

**Minutes of the Annual Open Parish Meeting of Staploe Parish
held on
7pm 21st March 2017 in Duloe Village Hall**

Present:

Councillors: Richard Squire (Chairman), Jo Ibbetts (Vice Chairman), Veronica Zwetsloot, Damian Smith, Gerardine Meola, and Jane Thomson
Lucy Crawford (Clerk), Tom Wootton (Borough Councillor) and five members of the public.

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 15th March 2016

Having been previously circulated and published on the website and in the Hamlets Exchange 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. She has now moved to 5 hours a week and is undertaking training (Introduction to Local Council Administration course). We have a new Vice Chair - thank you Jo for stepping in. I must especially thank Alan Potts, who has retired from the Parish Council, for all his hard work over the years for the Parish Council and the community and say that I am very sorry to see his house is up for sale. I must also say goodbye to our past councillor Howard who has now moved away from the village to Perry; he and Ann will be much missed.

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 the latest news like the A1 or 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, Margaret Smith and Frank Squire.

Traveller site news: the Borough Council took direct action to clear the traveller site on 4th - 6th May 2016 and the bill for clearing the site (£50,000) has been added to the land register so it cannot change hands without the council being paid. An application for planning was placed with the Borough in December but it was rejected as there is an injunction against the site which is being reviewed in court on 5th and 6th April.

A team of villagers helpfully ran Speedwatch in Duloe a few times through the year and with various emails managed to get the Police to come and do some speed checks in June and February at rush hour (but no vehicles over 35mph). Sadly the police make themselves so visible when they are here it is very obvious to any speeder when they are not here; which is most of the time!

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We do now have a point of contact with the police force and are receiving crime statistics updates for our parish so we can see if crime rises. In fairness it is generally very low in our parish and Woodhouse Lane access is monitored with the CCTV. We have new stickers on the village signs and there were some repairs to the plinth and posts at the playing field. The Thompson family have very kindly been painting railings in Staploe.

We had a very well attended Queen's Beacon bonfire for her 90th birthday in April at Mount Pleasant with sausages, buns and delicious mulled apple juice. There was a Christmas tea party with a Christmas cake and mince pie competition. Eating them afterwards was delicious and then more deliciousness in January with the curry night which was very well organised and everyone agreed it was a great success.

The football agreement was updated - up to 3 fixtures on Saturday, none on Sunday and no football matches in June, July and August.

Bins. After a consultation from the Borough the results of the consultation were ignored and we have had fortnightly bin collections forced on us since November.

The Village Hall rebuild is still under review. There was an asbestos survey of the village hall. We are continuing to save for Village Hall works / rebuild (£1500 per year) and for street light replacement (£750 per year)

Wyboston Garden Village has been put forward (4000 homes) to the Borough Council Call for Sites. From the plan there is a very small area that falls into our parish but we are more worried about the extra traffic this might create.

A1: three packages have been proposed for the new or upgraded A1. We have had a second meeting with our MP Alistair Burt about this.

Proposed routes for new A428/421 link between Black Cat and Caxton Gibbet have been published.

The government consulted on introducing referendum principles to Parish Councils but have decided not to introduce this for now.

We've bought a printer / scanner with grant money made available to help Councils comply with the transparency code and a projector and screen with the Ward Fund.

On a very positive note 19 people turned up to help with the village litter pick on Sunday and 48 bags of rubbish, 5 cans of oil and 5 tyres were collected. It was a great effort and I must thank everyone who helped out to make the parish a tidier and more attractive place.

Richard Squire

3. Financial Report

Income

This year the Council raised a precept from Council Tax of £8422 (£65 per year or £5.42 per month for a band D property). In addition, we received our usual grant of £1390 from Bedford Borough Council to pay for cutting the grass verges in the parish. We also received a reduced amount of Council Tax Support Grant which is part compensation for the £428 cost to the parish resulting from a change in the way Council Tax is calculated. This grant has been halved every year since 2015 and will be zero in 2018.

Expenditure

Expenditure was lower than expected. Regular expenditure and savings (for street light replacements and village hall rebuild / refurbishment) amounted to £10 500 compared to the budget of £11 600. This was due to the Clerk not needing to work 10% extra hours on other projects eg. village hall / A1, Clerk and Councillors expenses being low, maintenance costs were low and parishioners cut much of the grass in the 30mph areas of the village saving us money on grass cutting. Some of these savings may be transferred to earmarked reserves at the end of the month. We continued to save £750 towards replacing the street lights and now have £3000 saved for this purpose and £1500 per year towards rebuilding / refurbishing the Village Hall and now have £4160 saved for this purpose.

