

STRATTON PARISH COUNCIL

Official Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting
held on 16th May 2017 at Stratton Village Hall

Present:

Cllr A Aylott, Cllr C Hobbs, Cllr P Hallett, Cllr H Richardson, Cllr A Wheeler,
D/Cllr T Yarker, and 3 members of the Public.

Welcome

The Chair welcomed all attendees.

1/17. Apologies

Apologies received from C/Cllr J Haynes and D/Cllr F Horsington

2/17. Minutes of last Annual Parish Meeting held on 17th May 2016

The Chairman asked if there were any reasons why the minutes of the meeting of 17th May 2016 should not be signed as a true record. No matters raised, Chairman duly signed and dated the minutes.

3/17. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the meeting on 17th May 2016.

4/17. Chairman's Report 2016/2017

The Parish Council has had a very busy year, and in many ways a sad one. Work has been carried out in many areas, but with a decreasing number of Councillors and the unfortunate death of the Parish Clerk. That has meant considerable pressure on the remaining Councillors to cover gaps and shortfalls. As such, and as has been mentioned at various times during the year, the amount of work and the speed at which we can tackle problems has diminished and the public must accept that position. During the year the Chairman (Mrs Gill Slade) resigned, and right at the end of the year a Councillor (Mr Peter Jackson) resigned, and as mentioned the Parish Clerk (Mr Keith Hawkins) died at end of January. Having said that we welcomed a new Councillor (Mr Alan Wheeler). So only two vacancies to fill, and we hope that members of the public will step forward to fill these gaps to help ensure that we can continue to operate for the benefit of the residents of the Parish.

I said that we have had a busy year, and it is surprising what the width and depth we as a Parish Council have been involved in. Full details of what has occurred will come a little later in this meeting. But, for now I will merely highlight the two major projects which have occurred – that is the completion of the Adventure Play Area and the conclusion of negotiations with Wrackelford Farms Ltd to obtain land for the provision of allotments in the Parish. Both matters were major objectives in the 2015 Parish Plan, and I can report that they have both now been completed. My thanks go to Councillor Gill Slade, Councillor Peter Jackson and Councillor Hannah Richardson for all their work in helping to find grants or raise funds to help pay for the play equipment. Work on gaining land for Allotments has been on-going for some eight years. But I must however, thank Mr Thomas Pope of Wrackelford Farms Ltd for his support and help in concluding this matter.

We act as the access point for many residents of the Parish with the higher levels of local government in Dorset and with many other service providers. Many questions are asked of us, where we will attempt to find the correct contact person, or the current policy followed by those authorities to try and resolve

problems. We cannot always get what we want, but by working positively, we do put over our views. That can be done by us alone, or working as a group of Parish Councils, or working through the DAPTC as a collective voice across the whole of Dorset. A lot of this work is carried out quietly and behind the scenes, but I can assure you it does take place and by remaining positive our comments are appreciated and successes have been achieved.

I refer to other levels of local government in Dorset, many of you will be fully aware of imminent changes to the West Dorset District Council and County Council. What will eventually arrive we do not fully know, but the clear message that has been coming our way for several years is that Parish Councils need to be prepared to do more, and take on more of the services which are likely to be curtailed or dropped by the larger authorities as not being affordable under their severe budget restrictions. That means future pressure on us as a small Rural Parish to do more for ourselves. Considerable work has already started on trying to put us in a more favourable position by holding meetings and talking to neighbouring Parishes to see where and in what way we can work together or share services, or act jointly on any specific problem. Further talks and meetings will occur with our neighbours as the position becomes clearer on what the higher-level authorities will do or not do.

Work on creating our own Web site was concluded during the year, with the inclusion of financial pages as required by the Transparency Regulations for Smaller Authorities, together with basic information regarding the Parish Council, Councillors, areas of responsibilities, and public announcements. I pass on my thanks to Councillor Cheryl Hobbs who took the lead on this project and her hard work in getting items put on the web, and for co-ordinating as and where required with strattondorset.com and Stratton Active e-newsletter. Some problems have occurred with access to the site but, this is being looked at and changes will be made as appropriate.

Various maintenance work has been done on Parish assets, most of this work being done by Councillors themselves, I thank Councillor Peter Hallett for dealing with much of this. Maintenance work is never ending and no doubt Councillors will deal with more items this coming year.

I must pass on my most sincere thanks for the work carried out by the Parish Clerk, even though he was not well during most of the year. We will miss his input and help in getting our procedures correct. Our thoughts go out to his family for their loss.

