**STAUNTON COLEFORD PARISH COUNCIL**

MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

HELD ON 5th MAY 2021 AT 19:00

*[N.B. These minutes remain in draft form until approved at a subsequent meeting of the Council]*

**PRESENT**

Cllrs Smart (Chairman). Clerk Mr Crighton.

5 members of the public (remaining Councillors)

**1 APOLOGIES**

County Cllr Allaway-Martin, District Cllr David Wheeler

2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD 26 MAY 2020

It was reported that no minutes were taken at this meeting.

3 REPORTS

3.1 PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

The report was presented by Cllr Sadler and noted. A copy of the report is attached to the signed

copy of these minutes.

3.2 FINANCE REPORT

The report was presented by the Clerk and noted. A copy of the report is attached to the signed

copy of these minutes.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS None

5 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Provisionally 9 May 2022

The meeting closed at 19:15.

APM Annual Report May 2021

This past year all our lives have been dominated by the unrelenting impact of the Coronavirus pandemic and learning to live under the rules and restrictions that have come with the battle to get it under control.

For the Parish Council, last year’s Annual Parish Meeting was our first tentative attempt to conduct business via a virtual platform. In spite of the inevitable technical hitches - though thankfully no cat filters or Jackie Weaver moments - we have managed to make progress, both with on-going projects, and in dealing with one-off matters as they have arisen.

**Village Land**

Land management has been a big part of council business (and budget) this year. The Parish Council has a duty of care to keep the open spaces owned by the village safe for all who use them, the cost of which is met through the precept. This year we felled a number of unsafe trees on The Butts and commissioned a condition report for the large, mature deciduous trees at Castle Ditch. We will have a clearer idea next month when these are in leaf of exactly how much more remedial work may also be required here.

**The Meend**

An extended rest from grazing by the Moorland Mousie’s Exmore ponies, largely due to Covid restrictions, would appear to have done the native acid grassland species mix some good. Last summer there were clear signs of an increase in the spread of harebells and heather and plenty of grass visible beneath the bracken.

An appropriate grazing regime continues to be seen as an important part of the regeneration process. The Parish Council is applying to renew permanently the 10 year planning permission granted in 2011 to stock-fence the Meend. This is a legal requirement as the land is a registered common. Once this has been obtained, the Parish Council will be in a position to seek further funding to continue its sympathetic management of this lovely natural asset for all who use it.

In the meantime, David Dewsbury of The Foresters’ Forest, together with Cllr Mobbs Morgan and John Richards have set up a reptile monitoring project in the hope of determining if native species like adders, slow worms, grass snakes and possibly lizards are present.

**Highways … (and byways)**

Neither the number of vehicles, nor the speed at which some of them travel through the village would appear to have decreased one bit during lockdown. After lengthy, patient and persistent lobbying of Highways, we are hopeful that the replacement of the old broken portable battery Vehicle Activated Sign by new solar powered units at the 30 mph gateways is not far away. We are also looking into further road safety measures within the village, including carrying out an assessment to gauge suitability for a controlled pedestrian crossing.

Away from the ‘main road’, the tarmacked access way to the top of the common (technically part Restricted Byway and part footpath) is in a poor condition. Its upkeep is the responsibility of the Parish Council, but apart from occasional patching on a voluntary basis by Cllr Richards, no other maintenance has been carried out for many years. To ease the burden on the precept, we are planning to carry out a staged resurfacing, probably over two financial years. Quotes for stage 1 from Meend Cottage to the Adventure Centre area for around £7300 have been obtained and we have asked Tarmac if they can assist by supplying the materials.

**Quarry**

The quarry has continued to operate during lockdown, with regular firings along its western boundary, closest to the village. Whilst not everyone feels the impact, some residents say they have felt them for the first time this year. It is clear from our village Facebook postings that they are upsetting, and people are fearful of damage caused to their properties. However the readings remain resolutely within permitted limits so do not trigger planning enforcement concerns. Residents are urged to continue to report via the Parish Council website when shockwaves are felt. The Parish Council now has two representatives on the quarry liaison committee. Cllr Dyson attended the last one which was held in December and has engaged directly with the quarry on a number of occasions since.

**Community Spirit**

One positive during the last twelve months has been the strength of community spirit here in Staunton. Residents have looked out for each other with many acts of neighbourly kindness, support and generosity. And a number of suggestions for enhancing village amenities and surroundings have been put forward.

A request for allotments has led to the Almshouses Charity making available the small paddock behind between their cottages and The Pound. Plans are in hand for up to 5 allotments for local families. There has been a request for a dedicated children’s play area - a couple of potential sites are being considered as well as a proposal to sow wildflower seeds along the A4136.

Other initiatives include the launch of Staunton Move (a virtual village exercise group) and a pop-up café offering light refreshments for weary walkers, cyclists and riders in the grounds of Assisi on the common.

