

**Hilderstone Annual Parish Meeting**

**Hilderstone Village Hall on Tuesday 28th May 2024 at 7pm**

Minutes

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1** | **Chairman’s Welcome**  Cllr J Davies welcomed everyone and opened the meeting |
| **2** | **Apologies**  Cllr H Woodward – unable to make due to other commitments  Cllr K Aspin (SBC) – unable to make due to other commitments, but sent a report to be read out by the clerk |
| **3** | **Approve previous minutes – 24th May 2023**  Approved as a true record of events by all that attended. |
| **4** | **Chairman’s Report**  The election on 4 May 23 was not contested, thereby saving the Parish Council significant cost. Indeed only 5 names were on the ballot leaving 2 vacancies which were subsequently filled by co-option. Peter Higgins and Michael O’Donoghue were welcomed onto the Council, and it is healthy that all 7 places are now filled.  We have been very well served by our Parish Clerk, Nikola Evans, who has continued to be exemplary in the discharge her duties and we can all take comfort that the finances of the Council are in good shape.  During the past year the Parish Council has continued to be an active member of the Stone Area Parish Liaison group, meeting along with most of the other parishes that comprise the wider Stone community. That involvement has enabled us to benefit from the experience of others and to have a louder voice in unison with our partners.  **Planning**  Although the Parish Council itself cannot determine any planning applications – decisions rest with the Local Planning Authority (LPA), Stafford Borough – we hope that due weight is given to our opinions and we rely on our two Borough Councillors to ensure that happens, given that the Parish Council has no absolute right to speak at meetings of the Planning Committee.  Over the past year the Council has considered 13 applications, one of which the LPA has refused, 8 have been allowed and 4 are ongoing.  **Roads, Traffic and Footpaths**  The village suffers from perennial problems:   * **The narrow and twisting route of the B5066**. There is no prospect of a complete solution; the mitigation measures of traffic calming and the speed indicator devices are helpful but ultimately safety is in the hands of the individual road users. * **Parking.** Inconsiderate parkingcontinues to cause nuisance and potential danger. Enforcement is primarily in the hands of the Borough Council whose enforcement resources are extremely limited; when was the last time we saw an enforcement officer in the village? * **Road Maintenance**. The village suffers equally with the other villages in the area from defects such as the number and size of unfilled potholes, blocked drains and worn road markings. We continue to ensure our County Councillor remains very much aware of all these problems.   **Village Maintenance**  Most of the householders in the village continue to set an excellent standard in the appearance and maintenance of their properties.  The new grounds maintenance contractor (SJL Landscapes) has made a noticeable difference and we were very pleased to arrange with Oak Tree Farm Rural Project for the gardening of the ‘Village Green’. We are also immensely grateful for the other contributions made to the upkeep of the village, such as the strimming of the ‘Roebuck Bank’ and the maintenance of planters. Special thanks also go to Tim Dyer who has taken on various miscellaneous tasks around the village.  We are lucky to have retained our traditional telephone box structure and we were very pleased when a resident (Gemma) asked for permission to care for it and to set up a useful information point and book exchange.  **Facilities and Events**  A major loss during the year was the closure of The Roebuck which leaves Hilderstone, like so many villages, without its village pub. The Council is now concerned about the deteriorating condition of the appearance of the building. However, Christ Church and the Village Hall remain very active and the Parish Council is extremely grateful to all those who give up so much of their time to ensure that these facilities continue to serve the village and to attract visitors. The periodic Parish Magazine is an invaluable source of information and communication which is distributed to all addresses in the parish; in addition, also providing frequent, valuable information, is the Village Information Network (VIN).  **Finance**  I’m pleased to confirm that the finances of the Council are being managed correctly and prudently. The Council is funded by a small precept as part of the council tax most of us pay. For the current financial year, the Council Tax for a Band ‘D’ property in Hilderstone is £2,123.42 (£2,028.35) of which the Parish Council’s share is £44.88 (£43.78).  A statement of the up-to-date financial position is published each month by the Parish Clerk and is attached to the agenda for each parish council meeting.  **Conclusion**  The Parish Council has continued to play its central role in the community of Hilderstone to the best of its ability and powers. However, the success of the village is also dependent on the dedicated work of the villagers themselves and the various local organisations. I hope I’ve covered all the angles. If I’ve omitted anyone or anything I apologise – please let me know. |
