

Minutes of the Annual Open Parish Meeting of Staploe Parish Held at 7pm on 20th March 2018 in Duloe Village Hall

Present:

R. Squire (Chairman)	G. Meola	Four members of the public
J. Thomson	V. Zwetsloot	Tom Wootton (Borough Cllr.)
E. Meola	D. Smith	
	L. Crawford (Clerk)	

Apologies: J. Ibbetts

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 21st March 2017

Having been previously circulated and published on the website these were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

2. Chairman's Report

I would like to thank the parish council for their support over the year and our Clerk Lucy for all her hard work. I was very pleased when Emilio put his name forward and he became our latest Parish Councillor. We received a Transparency Code grant provided to cover additional hours for the Clerk to meet this code and for the Parish Council to buy a computer for the Clerk to use.

Website. Our website is up to date (I have noticed many other Parishes are not). Please refer to it in conversations and let villagers know it is there for them. You can find minutes of all our meetings and accounts going back to 2012 but also latest news like the A1, forthcoming events, historical photos, and much more. The Hamlets Voice newsletter is also full of the latest local news, things to think about, reminisce over and there is even a space for anyone to advertise for a small fee. Please read it from cover to cover. My thanks for this go to Emma Thompson, and Frank Squire. Margret Smith who was assistant editor and has lived in the village for many years has very sadly moved away, quite a long way and is now living in Australia near her daughter Beverly and our best wishes go to her for a happy future downunder.

The Village Hall rebuild is still under review. The Hall Refurbishment / Rebuild Working Group held their first meeting in February. In the meantime, £1000 from the Ward Fund provided by the Borough through Tom Wotton was used to purchase new heaters for the Village Hall and a further £700 was used to help purchase the Football Club Containers.

The Community Payback Team cleaned the hall inside and out, weeded and trimmed the hedges at the hall and Playing Field.

Bedford Local Plan – There is to be no development imposed on Group 4 villages such as ourselves. The Sharnbrook Colworth site was selected as the site for a new Garden Village and the remaining houses to be provided from urban, edge of urban sites, Stewartby Brickworks, and smaller allocations in Group 1 and 2 villages. So for the meantime Wyboston Garden Village is not a preferred site (however as a word of warning with long term planning schemes things can change).

A1/ A428 / Black Cat all seems to be on hold. A428 / Black Cat on hold until A1 project decides whether the cost of any works will outweigh the benefits.

School Transport – This has become quite complicated and very annoying. There was a change of policy to remove free transport post 16 and provide transport to the nearest school, which is not necessarily the catchment school, for children of 16 and under.

The Football Club is leaving on May 31st after many years here and is relocating to Paxton where they have been offered much better facilities. The playing field is now available to a new club.

In late July we had a Village Walk to Bushmead Priory. Although it had rained in the morning, it was a lovely sunny afternoon and about 30 people made the walk over to the Priory. Once there we were very kindly offered a delicious afternoon tea and full tour by the Wade-Gery family and huge thanks must go to them. What a fascinating place to have in the parish.

Curry Night in the Village Hall was delicious, well attended and great fun ! Thanks to Ged and Jane.

The broadband cabinet was upgraded in Duloe in 2017 with some benefit to residents of Duloe but speeds are still poor in Staploe. The broadband cabinet was upgraded in Colmworth in 2017 but speeds are still poor for residents of Upper Staploe and Honeydon. Apparently, we have some aluminium wires rather than copper which also limits speeds.

There is much concern about speeding. Police speed checks just don't work as they stand where they can be clearly seen, so are not a deterrent, as its obvious when there are not here, which is of course most of the time!! Sadly the cost of speed bumps or road narrowing is too much for the Borough Council to commit to. Data recorders in December demonstrated that there is a problem and money has been donated to the Parish Council to purchase a new mobile speed activated warning sign, which will also log speed data. It will be able to be moved between the three villages (provided Honeydon gets its new lower speed limits). Bedford Borough Council are currently consulting on introducing speed limits to Honeydon village.

On a very positive note a few brave and hardy souls turned up to help with the village litter pick on Sunday in the bitter cold North East wind with snow underfoot. 35 bags of rubbish were filled especially along Shakers Way, which gets a lot of rubbish left from motorists. There was so much litter we ran out of time so some verges which are normally picked over could not be done. As a result we are going to ask if the Community Payback team could help with some litter picking as well.