The Council spent:

- £3500 on the Clerk's salary and pension (her hours increased from 4 hours per week to 5 hours this year)
- £100 on a training course for the Clerk.
- £200 on a new printer / scanner which was met from grant funding. A new Transparency Code requires many Council documents to be displayed on a website and therefore the government have provided funding for equipment such as scanners and extra hours for the Clerk to meet this code.
- £560 on a projector and screen
- £340 on an asbestos survey for the Village Hall (out of the Village Hall rebuilding reserve)

Our regular costs include: insurance, office costs, street light maintenance and electricity, grass cutting, printing the newsletter, maintaining assets eg the vehicle activated signs, play area and street furniture, and hiring the village hall. These costs have been relatively stable.

We expect to finish the year with £5100 in unearmarked reserves which is about 6 months spending and £8030 in earmarked reserves for the street lights, the Village Hall rebuilding fund, elections (£500) and the Football Club deposit (£200).

2017/18

The Council have increased the precept to £10 040 (£77 per year or £6.42 per month for a band D property) in 2017/18 so that the entire £11 500 budget is met from regular income ie precept plus grass cutting grant. We do not plan to use any unearmarked reserve funds to meet our budget. We believe this is sustainable as we do not have excessive unearmarked reserves to use. It is recommended that Parish Councils do not have more than their annual precept in unearmarked reserves; we have around half of this. This will also ensure that if the government decide to

introduce referendum principles to Parish Councils in the future we will be starting from a sustainable precept figure. Referendum principles currently apply to large authorities such as Bedford Borough Council and state that if they wish to raise their Council Tax by more than 2% they would need to hold a referendum. In our case a 2% increase in our budget of £11 500 would be £230 and the cost of a referendum would be £1800 so any increase would be extremely difficult. Referendum principles have not been extended to Parish Councils this year but may well be in the future.

Lucy Crawford (Clerk to the Council and Responsible Financial Officer)

4. Village Hall and Playing Field Report

The Village Hall still stands! As a structure, the Hall has weathered well and offers a very practical venue for parties, celebrations, small scale club events and fitness classes. It is the only public meeting place in our community and the Parish Council use it for its regular meetings and for any extra-ordinary events. These include public meetings over the Traveller's site in Upper Staploe, the original A1 new route and no doubt the latest proposals to resurrect the A1 scheme will warrant community discussions. It's also our local Polling Station. It does have its limitations however, and bookings have been lost due to the poor heating system and thermal insulation that can add noticeable costs to any winter hire. This year the hall running costs were only just covered and there are some routine repairs that could tip the balance if bookings don't pick up.

The Committee recently met to plan for the Harvest Supper, which will be on Saturday September 30. This has survived over the years and remains an enjoyable family time. There is competition from the Parish Council social events with a food called "Curry", but we are confident that these modern fads will "fade" into history. The Harvest Supper retains the traditional Cottage Pie and peas and Brexit will enable us to avoid any "Brussels"!

On a personal note, this will be my last annual report due to Ann and I moving to Perry and resigning from the Committee with effect from the next Village Hall AGM in the autumn. It has been a very interesting experience and I would encourage all who read this report to consider if they could offer their time and help to enable the Hall to continue for many more years. Sam Bygraves is our long-suffering secretary and would be more than pleased (even ecstatic) to hear from you on 07768 303373.

Howard Purser
DVH Chairman
21/3/17

5. Football Club Report

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

The U7's managed by Damian Smith have been newly formed this year. They have settled in to the club well, and will complete a successful season in the Hunts Mini League. They have a nice mix of boys and girls currently (5 girls to be precise) forming the team, and will continue next season.

The U9's managed by Jason Webb are having an excellent season, due to compete in the semi-final of one of the cups, and finishing strongly in the Hunts Mini League. They have one girl playing who also plays for Peterborough Utd Academy, and a number of boys who play for the Cambridge Utd Academy. This team will continue next season, albeit possibly under a change of Manager (to be confirmed).

The Under 14's managed by Barry Cathrall, are playing in the Under 14's Hunts Youth B league, and after a slow start will finish strong and anticipate finishing top half of mid table. Still in the semi-final of the cup competition. This team will continue next season.

The Under 15's managed by Brian Affleck have had a steady season and should finish in a comfortable mid table position. They have a good solid squad, and will look to continue next season as their last season.

