**Dear Standish Voice Member**

This is the May newsletter from Standish Voice, the Neighbourhood Forum, for the village.

If you a new member, firstly we would like to welcome you and ask you to read the information on Standish Voice on our website ([www.standishvoice.co.uk](http://www.standishvoice.co.uk/)).

There you will find information on what Standish Voice is, what we are trying to do to make Standish a better place, information on the house building going on across our village, minutes and previous newsletters too.

Standish Voice is a formally constituted Neighbourhood Forum, established under the Localism Act of 2011, to create a Neighbourhood Plan for our village.

People on our committee are all volunteers from all areas of Standish and are from all walks of life. We have no vested interests. Our only concern in creating a plan for the village – which has to look at all aspects of Standish until 2030 – is to cope with the huge changes coming to Standish as a result of new house-building, and to maximise opportunities.

Over the past few years, around 1,650 homes have been approved to be built in Standish, yet less than 10 % of those have been constructed to date. The rest are due to be built out within the next five to 10 years. By the time construction has finished, the population of our village will have grown by around a quarter. Our community has to be ready to meet that challenge.

Standish Voice is committed to make sure our village can cope and also to ensure money comes to Standish to make that happen.

We represent our members views and communicate, through newsletters, emails, social media, monthly meetings and at our AGM, usually held in late November. We are also accountable to Wigan Council, which designated us as a statutory Neighbourhood Forum in 2015.

We are overseen by Locality - [www.locality.org.uk](http://www.locality.org.uk/) - the national organisation which oversees Neighbourhood Planning. Neighbourhood Planning is further overseen by the Government’s Department for Communities and Local Government.

The department has an information sheet about Neighbourhood Planning here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2>

Please email us at [standishneighbourhoodforum@gmail.com](mailto:standishneighbourhoodforum@gmail.com) if you have any questions. But please remember, we are all volunteers, so if there is a delay in answering your queries, we apologise.

**THE REC**

The general consultation on the future of The Rec has now finished but we will continue to listen to the views of residents on all sides of the debate.

We recognise that residents who live near The Rec have particular concerns and we have listened and continue to listen to their views.

Our response to that consultation has been published and it is on the Home page of our website.

We take this opportunity to reaffirm that any policy on the Rec has not yet been decided. The next stage is to ask residents and organisations what they would like to see in any community park on The Rec. We want local people – including you, our members – to tell us what new facilities or additions you consider would improve The Rec.

Groups and individuals have already suggested a small football pitch, a rounders square, room for growing community fruit and veg, a rose garden, children’s play equipment and a picnic space.

The consultation will run until the end of May and we are asking that people email us at our dedicated email address for Standish Neighbourhood Plan which is [standishplanconsultation@gmail.com](mailto:standishplanconsultation@gmail.com) or leave written suggestions in our Standish Voice box in the library. A letter about this current consultation is attached.

Standish Voice committee will look at this consultation, the previous consultation, and take into consideration all the views given to us verbally and in writing in relation to The Rec and the issues concerned before deciding what any policy on the Rec will be.

Any policy on The Rec will be included in the draft Standish Neighbourhood Plan, which we are aiming to publish in summer. The draft Plan will be open for further detailed consultation.

What happens then is that a final plan would be approved, sent to Wigan Council, who will study it, ask for residents’ views again and make any changes necessary. That final plan would then go to a Government planning inspector who would look at it closely and make any revisions necessary.

The final Standish Neighbourhood Plan would then go out to a referendum of people who live in Standish along the lines of a local election, with a ‘yes/no’ question asking if the plan should be adopted.

Only if the plan was voted in would a firm proposal on The Rec and any other policies be put forward. This would probably be in the form of a planning application which would be open to debate and objection and would most probably be heard at Wigan Council’s planning committee.

So you can see that we at the early stages of this issue.

We have a statement about the poll aspect of the recent consultation, which is attached.

**CAMPAIGN GROUPS**

We are aware two campaign groups have been established in relation to The Rec.

Unfortunately, both groups have been putting out misleading information and committee members of Standish Voice have been subjected to verbal abuse at recent Standish Voice Committee meetings from some supporters of these groups.

We welcome debate particularly when this is conducted in a courteous, dignified and respectful manner.

If you have any comments about their publicity material please email us and we will give you the correct information.

Despite us having concerns about the content of information being given to the public, we are aware that a petition is being canvassed. We will certainly accept any petition and views they give us ahead of creating any policy on The Rec.

**STANDISH CHRISTMAS MARKET**

As you will know, Standish Christmas Market will take place on Saturday, December 2, and Standish Voice is organising it again with the help of volunteers from the Friends of Standish

Library and the Women’s Institute.

