

1. Introduction

A Parish Plan is a document produced by a community for the community. It seeks to understand the community's present strengths and weaknesses, and then to move on from that to make proposals for maintaining the strengths and for overcoming the weaknesses. It is not a document in which experts tell us what they think is good for us.

In late 2003 Brereton and Ravenhill Parish Council decided that it would produce a Parish Plan and sought grants for this to avoid imposing a burden on council-tax payers. An open meeting was held in January 2004 and this established a Steering Committee that included both councillors and members of the general public.

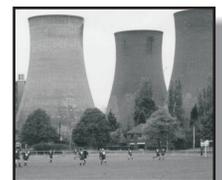
A questionnaire was produced and circulated to all households, businesses and organisations in Brereton and Ravenhill. There was a good response and this response was independently analysed. On most issues there was substantial agreement; but, perhaps inevitably, that was not so in every case. In particular, residents' views on road humps varied widely.

A main reason for carrying out the survey was to find out what problems the community suffers so that these can be faced up to and tackled. However that should not obscure the positive features of the Parish including:

- A strong sense of community with thriving voluntary organisations;
- A relatively low crime rate (a comment that must be followed immediately by a reminder of the danger of complacency);
- Part of Cannock Chase, one of Britain's most beautiful areas and one of the few places in the whole country where, with only a little effort, it is easy to see large wild animals; and
- Far more historic buildings than many other parishes.

This Plan is therefore not about saving a community 'on life support'. Rather it is about preserving and adding to what is good in a community that has much to offer and that offers a better quality of life than very many other communities.

When work started on the Parish Plan one resident asked the fair question: "Will it achieve anything?" It is now clear that it already has. Even before the publication of this final version of the Plan, its draft proposals have had to be altered several times because they kept being achieved: The Trent and Mersey Canal Conservation Area was extended at the request of the Parish Council following a proposal from the Steering Committee; phase 1 of the Parish's heritage trail, the 'Brereton and Ravenhill Way' is being developed along a two-mile route from Rugeley Town Station to the Chase; signposts are being erected in Chetwynd's Coppice showing maps of local footpaths and bridleways; local bus services have been improved; local rail services have been re-instated on the Trent Valley Line; the Parish Council is replacing stiles with kissing gates on local footpaths for benefit of the less agile. Of course, as the remaining proposals show, much remains to be done.



¹ A list of Steering Committee members is contained in Appendix 2.