Throughout this difficult year the team at the White Horse have worked hard, constantly adapting to changing lockdown regulations to keep us cheered with tasty takeaways and of course Charley’s motivational Facebook postings.

During its time of enforced closure the Village Hall has been redecorated, the committee have bought new chairs and are looking to hold the Village Barbecue (cancelled last year for obvious reasons) at a date in July - to be confirmed.

**Parish Council**

So here we are, another year on and at last hopefully looking forward to getting back to more ‘normality’ – all being well, this includes the Parish Council being able to resume face to face meetings from July. Even with the arrival of superfast Gigaclear, unexpectedly ahead of schedule earlier this year, and the resolution of many of the early technical difficulties, Zoom is never quite the same.

The Parish Council is keen to engage with as many residents as possible through the website (stauntoncoleford.org.uk) and Facebook. You are also invited to have your name added to our email contact list to receive agendas and minutes of meetings as well as information we consider you will find of interest, such as local road closures. Please email the Clerk if you wish your name to be added.

Almost last, but by no means least, our thanks go to our new clerk Richard Crighton, for stepping in on a temporary basis following the resignation of our previous clerk Clare Davies in September. We are delighted to have persuaded him to take up the post permanently at the start of this year. Safe to say the running of the Parish Council is in now in capable hands and good shape going forward.

And we are close to having a full complement of Councillors once more. Marrilyn Smart joined us in the autumn, bringing her wealth of experience as former parish and district Councillor. One vacancy still remains and volunteers are always welcome to apply for co-option. Even in a small community like Staunton, it is surprising how much there is to do. Anyone interested in the Parish Councillor role is encouraged to contact the Clerk (stauntoncolefordpc@gmail.com)who will be happy to explain what is involved.

**STAUNTON COLEFORD PARISH COUNCIL**

**FINANCE REPORT 2020/21**

W: stauntoncoleford.org.uk

F: facebook.com/groups/StauntonColeford/

E: stauntoncolefordpc@gmail.com

**INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **2019/20** |  | **2020/21** | **% change** |
|  | **INCOME** |  |  |
| 7643 | Precept | 8596 | +12.6 |
| 185 | Other | 532 | +187.0 |
| 4520 | Meend | 3516 | -22.2 |
|  | VAT reclaimed | 1191 |  |
| **12348** | **TOTAL INCOME** | **13835** | +12.0 |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | **EXPENDITURE** |  |  |
|  | Administration: |  |  |
| 2712 | Staff costs | 4979 | +83.6 |
| 1718 | Admin costs | 4157 | +142.0 |
| (4430) | (Administration total) | (9136) | +106.2 |
| 4421 | Meend | 250 | -94.3 |
| 1418 | Community services / projects | 6061 | +327.4 |
| 0 | Capital expenditure | 46 |  |
| 0 | Highways | 100 |  |
| 0 | VAT paid | 913 |  |
| **10269** | **TOTAL EXPENDITURE** | **16506** | +60.7 |
| **2079** | **SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)** | **(2671)** |  |

I certify that the statement of accounts represents a true and fair view of the Council’s financial position at the year end, and of the Council’s income and expenditure for the year.

**R S CRIGHTON**

**RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER**

**2 April 2021**

**NOTES TO THE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS**

**1 Other Income**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **2019/20 (£)** |  | **2020/21 (£)** |
| 185 | Wayleaves  Rent  Sale of timber | 377  5  150 |
| **185** | **TOTAL** | **532** |

**2 Staff costs** Includes salary and statutory deductions

**3 Admin costs**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **2019/20**  **(£)** |  | **2019/20 (£)** |
| 0\* | Travel\* | 153 |
| 0\* | Clerk’s allowance\* | 104 |
| 70 | Payroll services | 73 |
| 0 | Printing | 65 |
| 2 | Postage | 17 |
| 0 | Telephone | 156 |
| 0 | IT | 986 |
| 0 | Room hire | 184 |
| 1124 | Insurance | 1803 |
| 100 | Audit | 275 |
| 0 | Bank charges | 72 |
| 77 | Professional subs | 74 |
| 145 | Training | 125 |
| 147 | Election expenses | 0 |
| 53 | Sundry | 71 |
| **1718** | **TOTAL** | **4157** |

\* These costs for 2019/20 were wrongly included within Staff costs

**4 Community services and projects**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **2019/20**  **(£)** |  | **2020/21 (£)** |
| 0 | Defibrillator | 361 |
| 1300 | Grass cutting | 700 |
| 118 | Estate management | 4980 |
| **1418** | **TOTAL** | **6041** |

