



STARCROSS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in Starcross Pavilion on Monday 16 May 2022 at 7.40pm

Present:

Cllr Hopper (Chairman), Cadbury, Chase, Pegg, Rastall, Redmond, Williamson and Zawadzka

Also present:

Suzanna Hughes (Clerk), District/Cllr Connett and two members of the public.

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APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

- Cllr Lovell
- Cllr McNally
- Cllr Allen

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

FINANCE & GOVERNANCE

Our main financial task is to set our budget each year and for the period April 1st 2022 to 31st March 2023 the nett figure set is £ 41857 a small increase of £ 1141 over last year. On your Council Tax, for a Band D residence, the Parish Council contribution will amount to £ 71.50 or £ 1.375 per week. We hope that you feel this is a fair contribution toward the many services for which the Parish Council are responsible.

PLANNING & HIGHWAYS

We opened the year in the middle of a controversial application for 20 houses at the rear of Parkers Road. It would appear that difficulties were encountered around various conditions, amongst them flood risk considerations. It is becoming more and more apparent that small developments close to, or in the village, will become more difficult as flood risk precautions are increased. Consequently little new housing has been started in Starcross. The review of the Teignbridge plan however did suggest two sites close to the village for development – Brickyard Lane and Staplake Road. Concerns have been raised by the Parish Council with Teignbridge throughout the year regarding the unsightly appearance of the old garage in Church Street. The Parish Council has pressured Teignbridge which has resulted in some attention. Teignbridge have insisted that matters are confidential and that they are unable to enlighten us with progress. We continue to note various other sites such as the station building, which is in disrepair and we are in contact with GWR on this. We are also looking at the condition of pavements etc., on New Road and safety around the school. After some years, Devon CC are to run a trial of The Strand pavement improvements in the south end of village. This will take place from 31st May through to 14th June. It is appreciated that there are concerns from drivers that this project will cause increased delays. But our motivation is pedestrian safety and the road narrowing is minimal. We can only wait and see

PARKS & GARDENS

Your Council has invested in a major re-equipment of the Bonhay Road Play Park. The increase in activity has been impressive and we are looking forward to a Grand Opening on the 4th June with games, food and Jubilee bunting. It has raised the serious matter of dog mess on both the Play Park and the Sports Field. I always thought it a joke that Parish Councillors spend most of their time discussing dog mess. It isn't! We have to start thinking about more drastic action and we are in discussions with the TDC Dog Warden about next steps. It is a serious matter and I believe most responsible people agree that more restrictions need to be made.

PAVILION

Difficult times for the Pavilion. After the open/closed situation of the past months we lost most of our fixed bookings which were contributing income to the building. Then came the shock of the closure of the Westbank Charity Shop. The Council met immediately with the Westbank Chairman to complain at the lack of notice and information, but we quickly established that our object was to ensure continuation of services. First was to re-site the Post Office alongside morning refreshments and soon, with the appointment of Sally Chatham, a programme of meetings and events at the Pavilion and other venues around the village was drawn up. The Parish Council agreed a "start-up" rate of fees and the team who previously helped at the Charity Shop sprung into life. We thank them, and Sally, of course, for putting their disappointment behind them and getting back to work so efficiently.

SPORTS FIELD

On the field football continues to boom. Up to 100 boys and girls from Under 5s upwards can be seen doing wonderful things with a ball especially on Sunday mornings. Our local team, Starcross Dons, serve hot coffee and hamburgers making a truly brilliant scene. The Parish Council has worked closely with the Dons to help make this possible. Dons run school holiday soccer schools for girls and boys of all ages. See their Facebook page for details.

CAR PARKING

I think that most of us realised that once the process had started, it was inevitable that Teignbridge would carry through with their plans to commence charging on the New Road car park, and so it transpired. It was a blow to residents and short term users alike. The only debate was whether permits would be available. Council put forward an offer to pay for the upkeep charges for a further year so that a proper and full consultation could be carried out. This was refused. We also suggested an expansion of The Strand car park which was shelved.

