

1. Chairman of Stourpaine Parish Council: Cllr Peter Partridge.

Firstly can I thank you all for gathering here tonight at the Annual Parish Meeting which is hosted by Stourpaine Parish Council. As Chair of Stourpaine Parish Council I have prepared a short report.

In Stourpaine we are fortunate to have 2 quality play areas: Grace Upward on Bottom Road and Kidzone on Drapers Field. Both I believe are a credit to the village and provide essential challenging play equipment for our young people. The Parish Council continue to regularly inspect, repair and replace items when necessary. This coming July the old swings and wooden play equipment in Kidzone Play area will be replaced by new swings and a modern wooden trailway.

Your Parish Council regularly passes comment on planning applications within the village. As your representatives we try to fairly reflect the consensus of opinion when responding to requests from Dorset Council on planning matters. This past year has seen a conclusion to the planning application for 14 houses off Bottom Road. The initial application was turned down by Dorset Council and on 3rd December 2024, subsequent appeal was turned down by a Government appointed inspector. Stourpaine Parish Council originally objected on the grounds of access along Bottom Road. Worryingly this was not an issue for either Dorset Council or the appeals inspector. The appeal was dismissed on three counts; there was no proof of sufficient local demand, the site is situated within a landscape which is in part characterised by the remains of ancient field systems associated with historical agricultural practices, namely Lynchets, and finally the development is adjacent to the Cranborne Chase. Your Parish Council is aware that further planning applications for development of the Bottom Road site are possible.

The Flood Resilience Team continue to be available to assist local residents in the event of flooding. I would like to thank Rick Pearce for taking the lead in this small but important local group. In the past 12 months we have had some flooding within the village, primarily in the Havelins area. On each occasion the new flood warning signs were deployed. These were funded by your Parish Council. Team Leader Rick Pearce has recently conducted a Havelin's residents survey asking for their views and concerns regarding flood risk. The results of the survey will assist the Flood Resilience Team to determine the best way forward to help protect residents in the future.

I would like to say a big thank you to my fellow councillor Andrea Woodland. Andrea joined Stourpaine Parish Council last year and has become a valued member of the Council team. As a Stourpaine resident for many years she brings invaluable local knowledge to our monthly meetings. Can I point out that we have a vacancy on the Parish Council team should anyone be keen to join us and spare a couple of hours each month, generally on the second Tuesday of each month, then please contact any member of the Parish Council or our Clerk Jan O'Connell. We are a friendly bunch.

Whilst talking of a friendly bunch I'd like to thank my fellow councillors and Clerk, Jan O'Connell. We all bring something to the table and collectively I'd like to think serve the residents of Stourpaine in a caring and professional manner. There are some areas, in fact many areas that we need guidance, and, on those occasions, we turn to our Ward Councillor Sherry Jespersen who has regularly attended our meetings. I can thank her on behalf of the Parish Council for the guidance she has offered over the past year.

There is one more person that I would like to mention and that is Barbara Thomson. Barbara would ordinarily be here tonight, but a prior engagement has taken priority. She sends her apologies but tonight she is in Chard, receiving an award in recognition of her many years working with Riding for the Disabled. The award is to be presented by HRH The Princess Royal. Many congratulations to Barbara.

2. The Tennis Club: Felicity Cox.

Stourpaine Tennis Club was founded in 1998 and continues to thrive with matches, club sessions and fundraising activities. The AGM was held in November, and we were delighted to welcome

three new members to the Committee, Anabel Newman stepped down as Chair but remains on the committee and Sam Harriskine, who had been Secretary, took her place.

Membership: As usual we've lost a few members this year but have also gained some. We currently have just over 80 paid up members which is a very healthy number at the start of our membership year. There are members' sessions on Sunday and Wednesday mornings, (10.00 to 13.00 and 10.00 to 12.00 respectively) and, in the summer, Thursday evenings from 18.00. Newcomers are invited to come for a free taster session (contact Felicity below) and a warm welcome is assured.

League Matches: The summer league matches have just started, and the club has two teams in the Shaftesbury League and one in the Dorset League, (both mixed doubles).

