THE WEST STAFFORD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

 7.30pm Friday 21st APRIL 2023

 AT THE WEST STAFFORD VILLAGE HALL

**1. Present**

Cllr Sandy Tubby (Chair), Cllr Gordon Shaw, Cllr Hannah Cooke, Dr Paul Thompson (Parish Meeting Clerk) and 37 others.

**2. Apologies**

Barbara and Mike Davis, Linda Kemp, Adrian and Sian Edwards, Major and Maggie Haynes, Chas Duerdoth and Maureen Shaw.

**3. Chair’s report**

Sandy welcomed those present and explained that this was the annual Village meeting where any Village resident could have their say and vote on Village matters. She was in the chair as chair of Knightsford Parish Council (KPC). Since the last West Stafford village meeting in April 2023 the village appears to have returned to the usual way of life during this year. The activities and clubs relating to the village hall have all picked up again. The playing fields are up & running with the freedom for everyone to use this amenity. Both are back in the swing of fundraising with both large and smaller events being held which brings many villagers together to help with these projects. The Wise Man also continues to be a central attraction both for villagers and many people from outside the parish. The Knightsford Parish Council has met regularly every month except April, August and November. April and November being the village meeting & precept meeting respectively. The Neighbourhood plan is well on its way towards the first draft which will be presented in each of the four villages of our parish to ascertain the villagers thoughts and then to take it forward to the final stages. There has been much movement of people leaving and arriving to live in West Stafford and several properties on the market now….. if anyone is looking for a new property! I would personally like to thank Paul, the Village Meeting Clerk, for his hard work and time spent in pulling these village meetings together as this will be his final meeting due to moving onto pastures new. We wish him well.

**4. Minutes of the Parish meeting held on Friday 28th October 2022.**

The minutes were circulated and accepted as an accurate record of the meeting. Proposed by Tim Pryce, seconded by Jacquie Walton.

**5. Vacancies for Parish Meeting Chair and Parish meeting clerk.**

Cllr Sandy Tubby and Dr Paul Thompson will be standing down from their roles after this meeting and further volunteers are urgently needed. The chair position can be taken by the Chair of KPC on a meeting by meeting basis, but a Clerk is needed to organise the meetings. The positions have been advertised on the Noticeboard, and the Village newsletter, Oyez. To date there have been no volunteers. A job description will be circulated with further adverts on the Village website and in Oyez. Thanks from the floor to Sandy and Paul for their work over several years.

**6. Knightsford Parish Council Report (KPC).**

Cllr Gordon Shaw reported KPC have met on 10 occasions since the last Annual meeting in each of three village locations (West Stafford, West Knighton and Tincleton). Various topics have been discussed covering the four villages (3 above and Woodsford). The items concerning West Stafford include planning applications which were generally approved with the exception of an application to build 20 houses on land to the east of Wynd Close, where objections were raised. This application was subsequently rejected by Dorset Council, however, it is believed that an appeal has been raised by the applicant to be held on a date yet unknown. The Neighbourhood Plan update was regularly addressed under the Chair of Cllr Sandy Tubby is on schedule for completion later this year. It was also noted that an amount of CIL Money had been awarded to West Stafford and this will be discussed later in this meeting. We were fortunate that Mrs Hannah Cooke has joined the West Stafford team of councillors, but we are sorry that Cllr Dr Paul Thompson has resigned due to his move from the village, also our Chair Cllr Sandy Tubby will resign due to domestic circumstances and work load, however, she will continue to Chair the Neighbourhood Plan to its conclusion. We do now require two people to fill these vacancies in order to make up the requirement of 4 councillors.This is not a very arduous task and if any one is interested please speak with one of the councillors.

**7. The West Stafford Green**

Cllr Hannah Cooke, Chair, reported that the Green Dowry stood at £34,358.62 on 1st April 2023 with total expenses of £1941.24 for the year.

Cllr Gordon Shaw has stepped down as member and Chair of the committee as well as Cllr Sandy Tubby. Many thanks for their contributions. Hannah Cooke was asked to join and take over as Chair person which she accepted. The current committee is composed of Cllr Hannah Cooke (Chair), Liz Aggett, Karen Jones, Nigel Jones. Emma Selway KPC clerk is responsible for accounts. Jason Braybrook is employed to maintain the Green with a contract until June 2023, thanks to him. The committee members were elected to continue. Cllr Gordon Shaw and Cllr Hannah Cooke are also on the committee in an Advisory Capacity on behalf of Knightsford Parish

Council.

The committee has been discussing future developments to make the Green a better resource for Villagers and generate some income. Current issues include: repairs to the boundary wall (see CIL proposals later), and discussions, to create a useable level area on part of the Green while maintaining an environmentally friendly and attractive outlook for local residents. So far a survey has been undertaken and plans are being drawn up by Ann Balmforth, landscape gardener. Thanks to Ann who has supplied her services free of charge.

