

# **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Staploe Parish held at 7pm on 19th March 2019 in Wyboston Village Hall**

**Present:** Cllr. J. Ibbett (Chair), Cllr. R. Squire, Cllr. V. Zwetsloot, Cllr. G. Meola, Cllr. E. Meola, Cllr. J. Thomson, Cllr. D. Smith, L. Crawford (Clerk), and 6 members of the public.

## **1. Minutes of the meeting held on 20th March 2018**

Having been previously circulated these were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

## **2. Chairman's Report (Cllr. J. Ibbett)**

Cllr. J. Ibbett thanked the Clerk and Councillors for their work during the year and gave the following report:

In May there were a few changes within the Parish Council; Cllr. R. Squire stepped down as Chairman and Cllr. J. Ibbett was elected. Cllr. V. Zwetsloot was elected new Vice Chair.

Unfortunately, the hall had to be closed in May and meetings were moved to Wyboston. However, our usual and some new social events were able to continue with great responses in the form of the:

- Harvest Supper in October in Colmworth
- Picnic on Playing Field in June
- Pantomime in St. Neots in January
- Curry Night in Colmworth on 2nd March
- Litter pick on 10th March

There has been new legislation come into force this year for data protection. The Parish Council have therefore set up new e-mail addresses, training and policies to ensure compliance with this.

There were some new purchases over the year to aid the Parish in various areas, especially safety. This included the purchase of the:

- New mobile speed sign
- Replacement street lights installed in February 2019
- Containers from the football club when they left, for storage and use alongside the playing field, however the electricity supply and waste arrangements will be reconsidered in the future and have been removed for the moment as it has been from the hall itself.

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- repaired the Honeydon bus shelter with the Ward Fund money (removing the asbestos, and putting in a new roof and new bench) in January.

In other news, Broadband has been an important topic and the new cabinet was put in in Staploe in October 2018. Fibre to the premises is due to be installed in Honeydon by end of June 2019. However, at this stage, Upper Staploe and Bassmead are not due to receive any improvements. There is the possibility to consider Community Fibre Partnership in the future.

The Duloe phone box has been removed and we have been considering new road names to help identify all areas of the Parish.

Looking towards the coming year, the A428 / Black Cat preferred route has been chosen in March and this may mean the A1 progresses again.

The Parish Council also took over responsibility for the hall in January as the hall could not get insurance and the trustees resigned. A working group is currently working on the options going forward with regular reports to the Council.

### **3. Financial Report (L. Crawford – Clerk)**

We opened the financial year in April 2018 with £11,400 in earmarked reserves and £5,300 in available reserves making a total of £16,700.

Earmarked reserves were for street light replacement (£3,750), Village Hall rebuilding (£5,510), fund for purchase of the football containers (£800), Transparency Code fund to buy Clerk's computer and software (£530), election fund (£550) and other small reserves and deposits (£248).

During the previous financial year we were advised that we should be holding 6-12 months of expenditure in unearmarked reserves. Previously we had aimed for 3-6 months. Therefore, available reserves were slightly below the current recommended range at just below 6 months at the start and end of the year. Our precept was £10,091. In addition to this we received £1,500 of Ward Funding. £700 of this contributed to the purchase of the football containers (with the remaining £800 coming from earmarked reserves) and £800 contributed to the renovation of Honeydon bus shelter (removing the asbestos roof, re-roofing and repairing the bench). Other significant receipts were: £1,605 CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) for the new house at Topham End Farm in Honeydon Road, an £800 refund for the village hall heaters which never worked well and were returned and some other receipts for social events and interest on our savings account. Total receipts were £4317.

We aim to meet our regular payments and transfers to reserve (eg. saving towards the village hall) out of precept and these were very close to our budget with an underspend of £79 after transferring £750 to the Village Hall reserve and using £750 towards replacing the street lights as planned.

