



**Minutes of the
Stratton Audley Parish Annual Parish Meeting
Wednesday 11th May 2016 at 7.30pm
St Mary & St Edburga Church, Stratton Audley, Oxfordshire**

Present:

Chairman: Mr John Honsinger

Clerk: Mrs Anne Davies

Cherwell District Council: Cllr Barry Wood

Oxfordshire County Council: Cllr Mrs Catherine Fulljames

Parish Councillors : Mr A Flack, Mr S Hopkins, Mr G Nicholson

Thames Water : Steve Rapkins - Technical Co-ordinator ,Dagmara Weatherall - Asset Planning Team Manager ,Denise Kinsella - Customer and Stakeholder Liaison

8 Stratton Audley Residents

1. Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the meeting was a Parish meeting, which was facilitated by the Chairman of the Parish Council as a duty to the community. He explained that Thames Water representatives were attending at the request of the Parish Council to update residents on actions taken about the flooding in the Bradburys, Launton Road and Mill Road, following their attendance at a Parish Council meeting in February when the matter had been discussed at length. He therefore proposed to change the running order for the evening to allow them to explain the current position and then leave.

2. Thames Water

Steve Ratkins explained that, following their meeting with the Parish Council, Thames Water had replaced (rather than refurbished) the two pumps at the pumping station on the Bicester Road with new units, and a colleague was checking out the local piping network. The pumping station had been inundated by storm water over night on 10th May and both pumps had been working flat out, but Thames believed that the situation had been contained. Thames had also replaced the auto mechanism starting and stopping the pumps, which they believed had made the site more robust and reduced potential problems with flooding.

A resident asked how many flooding events had been caused by lack of capacity and how many by equipment failure? In answer the Thames representatives explained that they had monitored complaints back to 1998, and had identified some blockages in the network. However they were required to prioritise their capital investment and recent reported incidents did not relate to the flooding of a property (which are given greater priority and therefore value), instead they referred to the flooding around or outside a property.

Residents explained that they were frustrated that Thames Water had no record of complaints that had been logged over the telephone, although in response representatives of the company confirmed that they had an extensive record of complaints about external flooding recorded for the area, but the last recorded incident of internal flooding to a property was Winter 2014

Representatives from Thames Water confirmed to the meeting that the pumping station had received investment to upgrade it in 2007 , but Thames' own investigations indicated that the main cause of the problem of flooding was water infiltration (which was difficult to stop) rather than water inundation.

A resident queried the quality of the pumping station by observing that, even with two new pumps, the pumping station had had difficulty coping with the rain water generated overnight on 10th/11th May. In situations such as this foul water tends to seep out of the manholes and flow towards the brook, at which point he lodges a report of pollution with the Environment Agency. Heavy flooding causes the manhole covers to rise, becoming a potential danger to road users should the covers blow off, or the road becomes flooded with sewage, seriously affecting pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists.

The meeting was again advised that it would be difficult for Thames to justify any more expenditure on the pumping station in view of the lack of reported internal property damage, although they would want a report if there was sewage on the road, or it was interfering with a resident's use or enjoyment of his property.

One resident at the meeting drew Thames attention to the fact that a not infrequent event was for sewage to flood into the area immediately surrounding the house of two of the older residents in the Village, and, while they would not consider reporting the incident, the Village as a whole had real concerns for their safety.

Parish representatives at the meeting explained that some residents do not report internal flooding due to concerns regarding insurance or subsequent sales of their properties. While representatives assured the meeting that all the information held would not be passed on to third parties, a number of residents said they had had full details of their complaint log read to them over the phone, with very little attempt at data security. Thames confirmed that all reports were scanned into their Customer Relationship Management system, and this would continue to be necessary if they were to be able to justify expenditure on a different solution to the problems at the pumping station.

The situation would continue to be monitored by Thames but without more residents reporting internal flood damage no significant enhancements of the facility would be likely in the foreseeable future. The meeting was encouraged to continue to report all incidences and follow the example of one resident by reporting the issue to the Environment Agency.

3. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Cllr Cassie Lloyd, and resident Mr Jon Hill.

4. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting

The minutes of the previous year's Annual Parish Meeting held on 12th May 2015, copies of which had been circulated, were agreed as a true record of proceedings.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. Report by the Clerk about the year 2014 – 15

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council met 11 times between April last year and March 2016 with a wide variety of discussion taking place, as can be seen from the Minutes which are always displayed on the noticeboard and on the Parish Website.

She took over the position of Clerk in August 2015 and was immediately impressed by the community spirit in the village, the interest the village takes in Parish Council matters and the community activities organised in the village.

Oxfordshire County Council are now looking at ways of saving money by persuading parishes to take over their responsibilities (in community services eg libraries, youth clubs, in childrens' services with children's centres and in highway matters where it is offering to pass responsibility for a number of highway maintenance procedures – cleaning street signs, cutting back vegetation that is overgrowing footpaths etc). The Parish Council already cuts the grass on its verges on behalf of OCC and the meeting heard how OCC had reduced the sum paid to the Parish because it had cut the number of paid for cuts from 4 per year to 2 per year. She suggested that the Parish Council will need to think carefully whether it wants to bid for further delegations from OCC, particularly as most of them are now unfunded. She thanked Mike Gore for continuing to maintain the grass so superbly.

