

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting for Severn Stoke & Croome D'Abitot held at 7.00pm at Severn Stoke Parish Hall on 22 May 2017**

**Present:** Cllr Stephen Watkins (Chairman of the Parish Council) District Cllrs Harrison and Michael, Mrs L Gower (Clerk to the Parish Council), County Councillor Paul Middlebrough, Severn Stoke Parish Hall rep Tim Weeks, Tarmac - Colin Stafford, National Trust - Michael Smith, John Henderson St Deny's Church and approximately 28 members of the public.

**1 Welcome by Severn Stoke & Croome D'Abitot Parish Council, Stephen Watkins.**

Cllr Watkins welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the various speakers for attending this evening. A minute silence was undertaken in memory of Bert Male who passed away during the last year and was a long-standing Parish Councillor and resident of Severn Stoke.

**2 Apologies for Absence** Mr D Thompson, CSO Martin Butcher. Clerk circulates the monthly Policing report recently started by the Policing Team via the "round robin" email address. Please inform the Clerk if you wish to receive this.

**3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2016 and Matter Arising from those minutes (if any)** The minutes of this meeting had been circulated to attendees at this meeting. Approval of these minutes was proposed by Mrs E Hadley, seconded by Mr R Garrard, unanimously agreed.

**4 Report of County Councillor** – The newly elected County Councillor Paul Middlebrough thanked those who voted for him recently. He has undergone much training and induction over the last few weeks. He will attend all parish council meeting when he is able and sees parish councils as equal partners he recognises their importance within parishes. Anyone within the parish/ward is welcome to contact him. He also intends to develop a relationship with Gloucestershire County Council.

**5 Report of District Councillors D Harrison & J Michael**

Cllr Harrison mentioned some of the things he has assisted our parish with this year, including enforcement issues, planning queries and land drainage. Cllr Harrison is chairing the Croome Court Liaison meetings and attends the Tarmac Liaison meetings. He has met with Paul Green the Land Drainage Officer regarding work required in Birch Lane. He mentioned the fibre optic broadband provision for the parish which is slowing being rolled out with another cabinet going live last week.

Next year our weekly black bag collection will be replaced with black wheelie bins

Cllr Michael added that the black wheelie bins which will be collected every other week, alternately with the green recycling bins. Cllr Michael also attends the Tarmac and Croome Liaison meetings. They also mentioned their Ward Budget, if any organisation is seeking funds for a specific project please contact them.

**6 Report from Severn Stoke Parish Hall Committee**

Tim Weeks gave the report on behalf of Chairman Dave Thompson who could not attend this evening. The good news is the hall has seen an increase of 25% in revenue and usage. Some of this is due to Earls Croome Village Hall being out of action due to storm damage. The hall committee currently have £7,500 in a charity account and £3,500 in their bank account.

The roof has recently been assessed and there has been no movement in 18 months and all is well with it.

**7 Report from St Deny's Church given by John Henderson**

The Parochial Church Council is responsible for use/upkeep of the church, all church services, including baptisms, weddings and funerals. The PCC raises funds by collections to pay for the Parish Share of £1,100 per annum, towards retaining a Rector in the parishes of us, Kempsey and Norton. There is a church service each Sunday in Severn Stoke, (average congregation 16 people, many from outside the parish but loyal to St Denys) We need younger newcomers to support the church, (now over 800 years old) as it may not remain open for regular services within five to ten years.

Every five years, the PCC commissions a repair schedule, this year £10,000 will be spent on replacing a rotten timber in the Tower, stonework repairs/pointing. Charitable grants of £3,500 have been offered. A separate contract is for parts of the church boundary wall to be re-built, costing £5,000, which is coming from the churchyard maintenance fund.

The Friends of St Denys assist the PCC as the fund-raising organisation for maintenance/improvement of the church/churchyard. A parish survey in September 2015 encouraged the Friends to commission drawings for a modernisation Scheme with a Quantity Surveyor's estimate and the fundraising target of £150,000 was launched in November 2015. The purpose of the scheme is to make the church building more flexible/encourage diverse community uses. We now realise this was too steep a target and have lowered our sights for a first phase to install a toilet and plumbed in kitchen sink, mains eater to serve them, a Trench Arch effluent disposal structure and the electrics for light and to provide frost protection and water heating costing approximately £20,000. As the church floods, we are exploring a flood resilient de-mountable polypropylene 'Assisted toilet pod'. This would be acceptable under Building Regulations.

