

Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council

Annual Meeting of the Parish held in The Village Hub, Winterbourne Stoke, on Monday 20th May 2024 at 6:30 pm

In Attendance: Chair: P Smith
Parishioners: 9
Others: Rev. Jonathan Plows (Guest)

1	Opening Statement from the Chairman
	<p>The Local Government Act states that every parish must hold a Parish Meeting once a year. The meeting is to be held between 1 March and 1 June. The chair of the Parish Council is to preside if available. There is a standard agenda: a report of business over the last 12 months; a statement by voluntary organisations; and, finally, an opportunity for parishioners to make statements on relevant matters</p>
2	Agenda Item 1: Parish Council Chairman's Report
	<p>Routine business has continued as usual. The main element of this is the maintenance and inspection regime for the playpark, and the grounds maintenance for the playpark and the verges on the A 303 for which the parish council is responsible. In addition, the parish council has considered a number of planning applications. However, the grounds on which the council is permitted to comment are very limited, and the council's comments only count the same as those of one parishioner. The most important work is the setting of the financial statement and the setting of the precept, which has been maintained at £9,090.</p> <p>The coronation for King Charles III and Queen Camilla to place on 6 May 2023 and the occasion was marked by replacing the old village bench with a new commemorative oak seat. My thanks to Chris Brain, Jeff Thomas and to Rob Turner for their help.</p> <p>In September there was a large attendance at the Parish Meeting as a number of parishioners wanted to give their views on the fence erected by Druids Lodge across the water meadows. The issues were discussed then so with not be rehearsed here. Suffice to say that walkers are now safe from cattle grazing in the field. A resulting issue has been the amount of dog mess on the path, but this has been addressed and the situation is much improved. The continued cooperation of dog owners is welcome.</p>

Also at that meeting our long-term parish clerk, Jim Carr, resigned. We should be grateful to Jim for his contribution to the village over many years. The Chairman offered his personal thanks. This led to a reorganisation of the parish council. Andy Shuttleworth took the role of temporary unpaid clerk; Tony Pyewell took the role of temporary finance officer (usually undertaken by the Clerk); and Peter Smith was elected as Chairman. Also Tracy Ewart and Lannie Parkin were co-opted as Councillors. The Chairman expressed his gratitude to all of them for their contribution to the village. Ian Rennie was also thanked for conducting the monthly inspections of the defibrillator that is sited at the Bell. The Council has examined all the options for recruiting a new Parish Clerk. Sadly there were no volunteers from within the parish, so an advertisement was placed with the Wiltshire Association of Local Councils. *(Afternote: there have been three applicants, but one withdrew and, to date, a second has not responded to an invitation to interview. It is planned to interview the remaining candidate shortly.)*

Throughout the year there have been updates on the A303 scheme. Parishioners will be aware of various legal challenges that have delayed the start of the preliminary work. There was a public meeting in Shrewton on 29 April to update on progress. The most intrusive of this work is the closure of the A360 from April to July in order to lay electricity cables to the proposed construction site near Longbarrow roundabout. The main impact locally has been an increase in traffic on the B3083 Berwick Road. Concerns have been raised many times over the lack of a footpath on the Berwick Road, and fast moving traffic on the blind bend where the footpath joins the road.

For a number of years Andy Shuttleworth has represented the village on the Local Highway and Footpath Improvement Group. He has made the case for improved road marking and reduced speed limits. The work by LHFIG has persuaded Wiltshire Council that the methodology used by their contractors to monitor traffic speed was flawed. As a result there is now a trial near Netheravon to review the methodology. This may have benefits to us locally.

Finally, Wiltshire Council and Wessex Rivers Trust have joined forces to safeguard the water quality of the Hampshire Avon catchment, by launching a groundbreaking initiative aimed at upgrading septic tanks. This initiative seeks to reduce nutrient-rich wastewater entering watercourses and, in turn, enhance the health of our aquatic ecosystems.

Wiltshire Council is offering fully funded grants to homeowners in specified areas of the Upper Avon catchment, including Winterbourne Stoke because the River Till is a tributary that leads via the River Wylde into the Avon at Salisbury, to upgrade their sewage systems. The initiative promotes the replacement of septic tanks with more efficient package treatment plants, tailored to each property's needs. A new environmental law mandates the upgrade of old septic tanks that discharge near surface water. It is therefore, in parishioners interests to take advantage of this grant to upgrade their septic tank, before being obliged to do so by the new legislation. Monitoring of this project will continue through 2024 and 2025.

3 Agenda Item 2. Voluntary Groups.

The Village Preservation Society (VPS): David Connolly explained that the 5 committee members conducted a village survey that received 30 responses; or about 17% of the adult population. Of those, 27% were satisfied or very satisfied with village life, but 23% were not satisfied. Issues that were raised in the survey included:

Lack of a Village Hall;

Upkeep of pavements;

Lack of a bus shelter on the north side of the A303;

Improvements to the street scene, including replacement planters.

Wheelchair access to the pedestrian crossing;

The lack of a bin on the bus shelter;

Issues regarding the A303 scheme, including benefits that may be accrued and noise mitigation.

