

**Minutes of the Annual Stoke Hammond Parish Meeting held on  
Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022 at 7pm**

Present: Cllr Newing (Chair), Cllr Noble, Cllr Humphreys, Cllr Sharkey, Cllr Venn, Joanna Simonds,  
Clerk & RFO, Unitary Cllr, Phil Gomm & 8 members of the public

**1) Apologies for absence**

Cllr Craig Champion and Cllr Stephen McNally

No apologies received from any of the community organisations

**2) To receive reports and matters arising:**

*Report of the Chairman of the Parish Council covering the activities of the Parish Council*

Last May, first time for a while, the Parish Council was subject to a formal election with 12 candidates standing for the 7 councillor posts. The outcome created brand new Parish Council with limited experience, 6 of the councillors having less than 12 months previous service. However, there was a desire on behalf of them all to address the role with enthusiasm and a desire to make a contribution towards improving the Parish on behalf of all parishioners.

The Council entered the year with a number of key objectives:

1. To maintain prompt and effective responses to Parishioners concerns. And the maintenance of local infrastructure/services.
2. To address the ongoing concerns with Traffic within the Village particularly speeding.
3. In the light of the finally agreed Vale of Aylesbury Plan, to consider the further protection that might be afforded by developing a Neighbourhood Plan.
4. To support and implement activities that would add to and build a sense of Community across the entire Parish, and to look at how S106 money might be best spent to support this

The first of these has really been a continuation of the good work carried out by earlier parish councils. With the aid of Parishioner input on a weekly/monthly basis, in particular frequently the hardy souls that attend our monthly meetings we have been able to address most issues promptly. I know my fellow councillors will agree that this is in no small part due to our Clerk, Jo Simonds, who should be congratulated on her efficiency and ability to respond to all requests in a fast and effective manner. Occasionally the outcomes take longer than we would wish but this is normally due to matters beyond our control. Nevertheless, visitors to the area lost but approaching down the Newton Road now know that they are entering the village of Stoke Hammond !! The bollards on the Green were straightened and added to, additional posts were put up by the garages on Bragenham Side to prevent parking issues, the water pump has been not just replaced but enhanced, some of the main potholes have been fixed temporarily or permanently, Gigaclear spent some months in the village with minimum disruption, concerns about paths and footways have been dealt with, all of these are examples of the work that Jo does as a matter of course. My assertion that this is largely an area of success for the Council is I think supported by the fact that we have had no serious complaints to manage during the 12 months just passed.

Speeding on the other hand is perhaps our one area of disappointment. Concerns are frequently raised, and we knew that action was necessary. We were slow to get started initially due to a misunderstanding that there was going to be a Council Wide initiative in which we could partake. This is in fact not the case although one councillor is pressing for greater use of 20mph speed limits, and we have written to him giving our support. In the last 3 months we determined to purchase 3 new solar-powered speed signs and we hope to get Council authorisation for their installation shortly.

Planning is an important are for the Council to deal with and which is on our agenda monthly. During the past year we have tried to improve the process so residents are aware as soon as we are of applications. We advertise them on Facebook and instigated a councillor check that yellow notices are posted on time and appropriately. This followed a very helpful input from a parishioner who was unaware of an application affecting them due to a failure in the planning process. We address applications with a view to objecting purely on the basis of planning grounds. In the past year we have reviewed 26 applications that covered 17 sites as some applications come back after a refusal. We opposed 12 and offered no objection on 14, of these 12 were refused, 10 accepted and 4 remain outstanding. Encouraging evidence that we appear to understand planning rules fairly well.

We concluded during the year that there was a benefit to the Parish in adding a Neighbourhood Plan as a further layer to the Planning Policy which would afford an opportunity for Parishioners to impact the process when developers come looking for additional sites within the Parish. The AV Plan was finally agreed and within that Stoke Hammond was designated a medium size village without the need for further development, please note this takes into account the land off Fenny, the Mellows and the final Brook Farm developments. However, Bucks will be creating their own development plan and this is firmly expected to introduce additional pressure on the North of the County because of the Ox – Cam expected development, the growth of MK and the fact that much of Southern Bucks is designated Green Belt. Consequently, we have created a steering group with over 50% of the team from outside the Parish Council and they will develop the plan that will be presented to Parishioners towards the back end of the next 12 months.

