

Stoke Holy Cross Parish Council
Annual Parish Meeting 20th April 2023
Parish Council Reports

Chair's Report

Author : Sandy Collins

Key points:

Jim Hopper & Charles Bussey are standing down as Parish Councillors.

Jim has been working on the council for 16 years and Charles has been a councillor for 40 plus years .

on behalf of the whole village I'd like to thank them both for their continued selfless service to the village.

Charles was even involved in the building of this very building in the 80's.

Jim was always the fixit man for the play area and always with a beaming smile!

Both will be hugely missed for their enthusiasm and many hours of voluntary work keeping this village's amenities ticking.

2. 2022 village fete held June 4th to celebrate the Queen's platinum jubilee

- The weather thankfully was amazing and encouraged 100's of people to come along.

- It showed the best of Stoke and the reason why so many love living here, bringing young and old together with :

- a village run

- royal themed scarecrow competition

- dog obedience competitions

- Viking display of blood and gore - firing the imaginations of the younger ones.

- foodie and drinks stalls

- many stalls, some supporting local groups such as the preschool, sparklers, dementia group and the allotment association.

- live music from local musicians

- all topped off with an amazing substantial firework display

The PC we're proud to be able to hold the day without charge , making it accessible for all.

The PC would like to give a huge Thankyou to all of the volunteers to face many hours to plan, organise, and the day as a result of the success plan to hold biannual fete events - next one being 2024!!

3. It's been really encouraging to see the PC working well and closely with other groups within the village examples being:

- 2022 Christmas carolling in the carpark at the Pavilion in partnership with Rob Baker.

- jubilee meadow working group - residents with an interest in nature enhancing our environment for the benefit of both the animals/plants and the human experience .

- community speedwatch team - helping monitor our roads and keep them safe- plug they need more volunteers!! Speak to Stewart Hull if interested.

All of these activities have helped bring people from all backgrounds together that otherwise may never have met.

4. Thanks to DofE and Aviva staff volunteering in 2022, the tots play area for a lick of new stain to brighten the place up . Volunteering will continue this year will a number of year 10 boys volunteering their time for 3 days as part of the work experience scheme and they will be kept busy staining the fence around the car park and re-staining the play area amongst other tasks.

5. I want to take this opportunity to point out how Stoke PC stood out from the crowd by not increasing its' percentage in 2022/2023 Council Tax. This was very much a conscious decision knowing how hard many people have been hit with day to day costs and bills. Poringland increased theirs by 8.7% up on the previous year.

6. I'd like to thank my fellow councillors for their contribution during the last year - for most of the time it is a thankless task and most in the village have no idea what actually goes on behind the scenes .

In addition I'd also like to thank our newish team (they're not new boys anymore!:

- Michael Beckett - caretaker and master handyman

- Dan Wickham - our amazingly knowledgeable and efficient clerk

- Sam Himpleman - Pavilion operative and my son who cleans the hall far better than he cleans his own bedroom!

7. Lastly Charles and Jim's last day on the PC is 9th May , currently the council has 7 councillors but it needs 2 more to cover the next 4 year term wef 10th May - please contact Dan if you are interested .

Thanks Sandy Collins

Planning Committee Report

2022/2023 has been a fairly normal year with the planning applications consisting mainly of extensions and other features to enhance the property.

The only scheme for development has been the allocated land next to Harrold Place which is currently on hold due to the government's concerns over the environment.

We have had two applications for battery storage sites on the edge of the village adjacent to the A140, and two for ground-mounted solar panels.

There are also currently two applications in the system for barn conversions.

The one at Watering Farm is for the renewal of a previously approved application due to be 3 years old in May 2023. The other conversion is of a more concerning application due to location and structure.

I would like to thank all members of the council for their comments over the past year and to Sue Hull who has been having instruction in planning matters and will make a suitable successor to me. I will still be around to offer any assistance if required.

I would like to sign off from the Council which I have served on for about 45 years by saying I have enjoyed them all with many changes over the years.

I have seen the developments at Gravel Hill, Five Acres, Carol Close, Chandler Road, Brickle Road, Broomfield, and Harrold Place all come on stream to change Stoke Holy Cross forever. I think this proves we have had more than our fair share of extra houses.

I will, if required, continue to work with Glyn and Stewart to secure the balance of the funds required to construct the new Pavilion.

In Closing, I would like to thank all the present Council Members and Dan, our Clerk, for their friendship over the past 4 years and especially Sandy who has become a very able Chair.

Thank You

Charles Bussey

Vice Chairman and Chair of Planning Sub Committee

Playing Field Committee Report

Play equipment Long Lane.

