**Stretton-on-Fosse Parish Council**

**Annual Parish Assembly**

**The assembly was held on 23 May 2022 at the village hall at 6.15 p.m.**

**Present: Isobel Hazelwood (IH), Penny White (PW), Chris Longleather (CL), Richard Eedle (RE), Jon Holdback (JH), Sue Finlay (clerk)**

**Richard West (Footpaths Officer, RW), Dave Passingham (Tree Warden, DP)**

*APA.2022.1. Apologies.* JH arrived later.

*APA.2022.2. Approval of minutes of last meeting:* Approved

*APA.2022.3 Parish Council Chairman's report, 2021-2022:*

This last year has been relatively quiet in terms of council business. Most of the visible activity has been the work of the Stretton Sustainability Initiative (set up by the parish council) who have been working on various projects.

Planning issues continue to be one the three main topics which turn up. We appreciate that getting through the planning application process is tricky, but if we can help, please ask. The SDC planning department is not functioning at all well just to add to the frustration.

Frustration is the word to be applied to several problems with the Highways Department; in particular is our now infamous pothole with its very own seasonally decorated traffic cone, as featured in the Stratford Herald. A difference of opinion between Severn Trent and Highways led to a long delay in any work starting. Judging from the yellow arrows on the road leading to the ditch there is a plan to divert the spring water destroying the road surface – sometime… We understand from talking to other parish councils that dissatisfaction with getting damage repaired by Highways is a general complaint, especially smaller parishes like ours. We have asked over the last year for a speed restriction of 50mph between the boundary with Gloucestershire and Rowborough, signs warning that Belcony is unsuitable for large vehicles, a re-painting of the Slow signs coming north to the Stretton turn with no success so far.

As Openreach is informing us weekly on our emails, we now have access to superfast broadband and quite a number of households have already taken this up. We were the first village in Warwickshire to get this. Another first for Stretton is the provision of 2 Electric Vehicle chargers, courtesy of the Warwickshire County Council Greenshoots fund. ‘Leading the Way’ should be our parish motto! And ahead of Shipston on both counts.

On the positive side it is great to see how the village is bouncing back from the last 2 years of Covid. Activities in the village are coming back to normal. The parish council wishes to express their thanks to so many of you in the parish, for all the extra help, the care for neighbours and your forbearance when things got difficult.

We have so much help from individuals and groups with other aspects of village life: for example in keeping the village well-repaired and tidy and in particular we want to thank two who have helped more even than most: Rod Case for being such a fantastic handy-man and Richard West for taking on the thankless task of being footpath officer. Thank you both.

Thank you to my fellow councillors, Penny White, Chris Long-Leather, Richard Eedle, Jon Holdback and Keith Finlay for their commitment (even on Zoom) and their help. Keith has now resigned from the Parish Council so we would all like to particularly thank him for his many years of work and advice. Finally, Sue Finlay, as parish clerk, has as usual kept us on the straight and narrow and our thanks to her for all her work.

*APA.2022.4. Village Reports*

*SSI group*

The focus of the group is to see how sustainable Stretton can become: we concentrated on three main areas:

**Electric cars**

**Plastic waste**

**Local food**

A grant was applied for and successfully obtained for the fitment of two **electric car chargers** at the village hall. A number of houses in the village do not have their own driveways so this is an ideal solution to encourage future electric car ownership. Feelers were put out to see if there was any interest in having a village electric car for hire by residents, but there was not enough interest shown at the time to proceed with this.

We made contact with local supermarkets to find out what they are doing to reduce plastic waste within their business. We had responses from the Co-Op in Moreton. Since then most supermarkets have commenced collecting **soft plastics** on their premises, which is a great step forward. Tony Fuller arranged to have a supply of the collection bags available for Stretton to set up our own bin. We have a rota in place which involves taking the full bags to the Co-Op in Shipston to be added to their own. We feel this has been a really worthwhile exercise and everyone involved is happy to continue with the process.

We arranged to hold a community event in the Autumn with the focus on ‘**shop local.’** We had seven local producers attend to encourage people to shop local. A survey was handed out at the event and there was a definite request for regular ‘**get togethers’** to take place. Since then, we have had one on a monthly basis at which Eco Weigh have had a stall to sell their loose goods and refills.

**Battery, lightbulb and now ink cartridge** **collection** have also been set up.

We have set up **Stretton Share** which involves people offering gadgets, tools, etc., for others to use. It is early days for this scheme and it will no doubt evolve as time goes on.

We will be holding another **Community Day** in the autumn and are now working out what the themes will be this time. This is an encouraging start to a sustainable Stretton.

*Biodiversity group:*

Over the last year the Biodiversity Group has continued to maintain the wildflower areas on the Green opposite the Village Hall. The display of wildflowers in the summer and bulbs in late winter have been excellent. Additionally, we have seeded three more areas in the village with wildflowers with the help of Warwickshire Wildlife Trust. These were a strip along the hedge adjacent to the football pitch, an area under the trees at the corner of the playing field, and an area in the community orchard.

We have continued to cut the grass on the footpaths through the Dairy Ground Spinney.

A group work party was also held to maintain the paths through the spinney and open up the clearing.

In July we held our moth trapping event after missing a year. Three traps were set around the village. There is still a healthy population of moths. Thanks to Owen Lewis for his expertise.