I will be stepping down shortly as Parish Chairman. It has been very enjoyable and I am very grateful for all the support I have received from the community. I have found it very rewarding and I can highly recommend it to the next incumbent!

Richard Squire

3. Financial Report

We opened the year with £13,200 of which £5,100 was available reserves and £8,000 was earmarked for particular purposes such as street light replacement, rebuilding or refurbishing the village hall, and elections.

The precept increased from around £8,400 in 2016/17 to around £10,000 in 2017/18. This was to cover the reduction in the Council Tax Support grant which is being phased out by the Borough, increased staff, electricity and maintenance costs for the planters, and to ensure that receipts cover payments without using any unearmarked reserves as we had done in previous years. It was felt that the Council should set the precept at a sustainable level. We were also advised to increase our level of available reserves from 3-6 months spending to 6-12 months.

In addition to the precept of around £10,000 we received our usual grant for cutting the grass verges in the parish of £1400 which covered the costs with a small surplus.

We also received some extra grants:

- £1700 from the Ward Fund for new heaters for the village hall and a contribution of £700 towards purchasing the Football Club's containers which will cost £1500 in total.
- £1000 from the Transparency Code grant. The Transparency Code applies to small parish councils such as ours and stipulates that documents such as the minutes and annual accounts must be published on the parish website. This is a grant from the government to cover additional hours for the Clerk to meet this code and to provide a laptop and software for those Parish Councils which do not own a laptop of their own.
- £2100 from Richard Squire to purchase a mobile speed indicator sign to help record and deter speeding vehicles in the villages.
- £234 of other income from refunds, book sales and social events

Our largest regular payments which are met from the precept are: the Clerk's staff costs, maintenance (street lights, planters, repairs etc.), power to the street lights, insurance, village hall hire, village hall works and maintenance contribution and the Hamlets Voice newsletter.

Our regular payments were under budget by £37. There were underspends of £1167: £164 no additional hours for the Clerk (budgeted for 5 hrs/wk plus 5% additional - additional 5% not needed), £124 Clerk's other expenses, £120 no Cllrs expenses or training, £134 grass cutting, £92 fewer newsletters, savings on subs, play area, insurance & audits £133 and £400 contingency. There were overspends of £800 on football containers, £134 on Clerk's printing costs met from underspend on Clerk's other expenses, £87 due to power invoiced this year rather than last.

We set aside £1350 towards rebuilding or refurbishing the village hall and £750 towards upgrading the street lights.

We ended the year with receipts exceeding payments and transfers to reserves by £548 – largely due to extra money received for the transparency code grant.

However, unearmarked reserves are expected to be £5110 by the end of March 2018 which is within the recommended range of between 50% of the annual budgeted payments (£4,800) and the annual precept (£10,000). Total funds are expected to be £15,200 on 31st March.

In 2018/19 the precept will increase by 2%.

As the football club are leaving at the end of March we will need to pay to cut the grass on the playing field at a cost of around £1200. The Parish Council are sole trustees of the Duloe and Staploe Village Playing Field charity and all charity transactions must be held in a separate bank account. We have opened a new bank account for the charity. It currently has a zero balance. We plan to fund the playing field grass cutting by reducing the money saved for the village hall rebuild reserve from £1500 per year to £750. We are actively seeking hirers for the playing field and any hire income can be used to fund the grass cutting on the field.

Please see the detailed breakdown of performance against budget on p5-8

4. Village Hall and Playing Field Report

This report has been prepared from our latest Annual AGM and Accounts:

The Village Hall's income was slightly up on the previous year, and after expenses had been paid made a very small profit, but more importantly covered it's running costs. On taking over from Howard as Chairperson, who retired at our last AGM as he had moved out of the village, I have looked into our fire extinguishers, which all needed renewing at quite a cost to the hall, and we have had an electrical report carried out recently, at the same time as we were having problems with the meter.

We currently have only 3 regular hirers during the week, and at present we do have a few childrens parties booked in over the next few months, but these tend to pick up over the summer months.

Lucy Crawford — Parish Clerk has been kindly helping out with the installation/workings of the new heaters and the project of the village hall refurb/rebuild.

