

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Lapley, Stretton & Wheaton Aston Parish Council held in virtually using Zoom conferencing systems on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 6.30pm.**

**In attendance:** One member of the public Cllr A Anderson, Cllr E Dadd, Cllr W Millington, Cllr R Nelson, Cllr T Noblett, Cllr V Renfrew, Cllr M Smith, Cllr S Whittingham, Cllr Sue Whittingham

**Parish Council Assistant Clerk:** K Daker

- 1. Apologies - Cllr Mark Sutton, Cllr J Hodgkiss**
- 2. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 16<sup>th</sup> May 2019.** The minutes were approved and signed as a true record of the meeting.
- 3. Community Reports (Appendix 1):**
  - Brewood Voluntary Car Scheme
  - Stafford SamaritansNo other reports received
- 4. Chairman's Report. (Appendix 2):** Cllr Noblett gave a report of the previous year's activity.
- 5. Comments from parishioner: None**

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and support and closed the meeting at 6:50 pm.

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Chairman

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Date

## **Appendix 1 – Community Reports**

### **Brewood Car Scheme**

Last time I prepared a report on the Car Scheme I began – “This year has been quite eventful for the car scheme. This past year has been very uneventful”. Due to covid we made our last journeys in March 2020. Since then I have constantly been checking the government guidance on GOV.UK in the hope of getting us up and running again.

According to the guidance it has not been feasible to restart the scheme safely.

I have kept in touch with the drivers by email and contacted some of our customers, who I know look upon the scheme as more than just transport, in an effort to keep their spirits up.

Hopefully, when everyone has had their second vaccination, the world will be a safer place. We will get the scheme back up and running as soon as we possibly can. I am currently coming into the office to do the accounts and close up Year 20/21 and prepare for Year 21/22. The accounts are currently showing a deficit, so your support for the future is really needed.

For the future I have been thinking of extending our services beyond just medical appointments, but will have to discuss this with the trustees and drivers and I will endeavour to have a recruitment drive to get more drivers. The need for useful transport in this area is lacking and yet so important, I am sure our scheme can be of help.

### **Stafford Samaritans**

Stafford Samaritans are immensely grateful to have received a grant of £300 very recently from Lapley, Stretton and Wheaton Aston Parish Council.

Our services have been in high demand over the year since the first UK lockdown started. We have encountered increases in calls about coronavirus and health, but also about isolation, family problems, work and financial worries and self-harm. We have worked really hard to minimise disruption to our helpline, and made adaptations to our ways of working and our premises to maintain volunteer safety.

Unfortunately, we have recently noticed that both our burglar alarm and fire alarm have been going off for no obvious reason. At the same time some of our volunteers have noticed suspicious activity around our premises. We take our responsibility to keep our volunteers safe very seriously, so while our longer-term plan is to upgrade the building we need to resolve these problems more urgently. We envisage that we will make some changes to building and car park security, but the first step is upgrading the alarm systems.

Since the initial application form was completed we have obtained a number of quotes and trustees have decided to replace the existing fire and burglar alarms and panic button system with a single wireless ‘smart alarm’ which will perform all of these functions. This will meet the insurance requirements, build volunteer confidence and help maintain good relationships with our neighbours. Opting for a wireless system will give us flexibility if the branch is refurbished or decorated. The cost of the system, which will be fitted soon will be £1130 + VAT, so your donation makes a substantial contribution towards this work.

We are so grateful for your support of our branch.

## Appendix 2 – Chairman’s Report 2021

This year the organising of the day to day running of the Parish Council has had to accommodate two disrupting events. The first disrupting event, which the Parish Council were aware of, being the closure of the Parish Office at Codsall, due to the refurbishment of the District Council Building. The second disrupting event, which has not only impacted on the Parish Council, but everyone in the Parish and that is the Covid-19 Pandemic. The closure of the office has resulted in the Parish Council Manager and the Assistant Clerk working from their respective homes. The Covid 19 Pandemic has resulted in all Parish Council meetings being held remotely on Zoom. The Government has issued its roadmap out of Lockdown and this has generated a cascade of rules and regulations which have been communicated via the Village Notice Boards and the Parish Council’s website. Unfortunately, the Pandemic resulted in the Remembrance Service being cancelled but myself and Cllr Millington were still able to lay wreaths on behalf of the Parish Community at all the village’s War Memorials.

The Christmas Lights Switch On, because of Covid 19, could not go ahead as normal but after a short speech in the heavy rain I switched on the lights. On the Banners around the Christmas tree were Elves, drawn to a very high standard, by the children of St Mary’s First School.

