



OVER STOWEY ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 29th May 2019 in the Village Hall

*Please note that these minutes are draft until approved at the
May 2020 Annual Parish Meeting*

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

Members of the Public:

Representatives from - St Peter and St Paul Church Over Stowey and Stowey Green Spaces Group

1. Apologies:

Chairman – Over Stowey Village Hall and Recreational Ground Committee
Landscape Partnership Development Officer – AONB

2. To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Council meeting held on Monday 21st May 2018:

Proposed by Councillor G. Goddard
Seconded by Councillor P. Tully

3. Chairman's Report:

Councillor Curtis welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the Members of the Parish Council for their continued hard work. Councillor Curtis was pleased to report that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2018/2019 had been completed with no compliance issues. All areas are closely monitored with regular updates made to the Parish Council by the Clerk.

Achievements over the past twelve months include the following:

- A defibrillator was purchased and installed at the village hall
- The village hall kitchen was refurbished to a high standard and work was completed in October 2018 – with help from funds from the Downing Legacy
- Donations were made to Citizens Advice and Mendip Community Transport
- Plaques for the Downing Legacy projects have been purchased (an additional plaque will be available for the Church Community Room)
- The repair of the church bell which took place in 2016 was paid for with funds from the Downing Legacy
- More bulbs were available from Sedgemoor Clean Surroundings which were planted in autumn 2018
- A grit bin and rock salt were purchased for Hack Lane
- The Clerk has taken on another parish and is now able to focus solely on parish council matters – with additional training helping in the role

Looking ahead to 2019/2020 various projects under consideration include:

- Completion of the Memorial Bench
- Levelling of the ground at the cemetery
- Replacing the tennis court fencing
- Financial assistance towards the village hall repairs
- Issues regarding the leat wall are being followed up by the Highways Department
- The Clerk will be working with the Village Hall Treasurer/Secretary to ascertain what grants are available to help towards these projects

The 2019 election was uncontested and the Chairman is looking forward to another good year.

4. Reports from other groups:

Forestry

Cllr Bartlett reported that the main concerns were about the raves and other anti-social events that have been taking place. With regards to mountain biking, there is a meeting once a year where all relevant parties are able to discuss the events with a view to managing the area for all groups to enjoy safely.

Village Hall and Recreation Ground

Cllrs Barrow and Tully have been working closely with the committee and the Treasurer has now also taken on the role of Secretary. Fund raising will be taking place to put some money back into the 'pot'. There will be Sheep Racing at the playing fields and Mouse Racing will take place in the autumn. Both Cllrs wished to express their thanks to the Young Farmers who contribute enormously to the running of this event. The last Mouse Race raised £500 for the Young Farmers and approximately £1400 for the Village Hall. It has been suggested that the Campbell Rooms could be taken on as a project with regards to condition of the building and updating the interior. With regards to the existing tennis courts, it was asked whether as the intention is to re-fence the area, could a full refurbishment into a multi-use games area be an option.

Finally, the Village Hall are looking into having Wi-Fi installed to increase the level of use from other groups going forward.

Footpaths

Cllr Cavill stated that the footpaths were under control and extended his thanks to those who are helping to keep them clear by reporting problems and undertaking work where necessary

St Peter and St Paul Church

See appendix (i)

Stowey Green Spaces Group

See appendix (ii)

5. Somerset County Council Report:

County/District Councillor Caswell communicated the following:

Cllr Caswell thanked the Parish Council and is always pleased to see that problems are identified and dealt with.

With regards to Somerset County Council, Cllr Caswell talked about the Panorama programme which highlighted the funding crisis within adult social care. Whilst Somerset was the focus; this is a nationwide issue.

In Somerset, out of every pound of council tax, 43 pence goes towards Adult Social Care. Once Children's Services are taken into account, almost three quarters of each pound is allocated to just these two areas.

This is a national problem which needs to be sorted nationally from central government.

There is obviously a need to balance the budget and it has been difficult, however, a corner has been turned and the outlook is much better.

There will be some easing of restrictions on spending in areas including roads and highways, however the cost of social care is still the biggest concern.

6. Sedgemoor District Council (SDC) Report:

Councillor Pay stated that SDC had a good year in 2018/2019 with the local plan being adopted (which Cllr Caswell had been part of from its inception).

Council Tax has been kept low, without losing services and there is a view to increasing revenue by increasing the business portfolio e.g. by providing loans to developers to undertake projects. Other councils are seeing this as an opportunity to increase income and are starting to follow this example.