The Under 16's managed by Scott Taylor, have a small squad and are currently aiming for Second or third spot following their promotion in the A league. This unfortunately will be their last season.

Season 2017/18 should start with all of the above teams except for the current U16's all moving up a year group.

We hope/anticipate a new U6 or U7 team to be formed in the summer ready for the new season, keeping to our maximum allocation of 5 teams.

The current 2016-2017 committee consists of:

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

Match days have worked well at Duloe, with no reported issues or incidents that the club have been made aware of to date. We've kept to a minimum, where possible, three match Saturdays. (3 weekends out of a possible 39 playing weekends.)

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.

The pitches albeit difficult to up-keep at times, with our small ride on mower (8hrs to cut the field) have been well kept. The field is due a spray off in April, which we will liaise with the Parish about once a date is agreed. The pitches are generally in excellent condition, and only a number of games have been called off, for heavy frosts, straight after Christmas. 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 to the side of the field for the months of June & July.

The club's 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, leaving a small float through the summer for preseason staff/coach courses/training etc. The U7 & U9's have actually raised their own money to pay for a majority of their presentation day, which has eased the pressure on the club's finance. This season saw us paint the canteen and changing rooms, and treat the decking. The club still owes a small amount of money to a previous manager, outstanding from when the previous committee was in place.

Future monetary out-lays for review will be:

- Re painting of decking benches & field container.
- 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.

6. Borough Councillor Wootton's Report

Borough Council Budget 2017/18

At a meeting on the 1st February 2017 councillors agreed the Borough Council's budget for 2017/18. A 4.75% increase in Council Tax was approved in response to the Council's challenging financial position, caused to a large extent by significant increases in demand for social care and constrained resources.

The budget agreed around £10m of service efficiencies in the next 3 years, including £3.7m of savings to be delivered in 2017/18. There will, therefore, be an array of service changes, some of which were subject to public consultation. Changes of particular interest to Wyboston Ward are set out below:

School Transport

A general School Transport Policy was agreed by the Mayor's Executive in October 2016 to apply from September 2017. As it stands, pupils are able to access free transport to their 'catchment or nearest school', but a key change will see the Policy narrowed to apply to the 'nearest' school only. The Policy will not apply to SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) pupils.

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In addition, March 2017 saw the Mayor's Executive agree a change in the eligibility and fee for school transport for Post 16 (Sixth Form) pupils from September 2017.

A public consultation was held between November – January on initial proposals to end the current subsidy for Post 16 pupils or to remove the option of school transport entirely. Either of these approaches were earmarked to achieve a £150k a year saving for the Council.

The final proposals agreed by the Executive will now narrow eligibility, meaning that pupils will only be able to access transport if they are attending their nearest school, as opposed to attendance at their catchment school as at present (as per the general school transport Policy). This change will not apply to current Sixth Formers.

Those Post 16 pupils who are eligible to use school transport will also now have to pay £890 per year to travel to school, as opposed to the current charge of £381. The current subsidy for low-income families will, however, be retained, which will see these pupils charged £190 a year.

Post 16 transport for Bedford College, Bedford 6th Form, Kimberley College and Shuttleworth College will be withdrawn entirely.

Discretionary Concessionary Travel Scheme

The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) allows ENCTS pass holders to travel without charge on eligible routes between 9.30am – 11pm from Monday to Friday and anytime at weekends or Bank Holidays. Eligible ENCTS pass holders are those of state pension age or with disabilities specified by criteria set out by government guidance. The Council also operated a discretionary scheme allowing ENCTS pass holders to travel for free at any time within Bedford Borough.

Following a public consultation, the decision was taken by the Mayor's Executive to introduce a £1 charge for ENCTS pass holders if they are using a bus service before 9.30am. It is estimated that this will save the Council £0.100m a year. While disabled ENCTS pass holders will pay £1 during the specified period, a companion will be able to travel with them for free.

Bin Collections

Fortnightly bin collections came into operation on Monday 31st October in a move to save the Council 0.587m a year. This has seen green and recycling waste collected one week and black bin waste the next. In addition, green waste will no longer be collected over the months of December- February.

Around 27% of households have seen a change in their collection day. There have been teething problems and whenever I have been told of non-collections I have raised this with the Council's waste collection team. Please do let me know if you have any issues.

Council's Overall Financial Position

The Council's latest Financial Strategy sets out an estimated savings requirement for the Council of £27m by 2020/21 (on a current budget of around £130m).