Coaching: Our coach, Simon Kevern ran a very successful training day at our Club to raise funds to enable him to continue teaching children with severe to mild learning difficulties from Yewstock School. This was instigated by the charity Bright Ideas for Tennis run by Danny Sapsford. The weather was kind, and all attending enjoyed a great day of tennis, fun and a good tea. Congratulations to Simon for organising the event and for making working with these youngsters possible. Proceeds from the day raised £324.00.

Simon decided not to renew his contract with us this year and is continuing to coach juniors on the courts at The Blandford School. We now have a new coach for adults – Graham Howell – and the Thursday morning group session is now oversubscribed with some reserve people to fill in when others cannot make it.

Fund Raising: We held a successful quiz in October and a fun American Tournament 'Wimbledon comes to Stourpaine' is planned for the 27th July this year. The club is not-for-profit and our fund raising, and very reasonable membership fees go towards maintenance and running costs plus a saving pot for major court resurfacing.

We are a friendly club who welcome new members of all abilities. For more information see our website www.clubspark.lta.org.uk/StourpaineTennisClub or contact

Membership secretary Felicity Cox: Email: stourpainetennisclub@gmail.com

Tel: 07977 567292.

3. The Table Tennis Club: No report submitted.

4. The Gardening Club: David Meaden.

Membership of the Club is open to resident of Stourpaine and the surrounding area. Last year we had more than eighty members. Our year runs from our AGM held in February and last year included seven meetings held in the village hall at 7.30pm on the second Friday of the month. Speakers are arranged on a variety of gardening or general topics and these meetings also provide an excellent opportunity to socialise with refreshments being provided. In addition, we held our Annual Show last August and a Christmas Social with a quiz in December.

Last September we arranged an outing to the RHS Wisley gardens which was well attended. To date this year, we have held three successful and well attended meetings on subjects ranging from the creation and running of an allotment garden specifically for children: the Treasures of Dorset and a 'Good, Better, Best' presentation with a war time gardening theme and given by a resident of Stourpaine and based on his expertise.

Four more talks are arranged for the coming months together with our annual plant sale on 17th May, evening social supper on 11th July and Annual Show on 16th August. To round off the year we have a Christmas social. All meetings are open to non-members.

On behalf of the village, we maintain the memorial garden in Shaston Road and the planter adjacent to the bus stop. Despite our best efforts however the water butts here intended for harvesting water have been vandalised on several occasions and one planter has been damaged.

For more information contact: David Meaden on 01258 452083.

5. The Flood Team Report: Rick Pearce

The new River Iwerne water level monitor on the north of side of the bridge at the junction of Havelins and Hod Drive better enables remote monitoring of rising water levels, but house owners remain concerned about the state and function of the road drains near the bridge. There have been

numerous attempts to clear the drains and conversations with Dorset Council will continue until residents have been assured that there is a solution to maintain drains viability.

The winter rains resulted in 2 occasions, (Nov & Feb), when the water from the River Stour ingresses significantly up the River Iwerne Channel. As a consequence of the drains not functioning correctly, some properties in Havelins did suffer some damage. Traffic driving through flood water at speed also exacerbated damage, so in future road and trail users can expect access to Havelins to be closed/regulated on these occasions.

We have 85% response rate to a survey in April from village residents who have historically been affected by rising water. Most had plans and equipment to help mitigate the effects of rising surface water but were concerned that the Environmental Agency (EA) and Dorset Council were not delivering on their responsibilities to the village or appropriately attending to surrounding flood resilience measures. The intent is to invite these bodies and Wessex Water to a discussion forum in June/July to share resident concerns and understand the present and future plans of these bodies.

In the interim, additional information will be provided by the Flood Resilience Team to those that expressed an interest in additional help to better prepare themselves for possible events. In addition, we are looking at ways residents can help maintain the flood related equipment they own.