**GRAPHICS**

**SUPPLEMENTARY STATEMENT**

**Assets**

As at 31 March 2021 the following assets were held

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Asset | Cost (£) | Insured value (£) |
| Land – Castle Ditch, The Butts, The Pound, The Cross, and land to NW of church | 5 | 1 |
| Staunton Meend | 5 | 1 |
| Village Hall (999 year lease to Village Hall trustees) | 80000 | 191833\* |
| Brindsey Well | 1 | 1 |
| Frogs mouth | 1 | 1 |
| **Total (land and buildings)** | **80012** | **191836\*** |
|  |  |  |
| Fencing – Staunton Meend | 3339 | Not insured – low risk |
| Gates – Staunton Meend | 562 | 630 |
| Fencing – Staunton Meend | 6835 | Not insured – low risk |
| 2 x cattle grids | 15187 | 15187 |
| Notice board – The Pound | 808 | 780 |
| Notice board – White Horse | 780 | 780 |
| Notice board -Bus shelter | 300 | 780 |
| Ranger metal seat -Whippington’s Corner | 481 | 520 |
| 3 x seats / benches – Staunton Meend | 750 | 1500 |
| Seat – The Butts | 500 | 500 |
| Litter bin – The pound | 248 | 300 |
| 2 x seats, tables – The Pound | 500 | 1000 |
| Bus shelter | ? | 2000 |
| Bench – Searchlight area | 675 | 675 |
| Bench – near interpretation board | 657 | 657 |
| **Total Street furniture** | **31622** | **25309** |
|  |  |  |
| Asus notebook | 500 | 500 |
| 2 x filing boxes | 46 | 46 |
| **Total office equipment** | **546** | **546** |
|  |  |  |
| Bracken basher | 1050 | 1050 |
| Tree removal equipment | 845 | 845 |
| Salt gritter | 586 | 586 |
| **Total machinery** | **2481** | **2481** |
|  |  |  |
| **FULL TOTALS** | **114661** | **220172** |

\* The lease to the Village Hall is a fully repairing and insuring lease. As at 31 March 2021 the buildings insurance is covered by the Parish Council. It is intended that the position will be corrected prior to 31 May 2021 at which point the value of the building will revert to zero in these accounts.

**Borrowings**

As at 31 March 2021 there were no borrowings outstanding

**Leases**

As at 31 March 2021 there were no leases in existence of which the Parish Council was the lessee.

**Debts outstanding**

As at 31 March 2021 there were no debts outstanding

**Creditors**

As at 31 March 2021 there were no credits outstanding

**Capital Reserves**

There is no Capital Reserve.

**Reserves analysis**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Reserve | Opening balance  1/4/2020 | Closing Balance  31/3/21 | Notes |
| Meend | 700 | 3966 | a |
| Election 2023 | 0 | 250 | b |
| Quarry opposition | 0 | 2000 | c |
| Roads maintenance | 0 | 7000 | d |
| Estate management | 0 | 5000 | e |
| General | 24943 | 4756 | f |
| **TOTAL** | **25643** | **22972** |  |

**Notes to reserve movements**

1. Increase = grant £3516 less expenditure £250 = net £3266.
2. To meet 2023 election costs. Tfrd from general reserve
3. Maintain nominal sum for future opposition. Tfrd from general reserve
4. Estimate for Meend road repairs. Tfrd from general reserve
5. Tree maintenance etc. Tfrd from general reserve
6. General reserve £4756 = 40% of 2020/21 precept (£12000)

**Tenancies**

There were no tenancies held during the year

**S.137 payments**

Does not apply (General Power of Competence held)

**Agency work**

During the year the Council undertook no agency work on behalf of other authorities

**Advertising and publicity** None.

**Pensions**

The Council has fulfilled its legal requirements with the Pensions Regulator.

**SIGNED …………………………………R S Crighton 14/4/2021**

**(Responsible Financial Officer)**

**REPORT FOR ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

Income for the year was very similar to the previous year; the major changes being an increase of 12.6% or £953 in the precept, a VAT reclaim covering 3 years of £1191, but a reduction in the Meend grant of £1004.

Expenditure showed some significant changes year on year –

* staff costs up 84% or £2267 due to locum work and a revised contract for the Clerk,
* admin costs up 142% or £2439 due to website re-design and an insurance excess,
* Meend maintenance costs were down 94% or £4171,
* Community costs were up over 300% or £4643 due to major tree work.

Overall expenditure was up 61% to £16506 which resulted in an overspend of £2671. Within that figure was a net surplus of £3266 earmarked for the Meend and a general overspend of £5937.

The closing balance of £22972 has been apportioned to various specific reserves, leaving just £4756 as a ‘free’ reserve. With the strong likelihood of major expenditure in future years on roads maintenance and tree work and a reduction in the grant for the Meend, the decision was taken to increase the precept for 2021/22 to £12000.