

STOKE ST MICHAEL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
Minutes from the virtual meeting held on 6th May 2021

Present: Cllrs John McEntee, Keith Hambly, Simon Farnsworth, Amanda Taylor, Kim Gibson and two members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence

Cllr Keith Holder and Simon Clarke – Chair of Stoke St Michael Woodland

2. To receive the Chair's Annual Report

The Annual Report from the Chair was read out by Cllr John McEntee and is attached under Appendix A.

3. Report from the Chair of Stoke St Michael Community Playing Fields – John Johnston

John Johnston – Chair of Stoke St Michael Community Playing Fields read out the annual report, this is attached under Appendix B.

4. Report from the Chair of Stoke St Michael War Memorial Hall – Teresa Taylor-Wolff

Teresa Taylor-Wolff was not in attendance and no annual report was sent.

5. Report from Stoke St Michael Woodland

Cllr Keith Hambly read out the report in the absence of Simon Clarke, the report is attached under Appendix C.

6. Matters to Consider

- (a)** Later on, in the year when restrictions have been lifted a Parish Meeting will be held and all Community Groups will be invited to join.

Meeting closed 7.20pm

Appendix A

Stoke St Michael Parish Council

Chairs Report to the Annual Parish Meeting – 06 May 2021

Introduction

This report is an overview of the work and activities of the Parish Council since the Annual Meeting held in May 2019 covering the year 2018/19. In 2019/20 the activities were severely impacted by the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic.

The Parish Council were unable to hold face to face meetings in the War Memorial Hall and were restricted to virtual meetings held via Zoom. The government has not extended the legislation and the ability to hold virtual meetings end on 07 May 2021.

It is not intended that this report provides detail of every aspect and every decision or resolution of the Parish Council.

On behalf of the Parish Council, I would like to thank all those residents who attended the virtual Parish council meetings and engaged in the various debates which helped form and inform the decisions subsequently adopted by the Parish Council.

The Parish Council held 15 meetings in total during the year. There were 9 programmed meetings and 5 additional meetings. These additional meetings were, in the main, held to consider specific planning applications where the response deadlines set by the planning authority for responses were inconsistent with the Parish Council programme of meetings.

Principal Matters the Parish Council dealt with during the year

Planning Applications

The Parish Council were asked to comment on 23 planning applications by the planning authority during the year.

Local Plan Part II

The further public consultation on the Local Plan Part II concluded in December 2020. The Planning Inspector is likely to publish the report in May 2021. The Parish Council was pleased to note that their comments on location for housing development formed the basis of the emerging recommendations submitted for the village and we await the Planning Inspector's final comments later this year.

Millennium Wood

The creation of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation [CIO] for the management of Millennium Wood has now been completed. The Parish Council will now work toward a lease arrangement which passes the authority for day-to-day management of the facility to the CIO. This route to the management of the facility was chosen because it opens up additional opportunities for applications for grant aid which are not available to the Parish Council.

Web Site

The web site stokestmichaelpc.org.uk has been further developed during the year and is now the main source of information about the council, its meetings and formal minutes.

The Parish Council is keen to improve its communications with the electorate and suggestions on how this can be achieved would be welcomed.

Stoke St Michael Community Field – Registered Charity No. 304639

Stoke St Michael War Memorial Hall – Registered Charity No. 304640

The Parish Council remains Custodian Trustee of both these charities. The special responsibilities that arise from being Custodian Trustee are strictly limited to holding the deeds for the assets. The Parish Council has no locus for assisting or interpreting the management responsibilities of the relevant committees set out in the governing documents or the Custodian Trustee Act despite requests during the year to do so.

Annual Governance and Accountability Review (AGAR) – 2020/21.

The AGAR is the audit regime which was introduced for small authorities and to which the Parish Council is subject. The work necessary to comply with the regulatory regime was completed on time and the internal auditor has confirmed that all the legislative requirements have been met and did not raise any concerns. The completed documents and supporting information will now be passed to the external auditors for validation. A public notice will be posted giving residents the opportunity to raise questions in relation to the accounts.

Finances

Income

The Parish Council has limited opportunities beyond the precept levy to generate additional income. The precept for 2020/21 has increased by less than the rate of inflation.

Expenditure

The Parish Council continues to examine each item of expenditure for necessity and value for money. Our operating costs remain relatively stable and in the main only increase where a new demand arises as illustrated by the purchase and maintenance associated with Millennium Wood.

What the Council is currently doing

We continue to monitor those matters which impact on life and the environment in Stoke St Michael and either take appropriate action or provide advice to other agencies on local views. We monitor and provide comment to the Planning Authority on planning applications and where necessary hold special meetings to consider such matters and provide appropriate advice.

The Parish Council will continue to work toward developing and implementing the leasing arrangements for Millennium Wood.

The Future

We will continue to be open and transparent in all our dealings and activities. The web site provides a secure platform for publishing information to the community which assists in complying with the Transparency Code. The Parish Council will continue to strive for transparency in its decision-making and encourages the involvement of the local community in all its activities.

Appendix B

Stoke St Michael community field annual report 2020/2021

Annual report to the parish council

The past year has been undermined by the Covid epidemic. Like all outdoor and event spaces nationwide we have lost all the activity that would have occurred in 2020/21

The league football season for Stoke Rovers was lost. The WW2 memorial summer weekend was lost. The junior soccer season with Midsomer Norton was lost.

We did continue to maintain the field and the play areas all year. This is an expensive business and the repairs that Somerset Playing field association have highlighted are not all in place. We have set up a “blooms for bees” zone around part of the perimeter of the field. This is a village wide scheme encouraged by Natural England and lead in Stoke, by Simon Clarke.

Major work was carried out on the half pipe with funding from Cookswood quarry. John Wainwright’s quarries have supported our plan to set up soccer for fun for youngsters in the village with further generous support. This is a summer scheme to get Sunday games back on the field with boys and girls of all ages out to play.

It is very important to record how grateful I am to Keith Hambly and Amanda Taylor for all their help. The trustees and I have much to thank them for this past year.

John Johnston chair St St M C F

Appendix C

Report from Simon Clarke – Chair of Stoke St Michael Woodland

Obviously disappointed after our launch events in Autumn Winter 2019 that we've not been able to progress more community engagement.,

-We've tried to maintain good access throughout the year, keeping routes open and clear, and we've seen a good use of the site by residents of the village. We will begin mowing this year in the next few weeks.

- We've encouraged more areas for biodiversity, including leaving areas long for insects, wildflowers and birds and mammals. We now have records of barn owls using the site to hunt. Our bird boxes are getting used, with confirmed nesting again this spring. We also submitted butterfly survey data to butterfly conservations national survey. Thank you to a member of the village that supplied us with bird seed to feed birds over the winter

- H&S maintenance of footpaths and checks on site happening monthly; we've had a thorough tree survey done and nothing major to report other than we removed some ash dieback affected trees as a precaution.

- Stoke St Michael Woodland is now registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The Parish Council are working on putting the lease agreement for the wood in place and transitioning management responsibility to the CIO