We underspent on:

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- Highways grass cutting by £471 because the Borough Council cut our verges in error
- £300 contingency funds were not required
- we did not buy any assets (eg swing seats) for the play area saving £150)
- we did not attend much training saving £90
- hall hire in Wyboston's meeting room was cheaper than hiring Duloe Village Hall saving £67
- sundry other savings amounting to £155.

We are likely to use some of this underspend to:

- buy a litter bin in Shakers Way (£251)
- replace the rotten edging around the play area and fill gaps (£493)

We also had a number of other unbudgeted overspends on:

- repairing Duloe noticeboard
- cutting the grass on Duloe Common (previously done by a volunteer)
- jetting the drain behind the Village Hall

This left us with the overall underspend of £79 vs our regular budget.

In addition we spent £8050 using grants or earmarked reserves to:

- replace the street lights (£4,620 total of which £750 came from precept, £3750 from the street light reserve and £120 from CIL money)
- Purchase the football containers (£1,500 total of which £700 came from Ward Funding and £800 from earmarked reserve created at the end of the last financial year for this purpose)
- Purchase of laptop and software for the Clerk from a Transparency Code grant which arrived just before the start of the financial years so was held in reserve
- Refurbish Honeydon bus shelter. The roof was made of asbestos and was breaking up so had to be removed. We used ward funding and some of the heater refund to remove and replace the roof and bench.

At the end of the financial year on 31<sup>st</sup> March we expect to have around £100 less than the recommended 6 month's of expenditure in unearmarked reserves with around £5000 of unearmarked reserves and around £9000 of earmarked reserves (for the hall, CIL money, heater refund, elections etc).

In 2019/20 our precept increased to £10,500 (+4%) to enable us to increase our contribution to the Village Hall rebuild reserve.

### **4. Village Hall Report (M. Crawford)**

This year has been one of change and challenge for the Village Hall. In May 2018 the hall was closed indefinitely due to an inspection of the structure of the building highlighting significant concerns over the integrity of the timber frame and potential safety issues.

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The previous secretary and chair of the Village Hall committee (Sam and Ian Bygraves) also expressed their wish to step down from their roles after many years of faithful service.

Due to the debate around the future of the village hall, a questionnaire was circulated to all houses in the parish asking for feedback on the future of the hall. The committee received 45 responses, from a possible 120 (38% return). 84% of respondents stated that they wished to have a village hall within the parish.

A desire for a wide range of uses was indicated, including 1) community and parish social events, 2) community meetings, 3) regular clubs, & indoor sports and regular exercises and 4) Private parties / celebrations

Despite the low response rate, the committee believe that the parish were behind the replacement of the hall and they have proceeded on this basis with a view to considering options, developing a limited number of plans and presenting a costed proposal to the parish at a future date for further consultation.

After the AGM a new committee was appointed – consisting of seven members, including two representatives of the Parish Council. This team has met several times to consider the future development of the hall and what would be required to meet villagers' requests.

In December 2018 the committee discovered it was unable to obtain liability insurance for the hall buildings – which left the committee members potentially liable on a personal level for a claim.

At an Extraordinary General Meeting a resolution was passed to enable the Parish Council to become the sole trustee – with a clear indication that the management committee should be reinstated at the earliest opportunity. The entire committee resigned and daily responsibility was subsequently handed over to the Parish Council.

During the year we had two fund raising events, which were well attended. A harvest supper was held in Colmworth Village Hall in October – with 33 attendees enjoying an excellent evening together. A total of £33 was raised for the Village Hall. A village curry night in March (also held in Colmworth Village Hall) was attended by 45 people – with £248 gifted to the Village Hall. Jane Arnold (and her helpers) provided a wonderful curry, enjoyed by everybody – and the children played their traditional game of Spotlight on the playing field.

In 2019/20 it is the hope of the committee that they will be reinstated and will look to develop the new building plans, consult the parish and to set goals for fund raising and timelines for a rebuilding project.

## 5. Playing Field Report

Duloe and Staploe Football Club left on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018 and Duloe and Staploe Village Playing Field Charity became responsible for cutting the grass.