With respect to our efforts to improve our sense of community there are 3 specific items I would like to mention. Firstly, thanks to the hard work and focus of a Parishioner, Nick Ellins, we were able to support a formal recognition of the part RAF Stoke Hammond played in the history of our Parish. I hope this will be the first such event that allows us to recognize and be proud of the History of Stoke Hammond. We held a ceremony on the green that was well attended, involved the RAF cadets and were pleased to welcome our local MP Greg Smith to carry out the unveiling of the commemorative plaque, one of 3 now in the Parish marking the role of RAF Stoke Hammond.

Secondly the Parish Council is giving its full support to the Jubilee Celebrations that will take place on every day of the 4 day Bank Holiday weekend in June. Some people have suggested that maybe this is taking on too much, however the organizing committee was keen to mark this memorable event for the Queen with opportunities for all 1400 Parishioners to come together and enjoy a true Community weekend. We look forward to many parishioners joining together for a weekend of fun and thanks to Queen Elizabeth for her 70 years service.

Thirdly we have introduced a process for all community groups to approach the Parish Council to support their activities. We thought this was fair and important to provide the same opportunities to any representative group adding to our sense of Community.

I'd like to finish by focusing on the future and the challenges ahead for the parish Council over the next 12 months.

Firstly I'm conscious of not having said much specifically about Newton Leys. The number of Parishioners in the Parish from Newton Leys is now significant, approximately 40% of our total. They provide a significant contribution to the Council funds and as yet we have been unable to share this with them, as they remain the responsibility of the developers, which may continue for sometime. We are providing a noticeboard, would like to provide a defibrillator and are doing everything we can to include them in the social life of the village. We have been lucky to have Steve McNally on the Council for the past 18 months and he has worked hard in supporting the community, with issues such as the playground, which he managed to get opened after it had been closed for many months. We will need to focus on our responsibilities to Newton Leys Parishioners increasingly.

An early part of the Neighbourhood Plan was to complete a Scoping Survey to help the Steering Group to ensure the areas to be focused on were in line with the concerns of the Parishioners. At the same time we took the opportunity ask people about the current Community infrastructure and resources, specifically the Sports Club, Community Centre and the Bragenham Side Field. The response provided a clear indication that both the Community Centre and Sports Club provided much valued contributions to the Community however both have shortcomings in terms of size and availability to serve the size of community we now have. We have focused initially on the Neighbourhood Plan but the next 12 months will need to provide a much greater focus on how we improve our facilities and how we spend the S106 money going forward.

Finally I'd like to end by thanking Damian Willingale for the time he spent this year on the Parish Council. He was fundamental to the setting up of the Neighbourhood Plan Project and in establishing our relationship with our consultant Neil Homer. He unfortunately had to resign due to family commitments and we wish him well in his future home. The upside however is we have now added Craig Champion to the Council team and as a resident of Newton Leys this makes good sense given the parishioner population.

### **Village Show by Chris Page**

Hopefully people are aware of the show, but just a refresher:

- started in 2014 with a group of 6 people, wanting a party for young to old.
- The committee funded it themselves in the first year and made enough surplus to pay back the committee and fund the entire show the following year.
- There's been a show every year except 2020
- Instigated the scarecrow competition in 2021 with a fantastic 30 entries
- In 2021 we saw 700 people throughout the day
- In 2022, there were 25 stalls, a dog show, bar, BBQ, competition tent, raffle, games corner and more, all for just a £2 entry.
- The AIMS of the show are: (i) to keep the "village feeling" as the village grows and keep that community spirit. (ii) to be able to self-fund for longevity – we now own 3 marquees, a bbq and a bar (iii) to be able to contribute to the village, having already funded the village beacon), and (iv) to rent out the bar and tents.
- Continue to support it this year and hope it will be bigger and better than ever and just to finish, a few thanks to the Parish Council for helping, to the Community Association for allowing us to use their building, and last year they waived all fees, to Kutty, in the village store who has supported us unbelievably every year from day one, and the volunteers from Thursday through Sunday. It just doesn't happen without the volunteers, putting up massive marquees is not easy, but lastly a big thank you to the Committee, who start at the beginning of April and see it right through to the close, and to Jo, for running the website. We have had bigger committees in the past but sadly some people have had to drop off, without those we have though, it simply wouldn't happen as those dedicated individuals drive it entirely.

