

STRETTON PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL MEETING

Held 30th May 2023 at Stretton Community Hub, Church Lane,
Stretton

The meeting was opened by the Chairman of the Parish Council Greg Harker.

Present were Cllrs Greg Harker, Sue Armstrong-Brookes, John Cooch, Shani Storrey, Tamara King, Corinne Cassapi, Ward Councillor Nick Begy and 10 members of the public.

Chairman's Report

First, a warm welcome to everyone here this evening and special congratulations to all members of the council for either being re-elected or elected for the first time. I also would like to welcome Debbie Rolfe to her first Annual Parish Meeting as Clerk and also Nick Begy, our Ward councillor and now chair of the RCC planning and licensing committee.

At last week's Annual Parish Council meeting, I was elected as Chair and John Cooch as vice-chair. The other members are Sue Armstrong-Brookes, Shani Storrie, Tamara King and Corinne Cassapi.

Since last year's Annual Parish meeting, there have been many changes to the parish council line-up.

First, Paul Finlay, unfortunately became ill during the middle part of the year and although he came back for a short period, his heavy primary workload meant he could not give the post all of the time it needed. We have to thank Paul, however, for being an excellent chairman for 18 months.

Richard Foster then stepped up to become Chair but unfortunately he, also, fell ill and had to resign after just a couple of months. Richard, of course, had been Chair previously for many years and the village owes him a huge debt of thanks for his many years of service to our community. We then lost Michael Arnold also to illness. Thank you Michael, for your hard work during your 3 years on the council.

So, the council was left, barely quorate, for 3 months. We were fortunate that three volunteers came forward and John Cooch, Sue Armstrong-Brookes, and Tamara King were co-opted. We managed to get the precept approved but no further meetings were then held before the election on May 4th. All the current councillors were re-elected and, in addition, Corinne Cassapi was elected. So, we are now up to our full complement of 6 councillors.

To cap it all our excellent clerk, Jayne Isaacs, also resigned in September and we had no clerk for three months until we hired Debbie Rolfe who started work in January. We are very fortunate to have been able to hire Debbie. She is also clerk to Essendine and Ketton and so is able to bring a wealth of experience of these other councils to us. One of the first things she has done is arrange for an internal audit of the council and I am pleased to say that the audit was passed with ease. However, there was one issue which I should like to talk about now.

One of the first things that Debbie uncovered was that the Parish Council website was being managed from within the village. The Leicestershire & Rutland Association of Local Councils (LRALC) recommended some years ago that it should be owned by the council but managed independently from the village. Until now, we have been very fortunate that Andrew Hayns and Penny Isaac who run a computer server business in Stretton have provided the website and its support free of charge. Because of this change we will now have to pay for it. At last week's meeting we voted to hand the website management over to another local (non-village) business and the steps to achieve this have already been taken.

At this point I must say a huge thank you to Andrew and to Penny for all of their work over many years. Indeed, it was Penny who built the current Parish Council website for us, saving us many hundreds of £'s. They will still run and manage the parish website (not to be confused with the parish council website) but, importantly, the Parish Council will now own our own site and Debbie, as clerk, will be the sole person who will upload and download material from the site, in all normal circumstances.

I now want to highlight some of the issues we continue to deal with on the parish council.

First, I want to tell you of our ongoing concern at the sewage infrastructure. You may know that waste disposal from HMP Stocken is pumped down to Stretton and then onto Greetham and eventually to the works at Cottesmore. With the increase in prison population, the PC expressed strong concern over many years, that the Stretton pumping station and infrastructure could not cope. Before the latest (4th) expansion, Anglian Water agreed to upgrade Stretton and Greetham pumping stations and this was a condition of the planning permission. However, no sooner had permission been granted than AW applied to have the condition removed and this was agreed by RCC planning department. John Cooch and I, together with our ward councillor Nick Begy, met with RCC in March to discuss our concerns. To be frank, there is little that can be done now that the condition has been withdrawn, but RCC did promise to set up a meeting with AW to put our points to them and hear what their plans are with regards to any upgrades. I've also had an exchange of letters with Alicia Kearns, our MP – who was sympathetic and has agreed to help where she can.

Next, I'll talk about road safety and highways. First, the fantastic news that, after 4 years of lobbying, our stretch of the A1 has been resurfaced with quieter tarmac. It does not eliminate the A1 noise by any means, but it does reduce it. This was only completed earlier this year.

