and now we have been told there are no funds available to remove it. Bemused residents continue to park on the bus stop road markings which is strictly speaking illegal. The parish council had originally objected to the plans for this stretch of road on the grounds that it would be congested with cars with insufficient parking provision and would provide restricted access for buses and emergency vehicles. These objections were overruled and now the future of the bus service is in doubt because many of the larger buses cannot negotiate this section due to all the cars parked there.

The last Government's policy of restricting parking provision has caused major problems for Staverton which will affect residents for years to come. Inappropriate parking of cars around the Thestfield roundabout has resulted in some near accidents. Wiltshire Council was asked for a survey of waiting restrictions and road markings back in 2008; this was promised for 2010 and never took place. Now after 4 years, Wiltshire Council told the parish council to formally apply yet again. This move provoked an angry response from the parish council as it places an unnecessary financial administrative burden to complete the many forms required for a survey which was promised years before. Cllr Trevor Carbin stepped in at this point and offered to complete the forms on behalf of the council.

Chair Steve Figures has raised several traffic issues at the Community Safety Partnership meetings, one of which is the problem of HGVs being redirected through Staverton. Two of the three bridges in Staverton are very old and their infrastructure cannot withstand two HGVs passing at the same time. In recent weeks major damage was caused to one of the bridges over the canal damaging the stonework. It is not good enough to leave this problem with the Canal Trust. This damage is due to excessive HGV traffic being redirected through Staverton. There is also damage to the mill wall where HGVs have scraped it when crossing the River Avon bridge. Concerns were raised when Bradford on Avon Town Council put up signs redirecting traffic through Staverton and although there is considerable sympathy for the problems also facing BoA, their town bridge has not been damaged to the same degree as the two Staverton bridges. More discussion is needed over this. Although the appeal against BaNES was upheld, its decision to close the A36 to HGVs and send them out to small villages is still a threat which could still affect Staverton in the future.

Two years ago Staverton built a sports ground pavilion with S106 funding from Persimmon Homes. The contractor was illegally encouraged to exceed his remit, and carried out additional work which exceeded the agreed budget by £26,000. Thankfully the parish council was able to source this money without resorting to loans but it has left council reserves very low. The contractor then walked off the job leaving the building unfinished and not connected to services. The building had been commissioned by two ex parish councillors to an unnecessarily high standard providing changing and shower rooms for adult football with two referee changing and shower facilities, two large walk in shower rooms, partitioned changing room, kitchen and 7 toilets. However it very soon became obvious that the overheads in water, heating, council tax and emptying the septic tank were not sustainable against the limited income the footballers brought in. Unfortunately some poor, ill thought out decisions had been made at the design stage years ago which prevented it from being hired to anyone else other than adult footballers. Cllr Jon Perry has now taken on the task to bring the building up to a hireable standard and it is hoped to start hiring it out again very soon.

Having to battle with Wiltshire Council every step of the way has been exhausting and unnecessary but our thanks must go to two members of Wiltshire Council, Sarah Holloway from Adoptions and Norman Burgess from Maintenance, who have gone the extra mile to help sort out some of the more long standing issues. Persimmon Homes had built two footpaths from the Cottles Barton development which should have connected with the footpath bordering the sports ground but a water course separated the pathways. Wiltshire Council had not considered that two bridges were required to make the connection and Persimmon refused to build them as they were not part of the S106 agreement. Sarah Holloway, Environmental Services Officer from Wiltshire Council found funding in record time, kept the parish council fully informed of developments and within months both bridges were installed. A great result!

Also we would like to add our thanks to Peter Dunford and acknowledge the important role that the Area Board has played in trying to resolve many of the problems we have faced. The Area Board gives a stronger voice to small parish councils like Staverton and a platform to meet and discuss common interests and problems with other parishes. Staverton Parish Council still has many long standing problems to resolve but we hope with the support of the Area Board that we can finally resolve many of them.