### **Gardening Club – Eileen Curry**

After two years of inactivity, we were wondering how things would go when we started up again with our AGM in March. No need to worry – there was standing room only and 84 members joined or re-joined on the night with enquires still coming in. It was great to see everyone, and we were pleased to note that there were quite a few new residents signing up. Our programme for 2022 is being planned – kicking off with the Afternoon Tea and Plant Swap at the end of May and our first "trip out" a month later. We will of course, be continuing our support of village events and are in touch with other Gardening Clubs eg Wing, Soulbury to recommend outings, speakers etc. So, delighted to report that all is well and thriving.

### **Book Club – Eileen Curry**

Jo asked me to say a few words about the Book Club. It is mostly organised by Margaret Owen of Phoebes Orchard where are meetings are held. It has been going for over 4 years now and we meet once a month. We like to think that belonging to the Club encourages us to read books that we otherwise would not get down from the shelf – and, of course, discuss them.

Our numbers have to be restricted as the books are provided by the library so there is a limit on how many we can have – however, we have a very loyal membership and a waiting list ready should we have a vacancy.

### **St Luke's Church – Read by Hazel Turner, on behalf of Diane Webber**

Monthly Community Breakfasts continued to take place during the year outside of the lockdown period. They were usually very well supported with villagers saying how much they were missed. In addition to the obvious social function (particularly important for those who live alone), these served as an opportunity to promote services, invite people to church events, donate to our food bank, and to submit prayer requests. Villagers were also able to speak personally to the Rector socially, or on personal matters. The Rector's regular attendance was much appreciated. Many thanks for their success go to the Webber family, particularly Dave and his 'army' of helpers, many of whom have no other connection with the church.

A Benefice Lent course took place on Zoom and covered the Diocesan resource 'Come and See' based on the 'Pilgrim journeys' book by the Bishop of Oxford and was fairly well attended. Afternoon teas were again held in the church in August and September. These were quite well supported by the local community who enjoyed the opportunity to mix with each other. The church was beautifully decorated for the Harvest festival in early October, and was followed by the Harvest lunch, which was

very well attended, particularly by non-churchgoers. The Christmas Tree festival was held in December and was hailed as 'the best ever!' Many thanks to Hazel Turner for arranging this event and involving a number of village organisations thereby enhancing our relationships with them.

Our 'Carol singing on the Green' was well, but less, supported than in previous years. We were most grateful to those who attended for following social distancing guidelines, standing in their family groups and apart from others. Many thanks are again due to John Wearinouth for playing his keyboard and acting as MC, and to those who donated mince pies.

The Food Bank continued to run, supported by a number of villagers offering to sponsor the purchase of food thus helping the continuation of this service without the burden falling solely upon church members. There is also a food collection point available at each Community Breakfast. The Toy exchange scheme in the church porch has also continued.

The bi-monthly village newsletter (Stoke Hammond and Newton Leys South News) has continued, and Diane Webber has submitted regular reports to update the community on church matters. A leaflet was delivered around the village at Christmas with a seasonal message from the Rector, and advertising church services and events.

Terry Turner has continued to mow and carry out maintenance of the churchyard on a voluntary basis, only requiring reimbursement for the running costs of his ride-on mower and necessary materials. We are all extremely grateful to Terry. The annual grant of £500 was received from the Parish Council towards churchyard costs. Thank you Parish Council.