A bank account was opened for the charity and the Parish Council transferred £50 into the account for sundries. Of this £20 was spent on a padlock for the playing field bollard. £30 remains in the account.

The Parish Council paid for the grass cutting as a gift to the charity. Bradgate Fencing cut the grass 8 times between June and October and treated the field for weeds and moss at a total cost of £1051 ex VAT.

The Clerk advertised for new hirers in 2018 without success. In January 2019 it became apparent that the drain from the hall and containers to the septic tank was damaged and that the electricity to the hall (and therefore containers) needed to be disconnected and would cost thousands to upgrade so the containers are not suitable for hire at present.

## 6. Borough Councillor Wootton's Report

There have been notable developments in relation to a range of significant issues in the past year:

### Local Plan

The Council approved its Local Plan, determining sites for housing and employment growth, for submission to the Planning Inspectorate on the 5<sup>th</sup> December. Following the removal of the proposed Colworth Garden Village and its planned 2500 homes (because it was too close to the Santa Pod Raceway) the Local Plan period has been shortened from 2035 to 2030. That lowers the housing need figure from 7855 to a minimum of 3636.

The final allocations are set out in the below table taken from the report.

| Policy 3S – Amount and distribution of housing development                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A minimum of 3,636 new dwellings will be allocated and distributed as follows:                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                               |
| i.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Bedford urban area: 2,532 dwellings (of which 1,785 dwellings will be delivered by 2030)                      |
| ii.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Urban extensions: 210 dwellings                                                                               |
| iii.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Stewartby strategic brownfield allocation: 1,000 dwellings (of which 100 dwellings will be delivered by 2030) |
| iv.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <i>Criterion deleted</i>                                                                                      |
| v.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Key service centres: 2,000 dwellings                                                                          |
| vi.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Rural service centres: 260 dwellings                                                                          |
| In the settlements listed below, it will be necessary to identify sites to meet the following levels of development, generally in and around defined Settlement Policy Area boundaries. Other than in Roxton, all sites will be allocated in Neighbourhood Development Plans: |                                                                                                               |
| i                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Bromham – 500 homes                                                                                           |
| ii                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Clapham – 500 homes                                                                                           |
| iii                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Great Barford – 500 homes                                                                                     |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Sharnbrook – 500 homes                                                                                        |
| iv                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Carlton – 25-50 homes                                                                                         |
| v                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Harrold – 25-50 homes                                                                                         |
| vi                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Milton Ernest – 25-50 homes                                                                                   |
| vii                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Oakley – 25-50 homes                                                                                          |
| viii                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Roxton – 25-50 homes (see Policy 28)                                                                          |
| ix                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Turvey – 25-50 homes                                                                                          |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Willington – 25-50 homes                                                                                      |

The Local Plan will now be examined by the Planning Inspectorate which will make comments and, where appropriate, suggestions for modifications so that it complies with national policies and legal requirements. Local authorities are not obliged to take on board the views of the Planning Inspector, but doing so could ensure the Local Plan is deemed to be 'sound' should it be subject to legal challenge from developers in the future. Depending on the workload of the Planning Inspectorate at the time of submission, it is likely to take several months for the Council's Local Plan to be reviewed.

### **Council Budget**

The Borough Council's budget was agreed at a meeting of councillors on the 6<sup>th</sup> February. It includes plans to increase Council Tax by 1.49%, with an additional 1% for the Adult Social Care precept; a £36.63 per year rise for the average Band D property.

Demand for adult social care continues to be one of the main pressures on the Council's revenue budget, with spending rising in this service area to just under £52m in 2019/20. There is, therefore, a need for the Council to continue its savings programme, with £5.3m of efficiencies to be delivered next year. The total net revenue budget is £128.6m.