| **5** | **Borough Councillor’s Report**  Milwich Ward Member Report to Parish Councils. For Members, Meetings and wider distribution. MAY 2024 In no order, we highlight:  **A SBC matters**   1. Housing benefit: by unanimous agreement, council has determined that housing benefit will not be reduced as a result of bereavement and disability grants awarded to ex-service men and women. A good decision. 2. **Stafford Local Plan –** SLP has been abandoned after five years’ work, since change of control at the council. New government guidelines came out at the end of 2023, for producing local plans. South Staffordshire Council and others are progressing with theirs,but causing controversy with a plan for minimum 80 houses between Bednall and Wildwood, which I expect SBC to oppose. Our round of SLP consultations will have to start again.The council must maintain an annual rate of planning approvals, or developers will move to develop land of their choosing, so this is serious. Just to remind you:  * The council’s strategy until this year was to ‘go for growth’ on the basis that developers would attempt building on unsuitable sites without a ‘masterplan’. * Preferred option sites were identified. Our Housing Monitor sets out available housing sites on greenfield and brownfield land, together with information about the percentage of delivery on such lands in recent years -the [Authority Monitoring Report](https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/Authority-Monitoring-Report-2021). This includes affordable housing and statistics. * The council also keeps a Register of Brownfield Land: [Brownfield Land Register | Stafford Borough Council (staffordbc.gov.uk)](https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/brownfield-land-register). * We have no plans to build in the Green Belt.   We will keep in touch with PCs when the new plan is published, which we are still being told by the cabinet member is imminent. There will be implications for the villages, either those wanting development or trying to curtail it.   1. Green Infrastructure Framework: Aimed at planners and developers, the [Green Infrastructure Framework](https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.aspx) aims to increase the amount of green cover to 40% in urban residential areas. The accompanying Design Guide will support local planning authorities and developers to design and create more nature-rich urban greenspaces. They must now meet mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements which themselves support the development of the Nature Recovery Network, another new requirement on local authorities to develop strategic policies for green infrastructure. SBC will be developing a delivery plan to support the creation and enhancement of new and existing greenspaces, incorporating nature recovery, urban greening, tree cover, green space. Details are awaited. 2. Biodiversity Net Gain. This is the new obligation on developers to incorporate minimum 10% of land for biodiversity into every planning permission. The county Biodiversity Strategy and Local Nature Recovery Strategy sit over the Biodiversity Net Gain requirements. SBC must produce our own local design codes and strengthen our team to respond to the new environmental framework for planning. 3. **Commemorating the 80th Anniversary of D-Day** in Victoria Park:  * 1815 -20.50 hrs - entertainment, including marching band, Jazz singer, local choir, local acoustic singers, musicians and poets * 20.30 - arrival of Armed Forces and civic dignitaries * 21.00 - 21.15 hrs - National Tribute, the Exhortation, Last Post (followed by 2 minutes Silence), Reveille (this section of the event will be supported by Reverend John Davies, MBE, KStJ and Chairman of The Royal British Legion (Stafford Branch), Lt Col E C Dale OBE) * 21.15 - Beacon Lighting * 22.00 event ends.   Alberts Café will be open. It is hoped that a Fish and Chip trader will be in the Park as 6 June is National Fish and Chip Day.  “Vibe 1” radio (formerly Staffordfm) is taking part.  Invitations will be extended to local schools, Scouts and Guides and other organisations. Bring the family.  6 **Solar Farms applications:** These are major applications, which will always go to planning committee, but we will call them in none the less to articulate views from the communities in particular; always mindful that each application will be dealt with on its merits. At time of writing, the Hanyards application has been deferred by committee for further information, and no new date yet for it to go back to committee; the Drointon application awaits its day.  **B Amerton Artisans.** Congratulations, Eunice Finney and Amerton Farm. Around 40 small local businesses have been brought together in a new space dedicated to nurturing local talent, supporting emerging companies and fostering a sense of community collaboration. The new space will provide a platform for artisans, creatives and entrepreneurs to showcase their unique products and services”.  So nice to see small local firms given a platform to show off their talents and a chance to promote our rural enterprises.  **C Cannock Chase National Landscape CCNL (formerly AONB)**:    1 **Making Space for Nature:** The theme for this year’s conference was nature recovery.  