The Village Hall is at present operating with only a very few voluntary committee members, and is hoping to recruit new members at a meeting which is provisionally booked in for Wednesday 18th April at 8.00pm, where it is my intention to inform members of the different roles required and steps forward to promote/advertise the hall to encourage further bookings.

Samantha Bygraves

Staploe Parish Council Review of Budget Mch 2018					
	Actual 2016/17	Budget 2017/18	Forecast to 31st Mch 2018	Forecast less budget	Comment
Regular Receipts					
Precept	£8,422.00	£10,039.48	£9,900.00	-£139.48	Less precept than budgeted because the Clerk deducted the support grant in error when requesting the precept
Interest	£29.48	£10.00	£18.32	£8.32	Interest higher due to more savings
Grass cutting	£1,389.51	£1,389.51	£1,389.51	£-	
Council tax support grant	£278.00	£139.00	£139.00	£-	Grant being phased out
Total Regular Receipts	£10,118.99	£11,577.99	£11,446.83	-£131.16	
Other Receipts					
Newsletter advertising	£25.00	£-	£-	£-	
Ward Fund	£570.56	£-	£1,700.00	£1,700.00	£1000 received towards hall heaters & £700 towards football containers
Transparency Code Grant	£227.20	£-	£1,006.29	£1,006.29	£477 for additional hours to cover the transparency code, £530 for laptop & software
Donation for speed sign			£2,100.00	£2,100.00	
Other (eg. f.ball deposit, refunds, proceeds from social events / book sales)	£40.00	£-	£234.36	£234.36	Refund for trolley bought in 2016/17 £122 + book sales £17 + curry night £95
Total Other Receipts	£862.76	£-	£5,040.65	£5,040.65	
total incl VAT					
Total excl precept					
Total Receipts	£10,981.75	£11,577.99	£16,487.48	£4,909.49	Excess of receipts over budget due to other receipts less reduced precept (£140)
Payments					
					Hours increased from 4 to 5 per week in 2016/17 to meet transparency code requirements. 5 hrs maintained in 2017/18 and transparency code funds of £477 were used to cover. £477 of the salary budget was then allocated towards purchasing football containers (see "Other Assets". An extra 5% in budget was not needed. £164.39 less than budget.
Clerk's salary & pension	£2,702.52	£3,760.18	£3,595.79	-£164.39	
Clerk's PAYE	£-	£-	£-	£-	
Clerk's employment expenses	£229.65	£276.00	£254.47	-£21.53	Mileage lower than expected
Total staff costs	£2,932.17	£4,036.18	£3,850.26	-£185.92	

	Actual 2016/17	Budget 2017/18	Forecast to 31st Mch 2018	Forecast less budget	Comment
Audit Fees	£180.00	£180.00	£160.00	-£20.00	£100 external audit less than expected, £30 + £30 for two internal.
Councillors Expenses	£-	£50.00	£-	-£50.00	None claimed
Clerk's Other Expenses eg. stationary, print	£117.12	£174.00	£47.93	-£126.07	Printing and stationary now purchased direct under admin
Training	£108.25	£110.00	£40.00	-£70.00	£40 Clerk's training, Clrs did not attend training
Grass Cutting	£1,386.56	£1,522.50	£1,386.56	-£135.94	10 cuts will be £1386.56. No extra cuts in 30mph zone but were requested so keep in budget next yr.
Insurance	£467.04	£456.81	£410.46	-£46.35	Undercharged due to mistake on asset register to be corrected in 2018/19
Power (street lights)	£439.56	£488.00	£575.27	£87.27	Fixed deal for 3 years at £488 but we were charged for Dec 16 to Apr 17 power in April 2017. Hence underspend in 2016/17 and overspend in 2017/18
Maintainance (street lights, speed signs, fie	£248.99	£650.00	£648.28	-£1.72	Budgeted for: Street light maintenance £300 (correct) plus £150 mower servicing (not needed) & £50 fuel (not used), £150 planters (may still be used) + £46 for legionella testing + £154 for battery for vehicle activated sign
Play Area Inspection	£66.50	£66.50	£66.50	£-	
Play Area Works (assets purchased)	£-	£150.00	£120.95	-£29.05	New covered bin
Play Area Works (consumables / labour)	£-	£-	£-	£-	
Subs (SLCC / BATPC)	£167.00	£155.00	£145.00	-£10.00	BATPC. + share SLCC with Colmworth
Admin	£61.76	£80.00	£214.32	£134.32	£35 Info commissioner, stationary items and printer cartridges bought direct, prof advice, social events. Higher than budget because printer cartridges now bought direct. Clerk's other expenses £126 lower than budget.
Literature & info	£-	£60.00	£60.00	£-	Purchased Arnold Baker book for £75.60 (£15.60 from reserve see other payments)
Other assets (eg. street furniture / tools / office equipment). Excl. playing field/ play area)	£48.78	£-	£800.00	£800.00	Football containers cost £1500. This was not in the original budget. £800 will come from £477 reallocated when T.parency code became available to cover increased hours, the remaining £323 will come from underspends in staff costs, training and grass cutting. The remaining £700 has been donated by the Ward Fund (expected before year end). (Original budget showed £750 saved into the street light replacement reserve in "Other Assets" but this has been moved to "Transfers to Reserves" at the bottom of this column for clarity).