**8. Reports by Village Organisations**

 a. Village Hall Management

See report from Adrian Edwards and Richard Bates. Karen Jones, committee member gave a summary. She reported a very successful year with significant fundraising following the Summer Fayre at Stafford House, contributions from Lord and Lady Fellowes and several other parties, fetes and meetings. The funds have enabled several works and renovations keeping the Hall looking fresh and bright. Thanks to all who have taken part. There has been a fair turn-over of committee members including the Chair and Vice chair and several committee members. Please step forward if you would like to help and contact Karen Jones. The overall financial position for 2022 is a net reduction in reserves with an overall balance of approximately £41.000. Details can be obtained from Richard Bates. The current members are as follows: Chair - vacant, Deputy Chair - vacant ,Secretary - Karen Jones, Treasurer - Richard Bates, Bookings Officer - Jim Chamberlain, Jacquie Walton (Events/Fundraising), Sian Edwards, Linda Kemp (Floret Committee), Clive Pearson, Jerry Nash, Phillipa Dobinson and Gail Fenton (Website)

 b. Playing Field Management Committee

Kate Quinney Chair reported that we have had a good year. The CIL monies (see below) have enabled us to purchase some football nets which will be put up shortly for the Summer, and a new baby swing. The baby swing will replace the current swing that has been identified by ROSPA as in need of replacement. The order for the swing has been placed and it should be installed in around 6 weeks. In terms of fundraising we have raised £113.70 from the Christmas Market, £81.00 from carol singing in the village and £45.10 from the Easter Market. We aim to repair the climbing wall with this money as it is rotten and no longer fit for purpose. We plan a play park tidy up on 22nd April where we will paint the Wendy house, pull some weeds and generally ensure the park is looking its best.

 c. Table Tennis Club

Jim Chamberlain reported that he table tennis club has met continuously on a weekly basis since the last report in April 2022. We have more or less returned to pre covid practices, except we still don’t shake hands after games, although that is often partly because of bitterness on the part of the defeated parties. We have had an active membership of 10 and an average attendance of 7-8, so the weekly subscription of £1.50 per member just about covers the cost of hall hire, and tea and biscuits refreshment. Members would as always like to express their gratitude for the excellent facilities made available at the Village Hall.

 d. Short Mat Bowls Club

Jerry Nash reported that the bowls group has 13 members but it has been an unusual year with 2 members having knee operations and another unable to play because of other commitments.  Also, the work on the hall  stopped a couple of meetings. We really need 12 for a full game though still continue to meet if we have at least 8. We have recently put  a notice in the village news letter hoping to attract new members. We successfully applied for grants to get new equipment and we now have an electric mat winder which has made it so much easier to set up and put away the mat. We are also hoping to get a new mat when the need arises.We had a very enjoyable social evening in the autumn where we thanked Pat Cosgrove for all her input into the group as secretary. She was one of the original member, so had been playing for about 30 years, but has had to give it up for health reasons. The current committee members are: Sylvia Kimbrey (Chair), Jerry Nash (Treasurer), Sandra Dines (Secretary) and David Morland (Equipment Officer).

 e. Pilates

From the Village website pilates classes are held every Thursday from 18:30 to 19:30. Pilates can improve your mobility, strengthen your core and generally improve your health and wellbeing. Angela Cuff runs the class (angela.cuff @outlook.com) is a fully qualified instructor with extensive experience of practice and teaching.

 f. Craft Club

Linda Kemp has been running this club successfully now for 3 years. Over that time members have learnt many new skills both from each other and visiting demonstrators. They also have been able to donate over £400 pounds to local charities from the very successful craft sales and coffee mornings.

 g. St Andrews Church Committee

Rev Cora Yarrien explained that now the worst of the Covid epidemic restrictions are over activities at the church had returned to normal. These include Sunday service and services at Christmas and Easter and other holidays, ‘coffee and a chat’ sessions, lunches in the Wiseman (thanks to Philip), the Summer Fete and, of course, several funerals. All activities have been well attended even if the regular congregation is rather small. Some restoration work has been identified in a recent survey and contributions will be sought from the CIL grant (see below).