A WhatsApp group will be set up for residents to join to help share information and request support, and we will examine how to expand the support network in the village to help those who may be affected by periods of intense rainfall. The EA are trialling a new version of their Flood Warning and Alert Service and there are a number of websites on the internet that offer cumulative rainfall forecasts for those concerned about the likelihood of adverse weather events over the following 2 weeks.

6. Community Hub – Barbara Thomson.

This continues to take place in the Village Hall every Tuesday between 10.00 am and 12 noon, coinciding with the Post Office Outreach Service which is open from 9.30 -12.30. A plea – do make use of the Post Office as it is a case of use it or lose it!

We have welcomed Serena, a new lady from the Post Office as Jane retired this year and Mary who fills in when required. Catherine Gardiner and I continue to run it with a rota of volunteers – we hope to have enough helpers to mean that no one has to be on duty more than once a month. In this regards we have two of our people during the year and so we would be very pleased to hear from anyone who would like to join the team.

We have a regular core of people who come every week and enjoy a cup (mug) of coffee or tea (we have several different varieties) and biscuits while chatting to each other and it is great when new people appear.

On 20th May, Diane Traves, Community Outreach Officer, is coming to the Hub to introduce Age Concern which is based in Sturminster Newton. Her role is to let people know about the free services that they offer, such as welfare advice. It is an independent charity and not part of Age UK. She will bring an information board and a variety of fliers, so we hope villagers will come along and find out what is on offer.

The donations received from those using the Hub have enabled us to hand over £484.81, including £45.00 from the sale of Jacky Hardy's cards to the Village Hall last year. A further £161.74 including £21.00 from Jacky's card sales has been paid for the March Quarter this year.

So do come along and meet people you already know and get to know others you didn't!

7. Village Hall

The Village Hall Committee have spent a lot of funds this year on maintenance for the VH. We asked the local community to help spring clean in the hall and had a very good turnout. We currently have only 5 people on the committee.

We are joining with the Gardening Club who are having a plant sale, the pétanque court will be open and the VH holding a BBQ, where all volunteers will get free food.

8. Holy Trinity Church Summer Scheme: Judith Jakes.

Since Covid we have not run the weekly Friday Club for village children, however we run a Free Summer Scheme for the village children and their friends during the summer holidays. There are usually 4 sessions, and we support children to create entries for the Stourpaine Garden Club Show. The scheme is generally open to primary age children and their siblings with parents staying with children 7 years old or younger. They do crafts and construction, photography, board games and learning about bees. We end each session by holding a picnic in the playpark. We are grateful for the support from Stourpaine Parish Council who have given us a grant each year to assist with the scheme and helps let us offer attendance for free.

Holy Trinity Church Churchyard Grant: Judith Jakes.

Maintaining the churchyard and achieving a balance of rewilding and tidiness is difficult. We want to ensure that the churchyard is accessible by all and that the burial sites are looked after to the best of our ability. We receive many compliments, but this is costly. Last year it cost over £3,000.00 to maintain the churchyard so we are very grateful for the grant £450.00 that Stourpaine Parish Council make towards this work. If there are any villagers who would be interested in helping us to do some new work in the churchyard then please contact Judy Jakes using: jjakes@me.com or on 07957607111.

9. Dorset Councillor – Sherry Jespersen – Report:

The current government is making changes to planning regulations to further their intention to build more houses. Many of these changes are likely to make it even harder for local councils to control speculative development and government are also looking to strip away the powers of planning committees to make local decisions. The government's housing target for Dorset is 3,219 homes each year, more than double the previous target. So, the new Local Plan for Dorset will be critical. This plan sets out where the 3,219 homes should be located and what physical and social infrastructure will be needed alongside these new homes. But the local plan is not just about housing, it also sets out policies for employment and retail sites, reviving town centres, community facilities, conservation and environmental protection and building design and sustainability standards.

The final draft of the Dorset Local Plan will be published for consultation over the summer. It is really important that we all engage with the consultation. It will be our last chance to influence the plan before it goes to the Secretary of State for implementation in 2027. In the meantime, we continue with the current policies which we know from experience offer little protection from speculative development around our villages. I will continue to serve on the planning committee and do my best for North Dorset.

