Staverton Parish Annual Meeting

April 2024

Chair's Report

Thanks to councillors, WNC councillors, Clerk, village Hall committee for use of the hall, to Denise and Bruce Blackmore and to Simon Evans

Thank you all for attending the Annual Parish Meeting.

There are over 10,000 Parish Councils across England, mostly but not exclusively serving rural areas such as ours. And yet only 40% of the population is served by a Parish Council.

The functions of a Parish Council can be summarised briefly in the following five points.

To represent the local community

To deliver services to meet local needs

To seek to improve the quality of life in the parish

To exercise a general consultative role

To exercise statutory consultative rights on planning matters

With all this in mind it is helpful to remember that Parish Councils are constrained by the limits on their means and their powers. According to Mark Sandford at the House of Commons Libray

“The only power available solely to Parish Councils is to obtain lands for use as allotments. More broadly speaking, Parish Councils exercise a general consultative role on behalf of local people.”

And note that it is the Council as a body that has authority to speak and act, individual councillors have no authority outside of that which is specifically invested on them by the Council.

The issues that Parishioners have directed to the Council over the past year include concerns over obstructions to pathways, traffic speeding, problems caused by road closures, residents' response to “No Mow May” and most recently the lack of public transport.

Problems concerning roads and pathways should, in the first instance, be logged online on “Fix My Street” and I would encourage any one bringing any such issue to the Council to log this online as a matter of course. However, as Councillors well know, the typical response is that West Northants will

look into it sometime within a 6 month time limit. Following up matters with the relevant department the Parish Council is too often frustrated by the lack of response as yet another month goes by.

The Parish Council is appreciative of the support of West Northants Councillors Rupert Frost and Jo Gilford in taking matters forward wherever they can. And I would like to offer one example where by working together we have achieved a successful outcome. The closure of the A425 caused not only an unnecesary inconvenience for residents but created a potentially dangerous situation when unsuitable traffic was using Badby Lane as a shortcut. Even though this was not the "official" diversionary route all local traffic and some not so local vehicles made Badby Lane an unsafe place during the road closure and causing more damage to the road surface in the process. The outcome of a meeting between our Ward Councillors and the portfolio holder for Highways West Northants Council has reviewed its policies and procedures when arranging suitable diversions in the future including looking at adding weight restrictions to certain routes.

Talking of Badby Lane, after lengthy discussions and campaigning, a new speed limit has been extended along parts of the lane and I express thanks to councillors and parishioners who assisted in providing evidence, and in the support of Badby Parish Council.

As we as a society move inexorably towards an almost exclusively digital age the Council has finally been succesful in setting up an online banking account in spite of being told repeatedly by the bank that it could not be done in the way we wanted.

I would like to express thanks to councillor Adam McGibbon in organising and setting up our new website @stavertonparishcouncil.gov.uk And to Councillor John Golding in sorting through the policy documents to make sure we are all up to date.

Looking forward realistically and uncynically I anticipate another year of being told too often by our clerk that we have not had a response and asking her to follow it up. But also in some unanticipated and maybe as yet unknown successes. But mostly in fullfilling our role as your representatives, your voices and to improving the quality of life in the Parish. Particularly hearing your views on things like a Bus service for the village, how best to use CIL monies.

Roy Noon,

April 2024