The pond dipping was held at the pond in the Court House Garden. This was well attended by families with young children who really seemed to enjoy themselves. Thanks to Penny White for hosting and thanks to Anna Lewis for her identification skills. The list of species found showed that the pond is in excellent condition according to Freshwater Habitats charity. Here's the pond survey results of their Big Pond-dip, [https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/get-involved-2/big-pond-dip/](https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Ffreshwaterhabitats.org.uk%2Fget-involved-2%2Fbig-pond-dip%2F&data=05%7C01%7C%7C3c9ccf84389c4cfeda2b08da283a5736%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637866528297299382%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=QolmFD2RzWF2v%2BedX4aF1Y%2BnCnXuW6ERAmd31oe8bcE%3D&reserved=0)

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| **Pond Dipping 24th April 2022** | **Score** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Ramshorn snail | 1 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Water skater | 5 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Damselfly nymph | 10 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Pond snails | 1 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Lesser Water Boatman |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Greater Water Boatman |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Water louse | 5 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Smooth newt |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Dragonfly nymph (2 x species  *Libellula spp. Anax sp.*) | 10 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Midge lava |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| watersnail leech: *Glossosiphonia sp* | 1 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Diving beetles (2 x species) | 5 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Pea muscle |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Water shrimp |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Frog |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Cherrystone beetle *Hyphydrus ovatus* |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Pond Olive mayfly | 5 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Water slater | 1 |  |  | | | |
|  |  |  |  | | | |
| **Total** | **44** |  |  | | | |
| Score: 1-5 The pond could be better | | | | | | |
| Score: 6-30 Your pond is good | | | | | | |
| Score: 31-60 Your pond is brilliant | | | | | | |

We held a stall at the Stretton Community Day in October at the Village Hall. We organised the Stretton Big Garden Birdwatch for the 12th year. Thanks go to Marianne & Paul Robinson for hosting the group session at their house.

For the second year we did a litter pick around the village.

A willow tunnel was planted for children to play in, on the edge of the play area.

*David Passingham*

*Allotments group:*

We had a long wait before we were able to make a start on our new allotments so it was a very exciting time to begin to cultivate the plots in 2020. As we are all painfully aware, 2020 was something of an unusual year! It did mean, however, that we unexpectedly had more time to tackle the new allotments.

It was not long before we had made a start on preparing the soil for cultivation. Some used tried and tested no-dig methods, using cardboard to cover their plots then covering with manure and compost. Others used membrane to exclude light from the soil to kill off all the weeds before planting, whilst others rotovated and weeded.

Now in our third year, the allotment site is looking beautiful. There is the addition of a greenhouse, composting areas, mains water and water harvesting from guttering on the shed. A large variety of vegetables and flowers are grown in a multitude of designs making each plot individual and interesting. Everyone knows that advice, seeds, and plants are all on hand from fellow allotmenteers ensuring a supportive growing community.

The orchard as we walk up to the plots forms a tapestry of grasses, wild flowers and fruit trees, and the surrounding farmland is peaceful and relaxing. Having the sheep and lambs for company whilst tending the plots in spring is always a joy!

We are looking forward to another plentiful harvest of fresh fruit, vegetables, and flowers!

Marianne Robinson

*Village Hall committee:*

Like many organizations, the last 12 months have continued to be very difficult for our village hall, and the village community. We started the year closed and following the many and varied restrictions, have only been able to open part of the year. Bookings have been severely impacted by the ongoing combinations of illness, isolations, and limitations to activities.

Thank you to the committee, as we have all continued to try to understand the ever-changing criteria we have had to comply with. Your logic, patience, knowledge, and support has been so important and it is greatly appreciated. Everyone has given time, practical support, effort, opinions, and it has been a real team effort. Be it at the end of the phone, computer, or socially distanced pavement for advice and due diligence!

While the use of the hall has been limited by circumstances it has been continued to be valued by all who have used it. Being able to purchase milk and eggs during the tightest of lockdowns has been much appreciated.

We are fortunate that during this continued challenging time to still have financial reserves to cover our fixed costs and we have gone on to receive significant grant aid to cover our lost income.

Izzi, you have been a fantastic secretary again, and we hope that you will continue to do it in the coming term. You keep us on the right track and up to speed with everything in the community. Your knowledge is unparalleled and commitment is unwavering and crucial to the success of this committee.

Thanks to Rod, for another year of maintenance and organising repairs. We are in awe of how you manage to jump straight in and get things done. It’s a great skill! You keep the hall and areas flowing, no matter how big or small and it does not go unnoticed.

Thank you, Jayne, and Janice, for your joint work covering the role of Treasurer. Your regular reports have been very clear and helpful. We are grateful that Jayne has been able to support Janice during this transitional period and we wish Jayne well for the next chapter of your life

Sharon, special thanks to you too for dealing the bookings we have had, but particularly for dealing with all the correspondence about the availability of the hall

The garden area around the hall is looking lovely, thanks to the regular work of Gaynor, Jill, Geri, Jayne, Marianne, and Izzi.

Working with the Trustees, the committee has continued to monitor its procedures and protocols in line with current standards, guidance, and regulations. We are conscious of the amount of time the Trustees have spent working on these areas and we thank them for this.

Our hall normally relies on bookings from regular groups along with one off events, to help balance the books. The hall had offered a variety of fitness and well-being sessions, which were regularly held and benefitted all ages of our community and beyond. We are pleased to report that these activities have started to recommence.

Continuing to think of the next 12 months, working with the Parish council we are making exciting plans to celebrate the Jubilee in June. We will also be looking at how we can continue to make improvements to grow the village hall facility and recreational area, ensuring the thoughts and wishes of our community are upheld regarding our village asset, that our policies and systems are up to date and keep generating the usage, to the benefit of our community.

Thank you for your dedication and valuable time that you generously invest as a committee, working together, to ensure we have a sustainable, successful, and vibrant asset continuing at the heart of our community.