	Actual 2016/17	Budget 2017/18	Forecast to 31st Mch 2018	Forecast less budget	Comment
Village Hall Hire	£153.00	£270.00	£278.00	£8.00	PC meetings, committee meetings, social events.
Village Hall Works	£490.00	£150.00	£250.00	£100.00	£150 for regular VH maintenance payment, £250 towards heaters (of which £150 from VH reserve - see other payments). Original budget included £1500 under "Village Hall Works" to be saved in the earmarked reserve for the hall rebuild. However, this has now been listed under "Transfers to Reserve" at the bottom of this column for clarity.
Newsletter	£220.95	£250.00	£158.40	-£91.60	Only 2 x 16pp issues during the year
Contingency		£400.00		-£400.00	£300 in budget for contingency plus £100 in s137 which has been added to contingency because s137 falls under other budget headings. This extra £100 has been used towards hall heaters and remaining contingency towards football containers.
Total regular payments	£7,087.68	£9,248.99	£9,211.93	-£37.06	Underspend of £1167 on the regular budget (£164 no additional hours for the Clerk (budgeted for 5 hrs/wk plus 5% additional - additional 5% not needed) , £124 Clerk's other expenses, £120 no Cllrs expenses or training, £134 grass cutting, £92 fewer newsletters, savings on subs, play area, insurance & audits £133 and £400 contingency. Overspends of £800 on football containers, £134 on Clerk's printing costs met from underspend on Clerk's other expenses, £87 due to power invoiced this year rather than last has lead to an underspend of £37 vs budget.
Other payments (met from additional receipts eg. grants or earmarked reserves)					
Ward Fund assets purchased	£559.94	£-	£700.00	£700.00	Projector and screen in 2016/17, football containers £700 in 2017/18 (£800 contributed from other assets).
Ward Fund donations		£-	£1,000.00	£1,000.00	Hall heaters donated to Village Hall £1000 in 2017/18. £250 contributed from VH works of which £150 from reserve & £100 from contingency
Village hall payments from earmarked reserve			£150.00	£150.00	Towards heaters
Payments from other earmarked reserves			£71.59	£71.59	From literature and information reserve £15.60 towards book and £55.99 for hard drive
Printer, computer & software (funded by Transparency Code grant)	£199.98		£527.31	£527.31	
Mobile speed sign			£2,100.00	£2,100.00	
Other donations made by Staploe Parish Council		£-	£-	£-	
Total Other Payments	£759.92	£-	£4,548.90	£4,548.90	
Total Payments	£7,847.60	£9,248.99	£13,760.83	£4,511.84	Underspend of £514 on regular payments plus £4553 "Other payments" = £4035 higher than budget

