

Chairman's Annual Report 2021 for the Annual Parish Meeting on Monday 24th May 2021

For a second year I write this report in a year when our lives have continued to be dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic. We have seen restrictions lifted as the pandemic receded in the summer months, only to be re-imposed in the winter months, as the pandemic took hold once again. The Parish Council started to hold meetings via Zoom last May which, after a few initial teething problems, worked well and allowed us to communicate with each other and the residents of Stansfield. This May meeting will be the first that we have held in person since the start of the pandemic and will be subject to current Covid restrictions and guidelines. It may be that meeting in such a way is not as accessible to all residents as meeting virtually however, we must follow government guidelines where the flexibility for councils to hold virtual meetings was not extended past the 7th May.

The Stansfield Parish Council currently comprises myself, Sarah Hopkins (chairman), Ed Cardozo (vice chairman), Robbie Dennis, Fay Gridley, Fran Brown, Julie Ghirardani and John Underdown.

The Parish Council is elected to represent the members of the community, and as such we welcome the views and concerns of Stansfield residents. This should be done by emailing the Parish clerk at stansfieldparishcouncil@yahoo.co.uk. The clerk will pass on your comments and concerns which may be brought up at the next Parish Council meeting, unless it is something that can be resolved outside a meeting or has already been answered. However, it should be noted that, whilst you can speak informally to myself or other councillors, a collective decision by the Parish Council can only be taken at a formal Parish Council meeting.

Usually there are 6 Parish Council meetings each year, and all residents are welcome to attend and speak during the open forum at the start of each meeting. Notice of meetings are placed on the village notice board, giving at least 3 days notice in advance of each meeting, or you can look on the village website and click on the Parish Council link

Despite this year being characterized by lockdowns and social distancing restrictions, your Parish Council has continued to work hard to support the village and to try to achieve what is best for our community.

Housing Needs Survey

With reduced means of communication in the village due to social restrictions, the Parish Council realized that it was difficult to ascertain residents' views with regard to the potential building of new houses in the village. We had limited ways of sounding out public opinion and so we took the decision to commission a Housing Needs Survey from Community Action Suffolk (CAS), who are the provider recognized by West Suffolk Council. Mary Evans, our District Councillor, provided us with a locality grant to help fund the survey, for which we thank her.

This was an independent and anonymous survey, which was delivered to all households at the end of September. A return rate of 71% was achieved which has provided us with a robust insight into villagers' views and requirements for the period going forward. An average return for this type of survey is between 30-40%. The results were independently collated and analyzed by CAS, which provided us with sufficient data to respond to the West Suffolk Council's Issues and Options stage of the new local plan.

We have now also been able to release the summary of the survey results and a copy of this has been delivered to each household in the parish. The two key findings from the survey are that:

- i) there were more households in favour of a limited amount of new housing in the parish than against (39 as against 30)
- ii) there were 19 households indicating a future housing need in Stansfield (14 currently living in Stansfield and 5 identifying a need for people with a local connection to move to or return to Stansfield)

The information obtained from the survey will help us to respond to future planning applications in the parish in our role as a statutory consultee.

Quiet Lanes Suffolk

During the past year with many of us confined to home or our local areas, there have been many more people out using our beautiful lanes and footpaths. The Parish Council took the decision to work with Quiet Lanes Suffolk to designate three of our roads as Quiet Lanes.

We have been working with Denston and Poslingford Parish Councils, who have both entered the scheme, which has enabled us to extend the routes to the A143 and the Stansfield-Clare road, respectively and with Hawkedon Parish Council, who have agreed that we can designate the route along Thurston Lane to Thurston End.

- i) Pippin Post to Assington Green and then onwards past Chalcott to Denston (this is then extended by Denston PC through Denston, along Water Lane to the A143)
- ii) Assington Green to Gosland Green (then extended to the Clare Road by Poslingford PC)
- iii) Thurston Lane to Thurston End (with thanks to Hawkedon PC)

This is a nationally recognized designation which encourages a mutual respect for all users of a road. It urges drivers to “Expect and Respect” the more vulnerable users of a road such as walkers, runners, cyclists, and horse riders. Several of our quieter lanes link with the many footpaths and bridleways in the village and we felt that this scheme would be of real benefit both to residents and visitors to our area. The scheme is being heavily subsidized by Suffolk County Council with a small contribution (£100 in our case) from each parish. We were very pleased that we, and the other parishes that we have been working with, managed to meet the end of March deadline to receive funding.

The notice of the intention to designate these routes is out today the 24th May 2021.

The Cemetery Wildlife Project

Following a clear up of the Chapel Cemetery ground, in October (thanks to Julie for organizing and to all the helpers) it was suggested by a local resident that we start a Wildlife project to monitor, enjoy and encourage the wildlife in the area. Mary Evans, who was our local councillor at the time, kindly provided us with a grant to cover initial expenditure. With this we have purchased a garden bench to enable residents to sit quietly and enjoy the surrounding wildlife and also a wildlife trap, which will be used around the village to allow us to see some of the fauna living alongside us. The Bloomers group has also donated a beautiful

bird box which will hopefully come into use next spring. I hope that many of you will take advantage of this beautiful and reflective place.

Stansfield Bird Survey

Another idea which came out of the Wildlife project was to monitor the birds seen in Stansfield and its surrounding area. The last study was carried out by Carl Chapman, who lived at Briardene, in 1994 and so it would be interesting to compare sightings this year with those seen by Carl. You can see a copy of Carl's survey in the village telephone box. Please report any interesting sightings to shopkinsstansfieldpc@gmail.com

Other projects

- we monitor the cutting of the **roadside verges** by the County Council.
- **the telephone box** in the High Street continues to work well as a book exchange and information point; this year we have added magazines and jigsaw puzzles to support all residents and especially those who have felt vulnerable and reluctant to leave the village.
- we check that all the **dog bins** are emptied on a timely basis (thanks to Julie for this)

The Council continued to support village organizations with a donation to the Village Hall towards running costs. We recognize that this last year has been particularly challenging for the Village Hall, which has had no income from its usual users.

District and County Councillors

I would like to thank our local District Councillor and County Councillor, Mary Evans, for her continued support. Mary has done a great job of fulfilling both roles at District and County levels. She has attended all our Zoom meetings, been involved with our many projects, and offered us invaluable advice. Sadly, Mary decided to resign as District Councillor and not seek re-election as County Councillor in the recent local elections. We will miss her contributions as both District and County Councillor.

I would also like to welcome Mary's replacements and look forward to welcoming them to our meetings and working with both of them:

County Councillor: Bobby Bennett

District Councillor: Sarah Pugh

I would like to thank Richard Evans for doing such a great job in editing our village newsletter, **The Parish Pump**, and for keeping us both well informed and entertained. He has managed to convert from physical copies to an online version which, is possibly even better as it is in colour. Sadly, Richard has decided that it is time for his long stint as editor to come to an end. He has been working alongside an excellent editorial team and regular contributors. The Parish Pump is now looking for a new editor. Please contact the Parish Pump on parish.pump@gmail.com, if you feel that you can help.

Bloomers

Thanks are also due to the Bloomers group, who work so hard to brighten up our village with beautiful barrels of flowers adorning many a corner. This has been particularly welcome during the gloomy days of lockdown and has lifted our spirits.

Finally, I would like to thank my co-councillors and Joanne Kirk, our Parish Clerk, for all their hard work, their willingness to work as a team and for allowing the Parish Council to function during these difficult times.

Sarah Hopkins
Chairman
May 2021