

STRATTON PARISH PLAN

2015





STRATTON PARISH PLAN REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Parish Plans were established by the Government in 2000 through the Rural White Paper “Our Countryside, The Future”, in which it proposed that all rural communities develop Parish Plans to address the needs of their community. Parish Plans not only help to identify a range of social, economic and environmental matters that are considered important to the local community but an adopted Parish Plan is also strong evidence in making funding bids for community based projects.

Stratton Parish Council published its first Parish Plan in Spring 2006. The Plan reflected the needs of the Parish as identified by the villagers in October 2004, collated by way of a questionnaire and three open evenings. It acknowledged that it was a snap shot in time and that the needs of the Parish would change over time.

Subsequently the Parish Council has undertaken a number of reviews of the progress of the actions identified in the Plan.

In 2014 it was recognised that it was over 10 years since the residents had been formally asked for their views about the Parish, and the Parish Council established a small working group comprised of members of the Council and volunteers in order to undertake a new review. The group adopted the jigsaw theme to reflect the variety of different issues in the Parish Plan, and also to convey that everyone in the Parish had the opportunity to 'have a say', resulting in a composite picture of the residents' views.

The Process of Reviewing the Parish Plan 2014/15

In the spring of 2014 the Parish Council called for volunteers from the village to join a working group to oversee and undertake a review of the Parish Plan

The working group circulated a questionnaire around the Parish in the summer of 2014

Feedback was collected, analysed and summarised

Two open meetings were held in the autumn for parishioners to read and comment on the findings of the survey

The outcomes of the above exercise were presented to Stratton Parish Council in January 2015 with draft proposals for improvement

A further open meeting was held to allow parishioners to comment on the findings of the review before it was finalised.

The final version of the Review was presented to Stratton Parish Council at its meeting in March, for formal adoption by the Council.

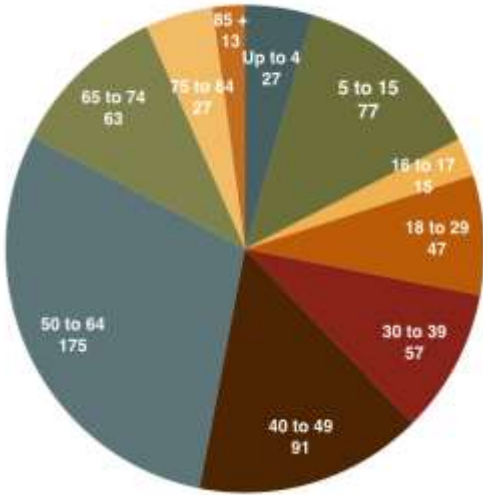
WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THE PARISH?

The Census in 2011 provides us with a valuable insight into the nature of the population in the Parish and can offer pointers as to where the Parish Plan can look to develop initiatives.

The Parish has a significant proportion of young families (one in four households have dependent children). This illustrates the 'rounded' nature of the community and may well provide opportunities for development of the Parish Plan looking at additional facilities for younger people.

Fig.1

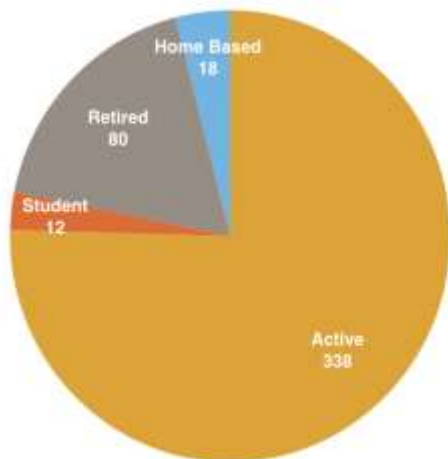
Resident Numbers by Age Groups



Stratton is a working parish - 75% of the population are economically active and the proportion of retired residents is somewhat smaller than the average for the District or County. This may have an impact on the time available for residents to give over to parish led events. Certainly the timing of these events would need to be considered.

