

The MINUTES of the Stoughton Parish Annual meeting held on Tuesday 16th May 2023 at 7.00pm at Stoughton Village Hall

Present: Cllr Bob Battey (BB) (Chair)
Cllr Tom Richardson (TR) (Vice Chair)
Cllr Tracey Mee (TM)
Cllr June Sparrow (JS)
Cllr Kirsty Volpe (KV)
Cllr Peter Elliott (PE)
Clerk Victoria Webster (VW)

BB welcomed KV to the Parish Council and thanked the other Councillors for volunteering again and looks forward to working with everyone.

1. Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

2. Approve the Minutes of the Previous Meeting 10th May 2022

The minutes were approved by all councillors.

3. Chairmans Report

When the daffodils where out it was a pleasure to go through the village to see they went all the way to the top of the village. Congratulations to all who planted them.

Overall, it has not been an easy year. The church wall has been repaired, however, because some of the wrong material was used the workman had to come back to redo the gaps between the stones.

We have seen a further decline in the support we should be getting from the County Council and the District Council. They are both underfunded and understaffed. Workman doing work for the County Council do not do it properly. They took out some of our speed humps and road signs and dispute our requests and they have not yet been replaced. They were here today doing some repairs. We have yet to see the results.

The Planning Department at the District Council, due to the lack of staff, have cancelled enforcement orders and we have had to attend planning meetings to object to the planning applications submitted. The officers take a long time to respond to our correspondence, indeed on two occasions they have sent a response at 4 o'clock by email before our Parish meeting at 7pm! We have found it necessary to inform our County and District Councillors of the problems. They have pleasingly attended some of our meetings and taken up our concerns with the relevant officers. This is much appreciated. Senior staff of the District Council do not appear to be sufficiently involved in monitoring the effectiveness of staff and pass matters to more junior staff when they should be dealing with it. This happened with a building in the village when a senior staff member, who said she would visit sent a junior to inspect it. This was due to the owner still doing nothing to put the building in order. Our concerns have now been passed to the Environment Department of Harborough District Council. Despite our contacts with them by email, we have received no response as yet.

The Co-op has been selling off plots of land. Purchasers have been buying them without checking with Harborough District Council before hand if the land can be built on. When they find it cannot be built on the land is sold again for a higher price, more profit for the auctioneers. The land is yet to be built on, despite the auctioneers showing pictures of houses on the sites as a suggestion as to what the land could be used for which is disgusting!

Despite all the problems we face, due to the excellent efforts of our Councillors we have managed to keep the identity of our unique village and we will continue to do so. I am most thankful for all the excellent support of our Councillors and the fact we still have 5 Councillors with the election of our new Councillor, Kirsty.

PE added that two new staff have now been recruited in the Planning Department on a part time basis. David Atkinson is due to be on leave for 3 months and Adrian Eastwood will be covering this period of time.

4. Financial Report

	Current Account
Opening Balance	£9,398.37
Receipts	£10,760.64
Expenditure	£11,118.16
Closing Balance	£9,040.85

Expenditure to note:

- Play area maintenance £224.52
- Queens jubilee contributions £246.61
- A new laptop was purchased for the Clerk

Receipts include:

- Queens jubilee grant £250
- VAT refund for 2021-2022 £863.14

5. District Councillor Report

PE started his report by thanking all living in Stoughton who voted the Councillors back in office as Ward Councillors to carry on the work they began.

Thurnby and Houghton has changed a lot over the last few years, Harborough District Council has been aligned with Lincolnshire and Rutland. There has been considerable housing development, in both Thurnby and Houghton, whilst Stoughton has managed to keep clear. Two years ago, the Government asked for landowners to put forward land that could be used for development under the Sheila project. So many farmers and landowners put land forward which resulted in developments being submitted on the A47 and A6. Luckily Harborough District Council won't require the amount of land offered.

Work has now started on the new Local Plan to take the district up until 2036 which will show future development.

PE is keen to pursue Harborough District Council on their support levels as currently Harborough District Council leave parish councils to invest in their local area themselves and this can be difficult for smaller parishes, some villages get large sums of S1.06 funds.

Simon Gaulton is keen to see tougher rules against water companies putting sewerage in local rivers and is looking at what can be done to prevent this from happening.

6. Community Gardens Report

Stoughton Community Gardens Society is a virtually autonomous group of residents who grow crops on land allocated and in possession of Stoughton Parish Council. The land is made available to all residents of Stoughton, but they are not charged by the Parish Council nor does the agreement fall under the Allotments Acts.

Currently there are 17 individuals/families who are active members. Of a possible 20 plots only 2 half-plots are currently vacant creating the highest level of occupancy in the 12 years since this project began. This winter two new families have joined as plot holders.

The past 12 months have been a challenging time. 2022 was a hot, dry Summer followed by a variable Winter with three distinct cold snaps. Spring 2023 has been long, drawn out, wet and cold and the current weather is probably three weeks behind what might be expected. Nevertheless, there is currently much activity and optimism for the coming growing season.

Members meet their own ongoing running costs by way of subscriptions. All monies are held in a ring-fenced account by Stoughton parish Council. The Society is hugely grateful to our Parish Clerk for receiving, administering, and recording these monies. The Society is currently over £800 in the black so that the finances may be considered to be in good health.

The Annual Meeting of the Society was held on 15th May 2023 (one day before this report) and written minutes of that meeting will be forwarded to the Clerk in the very near future. Matters considered were future plans, finances and a possible social event to take place this Summer.

The Society remains grateful to the Parish Council for the provision of this land and the support they have received from the Council since its inception in 2011.

BB thanked to TR and commented on how great the area looks and feels it was well worth getting the land for this purpose.

7. Question Time

BB raised a query received from a parishioner in relation to additional signs for closing the gate, no parking, and dogs on leads in and around the playground. TM responded that she already has some of the signs required and those signs we don't have can be purchased quite reasonable. TM proposed and KV seconded. TM will proceed with putting these up. All agreed. TM to inform the parishioner.

8. Date of Next Meeting

11th July 2023.

Meeting Closed at .7.21pm