

STANDISH VOICE VICE CHAIR'S REPORT 2024 – PAUL OGDEN

2024 was the 10th anniversary of Standish Voice and I too would like to thank our committee for their work and support during a busy year.

I'd also like to thank Gill who heads our committee, and has done so since we launched a decade ago – her wise leadership and tenacity has served us well.

Over that 10 years we have been involved in campaigns and projects both big and small, with the larger initiatives including Standish Neighbourhood Plan and Standish Coronavirus Help, but none have been more successful than Standish Christmas Market.

Last month's Market – our 7th – was widely regarded as the best yet, with the community, businesses and visitors helping us to put on a fantastic event.

I would like to thank our Standish Christmas Market Committee – ably led by Kathy Robertson, Standish Voice's Events Lead, with the help of Ian Trafford who excellently steers the marketing – and our volunteers. Financially, staging the Market is more costly than ever but due to our generous business sponsors, the support of our Standish councillors, and earnings on the day, we made a modest profit that will go towards this year's Market, which will be held on Saturday December 6th. Our first Market committee meeting is next month!

Here I want to thank our Treasurer Karen Bliss, who not only keeps us on a firm footing financially but processes a huge number of transactions, especially from the Christmas Market.

I would also like to thank Karen and her husband Phil for stepping up to take on the organisation of Standish's Poppy Appeal at short notice last year – and continuing to make a success of it – after the sudden and untimely passing of Chris Velone, who expertly led the Appeal for many years with his wife Tracy.

Standish Voice also helped in fundraising for the renovation of Standish Spire at St Wilfrid's, which needs around £500,000-worth of repairs. We commissioned a feature-length documentary on the history of the Grade I-listed church and almost 5,000 people have watched it on our YouTube channel, while donating money to the appeal. We also commissioned a Standish poster, which sold well over Christmas for the appeal, and which the church will be able to take profit from into the future for its upkeep.

In 2024, we were involved in many other issues, including objecting to new bus services in Standish beginning and ending their first and last services at the Police Station rather than the edge of the village at its boundary with Coppull. Thankfully, that was changed.

We applied for Council Brighter Borough funding to continue to pay for monthly free coffee mornings organised and hosted by Councillor Debbie Parkinson, who has had a very busy year this year as Mayor of Wigan.

The Greater Manchester strategic plan was adopted without any change to the Green Belt boundaries around Standish, which was a great achievement after years of lobbying. Gill has outlined that we now need to ensure this continues into Wigan's own Local Plan – we will certainly be working hard to get the best deal we possibly can for Standish.

Finally, thank you all for coming tonight and supporting us. It really does make a difference in what we try to achieve.