Playing Field Committee will submit plans to Parish Council for the fenced play area to be moved during New Pavilion construction.

Due to continued risks highlighted at the annual ROSPA play equipment safety reports for last few years an additional meeting was arranged for Parish Councillors with David Bracey, independent play equipment safety inspector. As a result of this meeting Parish Councillors agreed the removal of the wooden climber and metal gym frame due to identified medium risks. Thank you to Mike Beckett and Parish Council Vice Chair Charles Bussey, Councillors Carlo Iaccarino and Sandy Collins, Parish Council Chairperson, who all helped with removal and making good after removal.

Thank you to Charles Bussey, Vice Chair, who arranged for embankment slide to be mended, safer surfacing was installed around the embankment slide to increase safety and reduce stones and mud on the slide.

All medium risks highlighted in the yearly play equipment safety report have been addressed in the fenced play area, surfaces under play equipment have been improved by additional soil and grass seed. Exposed concrete blocks at 5-a-side goals covered with safer surfacing.

Zip wire bolt sheared through, in April whilst a child was using it, no injury to the child or children close by. However due to age of some of the play equipment all moving bolts to be checked annually and a replacement regime agreed.

The wooden play equipment needs to be stained to ensure preservation of wooden structures (across Long Lane and Carol Close play areas).

Councillor Danny Thomas is leading on MUGA project (agreed at full Parish Council meeting in March) Community Action Norfolk(CAN) previously suggested important to survey village to help evidence support when searching for funding . Danny leading on funding grants search - preferred contractor Sports Courts UK limited. This project will be prioritised over pump park/ BMX track development for cinder path which can be developed alongside the MUGA.

Grass / hedge cutting.

Additional quotes for the contract to cut grass received, changing contract due to some communication difficulties with previous contractor . Last year the football pitch needed to be cut after usual last cut in October due to length of grass on football pitch being too long. Preferred contractor for 2023/24 Ribbonsdale Nurseries.

Tree work.

Trees identified for removal due to safety: 2 poplars, tree close to skate park shelter and some tree stumps, quotes received and preferred contractor identified.

We may need to consider a further tree survey if we have another period of drought this summer.

Increased biodiversity around playing field.

Two longer verges will be left around playing field (verge in front of allotment and verge in front of Pavilion) to encourage plant diversity and food for pollinators .

The grass mound in middle of cinder path will be left uncut . Meadow makers group will cut and rake these areas.

UK Power.

UK Power identified work needed to protect power lines: two trees removed, and trees on verge of Long Lane cut back away from power lines.

Carol Close play area.

This play equipment is of a newer age, however surfaces under play equipment identified as needing attention .

Next Playing field meeting at 7 pm Tuesday 16th May 2023.

Jubilee Meadow Working Group Report

Habitat creation

- Phase One area of the wildflower meadow prepared and sown with green hay (sourced through NWT from Saxlingham Nethergate), Yellow Rattle seed and wildflower mix seed. We have recently confirmed an encouraging amount of Yellow Rattle emerging - this is a vital part of establishing the wildflower meadow as it should suppress the vigorous grasses that currently dominate.
- Additional areas seeded and planted with donated transplants.
- A small 'mini' wildflower area sown at the entrance off the car park.
- Second phase of hedge planting completed with saplings to complete and in-fill the hedge line alongside the Harrold Place boundary.
- Creation of native woodland copse areas around the meadow with saplings from NWT and donations.
- Wildlife homes provided including erection of bird boxes (Owl, tit and Robin), bat boxes, bug boxes as well as brash and log piles. Blue Tits have already been recorded visiting several boxes.
- Foraging strip alongside the meadow hedgerow maintained for small mammals and predators. A Barn Owl has been observed by neighbours hunting along the strip.
- Verges along Long Lane and playing field and flower border in front of car park managed to encourage pollinators.

Habitat management

- Paths created and maintained around the meadow.
- Notices about dog fouling installed.
- Surveys carried out for soil analysis and species including plants, insects, butterflies, birds and reptiles. The meadow has been set-up as a butterfly recording transect under the national UKBMS scheme and regular bird sightings are being logged on the national Birdtrack recording scheme. 14 species of butterfly were recorded during the 2022 transect and to date 47 species of bird have been recorded in 2023.
- An annual Work Schedule has been developed to manage the site.
- Demonstrated the use of willow whips to make tree guards as an alternative to plastic.

Public Engagement

- Noticeboard designed and installed on site.
- Seating provided with two oak benches (sourced from the Ted Ellis Reserve at Wheatfen) and two log circles using locally felled trees.
- Publicity in local newsletters (including front page coverage in Free-for-All), parish notice boards and residents Facebook.
- A dedicated website designed, published and maintained.
- A visitor sketch map of the Meadow designed and made available to view and download on the website.
- Promotion through Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT) Claylands project including a full-page article in the Spring Edition of the NWT Tern magazine and a presentation at the NWT Claylands Conference.