Dorset Council is reviewing Day Care Services and is proposing to close the Blandford Day Centre and the Trinity Centre in Shaftesbury which will leave residents of North Dorset underserved. These services are a lifeline for those who use them. A campaign led by local residents and supported by Local Councillors and Simon Hoare MP, is underway to persuade the administration at DC that these services must be kept open. A public consultation runs on this until 9th June so please make your views known.

On a more positive note, the new Vale Family Hub has opened in Sturminster. The hub offers support for families including health and midwifery, breakfast and homework clubs and help with problems such as housing and debt. It is a really welcoming space with a play area and a great café.

I am supporting a call to DC to increase support for Dorset's beleaguered businesses. While many of the levers to improve economic performance rest with national government there is more that the council can do to support businesses as they face unprecedented challenges. Conservative councillors have put forward a ten-point plan which will put economic recovery at the heart of the council's decision making and signal clear intent to support the moral as well as economic case for economic growth.

I have been working with the Police and Crime Commissioner for over 2 years to improve the data used by the police and council to assess road safety. So often I request road safety measures on local roads only to be rejected on the grounds that there is no evidence to support my case. Residents tell me about near misses, collisions and damage to property but until now neither DC nor the police have

kept records of non-injury collisions. I am pleased that we can now report damage only, non-injury incidents and near misses online to DC. This data will help me make your case for road improvements.

DC maintains 2,400 miles of roads, fills 20,000 potholes a year and cuts hundreds of miles of verges, so it stands to reason that work to maintain our roads must be prioritised. Our Community Highway Officer inspects roads for urgent work, but not all faults will get picked up. Residents all have a part to play in reporting issues as soon as they arise – the sooner and the more often a fault is reported the sooner it will be fixed. It is very easy to report issues on the DC website.

DC was awarded £3.3m in government funding for improvements to bus services but chose to allocate almost all of this to towns in the south of the county. Poor public transport is a persistent concern for rural residents, impacting the local economy, reducing choice for work or study and increasing isolation. I have raised this issue with the Portfolio Holder at DC and I will continue to press to ensure rural Dorset gets a fair share of investment to meet crucial transport needs.

Thank you to all our Parish Councils for all of their hard work on behalf of their communities and thank you to residents for their engagement. I am your representative to DC and am always here to help, so please get in touch on: cllrsherry.jespersen@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

10. The Allotments: Barry Graham.

Last year saw a few of the allotment holders withdraw, mostly for health reason, however we have managed to reallocate most of the plots. We have had to put up our maintenance costs by a small amount. We now have a whatsapp group which aids communication between the plot holders, and we have a communal area where we can serve teas and coffees. We have set up a volunteers working party which meets once a month on a Saturday morning which helps us tidy up the allotment. We are gradually managing to clear the neglected plots with scrap metal which has been left behind being taken away and regular bon fires to clear away the rubbish. We request that the PC assist us with the cost of new signage for the allotment which will give contact details and details of our What three words, being: overhead, after, tidal. These words will assist anyone trying to locate the allotments. We have 2 social events planned, the Midsummer Social on 19th July and a social planned on September 20th, a BBQ to celebrate Harvest with home grown produce. We look forward to the PC annual inspection of the allotments in July.

There followed a Democratic Period, where members of the public raise local issues:

-A member of the Flood Team expressed his opinion that the flood detection meter has been positioned on the wrong side of the bridge, the Flood team are due to meet with the head of DC Highways, this matter will be raised with them at that meeting.

-A resident raised concerns about the volume and speed of traffic along Havelins towards the trailway. Cllr Jespersen stated that there was not anything that can be done about the volume of traffic, and the matter of speed is something that the PC had been working on for many years. It was suggested that the village apply for the 20mph scheme, with which Cllr Jespersen said she would assist.

-Concerns were raised about cyclists on the trailway not taking care when passing pedestrians who do not always hear them approaching. Residents were encouraged to report any incidents to the police, Cllr Jespersen said that she would speak to the Rangers and that this should be raised with the Trailway committee.

There followed a regular meeting of the Parish Council.