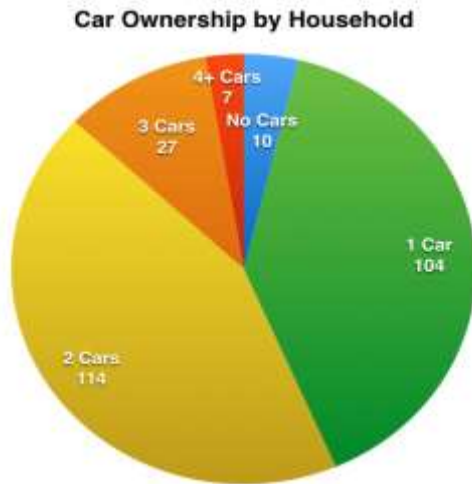
Fig.2

Economic Activity Aged 16 to 64



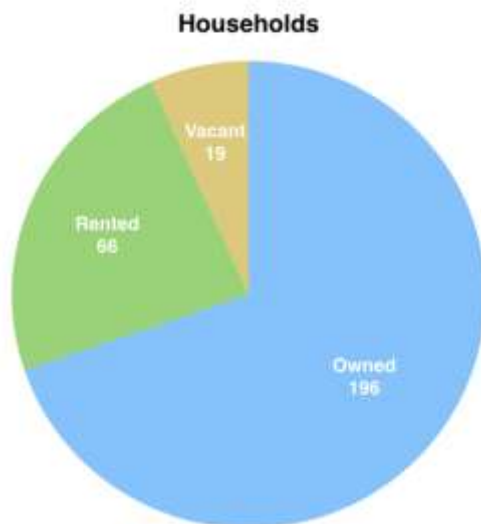
The proportion of households without a car is very low in the Parish; however, 40% of households have one car, and with the reduction in bus services from the parish this may lead to opportunities for further development of the existing Community Transport Scheme.

Fig.3



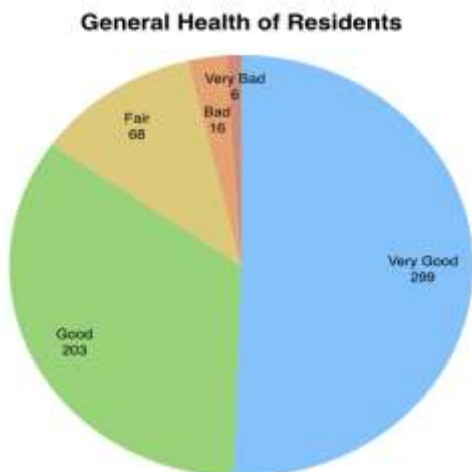
The Parish has a very low proportion of social/affordable housing when compared to the District and County as a whole and although not in the remit of a Parish Plan it is certainly a stand-out issue from the Census data and may well lead to further consideration.

Fig.4



The general health of residents is overall considered to be good or very good, but a small proportion feel their health is poor. This will have implications for the future care and support of these residents. In addition one in eight of the people in the Parish describe themselves as unpaid carers (i.e. people who care for a family member or friend). This is a significant proportion and may well provide opportunities within the Parish Plan looking at providing help for carers (Carers Clubs etc.).

Fig.5



Three quarters of the Parish residents describe their religious belief as Christian, although this does not detail which denomination or whether they attend church regularly but this is a high level when compared to West Dorset or Dorset and could certainly be of importance for Church led events.

WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THE SURVEY AND PUBLIC MEETINGS?

During the summer of 2014 the working group distributed surveys to every household in the Parish and subsequently held three open evenings to publicise the results of the survey and give residents an opportunity to review the outcomes and make further suggestions for change.

277 surveys were distributed, and 129 were returned, achieving a response rate of 47%. The three open meetings were attended by approx. 90 people.

The results were analysed under the following main themes:

Communications: how do residents routinely obtain information about what is going on in the Parish?