Outstanding matters which will need to be addressed in due course, and when it is appropriate to proceed are: (i) The Church Path needs urgent attention as it is potted and uneven. During the year quotations were obtained for the work, and the lowest was accepted in the sum of £10600 plus vat. It is hoped that a grant towards the cost can be obtained from Bucks County Council Local Community Board. The local coordinator has confirmed, after a visit, that 'the project could be considered given that it is open to and would benefit the whole community'. (ii) The Church heating system needs modernisation. The current overhead heaters do not provide sufficient heat colder weather. (iii) The 2018 Quinquennial Church Inspection identified works estimated to cost some £36k. Progress regarding these has been delayed, both by the pandemic and the need to appoint a new architect: Adrian Ringrose. It is hoped that he has familiarised himself with the Church and the Report, work can commence with preparation of contracts and obtaining quotations for the necessary remedial works.

St Luke's gives to charities when finances allow; this being a part of the witness of the church. The collection (£58) at The Remembrance Service, together with the proceeds of the November Community breakfast (£192-67) and a contribution from ITch funds (£7.33), was donated to The Royal British Legion. The Christingle Service collection of £63.25 plus a contribution from church funds of £36.75 was donated to The Children's Society. At the close of the year, it was decided to donate a further £500 to charity. £100 was given to each of: The Bucks Historic Churches Trust; Embrace the Middle, Willen Hospice, The DEC Afghanistan appeal, The Prison Fellowship.

The Church Council needs to organise events in an endeavour to raise funds to enable it to pay its bills, notably the Parish Share and Insurance. All fundraising receipts, therefore, go into the Church's General Fund, and if there is a surplus of receipts over payments at the close of the year then consideration is given as to the disposal of that surplus. Most of the surplus is transferred to the Restoration Fund to build this up for future works. There is a Gift Day each year specifically for the Restoration Fund; this is held on or about the time of the Patronal Festival (St Luke's) Day. This year the amount raised (inc tax) was £2103. A further £169 is due in 2022 due to an error by HMRC.

The events, themselves, form part of the outreach programme and enable church members and friends to meet socially with villagers in a relaxed and happy way; this applies particularly to the Community Breakfast occasions, but applies to other events too, where it is possible to talk about church matters and faith in a more 'matter of fact' way.

Fundraising in 2021 was remarkably good despite the continuation of some covid restrictions. Community Breakfasts were able to resume in September. These proved, again, to be very

popular. There is no charge for the breakfast. There is, however, a donations basket for those who wish to make a contribution to the work of the church. These amounted to £640.

Once again, our Churchwarden, Harry Davies, took part in the annual Bucks Historic Churches Trust 'Ride and Stride' event. Harry raised £162.50 for the Restoration and Repairs Fund; well done Harry. Diane Webber and John Bowler grew plants (including tomatoes, bedding, perennials, and planted hanging baskets and containers), and these were offered for sale by donation on tables at the gate of John Bowler's bungalow. Honesty envelopes were provided to enable purchasers to donate. Donations received were £569.

It was possible this year to organise a selection of the usual events, and grateful thanks go to Dave and Diane Webber, Harry Davies, and to any other helpers for organising and helping at these. The main events included another successful Barn Dance; a Summer Fete, which was a well-attended happy occasion; A Christmas Fayre, also well attended and with Father Christmas (thanks Harry) and a good seasonal atmosphere; and a Christmas Tree Festival. Earlier in the year the usual Plant Sale on the Village Green was held, and which was much appreciated by villagers; raised £543. There were also other usual events eg Harvest luncheon; Hamper Raffle (won by Margaret Owen), and Carols on the Village Green. Total Fundraising for the General Fund amounted to £5378.

This was another difficult year but, thanks to generous donors, enthusiasm, and faith, St Luke's was blessed with a successful outcome. There were many examples of extra giving and generous donations. All of this together with fundraising and other welcome income from Parochial fees, enabled the Church to pay the Parish Share in full, and to pay an additional £500 to assist shortfalls in Share payments elsewhere. Earlier in the year an error was discovered in the calculation of the Parish Share within the Benefice. Figures supplied by the Diocese had been incorrectly attributed, which meant that Stoke Hammond had been paying less Share and Bow Brickhill more than over several years. A calculation revealed a total error of nearly £5900. The Church Council agreed that this sum ought to be paid to Bow Brickhill, and this was done via repaying designated funds from the Restoration Fund to the General Fund. At the close of the year there was a surplus of £3195. The Church Council agreed to donate £500 to charities, and to make a transfer of £2650 to the Restoration and Repairs Fund; leaving £45 as an increase to the General Fund Balance, which, at 31st December, stood at £3759. The Restoration and Repairs Fund, despite the repayment to the General Fund of £5900, managed to maintain a balance of £41188. This was largely due to the successful Gift Day (mentioned above) and the transfer of designated funds from the General Fund.