In spite of the restrictions imposed by Covid 19 the Parish Council has achieved a great deal. A list of the achievements can be viewed in Issue 3/2020 of News & Views. I am pleased to see the following, among the many diverse items, resolved :-

- Installation of defibrillators
- installed VE/75/VJ75 benches at the appropriate locations in the villages.
- constantly bringing to the attention of both the County and District issues of Traffic problems on the A5
- creating a map of Parish walks, to be installed at the Green in Wheaton Aston
- SID (Speed Indicator Device) purchased and erected
- Implemented a climate and biodiversity policy
- Installed bird and bug boxes at the play areas
- Agreed to part fund and aid “Support Staffordshire” to hold “a thank you” celebration for volunteers in the Parish
- Made donations to voluntary groups such as Community First Responders, Brewood Voluntary Car Scheme and the Monday Lunch Club
- Take over the maintenance of WA Village Green and the land at Primrose Close both owned by SSC
- Assisted the police with ASB issues
- Liaised with St Mary’s Church to hire the church to offer wellbeing sessions
- Implemented numerous policies to improve services
- Working with St Mary’s School and the Woodland Trust to plant a tree for each pupil at the school
- Installing suggestion boxes in all three villages

Maintenance throughout the parish is an ongoing commitment particularly grass cutting. Grass cutting is required to keep our play areas, verges and all open spaces in an acceptable condition and because of the effects of climate change the season for cutting extends further and further into the Autumn. I would like to express on behalf of the Parish Council our thanks to our main grass cutting contractor Ditton Services for the co-operative and diligent way they carry out their work.

.The Parish Council employ four part time personnel whose general duties include repair and maintenance of Parish Council property and Litter picking. . This year the Parish Council has observed an increase in volunteers working in and around the villages in general tidying and cleaning up operations but primary litter picking. On behalf of the Parish Council I offer our thanks.

The many black and white finger posts, along with the floral displays outside the Village Hall help to give a distinctive look to the Parish. Once again on behalf of the Parish Council I offer our thanks to those involved.

The Covid -19 pandemic resulted in the Best Kept Village Competition being cancelled along with "2nd World War Enactment and Spectacular" in September. Let us hope these events return to the yearly calendar.

We now have a Speed Indication device (SID) installed near to the entrance of the Village on Ivetsy Road . A reduction to vehicle speeds has been noticed. However, In other parts of Parish speeds have to be monitored by the Community Speed Watch Team a group of volunteers who have received training from the Police. Numbers are falling. Please volunteer if you can. Get in touch with the Parish Council Manager

It is becoming apparent that unless the general Public bring to the attention of the District and County Councils small Roadworks problems such as Potholes, flooding, footpath repairs etc nothing will be done. The Parish Council do report the deficiencies but please if you see something amiss please Inform the Parish Council Manager, .or report the problem through the dedicated telephone number which can be obtained by looking at the village News And Views under Key Contacts.

Lapley Green renovation is virtually complete and a VE75 commemorative bench has been installed on the green and the old telephone box has been transformed into a defibrillator house.

Repair and maintenance to the play areas has taken place throughout the Year such as replacing play sand and bark, and repairs to the wooden framing on the play equipment bases.

We are considering the future of Broadholes Lane as the area is under used. Suggestions to date have been allotments, community dog park and an outdoor gym. Residents in the vicinity have been informed and all suggestions are welcome.

As in previous years vandalism is constant problem at Marston Field. Last year the parish Council decided to install a CCTV camera which has reduced the Incidents of vandalism. However, some areas of the field could not be viewed from the Cameras Resulting in further camera being purchased and installed

The pandemic has resulted in the Parish Council re-assessing our Risk Assessments in particular to the Play Areas. The parish Council Manager produced such a comprehensive document that the District Council and the surrounding Parishes have incorporated the document in their Policy Documents.

The meetings between the Police and individual members of the public raising their concerns which have been cancelled will recommence as soon as the Covid regulations allow.

The one major Housing development in the village, on Ivetsy Road, has commenced at last. When complete a mixture of houses and bungalows will be built, a total of 34.Units. The houses will be a mixture of purchase, shared ownership and rent.

The West Midlands Interchange Freight Hub, in spite of strenuous opposition from the Local MPs, District Council and the surrounding Parish Councils (including this Parish) the Government Inspector has approved the development .Opposition to the scheme is still very strong and the opposition will be trying to mitigate as much as possible as more details of the scheme become available.

As a Parish Council we are fully aware of the problem of Climate Change and with this in mind we are aiming to become, within the near future, a paperless Council. The first step has already been taken in that Councillors have been issued with tablets which enables the Parish Council Manager and the Assistant to transfer and distribute all correspondence, minutes of meetings etc by electronic transfer thereby saving trees.

Once again our finances are in order and well managed, and the Internal Auditor has concluded that the Parish Council's system of internal controls are satisfactory. The External Auditor has also passed the accounts and states that there are no issues to raise for the Council to consider.

Following an analysis of expenditure for year 2020/21 it was recommended by the Forward Planning and Finance Working Group and accepted by the Parish Council that the Precept be decreased by 10.53% for year 2021/2022.

A number of projects are to be completed using accumulated funds. largely due to services being unavailable during the Covid Pandemic and a reimbursement from HMRC

The ratio of attendances by the Parish Councillors at the Council Meeting has been very high which has enabled the various points on the agendas to be dealt with in an efficient matter. The public is always in attendance at the meetings and many points raised have found their way onto the agenda and have been acted upon by the Council.

I would like to remind the Parish that Parish Councillors attend not only the regular monthly Parish Council meetings but also some of the Working Group meetings, external meetings and training courses.

Finally, my thanks, as Chairman, to all the Councillors and the Parish Council Manager and Assistant for the work they do on behalf of us all in representing our interests and welfare and my thanks also, on behalf of the Parish Council, to Bev Cross, a diligent and hard working councillor, who has had to resign from the Parish Council due Family Matters.