The Council also has a Capital Programme for 2018/19 – 2021/22 covering spending on 'one-off' schemes. The total value across the 4 year period is £213.2m and includes projects such as the 'Transporting Bedford 2020' road decongestion scheme (£18.4m, with £15.5m being provided by the Government) and Wixams Railway (£27.4m, although this may be superseded by the East West Rail project).

### **Infrastructure**

- **Black Cat / Caxton Gibbet Bypass:** In February, Highways England announced its preferred option to upgrade the Black Cat roundabout and the selected route for a new bypass between the junction and Caxton Gibbet in Cambridgeshire. The roundabout is to be reconfigured and will become three-tier, while the new bypass will be built south of Little Barford and will then run east adjacent to the A428 towards. The estimated cost of the project is £810m - £1.4bn: <https://highwaysengland.co.uk/projects/a428-black-cat-to-caxton-gibbet/>
- **East West Rail (EWR) / Wixams Station:** From January – March a consultation was held on route options for the EWR line between Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge, with the potential in the future to extend further to Norwich. There are 5 options, 3 of which mention the use of an unspecified 'Bedford South' station, which could be the long-awaited Wixams station or an alternative site. Conversely, 2 of the options see the line going through the town centre and linking with the existing Bedford Midland station. See <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/haveyoursay>

- **Transporting Bedford 2020:** Preliminary works have started on the Transporting Bedford 2020 road decongestion scheme. The project cost, totalling £18.4m, includes £15.5m investment from the Government. Works will focus on the junctions at the A6 Paula Radcliffe Way bypass / Manton Lane, Ampthill Road and the High Street. For information search 'Transporting Bedford 2020'.

## Health

- **Hospital Merger:** Bedford Hospital and Luton & Dunstable Hospital both still intend to merge despite a delay. The plans would require £100m of capital investment from central government but this has not yet been forthcoming. Bedford Hospital's Chief Executive has stated that the merger would see key services including maternity, paediatrics and A & E retained at the Hospital.
- **Urgent Treatment Centre:** Bedford Hospital's new Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) opened its doors on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018. The UTC provides same-day appointments for minor illnesses over a 12 hour period, 7 days a week via referrals from A & E and the 111 phone service as a means of reducing pressure on the Hospital's A & E function.

## Policing

The Police and Crime Commissioner, Kathryn Holloway, announced in February that 400 Police Constables will be recruited in the years 2019/20 – 2021/22. In 2019/20, 160 PCs will be appointed through an average £2 rise in the police element of Council Tax and an additional £1.3m from the Government.

The force also received in December a £4.5m grant from the Home Office in response to 'exceptional' demands placed on the force by gangs engaging in violent crimes. It will cover the cost of 'Operation Boson'; Bedfordshire Police's response to gang, gun and knife crime.

Cllr Tom Wootton: [tom.wootton@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:tom.wootton@bedford.gov.uk) / 07771575227

## 7. Eaton Socon Charity Report (Joan Squire)

(The Eaton Socon Charity covers the Church of England Parish of Eaton Socon which includes Staploe, Duloe and Honeydon).

There were eight applicants from the parish who were given hampers and a cash grant - £30 for married couples, £20 for single people.

There were 32 extra hampers given to those living in the parish area, one of them living in Staploe.

We are looking for a new committee member to replace one who left the area. We are also looking for a new clerk to replace me.

## **8. Open Forum**

A member of the public asked if there had been any progress regarding extending the speed limit between Staploe and Duloe. The Mayor had told him that this would be considered at the end of the financial year. The Clerk agreed to find out.

Cllr. G. Meola reported that a resident in Duloe had been concerned that some solar farm construction traffic had been going through Duloe when it should have been using the Hail Weston road. The Clerk has raised this with the developers who have confirmed that the HGV's concerned were not related to the solar farm. They also confirmed that all construction traffic was using the Hail Weston road.

A resident asked whether addresses would need to change if road names changed. The Clerk confirmed that the addresses would change but that if someone used the old address (ie missing out the new road name) post should still reach the intended recipient.

The open forum closed at 7.35pm