I remember someone once said what good are Parish Council's, they are too small and run by amateurs. Yes, that is correct, but I have found over many years that those who come forward and volunteer all have a great sense of community spirit and indeed you could say a love for the village and surroundings in which they live. As such, they care and work to improve as much as possible the life of the community.

My final thanks go to Councillor Cheryl Hobbs, for taking up the reigns of acting-Parish Clerk, acting-Chairman and Vice-Chairman for several months and allowing me to remain on an extended holiday in Australia. Although we were in contact through intermittent e-mails she got many matters resolved and dealt with, and I thank her for all the help provided.

5/17. Financial Report 2016/2017

The annual financial statement was presented to the Meeting. This showed a reduction in Income over the previous year, mainly because Grants, Donations and Fund raising for the Adventure Play Area had ceased on completion of that project. Overall income had reduced by £1,101, down to £20,060. Expenditure during the year had also reduced, again for the same reason, a reduction of £4,964 down to £21,660. General Administration of the Parish and its day to day needs had increased slightly by £340 to £4,215. Overall, a deficit position of £1,603 had occurred on the year. With balances held reducing to £39,200.

Details on the Balance Sheet and supporting Notes were shown and explained to the Meeting.

See attachments for copies of the Accounts, Balance Sheet and supporting Notes

6/17. Extraordinary Activities carried out by the Parish Council during the Year

The Chairman gave an outline of all the matters the Parish Council had been involved with during the year. The vast majority of these were in fact not connected with the day to day normal duties of the Parish. Thanks were given to all Councillors for their work in helping to achieve all that had been done – especially as the Council had for most of the year been one Councillor short, and at times two Councillors short.

Achievements had been:

Completion of Adventure Play Area
Conducted a Speed Survey
Conducted a competition for a poster covering Road Safety
Investigated setting up a Community Speed Watch group
Arranged a Public Beacon event celebrating the Queen's 90th birthday
Arranged and held an Activities Fair for all Parish Social Groups
Set up a Parish Council Web site
Set up financial systems to adhere to the new Transparency Code for Parish Councils
Conducted discussions with strattondorset.com to agree/confirm best way of passing information between each other where it was required
Carried out direct maintenance work on play area on Village Green, on Village Green itself, on Noticeboards and Seat by the Village Hall, Noticeboard at Grimstone, and Bus Shelter at Manor Close
Held a Village Spring Clean event
Held detailed discussions with Wrackelford Estates re provision of allotments in Parish, and concluded a lease agreement with them
Held public meetings and encouraged the setting up of an Allotment Society
Carried out consultations over various changes to Bus services
Carried out consultations over flooding issues
Carried out consultations on sewerage on roads and private properties
Arranged with Highways Authority for creation of a Disabled Access ramp to Village Green
Arranged with Highways Authority for various road/kerb/flooding problems to be dealt with including re-surfacing work
Carried out discussions with Wrackelford Estates to create a new footpath
Organised an outdoor Carol Service in-conjunction with the Saxon Arms
Carried out discussions on a new memorial to recognise the Wrackelford Auxiliary Unit
Attended a number of County wide conferences and seminars with various Statutory Bodies
Involved with consultations regarding the Mobile Library Service
Held meetings with other Parish Councils on possibilities of sharing or combining services in future years
Had to deal with the resignation of the Parish Chairman and the unfortunate death of the Parish Clerk, and being one and at times two Parish Councillors short
Carried out consultation of public concerns on removal of Red Telephone Box
Carried out consultation of public concerns on Dogs on the Playing Field and fouling matters
Carried out consultation and involved with a Householders request to remove Noticeboards
Continue to review recommendations set out in the 2015 Parish Plan
Created two new Councillor specific duty areas – Maintenance and Communication
Liaised and discussed with Wrackelford Estates work on trees outside of the Church
Introduced a new procedure dealing with Section 137 Grants. Resulting in six grants being made
Created and adopted a Trees Policy
Met with and discussed action by a Householder on cutting back trees which belonged to the Parish
Created and adopted a Safe Guarding of Children's Policy
Created and adopted an Equalities Policy

7/17. Questions from the Public

The Chairman requested whether there were any questions from the public with regard to the finances or activities carried out by the Parish Council over the past year.

Mr M Jury passed on the thanks of the Stratton (Dorset) Allotment Society for all the hard work put in by the Parish Council in obtaining land for allotments.

Mrs M Putnam said she was surprised by the amount of various activities carried out by the Parish Council and that this information should be published for all in the Parish to see.

There were no further questions.

8/17. Date of next Annual Parish Meeting

The date of the next Annual Parish Meeting was set as Tuesday 15th May 2018 at 19:00.

The Meeting closed at 19:40.