In addition to departmental savings, some of which were outlined above, Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) has been commissioned to undertake a comprehensive review of the Council. PWC is of the view that its recommendations will save £10.4m a year by the end of the decade.

The next phase is now being put into action. As far as residents are concerned, we are told that the investment in new technology will make it easier to interact with the Council. For instance, the plans will apparently improve the Council's website and make it easier for residents to use 'self-service' in registering issues and being assessed for eligibility to receive support (for adult social care, housing benefit etc.).

On another note, the Council's Capital Investment Programme sets out its plans for 'one-off' spending, usually on the maintenance of assets to improve their condition in the long term and new building projects. The Council's latest budget confirmed the value of the Capital Investment Programme at £167m to 2020. This includes £55.6m to convert school sites to accommodate the move to a 2 tier education system.

Council Tax

After the Council's budget was agreed on the 1st February, a further meeting of all councillors on the 22nd February was required to agree formally the Borough's Council Tax resolution for 2017/18.

This sets out how much each property Band in Bedford, Kempston and each parish will have to pay next year. The overall average Band D Council Tax (including: Council; Police; Fire Service; parish, and; Special Area Charge precepts) will be £1,704.11; a 4.26% rise on the current year. The total Band D Council Tax payment for Staploe will be £1,736.58.

Local Plan 2035

Since 2014 the Council has undertaken work towards its new Local Plan, setting out sites for development for thousands of new homes and employment growth to 2035.

At its meeting on the 22nd February, the Mayor's Executive agreed the latest Local Plan document that will be subject to public consultation between 18th April – 2nd June.

The report provides an updated housing need target of 19,000 to meet estimated population growth. Just over half of this figure is already catered for via existing planning permissions or is included in existing plans. There is a need, therefore, for the Council to find sites for just over 8,000 new dwellings.

The Council is pursuing an option to develop 1 or more new settlement(s) in the north of the Borough to accommodate around a quarter of this target. The document confirms that the sites in Wyboston, Sharnbrook, Twinwoods (between Milton Ernest and Thurleigh) and Thurleigh Airfield are being considered. One or more of these settlements could go forward and are likely to provide around 4,000 – 6,000 dwellings each (although it is thought that only 2,000 could be developed within the Local Plan period to 2035, thus contributing to reducing the 8,000 target).

Sites earmarked for development in the urban and edge of urban areas are set to accommodate just over 2,000 properties. In addition, a number of villages have been designated as having 'Group 1' status, namely: Wilstead; Bromham; Sharnbrook; Clapham, and; Great Barford and are all set to increase substantially in size with between 500 – 600 new properties in each. An allocation of 1,000 homes has been earmarked for the brownfield site at the former Stewartby brick works.

Group 2 villages across the Borough will see development of between 25 – 50 new homes. Included in Group 2 are: Carlton; Harrold; Milton Ernest; Oakley; Turvey, and; Roxton. Willington is also a Group 2 village but does not have a housing allocation.

The other villages, including Staploe parish, are included in Groups 3 and 4. They do not have specific allocations but these communities may wish to bring forward sites for development through implementing Neighbourhood Plans.

For more information see www.bedford.gov.uk/localplan2035

Infrastructure

Black Cat / A428

Highways England has announced a consultation to be held between the 6th March – 23rd April 2017 on proposals to improve the Black Cat roundabout and provide a new dual carriageway to Caxton Gibbet.

Schools

Bedford Borough's schools have been ranked first in the east of England following the verification of 2016's GCSE results and a new measurement of performance.

The Government has decided to abandon the key standard of the percentage of pupils in each school attaining 5 A* - C grades including English and maths. Instead, 'Progress 8' has been introduced which measures each child's progress from their Key Stage 2 results (Year 6 / age 11) to their GCSE performance (Year 11 / age 16). School performance is, therefore, judged on whether pupils are attaining or exceeding their forecasted GCSE results.

Under this new system, the Borough is also ranked 1st out of 11 statistical neighbours (areas deemed to have similar characteristics) and 25th of 152 local authorities nationwide. Sharnbrook Upper School performed above the national average.

The implementation of a new 2 tier education system will start from September 2017. As far as the parish is concerned there will be the following changes:

- Wilden Lower is to become a primary school.
- Sharnbrook Upper is to be a secondary school.

Health and Social Care

Sustainability & Transformation Plan

I have reported in recent months on the ongoing STP review of health and social care services across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK).