One of her first tasks was to support The Chairman of the Parish Council in his application to WREN for funding to build a new playground in Cherry Street –and was pleased to remind residents that, at the end of October the Parish Council heard that its application had been successful and the Parish has been

awarded £26000. Following discussions with parents the actual cost of the new playground rose slightly to accommodate an additional piece of equipment but this cost was covered out of the Playground Reserve Fund which also had been used to pay a 10% contribution towards the overall cost. Work on site should have been delayed due to other commitments of the contractor Trevor Stewart – but the Clerk is confident that it will be commenced in the next few weeks.

In September the Parish Council had a visit from Carol Mackay – OCC's Emergency Planning officer, who discussed the possibility of the Parish Council making an application to SSE Ltd for a grant from its Resilience Fund – This is money available to support communities in the event of a serious emergency event including severe weather and long power outages. Cllr Stewart Hopkins led the application and very quickly the PC was advised that its application had been successful and it would receive a grant of £9500 towards the purchase of equipment including a defibrillator for the village, a storage facility and a generator. As part of this programme Cllr Hopkins has recently organised some defibrillator/first aid training which was well attended.

A group of volunteers braved inclement weather to reinstate the footpath on the Bicester Road which was later tarmacked by OCC, and there have been a number of successful visits by the CDC street cleaning team which were co-ordinated throughout the village to ensure cars were moved off the streets. Other things which the Parish Council has helped with include paying for some new Christmas lights for the Christmas tree, and indeed for paying for the Christmas tree itself. Thanks to Jeremy Adams for putting the tree up and Mr Papenfus for supplying the electricity for the lights.

A major theme running through the whole year has been the Village Website, which now contains information that should prove useful to both residents and visitors. The Clerk asked other village organisations to please consider using the web site to publish their information, and encourage other residents to look on the web site first if seeking information relating to the Village. As the Church plays an important role in Stratton Audley the Parish Council has inaugurated a regular meeting with the Church to discuss matters of joint interest.

During the year the CLP group had reported and posted the results of the village survey on the website, giving the community some useful feedback about residents' concerns and wishes. A number of social activities had been organised including the free Village Picnic Day which has been run for the third year in a row. The group are now in the thick of final arrangements for the Food Beer and Music festival on 4th June – which will also celebrate the Queen's 90th Birthday. Mr Flack would give more details later in the meeting.

Following a review of Parish Council responsibilities, the council had resolved to apportion specific areas of responsibility to particular Parish Councillors. Cassie Lloyd has taken on planning, Anthony Flack community matters, George Nicholson roads and transport and Stewart Hopkins emergency planning, so if residents have specific concerns around these subjects they were asked to contact Councillors direct. The Clerk explained the procedure for managing planning applications :- Cassie Lloyd will be the first to receive the planning application and will co-ordinate circulating the documentation to other Parish Councillors. Residents wishing to object to an application will be encouraged to raise their concerns with her – and they will be advised to contact CDC direct by email, phone or visiting the planning portal. Objectors to planning applications are also encouraged to attend the next available Parish Council meeting, or email or write a letter outlining their concerns. During the year the Council received 15 Planning Applications, 11 for buildings, and 4 for tree work.

OCC are planning to reduce /remove their bus subsidies to save money. Cllr Nicholson has taken an interest in traffic and transport and has had discussions with Thames Travel about possible occasional extensions of their no 22 bus route into the village. He was also instrumental in persuading TVP to supply some "Speedwatch area" signs for the Village, which the PC hopes have had an effect on the speed of traffic driving through, without incurring any costs.

Residents attending the meeting received packs which included the balance sheet and the income and expenditure accounts for the Parish Council. The full accounts for the year ending 31st March 2016 have been placed on the web site and are available for inspection – residents were asked to contact the Clerk if they did wish to inspect copies of the accounts. The majority of the expenditure has been spent on keeping the village clean and tidy and on general administration. The books will shortly be reviewed by the Council's Internal auditor, and will be sent to the external auditor in July. Anyone who has questions about the accounts should raise them with the Clerk - her contact details are on the web site. Finally she reminded everyone that all residents are encouraged to come to Parish Council meetings and speak at the

beginning of the meeting or observe the whole meeting. The meetings generally take place in the Hunt Room of the Red Lion on the first Wednesday of the month at 7pm. Anyone wishing to receive the agenda or minutes should let the Clerk know.

7. Councillor Mrs Catherine Fulljames

Cllr Fulljames reminded the meeting that she was available to help resolve any issues between the Parish and OCC and having heard the discussion with Thames Water she would raise the issue of highway drainage with the OCC highway engineers.

The County Council is in its 6th year of budget cuts, now trying to save 290M over the period 2010 – 2019. In 2016 the Council raised its Council tax by 3.99%, to cover additional costs of Adult Social Care. 50% of OCC's budget is currently spent on Children's Services and Adult Social Care, and by 2020 the proportion will have increased to 75%.