Respect for the 20 mph speed limit.

The VPS are planning a village tidy-up day. Consideration should be given to more dog bins in the village. It was explained that Wiltshire Council will not empty any additional bins in the village.

The VPS is now known as the Community and Events Group.

St Peter's Church: Rev Jonathan Plows gave a report on behalf of the Churchwarden.

The Church has a Holy Communion service on the last Sunday of the month. There was no specific Christmas, Easter or Harvest service in 2023. In December, the Carols through the Village event was a great success with some 50 people attending, starting at the Church and ending up in The Bell pub.

There are very few church attendees from Winterbourne Stoke, the majority of the congregation coming from Great Wishford, Stapleford and Berwick St James. Rev Plows stated that the church cannot continue if villagers do not support it. He has reported to the Bishop that 5 of the 9 churches of which he is responsible should close. (Later in the meeting he confirmed that St Peter's is one of those that should close).

A faculty for repairing the roof is awaited.

The area round the entrance to the Church has been maintained. The remainder has been left as there are very few volunteers who are prepared to give up their time to help.

The administration and organisation of the Church has been challenging. Cleaners have been employed as there are no volunteers. Gratitude was expressed to Heather Compton who unlocks and locks the Church every day. Comments in the Visitors' Book state that visitors are delighted to find the church open.

The financial position of the church remains precarious. A small monthly sum is paid to the Diocese towards the share contribution. Bookkeeping services are paid for as there is no church Treasurer.

	<p>The Rector responded to points from the village survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All responses are welcome and useful; • St Peter’s is unlocked and available everyday; • The vast majority of responses recognised the value of the church as a community asset, and wished for the church to remain open rather than be made redundant. This view needs testing in relation to the sustainable funding of and active support for services in the church. It is a case of lose it or lose it. If the church were to close, this would not affect access to family graves in the churchyard. • Before the advent of village halls, the church was the “village hub” The Easter Egg hunt and Parish Council meetings shows that this still works well. • The church needs a toilet, noticeboard, and disabled access. The Rector offered to report back. • A plan for managing the churchyard in an Environmental manner is being developed. • The Rector hope that the village will participate in this. St Peter’s is to join the Eco Church system.
4	<p>Agenda Item 3. Statements by Parishioners.</p>
	<p>There was a discussion regarding points made by the Rector. Tony Pywell reminded all that Olivia Dutton had won a grant for £5,000 towards improving facilities for the Village Hub. Little of this had been spent so far, a few hundred at most. The rest is held by the Parochial Church Council (not the Parish Council or Community & Events Group).</p> <p>Steve Fair commented that when Rupert Holtby was Church Treasurer there was a campaign to ask villagers to set up a standing order for the church, he said that this should be considered again. The Rector said that contributions could be made to restricted funds for the church fabric.</p> <p>Andy Shuttleworth mentioned that in the past a proposal had been made to convert the main body of the church into a village hall with a self-contained module that could be opened up for large church services when necessary. The Rector stated that the Church conducts its own planning process so sympathetic amendments to the church were possible, but that a vision was needed to develop a plan. There was discussion about a church fete which in the past had raised funds for St Peter’s and for the village on a 50/50 share basis. Similar events should be considered in future.</p> <p>Ian and Babs Rennie raised their concerns regarding a lack of communication from the parish council on the A303 community fora, and how little information was put on the village noticeboard. They said that the outcomes of the meetings had been summarised. They were also concerned that the Highways Agency’s contractors would be responsible for the ultimate design, that they did not know how high the viaduct would be, what noise mitigation would be put in place, and what noise and disruption would there be if the contractors constructed elements for the tunnel at the proposed site at Longbarrow roundabout. The chairman pointed out that the village website was used for communications and that the village Facebook pages and WhatsApp were also used to disseminate that information. The noticeboard was used for public notices and the Parish magazine was used to summarise information, more detail of which was usually on the website.</p>

There was discussion about A303 legacy works which would be match funded. This means that should the village have a project, for example, to build a new village hall or modify the church, then the village would need to raise half the funds and the Highways Agency would fund the other half. There was discussion about how such a project would be managed, as there was a fear expressed that should the A303 scheme be given the go-ahead then things would progress quickly thereafter.

(Afternote: On 21 May it was announced that on 17 May the Court of Appeal had decided that the Save Stonehenge World Heritage Site's legal challenge had been upheld. Their appeal will be taken to a hearing. There is no timeframe for this next legal process. This will cause further delay to the start of the planned preliminary work.)

Ian Rennie offered to offered to run a training session on the defibrillator. [Afternote: A live link to a British Heart Foundation (BHF) 15 minute RevivR CPR training course (with defibrillator familiarisation) has been added to the PC website and can be linked to from here:

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/how-to-save-a-life/how-to-do-cpr/learn-cpr-in-15-minutes>

This advice is regularly updated and BHF recommend visiting frequently.

Steve Fair offered his thanks to all those who contributed to the village, this view was supported by those present. The chairman thanked all those who attended.

P Smith
Chairman of the Parish Council