We promised that the Market would be bigger and better this year and we have announced that the number of indoor stalls has doubled with the use of Standish Methodist Church Hall as another venue on the day.

There are two halls there, which will both be used, and there will be room also for outside stalls on the car park, if this proves possible.

We asked for local traders to come forward first to apply for stalls and we have already had a great response.

Preparation for the event started in January as there is so much to organise and we will soon have our first in a series of meetings with Wigan Council – who helped to make last year’s event so successful.

If you would like to help in any way, have suggestions for the market, or would like a stall, please email [standishvoiceevents@gmail.com](mailto:standishvoiceevents@gmail.com)

**FACEBOOK**

For those of you who use Facebook, please be aware that our previous policy on this has changed.

Facebook is a great tool for spreading information, but it also has flaws. One of these is that the tone on the social media network can easily become coarse and aggressive if people do not show respect to other people who follow the page.

Up until, March 21, 2017, our policy was to only delete comments which included libel, swearing or racism. We will now delete comments that are abusive, overly aggressive or totally untrue. We will decide this.

A debate will be welcomed but this needs to be done in a respectful manner. Standish Voice wants people to challenge our policies on the forthcoming Neighbourhood Plan. We want a discussion to get it right and we will defend these policies where necessary.

But we will not tolerate people making untrue or derogatory about Standish Voice as a whole. We have 800 members and 15 of them are on our committee. We are all volunteers who want the best for Standish and put in lots of hard work to make the village better for everyone. We will not have those volunteers being vilified.

We are even more concerned that people are making personal attacks on our Facebook page against members of the public who use the site. This has to stop.

The Facebook group, Standish Then And Now, has always had a policy of banning people who it believes are abusive, are overly personal or are aggressive. Standish Voice will now also employ this policy.

People we believe have breached these rules will be warned and then banned if they continue. If the breach is bad enough they will be banned outright. If a comment is deleted, that is a warning.

Standish Voice has more than 4,000 people following its Facebook page. We will not let a handful of people poison it for all the others. We live in a community and we need to respect each other.

Standish Voice will also use Question And Answer sessions on Facebook to put over information, primarily about the Neighbourhood Plan, to make sure truthful information is given out.

Other websites and individuals are putting out highly misleading views and we want our Facebook followers to have the correct information.

These Q&As will be for a set time and only one comment or statement will be allowed to give time for us to respond properly. Any other comments, or comments made out of the set time, will be deleted. People will be warned if they abuse this.

Since we put in this policy, we have not needed to ban anyone from the page. People are largely complying with the new policy and we have had around 200 new followers since we adopted the new rules.

However, we have had to delete certain comments. If your comment has been deleted, please think about why we needed to do this and alter the way to comment on the page.

**PARKING**

You may have seen that the Co-op store in Standish has introduced a time limit for its parking bays.

The bays at the back of the store are in Co-op’s control. But the bays at the front are not in Co-op’s ownership. The council does not believe it is the landowner, either, so this area might not be under the control of anyone at the moment.

The Beeches has also shut off its car park to the public. This is even more frustrating as there had been an agreement between the hotel’s former owners and parents at Wood Fold School to use the car park. It seems the landowner has taken this action to prevent his land being used illegally.

You can read a recent news story on this here: <http://www.wigantoday.net/news/dismay-as-concrete-blocks-close-car-park-1-8517831>

We have been in contact with the council over the future of the building. It is not listed, but if there is a planning inquiry which would include demolishing or fundamentally altering the building, Standish Voice will be applying for listed status.

We have received advice on this that Historic England would probably only agree to look at a listing if the building was threatened. We will keep you posted on this.

**MEMBERSHIP**

It is with genuine sadness that the committee has to report to you that it has rescinded the membership of three people.

Standish Voice was established in July 2014 and became a Neighbourhood Forum in May 2015 and this is the first time we have had to do this.

We have around 800 members who all back our attempts to make Standish a better place through the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan.

A number of our members have disagreed with various actions and policies and this will happen in the future. We welcome debate and disagreement and people opposing individual ideas.

However, these three people contravened our stated rule and the committee took action under:

‘The Management Committee may refuse membership, or may terminate or suspend the membership of any member by resolution passed at a Management Committee meeting where it is considered membership would be detrimental to the objectives and activities of Standish Voice.’

We do not wish to reveal what the reasons were, as the individuals obviously cannot defend themselves here, but their personal views played no part in the decision to stop their membership. There is no appeal process.

We continue to welcome people’s views and comments as the Neighbourhood Plan develops to shape the future of our village.

