

# Stoke Fleming Parish Council

## Annual Parish Meeting

4<sup>th</sup> May 2022

Ron Harris Room, Stoke Fleming Village Hall at 7pm

### MINUTES

The following Parish Councillors were present:

**Cllr Struan Coupar (Chair)**

**Cllr David Harris (Vice-Chair)**

**Cllr Marion Holmes**

**Cllr Phil Elliott**

**Cllr John Belli**

**Cllr Ruth Adams**

**Cllr Tim Moseley**

**Cllr Jay Floyd**

County Cllr Julian Brazil, District Cllr Helen Reeve, Parish Clerk

1. Apologies for Absence: Rev. Alison Short, Sue Tweed, Paul Girardot.
2. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2021 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.
3. Matters Arising. None.
4. Chairman's Report.

#### **Neighbourhood Plan Progress**

As 2021 began residents were able to enjoy the improvements that had been made to the Bird Walk during December, a Neighbourhood Plan project organised and carried out by the Parish Council at a cost approaching £40,000. We were also able to appreciate the new Wood's Way footpath from Deer Park towards Swannaton, another of the policies within the Plan. During the course of 2021 the problem of speeding within the village was addressed by the introduction of a vehicle-activated speed limit sign and work began on bringing to fruition another of the key policies within the Neighbourhood Plan – a new car park at Mill Lane.

That proposal was supported by 91% of those who voted on it during the course of the extensive Choices for Change consultation that informed the Council of the views of parishioners on a range of issues, establishing what people did or did not want to see happen in Stoke Fleming over the coming years. Negotiations aimed at securing the freehold to the proposed site and the funding required to make the car park a reality continued throughout 2021 and has now been agreed. The need for a car park was first identified in 2006, the main objective being to provide parking for 55 properties in that area which lacked any provision. Planning permission was obtained in 2010 but allowed to lapse. We have been advised that reviving it should not be a problem.

A total of £55,000 has now been secured with which to create the car park and an adjoining Play Area, as well as a new biodiversity wildlife-friendly area at the Venn Lane end of the Recreation Ground.

Also in relation to policies within the Plan, we have recently raised, with the support of County Councillor Julian Brazil, the possibility of creating a "virtual pavement" from Bidders down to the post office. We have also asked that new signage be provided at the junction of Venn Lane with the A3122, directing drivers towards the mini roundabout at the top of College Way, and then along the A379 instead of using Venn Lane.

### **Queen's Platinum Jubilee**

Celebration of the Queen's 70 years on the throne is now less than a month away and the programme of events planned for the weekend of June 2 -5 has been published. Cllr Marion Holmes has headed the planning for the occasion, supported by a range of parish organisations, businesses and other councillors. Lighting along the Bird Walk is under consideration, controlled by infra-red motion detectors. Together with the new biodiversity area and other planting a new **Platinum Jubilee Way** will run from Rectory Lane to the Village Hall.

The programme of events starts with the **ringing of the church bells** from 19.52 to 20.22 on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> June, with a beacon being lit in the field opposite the bowls club at 9.15 and St Peter's church floodlit from then until 23.00. On Friday there will be a **Community Thanksgiving Service** followed by a tea party at the Green Dragon.

On Saturday events reach their peak with the **Party in the Park** from 18.00 to 23.00, with hog roast, a food truck and full bar, and culminate on Sunday with a bring-your-own **1950's Picnic in the Park** from 14.00 to 18.00, with music, dancing and other attractions. Throughout those two days coverage of Jubilee events in London and around the country will be screened live.

### **First Arrivals at Little Cotton**

The first 17 households have taken up residence at Little Cotton on the northern edge of our parish. That will grow to 47 by June and 63 by July. Half of these will be affordable homes, for rental or shared ownership.

The new arrivals received a welcome pack with a letter encouraging them to take advantage of the facilities and activities the parish has to offer, together with a copy of the current issue of the Stoke Fleming Magazine and the Platinum Jubilee programme of events.

