

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



50 Pepys Way, Strood, Rochester, Kent, ME2 3LL

DRAFT MINUTES

Friday 5th May 2021

Virtual Annual Parish Meeting ~ 7.00 pm

Attendees: Cllr B. Stone (Chairman) Cllr G. Blackman (Vice-Chair)
Cllr J. Wallace Cllr K. Copping
Cllr R. Morrad Mrs J. Allen ~ Clerk

Members of the public: Seven (7)

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm.

1. Welcome by the Chairman

The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

He immediately passed the floor over to 'Towards Plastic Free Medway', who were a community group seeking support to fight against the need for single use plastic.

Following a brief presentation both Councillors K. Copping and B. Stone spoke to offer their support, where it was agreed that too much plastic was being thrown away and not being recycled.

2. Minutes from the Annual Parish Meeting 2019

To receive the last minutes from the Annual Parish Meeting in 2019. (Please note that there was no Annual Parish meeting in 2020, owing to COVID-19 pandemic).

The minutes from the Annual Parish meeting, held on Wednesday 22nd May 2019, were submitted.

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was acknowledged that there had been no Annual Parish Meeting held in 2020, as a result of this it was recognised that these minutes were the most recent records.

The 2019 minutes were carefully studied, where it was unanimously agreed that they were a true record and accordingly they were approved.

3. The Parish Council

To receive a report from the Parish Chairman on the events and activities of the Parish Council during the last year.

The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, spoke and provided the following report :

The past year has been difficult for us all and is one that we will never forget. The Covid 19 pandemic has not only caused millions of deaths throughout the world but has severely disrupted all our lives, taking away our freedom, preventing us from travelling, seeing family and friends and has seriously disrupted the education of our children. The situation does seem to be improving in the UK and it is hoped that the vaccination programme will prevent any further spikes in infection rates and the need for further lockdowns. I'm sure that we are all thankful to be gradually regaining our freedom.

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Sadly we lost one of our parish councillors Gordon Barron and an ex councillor Peter Tungate. Our thoughts are with their families and others who have lost family members and friends due to the pandemic.

Our Parish Council meetings have had to be held via Zoom, which is not ideal but at least it means that village business can be discussed and members of the public are always welcome to join the meetings. There have been several important issues recently including the recent flooding and the frequent power cuts both of which have caused major inconvenience to all those who have been affected. The proposed closure of Stoke School has raised it's head once again. It is hoped that a satisfactory outcome can be achieved. This may be the last meeting to be held via Zoom, thank goodness.

Unfortunately we were forced to close the playparks for a while in line with government restrictions.

They are now all open but we have removed the old tunnels and climbing apparatus from Heron Way and Button Drive play areas as they were found to be unsafe and unhygienic. We are in the process of ordering new equipment to replace these items.

The doctors' surgery in the village hall has not re-opened since the St Werburgh practice was taken over last year. At present it is not known if or when it will re-open.

Church services have also been severely restricted with no Remembrance Sunday or Christmas Carol services. Sunday services have been held but with no singing of hymns due and social distancing measures in place.

Finally I would like to thank everyone in Stoke who has helped friends and neighbours during these difficult times and the businesses that have been able to stay open or adapt to provide supplies and services. My thanks also to my fellow councillors for their support and commitment as we look forward to getting back to some sort of normality over the coming months.

4. **Financial Situation**

To receive a report from the Stoke Parish Council Chairman on the Parish Council's Financial situation

The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone advised that after much deliberation the members had resolved to keep the precept at the same level of £21,000, for the third year in a row.

He advised that whilst the members reserves looked healthy, the Parish Council had already ringfenced a proportion of these funds to upgrade some of the old play equipment in both the Heron Way and Button Drive playparks, as addressed in his report.

5. **wHoo Cares**

To receive a presentation from wHoo Cares surrounding the activities of the community interest company.