**Best wishes,**

**Standish Voice Committee**

**Consultation - How would you like to see the Rec improved?**

Standish Voice – the village’s Neighbourhood Forum – is carrying out a consultation as part of the forthcoming Standish Neighbourhood Plan and we would like your views.

Standish Neighbourhood Plan will be able to shape change in our village until 2030 and will cover all aspects of life in our community. It is important that people from all areas of Standish are involved as it will be your plan for your village.

Recent consultation on the Future of the Rec on Southlands Avenue showed that an overwhelming number of people wanted the Rec to be a new community park for the whole of Standish.

This is your opportunity to have your say on how the Rec can be improved and enable it to become a popular park in the centre of Standish with facilities which can be utilised by the whole community, including nearby residents, families with children, youth organisations, shoppers and visitors to Standish centre, as well being a place with more plants and wildlife.

Do you or your organisation have an opinion as to what kind of facilities could be incorporated into such a park?

We particularly want young people to have a say in what kind of park and play facilities should be provided on The Rec, so if you represent young people, it is important to ask their opinions too.

Any policy to improve The Rec in Standish Neighbourhood Plan will go out for further consultation when the whole draft plan is published. This is due to be made public in summer.

Suggestions should come through our dedicated email address, so they can be collated effectively for consideration in Standish Neighbourhood Plan.

Please email your suggestions until the end of May to [standishplanconsultation@gmail.com.](mailto:standishplanconsultation@gmail.com)

Written suggestions, with your name address and postcode can be dropped off at the Standish Voice post-box in Standish Library.

STATEMENT ON THE REC CONSULTATION POLING

As part of the process for developing policies for the Neighbourhood Plan, Standish Voice recently undertook consultation across Standish to seek views from people living or working within the neighbourhood area as to the future of the Rec. Residents were asked to vote for one of three options, either by using a computer-based survey tool or by giving their views on printed forms in Standish Library. The voting tool chosen by Standish Voice was Survey Monkey, an online system that is recognised as being highly suitable for this type of consultation and is a system widely used across the country by similar community groups.

A handful of people opposed to change on the Rec suggested that the use of Survey Monkey was inappropriate. The reason given was that they considered it was possible to manipulate the results of the survey by casting multiple votes from one IP address (the IP address is a unique address that a computer, tablet or Smartphone uses to identify itself and communicate with others via the internet). This issue was raised part way through the consultation period at a Standish Voice committee meeting on 22nd March 2017. They also raised the concern that people who did not have access to a computer were being excluded from the consultation - this was not the case as people were able to vote and leave written opinions at the Standish Voice box in the Library, as was clearly stated in the leaflet which was delivered by Standish Voice to every house in the village.

Standish Voice monitored the voting rates and patterns throughout the three week consultation process. However, during the last few days of the consultation period, there was a significant change in the pattern of the votes being cast.

Standish Voice contacted Survey Monkey and as a result an investigation was undertaken.

Standish Voice can inform you that the change in the voting pattern was as a result of a significant increase in the numbers of votes cast in favour of Option 3 - leaving the Rec as it is. Analysis of the information found that there had been 639 votes cast from just three IP addresses. Of these 157 votes - again just for option 3 - were cast from a single public IP address and all within a 70 minute period on the 25th March 2017.

For comparison, there were only 30 votes cast from the Standish Library public IP address over the three week consultation period, and these were for a mix of options.

From this analysis and investigation we conclude that there had been a deliberate attempt to skew the voting to get the result this person/people wanted.

Standish Voice has been repeatedly asked by a small number of people, who have campaigned against any change on the Rec, for information as to which votes have been excluded from the results of the consultation and why. We were not able to release this information until the investigation had been completed.

Following advice, and in the interest of fairness, we can now announce that only 1 vote from each of the IP addresses where significant multiple voting was detected was included in the survey, and similarly from other addresses where multiple votes were cast. In addition, any votes cast from outside the UK were discounted.

The Standish Voice committee carried out this consultation in good faith and in accordance with good practice for neighbourhood planning, and is extremely disappointed that a handful of people within the village have behaved in this manner, and we are sure that the majority of our members will be equally as appalled.

Throughout this consultation we have sought people’s views, encouraged debate and welcomed challenge in order to establish what the whole community wants to see happen on the Rec, and to inform policy development of the neighbourhood plan for Standish.

We also received an envelope containing 151 paper slips for option 3, leave the Rec as it is, from residents of Southland Avenue and the adjacent estate, which were taken into account.

As well as the online poll, people emailed their views, posted their opinions on Facebook and talked to us.

We will continue to listen to views and opinions but expect people to do this in a fair and constructive manner. The next stage is to carry out consultation on what all people in the village, particularly young people, would like to see on the Rec.