The Council has built and maintains a good working relationship with the developers at Little Cotton and has been able, among other things, to influence the design of the buildings that will be visible from the village and from Venn Lane, and the way in which the site will be landscaped, to create a soft edge between it and the country areas. The homes in those areas will not be like the ones in the main part of the development but will have a lower profile, use finishes that include timber, brick, stone and hanging tiles and sit at varying angles to each other rather than be linear in layout. We have asked that semi-mature trees be introduced along the western and southern fringes of the development from the outset.

The families living at Little Cotton, more than 400 in total will be Stoke Fleming parishioners, entitled to vote in our elections and to the support and services provided elsewhere by the Parish Council. We wish them to feel welcome.

A copy of the letter the first arrivals received is attached as an appendix to the report. See Appendix Welcome Letter.

### **Fibre Broadband for Rural Areas**

The Council has maintained close contact with Airband, the company appointed to bring full-fibre broadband to the areas not included in the network installed by Gigaclear. Their aim is to complete the work by the end of June.

### **Recycling and Waste Collection**

The new recycling system was introduced in April 2021, and as all know only too well there have been various problems, including the suspension of garden waste collections over the winter. We have reported to the district council problems that have been drawn to our attention and we are extremely grateful to our district councillor Helen Reeve for all she has done to help alleviate the problems.

### **Village Stream blockage**

The Council, and particularly Cllr Phil Elliott, has been working to resolve the issue of the blockage of the stream that runs under the A379 in the heart of the village by the Shute. South West Water agreed to fund the cost of an underground survey. That has now been carried out and details of the cause and remedy are awaited.

### **Play Area Repairs**

Following the failure of one of the posts in the “Elves House” climbing frame a survey revealed that all the other posts, fitted more than 20 years ago, had deteriorated and will have to be renewed. The repairs will involve fitting metal shoes to prevent a recurrence. The supplier is awaiting delivery of these from the European supplier. The cost of repairs will be £4,500.

### **School Road and Deer Park Developments**

Work on the development at School Road came to a halt as the Covid outbreak began and the original developer eventually pulled out, having sold the land to Strongvox Ltd, who have with the Council’s help been working to secure planning consent for an amended proposal. That approval is now imminent and the Parish Council expects to sign the Section 106 agreement this week. The Company is eager to start work without delay.

The redevelopment of the Deer Park Inn site stopped in April 2021 and there has been no on-site presence since then. Concerns over lack of security and risks of accident and injury have been reported regularly to the planning authority. The developer, not contactable for many months, is apparently in receivership and the bank that is involved in providing finance has appointed a security company to fit new security fencing and cctv. Cllr Tim Moseley is continuing to monitor the situation.

### **Sustainable Stoke Fleming**

The Parish Council took a lead in the formation of Sustainable Stoke Fleming as a community group and councillors John Belli and Tim Moseley continue to attend meetings.

### **Parish Precept**

The annual precept for 2022-23 was increased to £39.95 from £37.50 to take account of rising inflation and one-off costs in respect of the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee. That is equivalent to 77p per week per household. The precept in local parishes for 2021-22 was:

Dartmouth	£183.53
Kingswear	£56.30
Slapton	£55.45
Strete	£45.78
Blackawton	£42.96
Stokenham	£41.81
Stoke Fleming	£37.50

There is one vacancy in the parish council. Sharon Whelon has recently taken over the role of parish clerk.

Struan Coupar  
May 2, 2022

5. Financial Statement. See Appendix A. These were signed by Chairman.

As clerk I took over just over a month ago. You will find attached the annual statement of accounts for 2021-22. There was a surplus of income over expenditure of £7,661.66. Expenditure was not as expected due to changes and vacancies of the clerk, unfortunately the backlog of payments were delayed in the financial year. This means that these transactions were carried over to 2022-23 and it is expected expenditure will show as above the budget for 2022-23 to balance this anomaly out.