Environment: covering issues such as parking, speeding and street lighting.

Maintenance: of the village green, recreation ground and other areas.

Facilities: including public transport, the village hall, village green, footpaths and rights of way.

Sports: looking at the usage of the sports and play facilities.

Recreation: including feedback on existing events and suggestions for future activities.

A summary of the feedback is provided below, together with suggestions for improvement where appropriate.

COMMUNICATIONS

Introduction:

In 2006 it was agreed that the Parish Council should consider developing a website for the Parish. This was initially supported and funded by the Council but it has since been agreed that an independent website (www.strattondorset.com) should be developed. This is very successful and receives an average of over 50 unique visits per day. Facebook and Twitter accounts now augment the website with over 200 friends and over 700 followers respectively.

A regular newsletter, the Stratton Herald, was established and funded by the Parish Council in direct response to the outcome of the first Parish Plan but eventually withdrawn due to a lack of contributors. A Parish-wide e-mail (StrattonActive) has been introduced, which is used to quickly publicise notices, currently to approximately 140 households. The Home Watch (Neighbourhood Watch) e mail has continued to provide valuable information regarding community safety to the Parish.

Response:

The main issues raised in the survey were:

- Most people (92% of respondents) receive their information about the Parish via the Chalk Stream.
- They also receive information from:
 - Neighbours and friends (62%)
 - StrattonActive e-mail (58%)
 - Notice boards and bus shelters (54%)
 - House mailings (50%)
 - Stratton Dorset website (48%)

Additional feedback at the public meetings included strong appreciation for The Chalk Stream and the introduction of StrattonActive. Suggestions were also made that there should be:

- Contact numbers for all the groups operating in the Parish
- A summary/diary of forthcoming events in one place
- All communications should be timely including feedback from Parish Council decisions

Proposals for Improvement

- Enhance list of contact numbers currently printed in The Chalk Stream to include all clubs and activities
- Discuss with The Chalk Stream editorial team regarding the provision of a list of forthcoming events
- Consider preparing a summary of outcomes of Parish Council meetings to be published in The Chalk Stream
- Improve the maintenance and increase the use of the various notice boards available throughout the Parish

ENVIRONMENT

Introduction:

In 2006 issues such as parking, speeding, road noise and street lighting were highlighted. A number of communications were issued by the Council to promote considerate parking and safe

driving through the village and it continues to monitor the visibility at road junctions throughout the village, in liaison with the Highways Department.

Response:

The main issues raised in the survey were:

- Strong feelings of a community spirit with immediate neighbours (87%) and across the village (77%)
- Strong feelings of being part of the village (76%)
- And extremely strong feelings of being safe (95%)
- Concerns over the speed of traffic in Stratton, and calls for a 20mph speed limit (57%)
- Inappropriate car parking in some areas of the village
- A mixed response with regard to street lighting, with comments that it was too bright in some areas and too dark in others. However, there were strong views that the street lights should be switched off after midnight. Those who commented were either happy with the status quo or would like less lighting in the village (78%)
- Concerns over flooding on the A37 at Ash Hill and the consequent disruption/risk to health
- Inappropriate use of bonfires in gardens
- Dog fouling on the village green, recreation ground and footpaths. Residents are still concerned about the dog owners who allow their dogs to mess in inappropriate areas (56%)

All the above items were supported at the public meetings.

Proposals for improvement

- Circulate notice to all households/ pub/ village hall regarding the need to reduce speed
- Liaise with Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) and Dorset County Council to acquire SIDs (Speed Indicator Devices) for permanent use in the village
- Investigate requirements for 20mph speed limit
- Liaise with PCSO regarding what action might be taken regarding inappropriate parking
- Publicise the arrangements by West Dorset District Council to action the turning off of street lights after midnight
- Continue dialogue with the Highways Agency regarding A37 flooding issues
- Circulate notice to all households with national guidance regarding the use/risks of bonfires
- Circulate notice to all households regarding dog fouling

MAINTENANCE

Introduction:

The previous Plan called for the Council to monitor the drainage of the playing field, which it has continued to do; however it is acknowledged that the field is a flood alleviation area and can never be totally drained. The Council has continued to monitor the condition of the cycle paths and to report any maintenance problems to DCC.