**9. Reports by Village Representatives**

 a. Rights of Way

Philippa Dobinson and Andy Jordan have taken over from Barbara and Mike Davis. Many thanks to Barbara and Mike for all the work over the years. In September 2022 there were three issues now resolved. 1. Footpath to Lewell mill very overgrown at the Lewell Mill end. Dorset CC attended and cut back the vegetation which  has improved access. 2. Bridleway gate at Frome farm to the tip collapsed. This has been repaired by Stafford Estate. 3. Small bridleway copse after Stafford Farm that leads down into West Knighton. Overgrown and blocked by falling trees was reported and cleared. In the summer just one issue. 1. Bridleway overgrown in the water meadow especially at the far end by the small gate. Stafford Estates did look at this but with the hot weather this mostly resolved itself. Over the winter it’s been relatively quiet. In the high winds last week a tree came down in the bridleway from Six Penny Gate to West Knighton. Andy went and chopped it down with a small chainsaw. Special thanks to Richard Foxell who continues to keep many areas clear and specifically the work with Tim Pryce to improve the visibility for crossing the bypass at the lower end.

 b. Flood Warden

Henry Quinney reported that in November the Dorset Frome begun its response to the heavy rainfall. The Bockhampton Road flooded and was under water to the depth of about 5 inches for a few days. This then receded. This cycle was repeated in December. Although FLOOD signs were deployed either side of the Bridge, many vehicles still ran the gauntlet. This is a very dangerous activity, not only for the vehicle but for the passengers becoming trapped and vehicles being mobilised in fast flowing flood water. I ENCOURAGE EVERYONE TO PLEASE CONSIDER GOING THE LONG WAY ROUND WHEN THIS HAPPENS AGAIN. During the heavy rainfall events in November, the surface water drainage network in West Stafford experienced no major issues. There was quite a flow of water that ran down the main road in West Stafford outside the church and ponded at Barton Close. This soon subsided through the drains and grips by the church with a little assistance from the flood warden, his apprentice (George) and a couple of rakes to move the debris from blinding the drains. There seemed to be no issues from the extra surface water catchment at Shepards Walk. The sandbag store in the village is still available and well stocked should residents require sandbags. Please contact Henry if you would like more information on the flood risk in West Stafford or anything to do with rainfall and river level data.

 c. Neighbourhood Watch

Chas Duerdoth was unable to attend and would like to step down from this role due to pressure of work. In a written report he states that It has been very quiet since the last meeting and I have not been made aware of any trouble. Alison Hart may have more info, but I haven’t contacted her recently. We now have a community Facebook group that will allow villagers to air security concerns. Alas, the Dorset Alert email system seems only to be used by the Dorset PCC as a PR tool, rather than actually alerting us to threats.

 d. Tree Warden

Tim Pryce reported that a number of trees locally have been felled due to Ash die back. We have not seen the end of trees needing to be felled. The Council have been informed about the Ash trees by the Pumping Station ref.no. 1211374. If you have Ash trees on your property do be aware they can become dangerous if Ash die back affects them.

**10. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) grant.**

The CIL grant was provided by DCC from the building of new houses in Shepherd’s Walk. Currently the fund stands at a little over £6056 to be spent on projects that will benefit West Stafford village. After advertising on the Noticeboard, in Oyez, the monthly Newsletter and by word of mouth 7 proposals were received by the closing date of 16th April 2023. Each proposer had submitted a short explanatory bid. These were read by Cllr Tubby and 10 minutes allocated to each for discussion. Once all had been read and discussed those present were asked to vote by a show of hands whether a proposal should be funded or not. It was agreed before the voting that those proposals for lesser amounts would be funded in full and those of larger amounts would receive a contribution equally from the remaining funds. This method was agreed by a show of hands. Here follows a list of the proposal titles, the result of the voting and the amount funded.

A ‘Green Heart for the Village’

For 4, Against 21. Not funded.

Removal of diseased chestnut trees in the Village Hall grounds.

For 25. Against 3. Funded - in full £1400.

Re-thatching of the Village bus shelter

For 21. Against 13. Funded - in full £600.

The West Stafford Community Speed Watch group.

For 17. Against 7. Funded - in full £400.

Repair of the wall fronting the Village Green.

For 19. Against 5. Funded - in full £650.

Refurbish the Village Hall toilets.

For 27. Against 1. Funded - contribution £1500.

St Andrew’s Church Summarised CIL Grant Application 2023

For 17. Against 7. Funded - contribution £1500.

**11. Village Website and Oyez newsletter.**

Karen Jones explained that the website <https://www.west-stafford.com> was now up and running thanks to the work of Gail Fenton (gail.fenton@gmail.com mobile 07841974373) who will continue to manage the site. Please ask Gail to post Village information and many thanks to her.

Adrian Edwards and Major Haynes continue to produce, collate and print the monthly Oyez which is distributed by email and by hand. Thanks to them and the band of delivery helpers.

**12. Any Other Business.**

It was clear from discussions during the meeting that car parking in the Village, especially around the Wiseman, Village Hall and outside Carwise is becoming more and more of an issue. These was concern about the number of cars apparently abandoned in the ‘pull-in’ area in front of the Forge and the difficulty gaining access to houses at the bottom of Manor Drive. It seems timely to establish a working group to take this forward. A small group of volunteers would be needed to carry out a study

The planned festivities for the Kings coronation on the Village Green were advertised. All welcome and see website for details.

The meeting closed at 21.20.

Dr Paul Thompson.

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