



The MINUTES of the Stoughton Parish Annual meeting held on Tuesday 7th May 2024 at 7.00pm at Stoughton Village Hall

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

Good evening to all and welcome Cllr Peter Elliott.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr June Sparrow (JS).

2. Approve the Minutes of the Previous Meeting 16th May 2023

The minutes were approved by all councillors and the minutes were signed.

3. Chairmans Report

When looking at last years report I ask myself what has improved? The answer is nothing. We see a further deterioration in the support we should be getting from our Government, our Local Council, and the Police Commissioner.

The Government has for years never implemented the legislation it promised to give more powers to Parish Councils for planning. This is despite frequent requests to our MP to look into this matter for us. Our MP has held frequent meetings with Chairs of Parish Councils in her constituency and has tried to bring about improvements but with little progress, if any, has been made by our Local Councils.

The County Council has ignored frequent requests to put signs on Thurnby Lane warning of the dangerous bends on the road with a 60mph limit. We have recorded at least 15 incidents and yet the police are only aware of 2!!

When the County Council did some road repairs, they took out one speed hump in the village and despite frequent requests they have never replaced it. They gave planning permission for a drainage ditch to be filled up in the Lane with the result of homes and gardens now flood when we have heavy rain. Our District Council has let a grade 2 listed house deteriorate despite saying they have visited twice last year but has not send us any report on the visit. The County Council has responded to our requests to investigate where a local resident garden has been used for the tipping of rubbish. Initially they passed the matter over to the apprentice to investigate the situation! They now seem to be not dealing with the matter at all!

We cannot meet officer from the District Council to discuss matters of concern due to staff shortages and working from home. There is a duty planning officer on daily duty to deal with urgent matters e.g. some one chopping a tree down with out permission. The contacts we used to have with our electing Councillors are now not as frequent s they need to be. Indeed, we were informed by a Councillor that we could complain to the Ombudsman. We did so and the outcome was only member of the public would complain!

You will see in the minutes of this meeting we also have many concerns that are not being addressed. Times are really bad, but we will continue to do the best for all living in our lovely village. I am most grateful to all our Councillors on our Parish Council for their efforts to look after our village.

4. Financial Report

	Current Account
Opening Balance	£9,261.36
Receipts	£12,321.36
Expenditure	£10,847.55
Closing Balance	£10,735.17

Expenditure to note:

- The village benches were repaired and repainted £465.00
- The platform was replaced on the play equipment £269.67
- Trimming back of hedge between play area and residents £360.00

Receipts include:

- VAT refund for 2021-2022 £888.91

5. District Councillor Report

One of the most important pieces of work Harborough District Council is working on at the moment is the new Local Plan which will determine how many and where new homes, schools and employment areas are to be built. This is necessary as the majority of Local Plans begin to be watered down after their first 5 years of being in place due to changes in planning laws and other legislation. The present Harborough plan runs from 2011 to 2030, so a new local plan needs to be put in place as soon as possible.

The new plan began with what is known as a call for sites or SHELAA Strategic Housing and Economic land availability assessment to give it it's proper name. This is where landowners who wish to put all or part of their land forward for Development were invited to do so. 244 sites were initially put forward, with around 100 further sites being put forward in a final call for sites in early 2024.

A public consultation ran from the 16th of February to 27th of February 2024. With 3,500 people around the district completing the online consultation document, at the same time a number of public drop-in sessions were held around the district.

The planning officers at Harborough are now examining the sites put forward together with the consultation documents. A number of the sites assessed so far have been thrown out as not being suitable for development for one reason or another.

Many councils around the country are carrying out Local Plans at the moment, which will all have to be read and signed off by a government inspector, which we are told could take up until 2028 to be completed.

This is another reason why Harborough must get its Local Plan completed and into the government inspector as soon as possible. If it were 2028 before our plan was agreed and signed off by the government inspector, our present plan would be so weak that it would be difficult to stop developers pushing through planning applications on unsuitable sites. To this end HDC has taken on Three new planning officers to cope with the extra work.

Another potential problem could be the delays of the Scraftoft North and Lutterworth developments both having problems in moving forward. If these developments don't receive planning permission before the new plan is signed off these developments would have to be incorporated into the new local plan.

Harborough Council engaged a new Chief Executive at the end of last year, John Richardson, who was chosen from 6 candidates. John who worked at Blaby District council for a number of years before coming to Harborough, hopes to create a better working relationship with the Parish councils around the district. With this in mind the council is at the moment advertising for the post of Parish liaison officer to work closely with the parishes.

This year two more of the giant warehouses at Magna Park came on line giving the council an extra 1million pounds in business rates. The coalition leadership has decided to split the 1 million pounds between all of the Towns and parishes in the district. There will also be a £500 grant to parishes for environment projects.

Harborough and Lutterworth Leisure Centre's, both of which had been allowed to become very run down after Covid, have now had a £5.9 million pound contract awarded to them for refurbishment plus a contract to S L M sports to run the Leisure Centres for the next 15 years.

6. Community Gardens Report

The idea of Community Gardens was conceived following the award of Section 106 monies to the village after the decision to allow the construction of the Old Charity Farm housing which was completed in 1997.

The first meeting of prospective gardeners took place in December 2009 and the plots were measured out and dug in Autumn 2010. This means we are now embarking on our 14th growing season.

The land is tenanted by Stoughton Parish Council on a long lease and the capital structure (hedge, fence, shed, water supply and gate) were funded by the parish Council as part of the S.106 monies.

Nineteen full plots, if unoccupied are available to anyone resident in Stoughton. The Parish Council charges no rent, but plot holders pay a small annual charge to the society to fund water, petrol for mowing and any other needs or activities as agreed by the members. All monies are held, but not controlled in any way by the Parish Council which simply acts as a banker. In this way the project does not fall under the Allotments Act, nor may the parish Council be seen as sub-letting.

In this last year we have gained two new members, and one long standing gardener has withdrawn. There are currently 17 individuals/families represented and there is only capacity for two half-plots which are currently grassed down.

Most years an Open Afternoon is held to display our crops and to promote the fellowship, with all proceeds being donated to local charities.

An AGM will be held on Monday 13th May when plans will be agreed for the coming year.

This year's expenditure slightly exceeded income, but funds remain adequate.

After a long, very wet, and occasionally cold winter, growing activity is only just starting, as the earth remains unseasonably cold and wet which has delayed seed sowing.

I'm sure the gardeners appreciate the provision of these plots to enjoy what is a healthy, active, and extremely social pastime.

They are also grateful to Toni Evans in her role as Secretary, in which she liaises with Victoria in the Society's administration.

7. Date of Next Meeting

25th June 2024.

Meeting Closed at 7.24pm.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____