A donation of £2,500 was received for the Birdwalk from the Stoke Lodge Hotel.

Due to lockdown the Amenity & Recreation contractors and room hire costs were lower than the budget. A more detailed audit meant that the auditors' fee was higher and this is expected to be an ongoing cost as the council grows with the population.

The closing balance at the end of the financial year (31/3/22) stood at £16,828.33.

Sharon A Whelon

6. County Councillor's Report

It's been another strange year but it's good to be meeting face to face again. A massive thank you to the Parish Council, community groups and local parishioners who have carried us through the pandemic. Without the help and support from the local community things could have been a lot worse.

The County has increased council tax by 3%. With the lack of support from central government there was little choice. The government had choices but chose to see council tax rises – hardly levelling up!

There will be extra spending on children's and adult's services which is welcome. However, this extra funding is from reserves and therefore a one off. Worrying times.

Children's services still have many improvements to make. This is very disappointing as this has been the case for over 10 years. There is a new head of children's services, and I am confident, with the right support, she will bring about the changes required.

The County has changed its policy on 20-mph zones and Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS.) Local communities can now ask for these without having to qualify through various strict criteria. (With a 20-mph limit already, this does not affect Stoke Fleming so much.)

I've been very happy to support the Cricket Club and the Loam Rangers with my locality budget.

Julian Brazil

6. District Councillor's Report

The District Council carried on holding meetings on line with but Full Council meetings being held at Tavistock. Now Follaton house has since revamped it's Chambers to be able to be Covid friendly but just as importantly up to date for streaming. So we are back at Follaton and building up on having more meetings face to face.

The financial team continue to work extremely hard keeping the council finance stable and many Covid grants have continued to be paid out which did cause extra workload.

Six extra locality officers were taken on in time for summer 2021 helping to keep an eye on our beaches, towns, car parks, dog and anti-social behaviour.

Four extra planning officers were appointed to hopefully help with demand and enforcements have had a shake up and we are seeing improvements there.

As well as an excellent finance team at South Hams we also have an excellent housing team which work incredibly hard and do help many residents in need, this also includes those residents needing assistance in their homes with the likes of stair lifts etc. A lot of help is provided which we don't always think about.

Waste has been a problem causing ward members grief trying to help. Although the grey bins and recycling has settled unfortunately brown bins are being missed where the council apologizes.

Climate change and biodiversity has its own officer helping to research ideas and hold meetings. A good fund has been put aside to assist with projects.

There is also an officer dealing with the internet coverage in the South Hams working with residents and Air Band.

Our Leisure Centres work hard as they try to reinstall their usage after coping with Covid and talks are in hand to out solar panels on their roofs.

A housing crisis was declared in the South Hams and schemes have been put in place from helping with deposits for those in social housing to buy, encouraging down sizing and finding ways to build more affordable homes and to tackling second homes. In the last 12 months lots has been put in place so hopefully this plus doing more will help. Air B & B continues to be a problem and it would be good to find a way to encourage landlords to go back to long lets.

Consultation has been in place ready for when the JLP is updated. Thinking climate change and biodiversity when deciding on developments etc.

Lastly the council welcomes input from town and parish councils and all residents of the South Hams. So when any consultations come out it really is your chance to comment

Annual Report – Cllr H Reeve

The Chairman thanked Cllr Brazil and Cllr Reeve who are both active and supportive to parish council.