There was also good news that the potholes on the Clipsham Road have now been completely eliminated by the resurfacing work that went on in May.

The not so good news is that the contractor lorries, travelling to Stocken have made a mess of the verges. RCC has been to repair the verges and made an even worse mess. We have invited the new head of highways to come and visit and hopefully this meeting will go ahead in the next couple of weeks.

We have also had a long discussion with RCC about speeding on the Clipsham Road and the Stocken Road. RCC issued a report to us last year that was unsatisfactory and, after we complained, have promised to re-issue it. RCC has accepted that there is speeding on the Clipsham Road but what is not agreed is what to do about it. RCC has put in the signs at both ends of the parish and this has had some effect. The footpath to George Henry

wood is narrower than it should be and RCC has agreed to cut back the hedge alongside the footpath 3 times per year. The debate about what else to do will continue this year and the parish council has an option to purchase or contribute to the cost of speed indicators. However, I just want to make it clear that the PC preferred option is for RCC to implement and pay for traffic calming measures. However, when the head of RCC highways visited us, she made the point that other villages have contributed towards the installation of speed indicators (including hers) and so we have retained the monies that were voted last year. If this money is not used for speed indicators, it will be returned to the precept to pay for other things.

I must also mention two other major items of expenditure which have occurred last year. First, the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and secondly the King's Coronation event. You'll have seen from the parish newsletter that a great time was had by all who went to both events, but I want to take this opportunity to thank both committees, the QPJ led by Sue Armstrong-Brookes and also Tamara King and her committee for organising the Kings Coronation event.

With the new council, we have agreed to create four focus working groups. We will have one group looking at planning issues (Shani and John) Highways issues (Corrinne, Tamara and me) tree issues (Tamara) and Finance issues (Sue). It's early days, but I'm hoping that this will get more councillors involved with the parish issues.

I've spoken for long enough, now it's over to you. I am happy to answer questions on what I have said but before I open up to the floor, I'd like to ask Ward Councillor Nick Begy to give us an overview of our issues from RCC's perspective.

This is really your opportunity to talk about what you would like to see happen in the parish so I'll open it up to the floor.

COUNCILLOR NICK BEGY

County Councillor Nick Begy gave thanks to the community for re-electing him. There is all change at Rutland County Council as the Liberal Democrats take office as leaders. They hope to be able to work together to get the best outcome for the County.

The biggest issue on Rutland County Councils agenda is the Local Plan which set out development for the County over the next 25 to 30 years. The previous local plan was withdrawn. Development will be spread around the county however the impact on Stretton will be relatively small as it is not deemed a sustainable village due to lack of facilities. The only issue will be if Woolfox gets put forward for development as this could see anything between 3000 and 7000 houses built. There are however factors that would not make this a viable development and the council will fight on behalf of Stretton to ensure this does not have any negative impact.

Focus for Stretton will be Highways issue, accountability for lighting and costs, New Cycle/Walking Initiative and a draft proposal has been put forward for a footpath. It is very early days for this proposal and we will continue to work hard on your behalf.

Cllr Begy was looking forward to working with the newly elected councillors, positive comments were made regarding the last Parish Council Meeting and hoped that with the addition of the new focus groups the Parish could now start working together to achieve the best outcome for the Parish and Residents.

Mention was made regarding St George's Barrack. There are 2 parts to the development, the airbase and the Officers Mess. The MOD development of the Officers Mess of approximately 40 – 50 houses is going through at the moment and is due 2026-2028. This is currently under debate with the local residents. There is no further update on the airbase.

More updates regarding The Ram Jam Inn were due and further planning applications are to be submitted shortly.

There was mention regarding the New North West Extension at Greetham Quarry with 2 other applications for new locations being considered. Greetham Parish Council and Cllr Begy worked together and did a huge amount of work to ensure stringent measures have been implemented to protect harm to residents due to the cumulative effect of multiple quarries. Stretton Village will be more protected than any other village in the uk.

THE MEETING WAS OPENED TO THE PUBLIC FOR A Q&A SESSION

A resident mentioned the efficiency of the contractors working on the Greetham Road was to be applauded.

Mention of Speeding through the village was made and this will be placed on the Highways Focus Group Agenda.

The cost of the new Website was raised and an explanation was provided why there was a need to move to a new provider.

Fundraising for the Hub was raised and Cllr S Armstrong-Brookes gave a brief update on Stretton Community Hub Association.

The meeting was closed at 19.38 and attendees were invited to stay for light refreshments.