	Actual 2016/17	Budget 2017/18	Forecast to 31st Mch 2018	Forecast less budget	Comment
Transfers to reserves					
Village hall rebuild savings to earmarked reserve	£1,500.00	£1,500.00	£1,350.00	-£150.00	£150 used for heaters
Street light replacement savings to earmarked reserve	£750.00	£750.00	£750.00	£-	
Total payments & transfers to reserves	£10,097.60	£11,498.99	£15,860.83	£4,361.84	Higher than budget due to "Other payments" covered by "Other income" or use of earmarked reserves
Total receipts - (total payments & transfers to reserves)	£884.15	£79.00	£626.65	£547.65	We ended the year with £627 more receipts than we spent or saved into earmarked reserves. This was largely due to underspends in regular payments eg. staff, training, grass cutting, and newsletter costs and a contingency of £400. We ended the year with £548 more in our unearmarked reserve than budgeted.
In Summary					
We have received around £5000 more receipts than budgeted due to £1000 ward funding used for hall heaters, £700 for football containers, £2100 for mobile speed sign and approx £1031 for the Transparency Code grant (Clerk's hours and laptop) which have all been used to fund these specific items. We have underspent on salary, grass cutting, and newsletter. There were overspends on power (due to bills arriving after year end) and assets (£800 purchase of the football containers). We ended the year using £548 less of our unearmarked reserves than budgeted. The budget was revised in January so that £100 was moved to "Contingency" from "S137". S137 is still accounted for but it is not a budget heading as it is spent under separate budget headings.					

5. Football Club Report

We have four teams playing this season for Staploe and Duloe Football Club:-

The U8's, managed by Damian Smith, have settled in their second season at the club well, and will complete a progressive season in the Hunts Mini League. Confidence has grown and the results from the coaching are starting to show. They have a nice mix of boys and girls currently (four girls to be precise) forming the team, and will continue next season.

The U10's managed by Steve Gore are having a good season, on the basis that Steve started from scratch last summer when the previous team moved to Eynesbury Rovers because of the playing restrictions. After a slow start and some great coaching, they are now getting the results they deserve in the Hunts Mini League. They have one girl playing in this team, and will continue next season.

The Under 15's managed by Barry Cathrall, are playing in the Under 15's Hunts Youth B league. They have a good settled squad of players, playing great football under Barry, & with two league games to go, they are in contention to win the B league title, and are still in a cup competition. This team will continue next season.

The Under 16's managed by Brian Affleck have had a steady start to the season, and with some positive results towards the end of the season should finish in a high position in the table. They have a good solid squad, and will look to continue next season.

Season 2018/19 should start with all of the above teams all moving up a year group. The current 2017-2018 committee consists of:

- Chairman – Colin Bower
- Secretary - Barry Cathrall
- Treasurer – Sharon Bower
- Welfare Officer – Donna Fox

Match days have worked well at Duloe, with only one minor reported issue regarding parking and access adjacent to the village Hall, which was acted upon at the time of the complaint.

We've kept to a minimum, where possible, three match Saturdays. The under 16s have played at Gt Paxton which has reduced three match Saturdays to just one to date this season.

We have liaised throughout the season with Sam Bygraves when the village hall is booked, and due to its current lack of use, we have been able to use the tarmac parking to aid parking issues. We have also recently started using the rear of the factory units for parking, (by the bungalow) and walking through the gap in the fence to the field.

We have also re arranged fixtures to accommodate village hall usage when asked.

The pitches albeit difficult to up-keep at times, with our small ride on mower (8hrs to cut the field) have been well kept, and are some of the best pitches in the league at this current time.

The pitches are generally in excellent condition, and only a number of games have been called off, for heavy frosts/waterlogging, straight after Christmas & in early March.

The goals left up on the field are chained together, so they cannot be used, and cannot be moved or tipped/pushed over. They will be moved at the end of May along with the field Container to our new pitch location.

The clubs finances are satisfactory. Contrary to opinion, the club does not end each season with a huge surplus, but enough for an end of season presentation day for the players, summer tournaments for the teams, leaving a small float through the summer for preseason staff/coach courses/training etc.

The club has cleared all its debt owed to a previous manager, outstanding from when the previous committee was in place. The club now owes no money to any business, or person.

Future monetary out-lays for review will be:

- New mower required.
- Upgrade of training equipment ready for the new season.
- Continued training of managers and coaches in order to comply with the Chartered Status we have with the Hunts FA.
- Possible new mini soccer team U6/U7.

Summary:

It is with disappointment that the Club feels it needs to move from Duloe, to allow the club & its teams to maximise their playing season & field/pitch usage. The restrictions set by the Parish Council make this impossible at Duloe.

Our field container and free standing goals will be removed from the field by the end of May 2018.