The Council was also tasked with implementing and maintaining additional planting around the village green and playing field, which it completed during 2006/07, and ongoing maintenance is regularly undertaken. Additional litter bins at the eastern end of the village, near the bus shelters, were also provided.

Response:

The main issues raised in the survey were:

- Generally people felt it was a well-kept village (72%)
- The village green is greatly valued (71%), however, a third of respondents commented that regular tree and hedge trimming is needed
- The village hall is also greatly valued (71%), but there were a number of comments that the exterior and surrounding garden areas were becoming shabby
- Maintenance of the grass verge in the centre of the A37 at Ash Hill and the eastern end of Stratton needs to be maintained to ensure visibility
- And similarly ongoing hedge trimming is needed to ensure a safe exit from The Rise.
- The bus shelter at Ash Hill is overgrown and vandalised
- Suggestions that residents should be encouraged to maintain the exterior of their own premises including weeding pavements and gutters.

Additional feedback at the public meetings included strong support for the need to prune the trees around the village green and also for the maintenance issues at The Rise and the A37. Other suggestions included:

- The size of the trees outside the church should be reduced
- The clearing of leaves in the turning area at the recreation ground
- The clearing of drains in Dorchester Road and the A37 to prevent flooding.

Proposals for improvement

- Seek professional guidance on scale and extent of tree pruning possibilities, and include in maintenance contract for the village green.
- Refer to Village Hall Committee the issues regarding the maintenance of the village hall
- Liaise with DCC Highways Dept. regarding regular trimming of the grass verges on A37 and The Rise
- Commission repair work to the bus shelter at Ash Hill, including removal of overhanging brambles and clearance of graffiti

FACILITIES

The main items raised in the 2006 Parish Plan concerned a post office and village shop, and a Doctor's surgery. However, these were considered to be non-viable as the Parish is not large enough to sustain these facilities. However it was suggested that approaches be made to relevant agencies to encourage visits from screening services, and this needs to be re-visited.

Response:

The main issues raised in the survey included:

- The village hall is seen as an asset and much appreciated (71%)
- The village green is a good amenity but could be used more for events, e.g. the summer hog roast and music event (71%)
- The church is recognised as a key part of the village (64%)
- The bus service is inadequate (49%), and there is a need for a community transport scheme
- Mixed views about the footpaths – with suggestions for more access for walks around and near the village and better maintenance of the footpaths
- 24%run a business from home

- News required regarding the outcome of the recent survey by Bradford Peverell regarding the potential for re-opening the railway halt at Ash Hill.

At the open meetings, there was strong support for more and clear information on the bus timetables, and also for more information on the railway halt issue.

Proposals for improvement

- Provide more publicity (via Chalk Stream) about the community transport scheme initiated by Sydling St Nicholas but seeking to expand in to Stratton
- Liaise with Stratton Summer Fayre Committee regarding the possibility of future events on the Green
- Publicise bus timetable in appropriate places
- Contact Bradford Peverell Parish Council for outcome of railway halt survey and publish result
- Liaise with Wrackelford Estates regarding the possibility of any additional footpaths

SPORTS

One of the key actions arising from the 2006 Plan included improved access to the tennis/football nets and line marking equipment for the recreation ground. Tennis nets were subsequently made available from a local resident, but football nets were not available for the existing posts.

The Parish Council was also tasked with encouraging the setting up of a fundraising committee/working group to oversee the current use and future development of the playing field, including a dedicated skate park and low level lighting. It was also intended to carry out a feasibility study and fundraise as appropriate for an adventure playground on the playing field. The working group was initially established, but did not continue due to lack of support.

