

STOKE ST GREGORY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting

Held in the Williams Hall on Tuesday 24th April 2018

Present – Nick Sloan (Chairman), Graham Glead (Vice Chairman), Glynn Banks, Ann Finn, John Hembrow, David House, Peter House, Sara Sollis, Heather Venn, Phil Stone (District Councillor).

In attendance - Becky Goodchild (Clerk), and 28 members of the public.

Apologies – David Fothergill (County Councillor), Karen Upshall (The Village Stores), Nicola Berridge (The Royal Oak), Liz Moorsom (Headteacher).

Chairman's welcome – NS welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Viv Price who would be giving a presentation about setting up a social enterprise.

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 25th April 2017 – The minutes were agreed by all and signed by the Chairman.

Chairman's report – NS thanked David Fothergill and Phil Stone for attending the PC meetings so regularly and for their contributions. Cecil Boobyer was also thanked for his voluntary role as Footpaths Officer and the efforts he has made with maintenance of footpaths. NS reported on the main issues and events that have occurred throughout the year:

Change of Councillors – Bill Carpenter stood down as councillor in August and Sara Sollis was co-opted onto the council.

Forward Strategy Group – This group was first set up as the Housing Group, originally to look into the possible need for housing within the village. The group is led by GG and consists of 3 other councillors (NS, DH, and SS) and 2 non-councillors. It became clear that there were other issues than housing to also address, and the group was renamed the Forward Strategy Group (FSG), acting as an advisory panel to the Parish Council. With 3 local businesses up for sale, the primary concern for the FSG is that these businesses are supported and remain in the village. However in the worst case scenario of the shop and pubs no longer trading the FSG is looking into the alternative option of a community enterprise. A survey conducted by the PC demonstrated support for this. The project could only go ahead when the situation with the existing businesses changes. A plan is being developed in preparation should action be necessary.

Farming – While the Parish Council's view is that it should not interfere in the running of local businesses there are occasions, such as when dangers are posed, when it is necessary for them to be intervene and seek solutions e.g. dangerous driving of tractors, and erosion of edges of roads. The suggestion by Ben Hembrow of a 'farming forecast' that could for example forewarn the public of an increase in tractor movements was positively received by the PC. The forecasts will be published on the village website. The public are encouraged to visit the website for other general village information too.

Cast iron finger posts – Stoke St Gregory still has the old style cast iron finger posts but TDBC no longer have a budget to maintain them. This now falls to Parish Councils should they wish to keep them. Stoke St Gregory Parish Council decided it would take on the cost of maintenance and the arms are currently in the process of being replaced/painted.

Viv Price (Regional Advisor to the Plunkett Foundation) – 'The Challenges and rewards of setting up a social enterprise' – As well as being an advisor to the Plunkett Foundation,

Viv has had first hand experience in that she was involved in the setting up the community shop in Otterton. The shop has been trading for 3 years now. The Plunkett Foundation was founded in 1919 and supports the creation of community owned co-operatives. There are now 46 co-operative pubs in this country with 180 further groups in the process of making plans to set one up. Viv described the start up costs and how such ventures can be financed e.g. community shares, grants, loans and fund raising. Viv listed the many uses that a community shop/pub could have (some of which can generate income), such as use by local groups, councillor surgeries, low cost community lunches, book clubs, after school clubs, post office, community events. As well as being a base to provide services to the community, such community ventures can help with social isolation and loneliness, improving healthcare and well-being, providing opportunities for unemployed people to volunteer and gain work experience, and even to gain hospitality qualifications. Following the presentation Viv answered questions from the audience:

What is the general time frame in setting up? - 18 months to 2 years once a property is found.
Where can grants/loans be obtained? - The Plunkett Foundation can provide up to £3000.
MTAP (More Than a Pub) offers 50% loan and 50% grant.

Village Hall report – GG reported on events of the successful past year, including the use of the hall by several new groups, the introduction of a new online booking system, installation of a flag pole, and internet enabled temperature controls. GG gave an update on the changes to the management group and thanked those involved. Financially the hall remains in good health as a result of good use by the community and from external bookings. GG thanked the many people who have contributed to the success of the hall during the past year.

Allotments Association report – GG presented the first annual report of the Allotments Association. A total of 21 plots were established and all taken up. Considering the late start to the season and unusually hot weather a successful first season was had, with a produce stall held at the Village Fete. Thanks were given to Peter House and Glynn Banks for the temporary supply of water, to Robin Ferrett for management of the site and equipment, and to Transition Athelney for supplying hedging. The association is in good financial health due to donations and awards, and options for a permanent water supply are being considered.

Playing field report – Neil Sollis has recently taken on the role of Chairman. Neil advised that the 2nd phase of the playground equipment installation has been completed. Several successful events have taken place on the field this past year including the bonfire, Village Fete, football and netball tournament, and a new event – the African Somerset Festival. Plans for a new pavilion have come to a halt due to lack of funding. Funding is also being sought to resurface the tennis courts.

Headteacher's report – The head teacher was unable to attend.

Reports from village organisations - Written reports from other village organisations were made available in the hall for people to read.

Any other matters for discussion – A member of the public raised the issue of erosion of roadside verges. NS advised Highways are not responsible for filling in worn verges. To be discussed further at a Parish Council meeting to find a solution.

NS thanked the other Parish Councillors for all their work this past year and thanked everyone for attending this meeting.

Wine and chat completed the meeting which closed at 9.40 pm.