This has been another disrupted and difficult year; but we give thanks for being, yet again, greatly blessed. We were greatly saddened by the death of Pauline Waller just before Christmas. She will be missed in so many ways over the next months and years, but we remember her with thanksgiving and pleasure. We continue to hold John in our prayers, knowing how much he must miss Pauline. Grateful thanks to our Church Wardens (Harry Davies and Diane Webber) for all their dedication and hard work. Grateful thanks to the many others who help in so many ways and to other church officers and helpers. Giving ourselves into the Lord's service and loving hands for 2022.

### **Buttons - Tracie Bailey**

Buttons at Stoke Hammond opened its doors in this wonderful village in September 2015, that's almost 7 years of delivering Outstanding preschool provision to the local community, and beyond. Whilst we were inspected by the infamous Ofsted in 2017, we have eagerly awaited their return ever since, sadly in 2017 they came on the back of a complaint (incidentally this was the incorrect setting) and back then the highest outcome on a complaint driven inspection was good, even though they were in the wrong place!! this we of course achieved with flying colours, the inspector was so complimentary about the provision I felt she might ask to return the following year,,,,, but still we wait, there is no doubt in my mind that when they finally arrive we will be flying the Outstanding flag loud and proud.

Our numbers have fluctuated over the 6 years and we are now sitting quite comfortably with over 45 children on roll, our busiest day being a Tuesday, as seems common across the portfolio, we cater for a wide range of children from 18 months to almost 5, we specialise in supporting children with additional needs and have an excellent reputation both locally and county wide, often being asked to offer short term respite sessions for children with high needs, this year we will send 7

children to school with an education, health care plan, this is usually only applied for once a child is 5, but we realise that until this is in place the likelihood of a child receiving the right level of support in school is minimal, so we do all the work to ensure every Button gets maximum opportunity.

No two days are the same, it is certainly difficult for Taz and her team having me here 3-4 days per week, she is under constant scrutiny, but the team are amazing, and we are very proud of what we offer. We support Joyful Tots on a weekly basis, our children have pen friends in the village, we happily and eagerly follow the antics of Bonnie and Hazel, we are regular visitors to Kutty in the local shop, we feed the alpacas, the children love to chat to the families on the barges, we access all areas of the village and we are simply loving being part of Stoke Hammond, many of the children from the village now attend and we have built a very strong bond with High Ash school.

2022 is the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Buttons, I recall sitting in Ikea in 2011 mapping out a business plan on a napkin, thinking, every child deserves the best start in life, preschool should be fun, it should be wonderful, inclusive and best of all it should be mandatory, our stats show that children who join us at 18 months make considerable progress, we have children out of nappies, speaking fluently and able to write their own names, put their coats on and count to 20 before they leave us for big school, every child is unique, every child a sponge and the team at Stoke simply support them to flourish. Who knew that my little pipe dream would cement the lives of so many. Friday night will see the entire Buttons team celebrate at our 10 year awards, everyone is a winner and I look forward to showcasing their achievements.

I could regale you with 100's of stories, successes and of course some sadness tonight, but I won't, I will just share with you a quick note from today, we have been visited by a group of newly qualified teachers from across MK, along with a Head Teacher from a very high profile school, after spending around an hour touring our setting, the parting comment was "wow, just wow, why can't every child in the country have a start like this, you deserve to be proud. Well proud we are.

I would just say a huge thank you, especially to Greg, who has supported me personally as well as Buttons professionally over the past few years, the community centre here is a huge part of Buttons life, we are proud to support the community in any way we can, and we look forward to many more years of wonderful early years provision.

