

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

DRAFT MINUTES

Wednesday 4th May 2022

Annual Parish Meeting ~ 7.00 pm

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

Members of the public: Seven (7)

The meeting commenced at 7.02 pm.

1. **Welcome by the Chairman**

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

2. **Minutes from the Annual Parish Meeting 2021**

To receive the last minutes from the Annual Parish Meeting, held on Friday 5th May 2021.

The minutes from the Annual Parish meeting, held on Friday 5th May 2021, were submitted.

The document was carefully studied, where it was proposed by the Vice-Chair Cllr J. Wallace, seconded by Cllr G. Blackman and unanimously agreed that the minutes were a true record of the meeting.

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 :

This time last year we were all dealing with the threat of Covid. Hopefully the worst of that is now behind us, we have regained our freedom and are once more able to travel to most parts of the world. The relaxing of restrictions has also enabled us to hold face to face meetings once again, which I much prefer to holding them via Zoom

During the year two parish councillors resigned for personal reasons and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their contributions to the council. We have been fortunate to be able to co-opt three new councillors and we are looking for one more to complete our number.

We continue to work hard to keep the three playparks in good order. We have replaced two large items of equipment, one in Button Drive and the other in Mallard Way, at a total cost of £20,000.00, plus installation costs. Unfortunately the gales early this year uprooted a large tree in Button Drive, breaking the fence around the small play area and the whole park had to be closed until the tree was removed. The fence will be repaired as soon as we are given the go-ahead by the insurance company and are then able to source the fencing. Regrettably there is still some vandalism in the parks with litter being left despite the presence of litter bins.

A new notice board has been erected in a more accessible position in Lower Stoke. This together with the ones in Middle and Upper Stoke provide details of parish council meetings and other public

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information. I regret to have to report that the board in Upper Stoke has recently been vandalised and will have to be repaired or replaced – another cost for the council.

Flooding continues to be a major problem after heavy rainfall and we are awaiting a report from Medway Council who are looking into this, with a view to try to alleviate the problem. Power cuts have also caused problems for most of us in recent months and there is now talk of new underground cables being laid, but I'm not sure when that will be.

Parking is still a big concern in the village with the ever increasing number of vehicles. Please be considerate of your neighbours and other road users when parking. We are looking into marking out parking bays in the car park in order to optimise the space available.

It has been reported that Stoke School will shortly be taking in children from the Medway Towns while a new school is being built. The children will be bussed in and out each day which has the potential to cause traffic chaos especially if some of the parents bring their children in private cars.

Our village children are already collected from the front of the school and taken to Allhallows byminibus and it is hoped that the bus movements will be synchronised to reduce congestion.

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee is a cause for great celebration and a street party has been organised for Sunday 5 th June. Permission has been granted for a partial road closure in the High Street to accommodate this. To commemorate the Jubilee the parish council have purchased two wooden benches one for Middle Stoke and the other for Upper Stoke and three oak trees will be planted around the villages.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow councillors for all their help and support during the year.

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 spoke to advise that owing to ever increasing running costs, the members of the Parish Council had reluctantly decided to increase the Precept for the Financial Year 2022/2023 to £23,000 at a meeting held on Wednesday 5th January 2022.

He advised that whilst the members reserves stood at £24,000, the Parish Council had already had already ringfenced a proportion of these funds for further improvements to the three Playparks.

He closed his report in confirming that the anticipated running costs for the Parish Council currently stood at £24,000, with an expected income of £27,000 (which included the abolishment of the 'Tax Grant' and the Rural Liaison Grant', that had been awarded previously by Medway Council).

5. **Community Reports**

To receive reports from community groups in Stoke.

The following two community reports were read.

wHoo Cares

(Report to follow)

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The Peninsula Methodist Church

The chapel like almost every other place of worship has been closed for the best part of two years and whilst some churches chose to open their buildings when allowed to do so we at Stoke waited until September/October last year. As we have previously reported we are very small and so what we can do is quite limited but what we lack in numbers we make up for in enthusiasm.

Our building might have been closed but that in no way meant that we were closed. We worshiped together as a circuit weekly via live you tube services and they continue to be provided by the circuit every week. We held meetings and fellowships via zoom and individually and collectively we prayed for our world, our country and our communities. Post pandemic there will be a lot of healing to take place we are aware people have been bereaved and not just of loved ones. We have lost time, we have lost jobs, we have lost the opportunity to meet new family members; and although we may not be aware or recognise it from the youngest to the eldest in our societies, we have all in some form encountered loss and we at the chapel are looking to explore ways in how we can in some small way help our community process those losses.

Toddler group which operated on a Wednesday has turned into a drop-in session where all are welcome to come along and share in a bit of chit chat and to partake in a cup of coffee or tea and biscuits, we sometimes have cake. We also have a book swap table that is available to all on that day although it's not compulsory to bring a book to swap, please do come along and have a browse there might be something there that catches your eye and you never know you might find some holiday reading on the table.

Foodbank during the pandemic closed all their centres and operated from the warehouse on Medway City Estate, it is unlikely that we will go back to hosting Foodbank collection sessions like we did but we have been in talks to provide and or provide a few emergency food packages for those who find themselves in need at this end of the peninsula. These talks are ongoing and given the struggles people are facing with the recent energy rises now we do sadly suspect we might be asked to consider returning to being a regular provider of food in the community come the predicted prices in the autumn.

The Stoke Community Project decided to break from the church connections that they had and they now organise events independently of us. While this is sad, we do wish them well and continue to pray for them and all that they endeavour to do for the village.

In September the Peninsula Church had Bart come join us with pastoral responsibility as well as his other hats he wears within the circuit and he is keen to be involved with the chapel and all that we are endeavouring to do.

Our newest most exciting venture is the Peninsula Shed project. It is an opportunity for men to come together to make and do to chat and to share the company of each other. The small hall at the church has or is slowly being turned into a workshop with an eager band of about ten to fifteen overall volunteers/ members. This band of enthusiastic gentlemen had their first official meet on the 26th April and they will now meet every Tuesday at the chapel and we are excited to see what creations they might produce. If you are a man and thinks this is something you might be interested in please drop along from 9.30am.

We are going to return to have services in the chapel again. We will for now have them once a quarter but we would love to make that once a month and then weekly again. We have chosen to make this an evening service and it would be lovely to see some new and perhaps some familiar

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faces once again. Please do join us at 6.30pm on 17th July.

We would also love to work ecumenically with St Peter & St Paul again and we are looking forward to meeting the new vicar and perhaps generating conversations.

We continue to pray for our community, we also continue to explore ways of how we can be the church in the village. We thank God for his blessings and are encouraged by all that he continues to do in our community. We pray in love for the villages of Stoke and the parish council.

6. Conclusion

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

The meeting closed at 7.20pm.

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