Following the recent election, at which both Cllrs Pay and Caswell were re-elected, Cllr Pay is now part of the Audit and Standards Committee. Cllr Caswell is now within infrastructure – including projects such as Hinkley, Dunball Docks and the Tidal Barrier scheme.

The meeting adjourned at 8.25pm

Appendix (i):

Report to Over Stowey Parish Council Annual Meeting
St Peter and St Paul Church, Over Stowey

The parish church of St Peter and St Paul is situated in the village of Over Stowey. It is one of six churches of the Quantock Villages benefice and is part of the Diocese of Bath and Wells within the Church of England. The management of the church is carried out by the Churchwarden and the Parochial Church Council. The PCC is a charity excepted by order from registering with the Charity Commission.

The PCC is responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish including deciding on how the PCC funds are to be spent, and for the maintenance of the church fabric.

From the date of the Annual Meeting, which took place in April, there are ten members on the PCC. Peter Higginson was elected as Churchwarden.

In August last year a new Rector, the Reverend Eleanor King, was interviewed and appointed after a vacancy of one year. During the vacancy, our programme of 5 services each month was not interrupted due to use of retired and visiting clergy, and Readers. Carols by Candlelight was again well supported. Weddings, baptisms and funerals took place throughout the year. The appointment of an assistant priest in the benefice is imminent.

Various events have been held throughout the year, which added to the spirit of the village as well as raising funds for the church. Carol singing across the parish led to a collection of £634 sent to UNICEF for children in Yemen.

We are fortunate that we have a set of bells which continue to be rung by our local team and visiting teams.

All money for the running of the Church has to be raised by the congregation and fund raising, none comes back from the Church of England. Last year we had to pay a Parish Share of £12272 to the Diocese to cover the salary and pension contributions of the Clergy, and Diocesan central expenses – this is 70% of the church expenditure. At the end of the year we had a deficit of £3068 as less fund-raising took place. We have renegotiated the Parish Share we will have to pay in the future which will allow us to at least break even, so that we can guarantee having an operating village church into the future. Without income from parishioners the church will close.

The 5-yearly survey of the church fabric took place and I am pleased to say there are no major works identified. The minor works will be followed up so they don't become major. The servery project is continuing and we now have agreement from the Diocese on its design. Public consultation is currently in process and following this the Chancellor will issue a Faculty for the work to take place. PCC is grateful for the grant, which has been agreed by the Parish Council, from the Downing Legacy – Miss Downing having been a regular member of the congregation and for many years the church organist.

Peter Higginson
Churchwarden

Appendix (ii):

Stowey Green Spaces Group – Report 20 May 2019

Background

Stowey Green Spaces Group grew from an initial brief in late 2016 to advise on a long-term strategy for care of the trees, rough grass and undergrowth, hedges and stream on the Recreation Ground. The Group quickly expanded its horizons to include the green spaces of the surrounding areas and linking routes between them in order to maximise community interest and introduce visitors to our wider surroundings.

Work since last year's Annual Parish Meeting

Recreation Ground

Planted new hedging in the area at the MUGA entrance to replace damage caused by fly tipping; constructed a compost bin and planning a second bin; improved/widened the path between the stream and Play Area; installed a stop-post at the MUGA pedestrian entrance to deter vehicular entry and fly tipping; supervised hedge flaying to allow development of suitable saplings into trees in the hedge

Stowey Wood

In July, Somerset County Council licensed the management of Stowey Wood, an 'ancient wood' that dates back to the 1700s, to the Stowey Green Spaces Group. The Green Spaces volunteers together with groups from Taunton Midweek Volunteers, Quantock Conservation Volunteers, The Field Studies Council (Nettlecombe) and their Family Groups and D of E candidates, cleared brambles and other brash, including invasive rhododendron and Himalayan balsam and planted 420 broadleaf saplings. This was possible as a result of 2 previous years hard preparation work by Roy Osborne and R.I.* Tree felling was carried out by arrangement with Bridgwater College Arboriculture Department, who use this as a necessary part of their students' curriculum work. Year 5 from our school visited Stowey Wood in January and planted wild fruit tree saplings along the lower slopes next to the path through the wood. We installed a picnic bench and two 'leaky dams'.

Castle Mount,

SGSG are girded up for preliminary volunteer work, clearing brash and bracken, ahead of funding plans for new fencing.