Staffordshire and Stoke councils are preparing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and CCNL are beginning the process of reviewing the Management Plan.  Nature recovery will be central to our vision for the Chase for the next 5 years.  The conference reflected on the state of nature in the National Landscape; what we mean by nature recovery; and how we can work in partnership to deliver a better future for nature. Two local presentations were excellent: Jeff Sim from Staffordshire Wildlife Trust on creating corridors for nature and specific grazing initiatives by SWT to restore habitats; and Jamie Burnett, for the National Trust at Shugborough, on their new woodland restoration project.  **2 The Cannock Chase Destination Access** guide is available as a [download here](https://www.cannock-chase.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Cannock-Chase-Access-Guide-FINAL.pdf) with information on the accessible facilities available at 21 different locations including the visitor centres and cafes. Shugborough Estate and other attractions, trails, nature reserves and car parks are included.. It gives visitors information on accessible leisure activities that can be visited if you have a disability, require assistance with access, adaptable bikes, or a parent and guardian with small children and a buggy.  **3 Defra Farming in Protected Landscapes Fund (FIPL):** There is a significant amount of money available for the next three years, for valid farm and land-related projects, large and small, within the radius of the Chase.The link below details some projects that have taken place so far. More will be added as they are completed, so do visit from time to time to see the projects as they progress and share it with anyone who you think may be interested in applying. [Farming in Protected Landscapes - Cannock Chase AONB (cannock-chase.co.uk)](https://www.cannock-chase.co.uk/get-involved/farming-in-protected-landscapes/). Runs until March 2025 and will fund projects that support nature recovery; mitigate the impacts of climate change; provide opportunities for people to discover; enjoy and understand the landscape and its cultural heritage; support nature-friendly, sustainable farm businesses. Visit the team at the County Show at the end of the month.  **4 Cannock Chase National Landscape Sustainable Development Fund is open for applications. Last chance.** The funding is available to community groups, schools, organisations, and individuals and even if you do not live or work in the National Landscape area you may still be eligible if your project will have a positive impact on the area. Examples of projects previously funded include:-   * Installation of bird and bat boxes * Creating wildlife gardens * Production of information boards, leaflets, and a video * Wildlife surveys such as using emerging technologies to survey for nightjar and research projects. * Heritage projects including Lens on the Past * Providing access to art and eco-therapy to clients with a mental health diagnosis   Applicants are normally expected to contribute at least 25% of total project costs either from their own reserves, other funding sources, or ‘in kind’ contributions such as volunteer time or the loan of premises or equipment.  For smaller grants of £500 or under funding could be given up to 100% of the project costs.  Email [cannockchase@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:cannockchase@staffordshire.gov.uk) with your project idea and they will send the application form to you. For further information on the fund see [Funding for your project - Cannock Chase (cannock-chase.co.uk)](https://urlsand.esvalabs.com/?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cannock-chase.co.uk%2Fcaring-for-cannock-chase%2Fget-involved%2Ffunding-for-your-project%2F&e=86405301&h=f9870e34&f=y&p=n)  The closing date for applications is **midnight 11th June 2024** and projects must be completed by 31st March 2025.  **D Village Halls small grants – DEFRA & ACRE.** The grant fund has now re-opened to new applicants who wish to undertake smaller projects such as disability access, toilet upgrades and new kitchens. Grant awards of between £2,000 to £5,000, and up to 20 per cent of eligible project costs, are on offer. Project expenditure must take place before 31 March 2025. The fund is expected to stay open until December 2024, however it may be withdrawn before this.  **Defibrillators grant for community spaces** like town halls, local parks or post offices. The DHSC Community Automated External Defibrillator (CAED) Fund will support provision of 2000 AEDs. These will be distributed across England during 2023-2024, supporting any organisation based in England that is not eligible for the current Department of Education AED programme. **Closing date:** 21 September 2024  **Let’s hope the floods don’t turn to drought…**  **Cllr Frances Beatty: 01785 240667/07877 896466** [**fbeatty@staffordbc.gov.uk**](mailto:fbeatty@staffordbc.gov.uk)  **Cllr Karine Aspin: 07498 325374 kaspin@staffordbc.gov.uk** |
| **6** | **County Councillor’s Report**  Did not attend |
| **7** | **Public Participation**  None attended |

Cllr. J Davies

Chairman of the Parish Council

May 2024