- Public events including public participation in hedge planting, a stall at the Jubilee fete, inclusion in the village Easter Egg hunt and a forthcoming Dawn Chorus event.

Resources

- Grants obtained from South Norfolk Council and The Geoffrey Watling Trust to supplement Parish funding.
- An active group of local volunteers, the Jubilee Meadow Makers, established.
- Donations from individuals including bird boxes, plants and seeds and even chocolate biscuits to keep up the energy levels.
- Publicity design work has been carried out gratis by Jubilee Meadow Maker volunteers.
- Advice, resources and support from the NWT as part of the Claylands project.
- Working Group established to manage the project and oversee the development of the Meadow and associated areas around the playing field and Long Lane.

Looking forward

- Phase 2 plan for developing and extending the wildflower area of the meadow agreed.
- Looking at ways to ensure saplings are watered regularly.
- Plan and deliver more public engagement opportunities and events.
- Manage and monitor existing habitat.

Dave Jones

On behalf of the Jubilee Meadow Working Group & Jubilee Meadow Makers

New Pavilion Working Group Report

- A year of 'Ups and Downs' for the New Pavilion project.
- We reported to the Annual Parish meeting last year that funding for the New Pavilion project was on track and that the Planning Permission was due to be legally commenced.
- A short section of footings for the new hall was therefore installed in late April, and the outstanding pre-commencement planning conditions agreed with South Norfolk Council, so that the project could be commenced once funding was assured.
- Unfortunately, the developer who was due to fund half the cost of the hall decided to withdraw from the project following the introduction of the 'nutrient neutrality development embargo', that was imposed across Norfolk, in the Spring of last year.
- The NPWG therefore urgently investigated further funding sources and asked our architects to find an alternative construction firm to build the New Pavilion. A local firm, Draper and Nicholls, has indicated it would like to take on the project at a competitive price.
- Alternative funding was sought from a variety of sources, including the National Lottery, South Norfolk Council, and several local grant funding organisations. In order to prepare new bids for funding, it was necessary to confirm

that the Village still wanted the new pavilion so a survey of all households in the Village was undertaken in July 2022. This showed that 98% of households who responded, were in a favour of a new Pavilion, and a variety of suggestions were made about how it could be best used.

- Several local funds have indicated that they would in principle provide grants towards a new pavilion as is being proposed in Stoke Holy Cross. The most promising source of alternative funding however is from South Norfolk Council, which potentially could provide matched funding to the money already held by the Parish Council for the New Pavilion.
- South Norfolk Council has commissioned a feasibility study for the new Pavilion utilising grant funding from the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund. The report is in its final stages and is anticipated to demonstrate the need and demand for the new pavilion, as well as the sustainability and viability of the project. South Norfolk Council has said it will be supporting an application to its Co-Investment Fund over the coming months, to secure the existing funding. It is expected that the application will be reported to the Council's Cabinet in mid-June, after which the outcome will hopefully be confirmed. South Norfolk Council has said it will also be supporting an application to the Shared Prosperity Fund for a small grant towards the balance of capital funding, if required.
- We are therefore currently waiting to hear the outcome of this bid, which we understand has a good chance of being successful. If this is the case, work on the new pavilion should commence later this year. If this occurs, the project will move into an exciting new phase, and I would hope that we will be able to invite and encourage parishioners to get involved with the management and running of the new pavilion when it is built.
- Can I again thank all the members of the New Pavilion Working Group, and particularly Charles Bussey and Stewart Hull, for their invaluable work in keeping the New Pavilion project alive and now hopefully on track!

Glyn Davies
Chair – New Pavilion Working Group

Traffic Working Group

The main thrust of this group's work is through the Community Speedwatch Team, which continues to flourish in the village. There are always spaces for new volunteers and a recent advertising campaign actually produced a new volunteer who should be joining us shortly, taking our compliment up to 13.

Speeding in the village is, and always will be a problem. The best we can do is to show our presence as much as possible in order to deter the culprits. The two main problem spots continue to be Poringland Road in Upper Stoke and the area of Norwich Road as you leave the village going towards Norwich. With regards to the latter location I am in the process of having a 30mph repeater sign moved to try and improve this problem and hopefully that will have some effect.

I'd like to take this opportunity to place on record my thanks to all the volunteers who perform this duty, in all kinds of weather, and who selflessly give up their time to try and keep our village a safe place to walk about and drive through.

Stewart Hull