

Chairman's Annual Review 2023-24

Stansfield Parish Council Annual General Meeting, May 8th, 2024.

First.....I would like to thank you for the kindness, understanding andgood wishes during my health difficulties last year.

How to sum up our first year as a new council...?

I thinkWork and Progress? Work.. and.. Progress.

Very importantly, we are enjoying working **together**, both as parish councillors and with other organisations in the village.

We share **the main aim** which is...

To work in the interests of the community, taking actions to improve our quality of life and our beautiful historic environment.

One example: the old **Chapel Graveyard**this site was cleared by a party of councillors and residents working together in Autumn. We asked Suffolk Wildlife Trust to make some recommendations for the site, which is an important wildlife habitat, as well as being a place for quiet contemplation with interesting flora and fauna. A working party is implementing these, whilst the gates are being refurbished at no cost to the parish, thanks to a donor.

We are compiling a list of important community assets in the village which are not part of the national listed building scheme eg the VH, the old pumps, the telephone box.

We would like residents to suggest more of these assets, and comment on this.

The Parish Council has welcomed the recognition that our whole valley, from Hawkedon to Wickhambrook, is special.

West Suffolk Council, in its new Local Plan which sets out parameters for development in the district for the next twenty years, designates this valley as **an LVL (Locally Valued Landscape)** which recognises its special character and quality. The Parish Council said in their submission to WSC that walks and views across the valley's ancient field patterns and woodlands are particularly valued by many Stansfield residents and visitors.

Work and Progress..... How do we communicate our work and progress to residents?

We attach great importance to Community Engagement:

Our aim is to be:

Less Stuff and have minimal formality.....

.....hence.... we now have only four formal council meetings rather than six each year, but with active council involvement in more informal and inclusive events like the Community Coffee Morning in February and the Summer Event..in August...date to be advised. These and also **regular events...** like the Rural Coffee Caravan monthly visits and cinema and other events at VH... are where we aim to collect ideas and views from residents.

And of course, as representatives of residents, Councillors are available by telephone and/or email, the list is on the website and noticeboard.

So, going forward working on communication, inclusion and consultation

...we have started a **Working Party** to make efforts to improve our website presence And also to look in a more detailed way at community engagement generally, with the task of producing a Council Policy document on this topic later this year.

.....We are **very Keen** to have **interested residents as members** of these working parties.

Sincerely hope as many residents as possible will come to the **Annual Parish Meeting on 14 May**...this is an open meeting for electors of the parish to pose questions and raise concerns about village matters.

Work and Progress..... Keeping down Costs

We have deliberately kept down the 2023-24 precept to the level of 22-23, having in mind the pressures of cost of living increases on households.

Also we are **enlisting the help of residents** and in particular through the Stansfield Good Neighbour Scheme to help with the work in the community **so the cost and burden does not fall on the parish funds**. We are encouraging sponsorship for community projects where possible.....eg the old chapel graveyard gates.

I and my fellow councillors would like to thank and pay tribute to the many personal and community efforts made by the **Good Neighbour volunteers** in their first six months of operation..both in aiding individual residents and in undertaking community projects such as the repair of the noticeboard, and in helping organise and man community events.

This scheme is a really valuable and cost effective new resource for all villagers.

I also most heartily welcome the joining forces and working together of the PC, the GN scheme and the very hard working Village Hall committee to enhance community spirit in the village.

The first joint venture, the Community Coffee Morning was a success with between 50 and 60 people attending. We hope the proposed Summer Event will prove similarly popular.

Thank you also to all those residents who helped with the annual village Litter Pick in April.

Twelve bags of litter were collected from roadside verges and footpaths and volunteers enjoyed well earned refreshments provided by the GN scheme.

Work and Progress...Planning

Because this area is so special, national and local planning rules mean that there are few opportunities for new homes and development here. One possible way that a small number of new homes might be built here is on a Rural Exception Site. A need for affordable new homes would need to be proven. The Parish Council has asked WSC to consider setting guidelines and criteria for the undertaking of housing surveys, before they accept survey results as giving accurate information about potential housing need in a village. We have also offered to make the lessons learned in the recent failed housing survey in Stansfield available to WSC. And we have asked WSC to consider setting out criteria for the viability of rural exception sites and for them to limit any developer from seeking to vary the planning permission at a later date to potentially increase the proportion of market housing against affordable homes on such sites, as witnessed in some local villages. This practice tends to erode public confidence in the planning process, we feel.

Work and Progress .. Emergency Planning and the Defibrillator

We have updated and rewritten the Emergency Plan for the village and submitted this to WSC.

A list of telephone contact numbers which might be useful in an emergency has been circulated to all households.

Also circulated, was information on what to do if someone collapses from a suspected heart attack. And how to access help and the defibrillator, which is sited at the VH.

This was the subject of a first aid session organised by **Cllr Pallett** at the VH in November and we thank him, **and his wife Jan**, for keeping the defibrillator maintained. We will look at

repeating this well attended first aid session.

So finally....

in contemplating the next year of **Work and Progress.:**

We recognise that a lot of people have worked hard in the village, and in the community during the past year. and we thank everyone who has helped. We encourage more residents to join in the fun!

We especially thank Derek and Dolly and their Village Hall committee, who have done so much, and put on such interesting events.

And we thank our representatives: Sarah Pugh, WSC , and Bobby Bennett, Suffolk County Council, for their help and support.

Finally I and my fellow Councillors **heartily Thank Annie and David Lines** for all their hard work helping us to understand how to achieve our aims and especially keeping us on the straight and narrow with regard to regulations!

RB 8 May 2024