Ms M. Trumper from wHoo Cares provided a presentation about the community interest company's activities, both prior and during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The informative presentation confirmed that the company was set up in 2016 with only 3 members of staff and a group of volunteers. Owing to the award of some National Lottery funding the

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company was able to expand and subsequently it was then able to employ 8 members of staff, alongside 64 volunteers. A second office was opened in Chattenden in January 2020, when the pandemic hit not soon after.

Owing to the nationwide health crisis, it was understood that wHoo Cares responded by branching out into variety of different roles, that included, but was not limited to:

- Collecting prescriptions
- Picking up non-essential items (such as hearing aid batteries),
- Transporting patients to healthcare appointments.
- Assisting residents self-isolating in carrying out shopping and dropping the items back to their doors,
- Telephone befriending
- Doorstep visits

It was confirmed that over this time wHoo Cares also delivered over 250 activity and wellbeing packs, they hosted a community van (which visited residents outside their own homes) and that they were able to prepare and deliver over 30 Christmas Day Dinners, which also including a small gift for the recipient.

Mrs M. Trumper ended her presentation in confirming that wHoo Cares had appeared on the Freeview Channel 'Together TV', and that currently they were supporting over 170 residents living throughout the Hoo Peninsula.

6. **Community Reports**

The meeting received three Community reports in total, which were provided by the Peninsula Methodist Church, the 'Medway Health Walks, Nordic Walking and Medway cycle group' and from the 'Stoke Community Project'.

Peninsula Methodist Church – Stoke Centre

Ms T. Robb from the Peninsula Methodist Church in Stoke spoke to inform the meeting that owing to pandemic the church had been forced to shut down and as a result of this they had not engaged with the community for almost for a whole year.

Over this time, it was confirmed that the goods belonging to the local foodbank had been returned to the main warehouse, where she understood that wHoo Cares and Medway Council had organised for its re distribution and delivery.

It was reported that the companion café and the toddler groups had both closed and that the church had been financially supported by the circuit in Strood.

Ms T. Robb closed her report in advising that owing to the upcoming relaxation of some of the restrictions that she hoped that the toddler group would reopen at the end of the summer / early September and that the church would be able to start fully functioning again soon.

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Walking, Cycling and Active in Medway Club

A report was provided by Mr D. Bateman-Palmer of the Medway Health Walks, Nordic walking and Medway cycle group, where he spoke of the organisation's aim to encourage villagers to leave their houses and to get active.

Mr D. Bateman-Palmer advised that a new walking programme had been devised, which was scheduled to reopen in Stoke on Thursday 10th June. He confirmed that the organisation had been in contact with every walker who had attended previous events, to provide guidelines in regards to meeting as a group, in order to comply with the current Government restrictions.

Prior to the pandemic it was understood that the Medway Health Walks, Nordic walking and Medway cycle group had been very successful, where the organisation had encouraged over 25,000 individuals to participate across their walking programmes taking place throughout Medway.

Stoke Community Project

A report was provided by Ms E. Hookway of the Stoke Community Project, also known as the 'Stoke Safaris', concerning their planned fundraising events for the remainder of the year.

Ms E. Hookway spoke of the committee's ideas in organising the 'Big Lunch' event, a Halloween disco, carol singing and a Santa Delivery drop, alongside co-ordinating craft and reading days with the local school.

She spoke of further ideas in organising a float for the Grain Carnival and entering Stoke into the 'Village in Bloom' competition, if the Parish Council would consider buying small packets of seeds for the villagers to plant.

She closed her report in confirming that the Stoke Methodist Church were providing the insurance for their 'Big Lunch' event and that music projects and art classes in the church were also being considered as additional fundraising events.

Following the Stoke Community Project's report, the members of the Parish Council spoke collectively of their suggestion in entering into the 'Village in Bloom' competition. An additional idea of co-ordinating the 'Biggest Sunflower' competition locally was also aired, where the members acknowledged that a similar incentive by wHoo Cares had been initiated during lockdown.

7. Conclusion

The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.03pm.