ALLOTMENTS (from Secretary Allotments Association Roger Crane)

The Starcross Growers Support Group (Allotment Association) reports another successful year managing the site on behalf of the Parish Council. Financially the Group is operating on a stable footing. A recent consultation was undertaken and the committee are considering a number of suggestions for improvements to increase access and availability. The Flower and Produce show will be open to the wider community and will be held at the Pavilion on 13th August. A free area and a tool and equipment 'donation' shop is well supported and has proved to be a great benefit, especially to new allotmenters. A social area and shed with free tea and coffee is available to all site users. This area is designated "Ken's" in memory of the late Councillor Ken Harris who devoted so much time and energy to the running of the plots. A monthly inspection of the allotments is undertaken by members of the committee and a reasonable standard of cultivation maintained. All the allotments are currently let and the waiting list is sufficient to maintain full occupancy. We have recently advertised locally for potential new plot holders. The Group greatly appreciates the support of the Parish Council and continues to strive within our current arrangement to provide the effective and efficient management of the site.

THE FUTURE

We have reserves of cash and many thoughts about how to invest for the future. The big question is whether we should concentrate on one big project while we have the funds and what that should be. The age groups where Starcross lacks investment are the primary to mid teen group and the just retired age group. For the latter we are offering free use of the small meeting room in the Pavilion to aid formation of small groups and clubs. We have in mind chess, a gardening club etc. The room could accommodate a dozen or so and if larger numbers join, they could graduate to the Main Hall. For the younger group we have often thought about a small skate park. And for everyone – more benches on the field and a covered area on the Pavilion patio for

music events etc. We would like to develop the Pavilion to become a more community based venue.

Councillors do work hard to improve life for our residents. I think we have made great strides with projects such as the new tarmac path across the Sports Field, solar panels on the Pavilion and the new equipment on the Play Park. I would like to thank them all for their contributions.

Liz Chase, Andrew Cadbury, Pauline Allen, Stuart McNally, Vicky Williamson, Di Lovell, Caroline Redmond, Justyna Zwadzka, Sally Rastall, and Daryl Pegg and not forgetting our Parish Clerk – Suzanna Hughes - THANKYOU !

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FINANCE REPORT

The Parish Council's total income for 2021/22 was just over £57,700. 70% of this came from the precept (the money raised through council tax from all the dwellings within the parish) and the other 30% from various sources including rent from hiring out the Pavilion and sports field, fees for using the dinghy rack on Generals Lane, rent from the allotment association and various grants. Expenditure at 31 March (the end of our financial year) totaled £62,624.

As well as the usual budgeted running costs, I would like to highlight four significant costs this year:

The first was in July last year when £6000 was spent on the resurfacing of the footpath from Church Street to the Pavilion. This supported the Parish Council's desire to continue to improve accessibility to its facilities.

The second investment was the purchase of solar panels which have been installed on the Pavilion. Whilst the capital cost was £3700, we should see a reduction in energy costs over time and it is a positive step towards tackling climate change.

The third major expenditure has been the purchase of new play equipment at the Bonhay Road Play Park. £10,000 was spent in 2021/22 and a further £5,000 has been spent in 2022/23. Due to the economic climate, it has been difficult to source grants for this project although £500 was gratefully received from Cllr Wrigley's locality budget.

The fourth and unexpected expenditure this year has been incurred as a result of emergency tree work costing £4200. This cost covered a tree survey, some pollarding and the unfortunate felling of a veteran oak in the play park.

We are carrying forwards a healthy balance of £73,214 into next financial year and the Council will continue to manage your money prudently and diligently. You can be assured that we remain good value: the Band D town/parish charge in Starcross for the financial year just ended was £69.55 compared to the average across Teignbridge which was £81.46.

The accounts for 2021/22 have been internally audited and will be approved by the Parish Council in May's Parish Council meeting. For your reference and scrutiny, all the accounts and audit documents are published on the Parish Council's website, www.starcrosspc.co.uk.

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PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no questions from those present.

SIGNED:
Chairman of the Parish Council

DATE: 13 June 2022