### **Community Association – Greg Noble**

Well, what a difference a year makes, from not being able to open for hires, we're now booked out most weekends, both on Saturdays and Sundays, and in some cases two consecutive hires on the same day. As for our regular hirers, well Button Preschool except for the first few weeks of the Covid lockdowns, never really left us, the Scouts have returned and just in the last couple of weeks Joyful Tots are also back, plus of course the monthly St Luke's Community Breakfasts enjoyed by so many. You can also come down every other Friday and enjoy a freshly prepared to order wood fired pizza from Welsley Pizzeria who last year approached the Community Centre about parking up their van/converted horsebox in our entrance road, and I know many in the community, including my family enjoy this occasional Friday treat.

Talking of the entrance road, this has now been fully resurfaced as indeed has the pavement that runs alongside and at the same time as carrying out these works, we added two user friendly dropped kerbs and a marked out and signposted dedicated disabled parking bay. Much thanks must go to both Parish Councillor Stephen McNally who helped us to secure a grant from the Mercer Organisation, and to Ward Councillor Phil Gomm, who assisted us in obtaining a further grant from the Winslow & Villages Community Board. These grants significantly reducing the financial burden on the Association to carry out these works.

But this is not the only improvements we have carried out as we also last year retained the services of a specialist consultant to undertake a full Fire & Disability Risk Assessment, which we passed on most aspects, but it did highlight a shortcoming on our fire alarm system and certification for our electrics. We now have installed a full new monitored fire alarm system and the electrics have been updated and fully certified for the next five years. Unfortunately, we did have a couple of false fire alarms, albeit not the fault of the system itself, which meant I had to 'eat humble pie' and offer my sincere apologies to the fire crews that arrived down Bragenham Side, blue lights flashing! The smaller meeting room has also seen some improvements, the first being the replastering and subsequent painting where the plaster had failed. We have also added a separate mains pressure fed electric under sink water heater to resolve the low hot water pressure we were suffering to the

meeting room sink and toilets which also gives the added benefit of almost instant hot water from the moment the tap is first turned on.

We have for the first time in many years had to raise our hire rates but endeavoured to keep these to an absolute minimum. But like all of us we have seen our 'day to day' operating costs increasing, for example we use oil for both the heating of the centre and the water aside from the aforementioned meeting room, and we all know where oil prices have gone. Luckily, we did last year take out a long-term fixed price electricity tariff with British Gas so we do have some relief there and we also signed up for the Gigaclear Community Scheme which provides subsidised Fibre Broadband to the centre.

We are a non-profit making charitable organisation, and without my colleagues on the management committee who give up so much of their time, the day-to-day operation of the Community Centre would not just happen. So, and purely in alphabetical order I must thank Ann, Fran, Sue and Tracie for all that you do, and not forgetting Jackie our cleaner and Caroline our caretaker. I must also thank our Trustees and the other army of volunteers who help out at events such as the Summer Afternoon Tea and the Senior Citizens Xmas Lunch.

In closing I would like to say how pleased we are at the Community Centre to be involved in the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations and to once again be the venue for the Village Show in August.

### **Buckinghamshire Council - Unitary Councillor, Phil Gomm**

- First year of being elected, it's great to engage with many people of the community.
- Picked up some good things like drains, footways, and rights of way
- There is ongoing action with the layby and information will be released in due course
- Picked up this year on school bus issues and how Newton Leys South have been missed out slightly. I am working hard to bring them in to the fold
- Actioned with the Clerk earlier this year the new village gateway signs
- Planning is always a big issue, and we are making sure we drive planning applications up in the North as far as possible.
- I was happy to support the Community Centre through the Community Board and glad we helped with the field next door with sorting out the entrance way through County.
- In the pipeline, trying to discuss a refuse tip here in the north of the county
- On speeding, there was a desire to set up a community group throughout the Ward, but it didn't happen because there was not enough interest so we just selected the parishes that wanted to be involved and Cllr Noble will be the Cllr I work with on this.
- Good year but a lot to carry on with.