



## **OVER STOWEY ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on  
21<sup>st</sup> May 2018 in the Village Hall

*Please note that these minutes are draft until approved  
at the June 18<sup>th</sup> 2018 Meeting*

Present:	Parish Councillor	R Curtis (Chairman) K Barrow M Cavill P Tully G Goddard B Bartlett
	District Councillor	J Pay
	District/County Councillor	M Caswell

Members of the Public:

Mr. R Osborne  
Mr. R. Ince  
Mrs. S. Bristow

### **1. Apologies**

Councillor D. Peaster

### **2. To approve the minutes of the parish council meeting held on Monday 16th April 2018**

Proposed by Councillor P. Tully  
Seconded by Councillor K. Barrow

### **3. Chairman's Report:**

Councillor Curtis started his report by thanking all the members of the Parish Council for the work they do which is aided by the fact that they all work well together. Councillor Curtis then talked about the following:

- The Parish Council supported the Village Hall and Recreation Ground Committee grant application for the village hall kitchen refit. This application was successful and with the donation from the Parish Council, the project can go ahead
- Additional free bulbs were available from Sedgemoor District Council which were collected and planted around the parish
- A good working relationship with the highways department has ensured that as much as possible with the adverse weather conditions last winter, most of the major potholes or road defects that have been reported have been rectified in a timely manner
- A donation towards the refurbishment of the Village Hall toilets has been granted by the parish council
- The re-tarmacking of the cemetery path was completed to a good standard
- The monument in the graveyard that needed repairs has had the works completed
- A defibrillator has been purchased for the parish, along with a storage cabinet and it is anticipated that the unit will be fixed and ready for use by the end of June 2018
- Councillor Barrow ensured that as much as possible, the roads in the area were kept clear during the adverse weather conditions earlier this year
- Brush cutter training by a local volunteer has been undertaken and half the cost was covered by the Parish Council
- With regards to the cemetery, a working party from the Parish Council will be measuring up the extended area with a plan for Grandfields to work to for future burials.

#### **4. Reports from other groups:**

Over Stowey Church – see attached (i)

Stowey Woods – see attached (ii)

#### **5. Somerset County Council Report:**

County/District Councillor Caswell communicated the following:

After being in the role for just over a year, it has been a steep learning curve with many areas being covered within his remit.

The challenges affecting Somerset County Council include: the long term financial commitments, the ever-increasing cost of adult social care due to the increase in life expectancy, the shortfall in income which was in part due to the level of council tax being the lowest in the South West and not being increased over a six-year term and the move towards a unitary authority and how this will affect the county.

County/District Councillor Caswell concluded by saying that he is involved in many aspects of the above and being on various working groups means he has a direct input into the decision-making process.

#### **6. Sedgemoor District Council Report – see attached (iii)**

### **The meeting adjourned at 8.10pm**

To: Members of the Parish Council

Cllr B Bartlett, Cllr D Peaster, Cllr K Barrow, Cllr M Cavill, Cllr P Tully,  
Cllr G. Goddard

District/County Cllr M Caswell, District Cllr J Pay

CC Amanda McMurren (Clerk to Over Stowey Parish Council)

## **(i) Over Stowey Church - Report to Over Stowey Parish Council AGM May 2018**

The parish church of St Peter and St Paul is one of the six churches of the Quantock Villages Benefice. It is at the centre of the village and along with the village hall is a focal point for the community. This is demonstrated by the congregation at weekly services, attendance at our social events, and the need of the community to use the church for weddings, baptisms and funerals.

The eight members of the Parochial Church Council have the responsibility of assisting the Rector to ensure the continuing availability of the church for the use of the community and enable as many people as possible to worship at the church and to become part of the parish community.

Following their resignations there has not been a Rector or Assistant Priest since 1<sup>st</sup> August 2017. During this period the churchwarden has been the main contact on any church related queries. All services have been covered by retired Clergy and Readers in the area, and Clergy from other churches further afield. An appointment of a new Rector has now been made – Revd. Eleanor King – and she will take up her role in August and soon after a new Assistant Priest should be appointed.

During 2017 there were four marriage services and four christenings held in the church. There were no funeral services. Weekly Sunday church services have continued to be made available for the community. Additional services were held at Easter and Christmas, and again there was a full church for Carols by Candlelight.

The church has held various social events throughout the year, which added to the spirit of the village as well as raising funds for the church and these were – in the church a concert by Somerset Opera, in the village hall two themed meals and an open breakfast, and four community coffee mornings organised in partnership with the Village Hall Committee. Carol singing across the parish took place that led to a generous collection donated to UNICEF. The church donated a small part of its income to a number of other charities including the Children's Society, Salvation Army, Church Mission Society, Signpost International, Disaster Emergency Committee, and Royal British Legion.

