**Stretton-on-Fosse Parish Council**

**Annual Parish Assembly**

The assembly was held on 6 May 2020 on Zoom following the AGM at approximately 7.15 p.m.

*APA.2020.1. Apologies*

None.

*APA.2020.2. Approval of minutes of last meeting*

Approved.

*APA.2020.3 Finance*

To be deferred until the general meeting

*APA.2020.4. Parish Council Chairman's report, 2019-2020*

This report is being written while the country is in lock-down due to the coronavirus crisis – the pub and the playground are closed, many village activities have ceased temporarily, but this report is really to reflect the 11 months before this.

There have been some tense times over last year but generally with good outcomes.

1. Portabello Crossroads traffic lights: it took 12 painful weeks of queues and chaos but the result is that it works really well – safer, no queues. The Parish Council asked in January if the Highways Dept would lower the speed limit to 50mph from the boundary with Gloucestershire right up to the crossroads but so far, we have heard nothing.

2. Harold’s Orchard/Dyas Green: the 5 new houses built by Grevayne for Warwickshire Rural Housing Association (2 x 3 bed, 2 x 2 bed, and a 2 x bed bungalow) were at last completed and occupied – 7 years after the project first started and after a lot of wrangling and delaying. The houses themselves seem to be well-built and all the occupants and the new occupants of two of the other Harold’s Orchard houses are all local people. There is still an issue with drainage off the land behind, which proved inadequate during the heavy rain over the winter which we hope Grevayne will resolve soon with WRHA.

3. The ownership of the allotment land and orchard just to the west of Harold’s Orchard was then supposed to have been transferred via WRHA to the Parish Council, as stipulated by Margaret and Paul Bellew when they originally sold the land for the houses to Grevayne. It, therefore, came as a shock when Grevayne informed us in late August they would not do so but offered to lease the land for 5 years @ £200 per year – completely unreasonable terms to rent out allotment and orchard land. We fought as best we could to change their minds in September. Then encountered total silence from them till late January (unanswered emails, phone calls) when we were preparing to threaten them with court action. Suddenly the Chairman of Grevayne told us he thought we had been offered 25 years @ a peppercorn rent. Reluctantly we felt we had to accept this, although still feeling we had been cheated. As of today, a draft lease agreement has been signed by me and we are waiting for Grevayne to sign too. Meanwhile all 12 allotments are taken and planting has started, rabbit fencing installed, water supply is still to be organised. Thank you to Jonathan Davies for undertaking to draw up the lease and keeping the costs down. And to Chris Long-Leather for all his hard work and support on this.

4. The Playground: This small village managed to raise over £29,000 in about 18 months – a fantastic achievement - for the new play equipment which was installed in early September – very popular with its users, the children, and adults can keep fit with the 4 pieces of adult gym equipment installed just outside it. Thank you so much in particular to the committee who organised most of the fund-raising events and organised the installing and to the amazing generosity of the village.

5. Planning this last year has been quite quiet. The owner of the Pitstop ‘prestige’ car sales has continued to flout all but one of the 10 conditions in his planning conditions and to play the system by waiting to the last minute to appeal, again. We are currently waiting for his appeal to be resolved. The petrol station next door was ram-raided last summer and it has remained closed but has been recently bought by someone who wants to open up soon and to expand the size of the shop which we see as a positive step.

6. Our finances remain in a healthy state. We have set aside £1000 for sustainability for the year 2020 – 21 but because of the Coronavirus crisis we have yet to make much progress in this, beyond opening the allotments. We have also set aside £1000 this year to set up the allotments.

7. Thank you all of you for your support again this year – Penny White, Chris Long-Leather, Keith Finlay and especially Sue Finlay the parish clerk.

Izzi Hazelwood, Chair of Stretton-on-Fosse Parish Council

*APA.2020.5. Village Reports*

*Stretton Biodiversity Group: Report for 2019/2020*

Over the last year the Biodiversity Group has continued to maintain the wild wildflower areas on the Green opposite the Village Hall, the Three Corner Piece and around the whitebeam tree on the Green. The display of wildflowers in the summer and bulbs in late winter have been excellent.

We have continued to cut the grass on the footpaths through the Dairy Ground Spinney. Logan Hunter-Anderson has been re-writing the Biodiversity web page in Wordpress for his Duke of Edinburgh Award.

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

Wildflower seeds were spread on patches of land throughout the village and 150 tree whips were planted mainly at the new allotments as a windbreak.

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.

The Annual Cream Teas & Biodiversity Exhibition was held in October at the Village Hall. The annual Biodiversity Talk was from Vale Wildlife rescue.About 50 people attended. A large collection was made and donated to them to be put towards their work.

We organised the Stretton Big Garden Birdwatch for the 10th year. Thanks go to Marianne & Paul Robinson for hosting the group session at their house.

Because of lockdown we are now having meetings on Zoom.

*David Passingham*

*Gardening Society Report/Allotments Report 2019/2020*

The gardening club was restricted last year to a plant swap, a walk around village gardens and the village show which for the first time included a dog show. All activities were successful.

In view of relatively low turnouts to date for talks or garden visits we are looking in 2020 to have joint visits with Ilmington, provided this is possible under COVID 19 restrictions.

*Chris Long-Leather*

*APA2020.06. AOB*

Councillor Longleather raised the idea of purchasing a chipper for use in the village to help avoid the many bonfires that occur over the season because of people trimming hedges, etc., then needing to dispose of the trimmings. He suggested a small group might take it round where needed and do the chipping, for a small fee/donation. He suggested the cost be split between the Parish Council, Village Hall, gardening club, and Allotments.