Suggestions were also made that fencing might be introduced for the tennis courts. This was considered in 2008 but rejected as it was non-viable financially.

Response:

The main issues raised in the survey included:

- The children's play area on the village green is greatly appreciated (45%). Comments were received that there was a need for seating for parents (Note: this is already being progressed by the Parish Council) and also the fence needs fixing
- There is a need for play equipment for older children – a petition to that effect has already been submitted to the Parish Council
- The recreation field is under-used, but recreation and dog/walking areas should be segregated
- The Boules events were appreciated.

There was strong support at the open evenings for the need for play facilities for older children, and the creation of more routes/authorised paths for dog walkers.

Proposals for improvement

- Establish working group to explore possibility/costs of play equipment for older children on the recreation ground, and support them to explore funding opportunities.
- Work with Stratton Summer Fayre Committee to explore the possibility of funding for the children's play areas
- Consider options for segregating dog walking/play areas on recreation ground

RECREATION

The need for greater publicity and promotion of events at the village hall was identified in the 2006 Plan and this continues to be an ongoing issue for the Village Hall Committee. The Committee was also asked to investigate the possibility of becoming an "Artsreach" venue – this was initially rejected by Artsreach because of the acoustics in the hall, but the Committee will keep this suggestion in mind for the future.

Response:

The main issues raised in the survey included:

- There should be more summer events on the village green
- The need to explore the possibility of regular social activities for older people
- Similarly for the under 25s
- Requests for feedback on the outcome of the search for allotments.

At the open meetings, there was support to increase use of the village green. Suggestions were also made, in relation to the need for more activities for older people, for a "coffee and cake" morning once a week in the pub. It was also suggested that there should be an Activities Fair held in the village hall so that all the clubs and societies in the village could "showcase" their activities.

Proposals for improvement

- Liaise with Partnerships for Older People (POPPS) Wayfinder Service regarding options for social activities for older people
- Write to all clubs and societies in the village to seek support for an Activities Fair - this might also generate further discussion of activities for under 25s
- Provide update via Chalk Stream/Stratton website regarding allotments.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The Survey and the open meetings encouraged parishioners to put forward any other suggestions for improvement. These ideas have not been included in the above main issues, but are worth some further consideration.

Environment

One idea was to develop footpaths into nature trails with information posts on local wildlife. Another was to have a Dog Warden visit the village to assist with dog control. It may be worth looking at the feasibility of both these ideas in the future.

Maintenance

Perhaps consideration should be given to having a “village warden” to assess any problems arising across the village and report back to the Parish Council for action.

There was also concern over the condition of our rivers and drains, both of which require better maintenance to help alleviate flooding.

Facilities

A couple of suggestions were made in connection with the Church. Some felt that a Sunday school might encourage young people to attend church. There was also a request to have Holy Communion (BCP) in Stratton at 10.30am once a month.

A proposal was made to have a First Responder in the village, with perhaps a defibrillator in the village hall for medical emergencies.

Recreation

Although people were generally satisfied with the various events taking place in the village, it was felt that there is room for some additional activities. One idea is to have a village social club in the village hall.

As the summer Hog Roast on the village green had been extremely successful there was a feeling that similar events would be appreciated, for example open-air concerts and plays. In addition, some might welcome travelling theatre shows in the village hall.

Moving forward with these ideas

In order to assess whether these suggestions are viable and move some of these ideas forward, the involvement of more of the residents of the Parish will be needed. If you would be willing to volunteer to help with any of the above projects please contact the Parish Council or any members of the Working Group to discuss the next steps to make some of these ideas become reality.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the following people for their support in undertaking this review:

- The parishioners who completed the survey questionnaire and attended the open meetings
- The Working Group members: Chris Boulton, Joyce Dillon-White, Matt Garner, Tracy Hughes, Jenny Hunt, Pete Jackson, Gill Slade, and Malcolm Wilson.