In 2017 the cost of running the church was £20105, over half of which is the contribution to the Diocese of Bath and Wells for the provision of Clergy. All of these costs are met by parishioners through service collections, donations, regular giving, and fund raising. Without this giving the church would close as it receives no money from the diocese.

During the year we had the tower floor repaired. We did not receive an invoice for the replacement of bushes on some bells that took place last year. With regards to the installation of the servery area within the church in memory of Marjorie Downing, the Diocesan Advisory Committee has finally agreed in general terms to our proposals for the facility after we took into account the suggestions of Historic England. However, the DAC did not consider as appropriate in a Grade II listed building our simplistic domestic kitchen design for cupboards and sink unit, and so we now have an architect designing the furniture to a standard that will be acceptable to the DAC. This does seem to be the final hurdle. Once this is complete it can be reviewed and agreed by DAC so that we can post a Faculty application on the church door to inform the public, ahead of the Diocesan Chancellor issuing the formal approval for the works. We will then need to get the furniture made and installed. The Church of England process takes a long time.

Peter Higginson  
Churchwarden

## **(ii) STOWEY WOOD: BACKGROUND NOTE**

Stowey Wood comprises about 10 acres of land located between Stowey Rocks Farm and New Stowey Farm, both of which are owned by Somerset County Council.

Little is known about the history of the wood, although a study carried out in 1999 found evidence to suggest that parts of it could date back to the 1700s. In 1970 about two thirds of the wood were cleared and planted with Sitka spruce by the Forestry Commission. At some point beyond that ownership of the wood reverted to Somerset County Council.

No management of the wood was carried out for the next 45 years and by 2012-13 the Sitka plantation had matured to the extent that the wood was densely shaded and the soil acidic, making it almost impossible for plants to survive.

Since that time a number of people and organisations have been involved with efforts to broaden the diversity of the wood. Somerset County Council liaised with Matt Peaster at Quantock Lodge and with Bridgwater College, whose forestry students have for the past three winters been working in teams to fell the Sitka. Timber of commercial value has been removed and sold (in 2016-17 to the Ebbsary family at Hawkridge and in 2017-18 to Ian and Rob Stark at Merridge).

For the past three years Over Stowey residents Roy Osborne and Richard Ince have been working to clear felled branches, brash and debris to pave the way for re-planting the wood with native hardwood species. They have been helped by volunteers, mainly from Nether Stowey but also by the AONB's Quantock Countryside Volunteers. On 24 May 2018 the Taunton Mid-Week Conservation Volunteers will also be working in the wood.

Looking ahead, and subject to the Parish Council's agreement, Somerset County Council propose to license the wood to Roy, Richard and the Chairman of Over Stowey PC.

Although only an interim measure, while the longer-term future of the wood is decided, this would enable the licensees to manage the wood for the benefit of wildlife and the local community. The licensing agreement would follow the format used to licence Stowey Millennium and Jubilee Woods to Roy, Richard and the Chairman of Nether Stowey PC, an arrangement which has worked well. SCC would retain ownership of the wood.

Future management of the wood will be carried out by local volunteers. Bridgwater College students may fell some of the remaining Sitka over the winter season 2018-19. The Woodland Trust have agreed to provide 420 saplings of mixed native woodland species to be planted (by volunteers) in November 2018. Tutors and students from the Field Studies Council's Nettlecombe Court have expressed interest in carrying out conservation tasks and monitoring work at the wood. Members of the Stowey Green Spaces Group (SGSG) also take a close interest in the wood.

Somerset County Council have designated the track which runs through the wood as a "permissive" path, thereby completing a circular walk from Nether Stowey playing fields, through Stowey Millennium/Jubilee Wood, across fields to Stowey Wood and back to the playing fields via New Stowey Farm. This route, which takes about half an hour, is already used regularly by walkers and dog-walkers, mainly from Nether Stowey.

### (iii) **What Sedgemoor has achieved for 2017/2018**

- To remain a low Council Tax Authority by ensuring all our activities are managed efficiently, effectively
- We Value our customers and put them at the heart of everything we do. We will listen to and respect their views and aim to shape our services to their needs in a way that provides equality of access to services and equality of outcome.
- The Council had a very positive Local Government Association Peer Challenge late last year
- Finances – Band D council tax was £150.52. The funding gap for the next few years is 397,000 per annum
- 5 Of our high performing areas
  - Planning
  - Benefits
  - Affordable Housing
  - New Homes Bonus
  - Low Council Tax
- In the last few years we have been fortunate to realise investment in
  - The new police HQ
  - The new Community Hospital
  - Private sector care facilities
  - Offices (Innovation Centre)
  - Distribution (Morrison's)
  - Hinkley Point C Project is resulting in a huge investment
  - Cannington Bypass
- Big Issues are
  - New Nuclear at Hinkley Point C
  - National Grid – pylons over the Somerset Levels
  - Barrier over River Parrett
  - Devolution
  - Huntspill Energy Park
  - Building our own houses
  - Commercial Strategy