While all Borough councillors agree with the objectives of the STP they are calling on the STP leads to be more open about the plans. There is particular concern around plans to amalgamate services between Bedford, Milton Keynes and Luton & Dunstable Hospitals. It is unclear at this stage how this will affect services. Councillors have requested a commitment from the STP leads that key services, namely A & E, paediatrics and obstetrics (maternity and childbirth) will be retained at Bedford Hospital.

Stroke Services

It was announced in July 2016 that Bedford Hospital would no longer have a Hyper Acute Stroke Unit (HASU) following the resignation of one of its consultants.

From July 2016, patients who would have previously accessed the HASU at Bedford Hospital were instead taken to Luton & Dunstable or Stevenage. They are then brought back to Bedford Hospital to access rehabilitation and inpatient services after 72 hours if they are in a stable condition but are unable to go home.

Policing

Bedfordshire's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) issued her first Police and Crime Plan after her election in May 2016. Kathryn Holloway has set out the following priorities for Bedfordshire Police:

- A return of more visible policing across the county
- To rebuild public confidence in Bedfordshire Police
- To ensure police are there when needed most after 999 calls
- Putting victims at the centre of policing and prosecutions
- A fair deal on policing whether you live in the country or town

- Protecting the police to protect the public
- Genuinely being a Commissioner for all communities
- Working with partners to break the cycle of crime

She has also published a Rural Crime Strategy, which includes actions such as the appointment of a Rural Crime Liaison Officer with responsibility for working with farmers and parish councils, as well as the extension of a scheme to appoint Special Constables with specific responsibility for the rural areas. For more information see www.bedsppcc.org

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

7. Eaton Socon Charity Report

In December 2016 there were 13 applicants, one from Duloe. They were given hampers and a grant of money. 27 extra hampers were given to others in the Eaton Socon parish area. The hampers were paid for by the Charlotte Rose Fund, the money by Eaton Socon Charities. Also, Eaton Socon Charities donated £40 towards a fuel bill.

Joan Squire

8. Open Forum

A letter from a resident of Duloe was read at their request as they were not able to attend the meeting. It raised concerns about

- Quantifying the saving in grass cutting costs to the parish of the football club cutting the grass vs the cost to Duloe residents in terms of traffic and noise. Suggestion that the value of the grass cutting does not match competitive hire rates for football pitches in the area.

The Clerk has explained that the cost of cutting the grass would be around £1500. Cllr Squire will write to explain that the competitive quotes may not be comparing like with like eg. Duloe Football Club do not play in June and July (but still cut the grass for us) and only play at weekends from October to March due to short evenings and lack of flood lighting at the playing field. The Football Club provide their own facilities (toilets, changing rooms etc). Cllr Squire will explain that there is a robust agreement with the football club which has been extensively debated at Parish Council meetings.

- Suggestion that the poll of parishioners in Duloe regarding the football club in October was not complete and the questionnaire was flawed.
- Request for better access to financial information eg. by publishing it in the newsletter.

Cllr Squire will explain that the financial records, minutes and agendas are published on the website and in the blue folder in the Hamlets Exchange but that publishing the full accounts in the newsletter might not make exciting reading. The agendas and accounts are displayed on the noticeboards. In

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addition, the Clerk sends an e-mail to all those on her mailing list directing parishioners to the minutes and accounts as they are uploaded.

- Request for assets such as the bench in Duloe to be better maintained.
Cllr Squire will explain that there is a fund available for small maintenance tasks and this will be considered in the coming year.
- Concerns about speeding traffic.
Cllr Squire will explain that the Community Speedwatch team have worked hard to reduce speeding and the Parish Council have persuaded Bedford Borough Council to invest in gates and white lines to narrow the road and extend the 40mph zone out of the village.
- Concerns that the Parish Council does not sufficiently represent the views / needs of the residents of Duloe vs Staploe.
Cllr Squire will respond to explain that there are two Councillors from each hamlet and that Duloe has the Village Hall, Playing Field and Common, it has benefitted from speed reduction measures and Woodhouse Lane has been resurfaced.

Another resident of Duloe complemented the Parish Council / Borough Council for getting Woodhouse Lane properly resurfaced and thanked the Borough for doing such a good job. He also said how much he enjoys reading the Hamlets Voice newsletter.

A resident of Staploe asked whether we could renew efforts to get copies of the Bedfordshire on Sunday newspaper delivered to the village (a pile of papers used to be delivered to 20, Staploe for parishioners to collect). The Clerk offered to renew our request for this. A parishioner from Duloe said he could collect a copy and put it in the Hamlets Exchange if this was not possible.

The meeting closed at 8pm