OCC will be withdrawing its bus subsidies from the end of the school summer term on 20th July; some parishes councils are joining together to look for alternative arrangements to provide transport for their residents.

The household waste site at Ardley will remain open beyond 2017, but Viridor is still looking to close the site when a replacement has been found (possibly near the new Bicester eco town).

HS2 is of concern to some villages in her Division, and she would have preferred to see the money available for this used to improve other local train services. During construction there is likely to be a significant adverse effect on junctions 9 and 10 of the M40 caused by aggregate lorries supporting the development.

She closed by mentioning the current debate on unitary authorities in Oxfordshire – with OCC supporting 1 Unitary Authority for the whole of the County, and the District Councils currently looking at four authorities with a division of county functions between them.

8. Councillor Barry Wood

Cllr Wood confirmed to the meeting that he had been re elected as a District Councillor for the enlarged ward from Finmere to Kirtlington in the recent elections. This ward was now split between three Councillors although he will remain as the principal point of contact for residents of Stratton Audley. Cherwell District Council enjoys a satisfaction rating of 80% and 60% of waste is recycled. Cherwell District Council have held their rate of Council tax at its current level for seven years, by co-operating with other Councils and looking to save money with novel solutions. Currently Cherwell and South Northants share posts and officers, thus reducing overall costs. The District believes that there is a strong case for a number of Unitary Councils in Oxfordshire is that it provides the potential for change and further improvement.

He also confirmed that he was a fervent supporter of the rural way of life.

He was asked why, when the Banbury Gateway development was seen as a success, planning permission had been refused for a similar development opposite the new Tesco site in Bicester. He clarified that permission had been refused on two grounds: Traffic and the impact on Bicester Town Centre.

So far as the future development of Bicester is concerned planners were keen to exploit the relationship between Bicester Town and Bicester Village.

9. Parish Council Strategic Objectives

Mr Honsinger reviewed the Parish Council's Objectives for 2015-2016 :

Objective 1 Communicate more in an open and transparent manner.

The Parish Council had undertaken more leaflet drops to all the houses in the Parish than in previous years, put frequent information up on the notice board and regularly updated the Parish website. More communication via email with councillors takes place between meetings which helps to speed up decision making at meetings.

Objective 2 Develop the Community Led Plan.

The Community Led Plan Group had reported to the Parish Council in November, and the Parish Council were now considering whether to extend this work to form the basis of a Neighbourhood Plan, which would enable the Community itself to control its future, including any future development.

Objective 3 develop a new web site for the Parish Council and all other village activities.

The new website went live in November, and currently under development is a front end improvement to ensure all latest news items are immediately identifiable.

Objective 4 refurbish the Playground

The Parish Council applied for, and was awarded, a grant of £26000 from WREN ltd towards the cost of a new playground. A contractor has been appointed and work should commence soon.

Objective 5 Cyclepath along the A421

Ongoing and awaiting funds, although discussions about cycleways have been held with Fringford.

The Parish Council will be considering its objectives for the current year and residents were asked to make know any issues they would like to be considered.

10. Village Hall Fund

A short report on the Village Hall Fund was presented to the meeting which advised that a specific meeting had been organised for 16th July at 11am in the Red Lion to discuss its future, and to respond to the request for suggestions as to where the Village Hall fund monies should be spent. The Parish Council once again made it clear that it was not involved with this fund and would not be participating in the meeting. One resident asked how much was in the fund and was told about £10,000. Residents in attendance suggested that either the monies could contribute towards the cost of a village bus to be run by volunteers, or towards the construction costs of an extra floor in the bell tower of the Church to ease storage problems for the church and the village.

Residents were asked to make their ideas know by filling out and returning the form given to them.

11. Church

Mrs Adams reported that a new Team Rector has been appointed – Alice Goodall, who is keen to be involved in the community as well as the Church. The Church presently plays an active part in the community and would like residents' ideas of how it could build on this role to enable the Church to serve the whole community of the village, possibly through more active use of its Shelswell News magazine which is currently circulated to about 70 houses in Stratton Audley . The Church porch and wall surrounding the church yard requires restoration – and the Church has recently made an application to Viridor for grant funding to assist with this project.

12. Report by the Community Led Plan Group about the responses to the questionnaire and the next steps

Mr Flack reported that, although Stratton Audley is a small village with no Village Green, recreation ground or Village Hall, it organises a number of community activities – with the next planned event being the most ambitious - the Food, Beer and Music Festival on 4th June, with proceeds supporting the Church porch restoration fund, Sobell House and the Air Ambulance.

The main location will be Church Street, where the road will be closed off, there will be live music, 10 craft beers for tasting, a hog roast and some 25 specialist food stalls. Children's events – particularly a bouncy castle and face painting, will be in the garden of the Manor, and tea and cakes will be in the Church.

Significant sponsorship has been achieved which more than covers the funding for the event and already underway is a major marketing campaign, in local papers, through signage on the main roads and door drops to surrounding villages. Tickets for a prize draw will also be sold in advance of the event.

However more volunteers and organisers are needed for two hour rotas.

13. Any other business

No further items were raised.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm.

Signed..... Date.....