The profits from two art exhibitions at the church, last year's open-air production of 'Murder on the Terrace' and some generous donations/a bequest, mean this target is in reach. All is subject to approval by the Church authorities and we hope to have their initial view soon. Approval is also required from the Diocesan and English Heritage.

We would like to attract more community use of the Church Building to ensure that this investment and the further improvements proposed provide a viable operation. The community indicated that they wished the church to thrive as a multi-use building. It complements the Parish Hall and may outlive it structurally. Fund raising activities require support. We hope that the Parish Council will support the efforts of the PCC and Friends and that when the Precept is reviewed, they will review their contribution towards the church clock maintenance and the churchyard mowing, a cost of £2,500 per annum. The next fundraising event is an open-air theatre production of 'The Secret Garden' to attract all ages, at Severn Bank House on Sunday, 3<sup>rd</sup> September.

#### **8 Flood defence progress by Flood Action Group Chairman, Mr Tim Weeks**

There has been steady progress. A recent meeting with Harriett Baldwin MP/landowners/EA means in principle the landowners have agreed a route. Boar holes are being done in the next few weeks and other environmental studies. FLAG fundraising has continued with £3,700 in the account with pledges and donations bringing a total of £7,500 as an operating fund. Harriett Baldwin MP has stated that if re-elected flood alleviation is high on her agenda, without her support this project would not be as far forward.

#### **9 Croome Court – National Trust Update Michael Smith, Manager, Croome Court.**

Michael Smith gave an outline of the work and goings on at Croome. They have recently won an award for Special Needs provision with the Potter and Ponder scheme. Visitor numbers increased last year by 70,000. They hope to sustain their visitor numbers but not increase any further. Some annual events on bank holidays etc are not being held this year so facilities/infrastructure can cope with their busiest days as the water supply struggles on very busy days. There are planning applications going into MHDC to regularise the activities at Croome. These are for temporary buildings to secure them. They also plan to repair the Sargent's Quarters and have additional toilets and an education centre. The building is in good condition with work ongoing, the Coventry collection is returning to Croome. Work is also planned for the weir as the Croome River is losing water. The PC/District Councillors/residents have set up a liaison group who will meet regularly to discuss the goings on at Croome and monitors/raises any concerns. The visitor numbers for last year were 273,000.

#### **10 Tarmac update – Colin Stafford from Clifton Quarry**

Colin Stafford gave information on the ongoing restoration work of the east and west areas. Re-levelling, reseeded, fencing and new hedgerow all being part of this with the aftercare being taken on by Croome Estate. Phase 9 has seen some slumping but remedial work is being undertaken. Current extraction will last approximately 4 weeks. Phase A of the new section is hoped to start next month but there are still issues with the Pipeline Agency and Western Power. There was a tusk discovered recently which is now with the Archaeological Dept at Worcester, it is thought to be from a mammoth and over 50,000 years old! A question was asked how the new areas aggregate would get from the opposite side of the A38 to the plant side, Colin said this was proposed to be by tunnel.

#### **11 Open Forum – Residents Question Time**

The Clerk gave a brief outline of other items addressed by the Parish Council during the year including the work to try to assist with reducing speeding. The railings at Clifton have been painted white to make the bend more obvious. A new Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) has been purchased for High Green with £1000 funding from the National Trust and the remaining £2,000 being funded from County Councillor Sutton's Ward fund. The white gates and new village signs at High Green were also funded by Cllr Sutton and installed by National Trust staff/volunteers. The mobile VAS will now be moved between Severn Stoke, Clifton and Kinnersley on a more regular basis. We have a newly co-opted Councillor, Paul Sturgess, who has joined us from Clifton. Clerk also said that we currently pay £500 a year towards the cost of maintaining the churchyard and also pay the annual service cost of servicing the Clock at an approximate cost of £230.

A resident asked Michael Smith if there was a set criteria/agreement regarding the resident permits for access to Croome. Michael said these has been given out to close residents who were affected by Croome/NT activities. This discussion continued with the resident after the meeting.

**The meeting closed at 19.50pm** Signed.....Chairman of Severn Stoke & Croome D'Abitot  
Parish Council Date .....