#### 7. Parish Organisations Reports:

Stoke Fleming Parish Church

#### **REPORT FROM REV ALISON SHAW, RECTOR OF ST. PETER'S CHURCH**

It is a pleasure to look backwards and forwards in a constructive and optimistic way, and it is a great joy on this occasion to be able to look back at a year which has seen many positive things happening in our church, despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. Even though it has included a period when we weren't able to meet together properly, the people who make up God's church at St Peter's have carried on faithfully. Embracing the demands of new technology, sharing in online and offline services, only the most unobservant would dare to suggest we have stood still or trod water. Our lovely baby and toddler group 'Little Stars' has added a very special touch, and we love the sounds and sights of the little ones as they play. A

Although things were very different in 2021 and there was a sense of loss personally and corporately in so many ways, there has also been much to celebrate and give thanks for. I hope you, as our parishioners and Parish Council will accept this as a huge thank you to all those who

have played any part in the past year in getting things done, keeping us all going, and keeping us on the right path as a parish with such support, enthusiasm and dedication. I wouldn't mind betting that when we first went into lockdown most of us had no idea of how long this pandemic would last and the impact it would have on us all. However, whilst we left our buildings, God didn't leave the church and has continued to work in and through us by His Holy Spirit. The ways in which churches express themselves and their faith may change to meet the differing needs of society, but at our heart is a faith with Jesus Christ as the one who inspires, encourages, and enables. Every church member is called to be a part of the Church's mission and while not all in the congregation might feel able to go out and spread the word, there are plenty of tasks to be done that can help.

Every activity needs fresh blood and ideas and I would ask every person in this village to think (and if you do) to pray, about what you might do to help.

I am immensely heartened by people who have taken on informal roles in the life of your parish church since the last Annual Parish meeting and there's still room for more good hearted folk to get involved ! Good stewardship of our and God's resources is not so much what we are good at but how willing we are to be committed. John Milton dictated poetry when he was blind; Beethoven was deaf when he composed many of his greatest works; Robert Louis Stevenson was in ill health most of his life and yet wrote lasting literature. It is said of D L Moody, the evangelist of the 19th Century, that he had no idea that he himself could teach but he devoted to God his one talent of being able to drum up recruits. Look at the Psalmist David, Martin Luther, William Booth, people who did what they could and were then led further by God. Our vision as a church must be to continue reaching out to this community we serve, to be better at sharing our faith and our life, and to make the most of our building - and our lovely churchyard - so that we can bring the abundance of God's life to those amongst whom we live and work. In this way we play our part in our church's history as witnesses to God's presence and activity in this place.

I believe that our willingness to rise to the challenges of life in a pandemic has been the gift of our faithful and creative God. It has not been easy, and it isn't quite over yet, but we go forward with courage and hope, praying that we will continue to know and enact God's vision for his people, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and in the unquenchable light of Christ. Every blessing. Revd Alison

(presented at the Parish Annual Meeting by Mr Peter Barker)

### **Stoke Fleming Primary School** See Appendix B

#### Public Question time

A parishioner asked that long-term plan existed for the toilets on School Road, and was advised that these are likely to be removed and potentially replaced by a new block at the proposed car park site.

A parishioner asked about social housing at Little Cotton and School Road, and said that local people could not afford the kind of rents being asked. The Chairman said that six of the 20 units at School Road would be "affordable" and a total of 83 at Little Cotton. These will be partly for rental and partly for shared ownership. The Parish Council had arranged a meeting with the officer at SHDC responsible for the Local Lettings Policy and the officer had pointed out that although central government funds were available for 'affordable' housing with 25% discount on market rates. Central funding for "social" housing, with a 40% discount, has not been

available for some time but a limited amount is due to be made available this financial year, and that may grow in the future.

The Council said it will establish what covenants apply to affordable homes to prevent them being re-let as second homes. Application of government guidelines on housing are a matter for the District Council as the planning authority, not the Parish Council.

A question was asked about the new medical centre at Little Cotton, and when it would be completed. The Chairman pointed out that the site of the new facility is not within Stoke Fleming parish, though close to it. The location is within the park-and-ride and construction is well advance.

A proposal was made to thank the parish council. There was a round of applause. The Chairman added that the council tried its best to influence and deliver results, although parish councils have limited powers of their own.