The club would like to thank the Parishioners who have been proactive, encouraging and positive about our stay, and in particular Lucy Crawford who has been our main point of contact/communication during this time.

We wish the Parish well, in finding a new user for what is a great venue for amateur sporting activities.

6. Borough Councillor Wootton's Report

Bedford Budget Council Budget

- The Borough Council has agreed its budget for 2018/19. As in previous years, demand for services is increasing whilst the overall resources available to the Council will remain relatively unchanged. This has required a continuation of its programme of service efficiencies.
- Bedford Borough 2020 will see the introduction of a 'Digital Operating Model', which is estimated to achieve annual savings of £10.4m by 2020 through improved technology, including more opportunities for residents to use 'self-service' functions when interacting with the Council.
- Service efficiencies totalling £3.8m will be delivered in 2018/19. A Council Tax increase of 1.75% has been agreed, along with a rise of 2% in the Adult Social Care Precept.
- The Council's Capital Programme determines schemes for 'one-off' investment in schemes totalling £185.8m from 2017/18 to 2020/21. This includes £19m of Government investment in traffic decongestion schemes, £5.5m in Disabled Facilities Grants monies from the Government to support independent living and £59m for school facilities.
- The Council is delivering £7.8m of efficiencies in 2017/18. As we near the end of the financial year, it is estimated that there will be an overall underspend of just under £1.8m. Councillors have allocated £1m of this sum for improvements to roads and pavements and £0.525m for new average speed cameras.

Local Plan 2035

- The Council has set out preferred sites for the development of around 8000 homes to the year 2035 in its draft Local Plan (see the below table and www.bedford.gov.uk/localplan2035).
- A key aspect of the draft submission is the selection of a new settlement to deliver around a third of the new homes to 2035. Land owners and planning agents submitted 4 sites for consideration, namely: Wyboston; Colworth (Sharnbrook); Twinwoods (between Milton Ernest and Thurleigh), and; Thurleigh Airfield. The Mayor's draft Local Plan includes the Colworth site as the preferred settlement to deliver 2500 homes in the Local Plan period and up to 4500 thereafter. It has been stated that a key reason for the selection of Colworth is the possibility of a new rail station linking the settlement with Bedford and London.

Local Plan 2035 Plan for submission	Amount of residential development
Urban area	2,420
Edge of urban area	210
Brownfield site Stewartby Brickworks	1,000
Colworth garden village	2,500
Group 1 villages – Key Service Centres	
- Bromham	500
- Clapham	500
- Gt Barford	500
- Sharnbrook	0
- Shortstown	0
- Wilstead	0
- Wixams	0
- Wootton	0
Total Group 1 villages	1,500
Group 2 Villages – Rural Service Centres	
- Carlton	25-50
- Harrold	25-50
- Milton Ernest	25-50
- Oakley	25-50
- Roxton	25-50
- Stewartby	0
- Turvey	25-50
- Willington	0
Total Group 2 villages (mid point)	225
	7,855

- The draft Local Plan also includes 2420 homes in the urban area, which means there is no longer a need for ‘edge of urban’ sites at Salph End, Renhold and Gibraltar Corner, Kempston. A 500 home allocation for Wilstead has also been removed, while a 600 dwelling development in Sharnbrook will not go ahead if the Colworth settlement is agreed. Conversely, 500 homes are still scheduled in each of Bromham, Great Barford and Clapham

Infrastructure

- The Government has committed to an ‘expressway’ between Oxford and Cambridge which will improve Bedford’s eastern and western transport links. Last year Highways England consulted on plans to reconfigure the Black Cat roundabout as well as providing a new dual carriageway from the Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet. We are awaiting news of the preferred options.
- The Council announced its ‘Transporting Bedford 2020’ project for £22m of decongestion schemes for Bedford town centre. This has been backed with £19m of Government funds while the Council, along with contributions from developers, will add a further £3m. For more information search ‘Transporting Bedford’.
- The Chancellor’s last Budget announced that the western section of the East West Rail line from Oxford to Bedford will be running by 2024. A new ‘East West Rail Company’ is also being established to accelerate delivery of the next part of the line from Bedford to Cambridge. The preferred route in or around Bedford has yet to be chosen. See <http://www.eastwestrail.org.uk/>
- It was announced by East Midlands Trains (EMT) and Govia Thameslink Railway in December that peak East Midlands Trains services will not stop at Bedford or Luton from May 2018 until the completion of the Midland Main Line upgrade in 2020. Off peak services will continue as normal. For

information see: <https://www.thameslinkrailway.com/travel-information/plan-your-journey/bedford-changes>