Other Green Spaces

25 kilograms of daffodils were planted in November.

We built steps for ease of access on the north side of the Old A39 path.

Walks

The Green Spaces arranged a Spring Walk through Stowey Wood and an Autumn Walk from The Mount through Watery Lane to Hockpitt Farm with guides (N.P. and L.P)* and tea and cake (from J.S. and G.C.)* and the hospitality of the Recreation ground and Hockpitt Farm.

Funding

We are applying for funding (not due until May 2020) from the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme. This includes:

Interpretive panels, showing the title of the location, a map covering all the green spaces and linking paths between them as well as an overview of heritage and/or ecological

information. These are planned for the Recreation Ground, Millennium and Stowey Woods and The Mount.

Leaflets for the Woods, The Mount, in the style of the one already being distributed for the Recreation Ground promotion.

This has been made possible with considerable professional volunteer help from T.S.*

Treasury

After initial banking in an old chocolate box we opened a real bank account in December.

Signage and other publicity

We have a Facebook page set-up and have produced a flyer promoting the Recreation Ground.

A panel is in hand for inside the Stowey Gaol, in collaboration with Stowey Walking (and sponsored by N.P. and J.P.)*

Litter picking - The Green Spaces organises litter picks on the 3rd Saturday of the month, from a 10 am start to midday finish with tea/coffee in the Portacabin on the Recreation Ground – we now have 18 volunteers on the roll, more would be welcome. Sedgemoor's Clean Surroundings team provide equipment and collection of the bags.

Volunteers

Some funders allow volunteer time to be match-funded: £50 per day per volunteer, £150 per day for volunteers giving professional input.

Collaboration with other organisations

Over the past year we have worked and/or benefitted from help and communication with:

- The NS VC Primary School
- Thomas Poole Library – the Library displays our publicity; we supported their funding application.
- Dog Walkers – a sound source of feedback and suggestion.
- Sedgemoor Green Surroundings for litter picking and care in their mowing around our crocuses.
- Stowey Walking – we installed steps (and expect to upgrade them with a handrail this year) on the north side of the Old A39 at the request and with the help of Stowey Walking, and are collaborating in the Gaol!
- AONB – for advice, funding, and help with rhododendron elimination
- Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme (Reimagining The Manor) – SGSG carried out a pioneer Hedge Survey, 30m sections of 9 hedges
- Taunton Mid-week Volunteers
- Field Studies Council, Nettlecombe – working volunteer group visits, long-term monitoring of Stowey Woods
- SDC Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study – we contributed information to their survey
- Bridgwater College arboriculture department.
- Inwood Farm, who kindly arranged the biennial Recreation Ground east border hedge cutting.
- The Woodland Trust – who supplied 420 saplings.
- The Quantock Messenger
- Nether Stowey Parish Council – maps, use of their address, printing and patience.
- The Quantock Conservation Volunteers

- The Greater Quantock Landscapes Development Fund, who funded stakes and protective tubes for our 420 saplings.
- Nether and Over Stowey Parish Path Liaison Officers
- Friends of Quantock

Overall objectives of the Stowey Green Spaces Group

- Identify, assess and help protect and enhance the natural and developed landscape and features of the landscape in the local area;
- Assist in the long-term management of local natural resources especially land based;
- Take a role in building awareness, educating residents and visitors at the local level about the natural environment and introducing the countryside to people who may be hesitant to 'use' it because of unfamiliarity with countryside practice;
- Take on local projects to achieve the above objectives;
- Gather and catalogue information on the natural environment;
- Engage with local schools and colleges - the next generations - to achieve the above objectives;
- Offer advice and recommendations for best management practices on public and private lands as requested;
- Liaise with Nether and Over Stowey Parish Councils, AONB, SCC, SWT and others on green space issues;
- Keep public areas and roadsides in and around Nether and Over Stowey clear of litter, in liaison with Sedgemoor District Council.

The Green Spaces

Nether Stowey Recreation Ground; Stowey Millennium Wood; Stowey Wood; The Mount; Public Rights of Way (footpaths and bridleways); Area between Banneson Road and Memorial Gate; Nether Stowey Plot 173; The old A39; The Mount; The pedestrian lanes throughout Nether Stowey; Barn Close; Waterways; Rough woodland between RG and A39; Village Hall area, until/if it moves to the playing field; Over Stowey Cricket field; any other green areas in the locality of Nether and Over Stowey.

*Amendments made by OSPC to comply with GDPR guidelines