Health and Social Care

- In September Bedford Hospital and Luton & Dunstable Hospital announced their intention to merge. A business case was submitted to NHS England but there has been a delay regarding the financial arrangements. In particular, it will not be known until the summer as to the available Government capital funding (the merger includes plans for £150m of upgrades to facilities on both sites). The Chief Executive has confirmed that key services such as A&E, maternity and paediatrics will be retained at Bedford Hospital.
- The Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG), the body responsible for organising NHS services locally, announced in January its intention to close the Walk-In Centre (WIC) at Putnoe Surgery in Bedford from October 2018. Thereafter, alternative provision will be implemented through an 'Urgent Treatment Centre' (UTC) based on the Bedford Hospital site, which will operate a 'like for like service from the Putnoe Walk In Centre'. It will also link with the Hospital's A & E function, allowing non-emergency patients access to diagnostics should further tests be required, and will receive ambulances and appointments via the 111 phone service. In addition to the UTC, the BCCG has expressed its intention to extend GP opening hours into evenings and weekends, giving patients more options to book appointments.
- A review, called the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP), is continuing to look at options to amalgamate health and social care in Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes. For more information see: <http://www.blmkstp.co.uk/>
- The Council continues to see increased demand for adult social care with the budget for this service being set at £52.1m next year; a 13.7% increase since 2015/16.
- In October, the East of England Ambulance Service Trust (EEAST) announced a new system for responding to calls. See <https://www.eeastamb.nhs.uk/news/new-ambulance-response-standards-go-live/1913> for more information.

Policing

- A scheme tackling rural crime has been deemed a success since its inception earlier in the year. In March, the Bedfordshire Police & Crime Commissioner, Kathryn Holloway, announced the establishment of Operation Sentinel Rural. This has seen a team of an Inspector, Sergeant, 4 Police Constables and 4 Police Community Support Officers focus on rural policing issues.
- In September it was reported that since initiative was launched, the rural crime team has been involved in a range of operations including 900 speed

checks, the seizing of 39 vehicles and carrying out 9 arrests. The rural crime team can be contacted via opsentinel.rural@Bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk

Ward Fund

This year I was very pleased to make contributions from my ward fund to the following schemes in the parish:

- £1000 contribution for 2 wall heaters at Duloe Village Hall
- £700 for the purchase of new containers at Staploe playing field

Cllr Tom Wootton 07771575227 / tom.wootton@bedford.gov.uk

7. Eaton Socon Charity Report

Eaton Socon Charities distributed 48 hampers, each worth about £30 to families and individuals who live in the parish of Eaton Socon. There were 10 applicants to the charity who, in addition to a hamper, were given grants of money. £30 to married couple and £20 to single people.

The Rose family donated the money for the hampers and also delivered over half of them.

There were some very positive comments about the hampers and the charity intends to continue with these in Christmas 2018.

The charity is also making enquiries as to whether local organisation who provide community activities would like some help.
Joan Squire.

8. Hamlets Exchange

The hamlets exchange library in the red telephone box in the middle of Staploe has been well used during the past year. As I live opposite the phone box I often see parishioners exchanging books or sometimes purchasing them too. There have been quite a few book purchases during the past few months which has raised £5.50 towards the upkeep of the phone box. This has now been transferred to the parish council bank account. I also often see people stopping their cars or bikes and taking photos or selfies with the phone box!

Currently the wooden door is in need of repair as the bottom left hand corner is starting to rot. I have also noticed that during wet weather water and damp has affected some of the books as the door is ill fitting and needs adjusting so the door closes properly. At present there is always a gap when the door is closed which lets water and damp into the phone box. Once the door is mended I shall sort through all the books and dispose of any that have been adversely water damaged. I believe that a quote has been obtained by the parish clerk for repairs to the door.

Celia Woolley

9. Open Forum

All matters addressed were related to items on the agenda for the Parish Council meeting which followed this and are therefore reported in the minutes of that meeting.

The meeting closed at 8pm