

## MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

### HELD

MONDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> APRIL 2023 @ 8.15 pm

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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|   | <p><b><u>Councillors Present:</u></b> Bob Wilkin (BW), Mark Poyner (MP), Mo Rashid (MR), Geoff Shute (GS), Chrys Smith (CS), Lynne Smith (LS) &amp; Alan Wright (AW)</p> <p><b><u>Also in attendance:</u></b><br/>         8 Members of the Public (MOP)<br/>         Clerk – Sally Harrop (SH)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 1 | <p><b>Welcome</b><br/>         The Annual Parish Meeting is NOT a Parish Council Meeting. The APM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is required by law;</li> <li>• allows the Parish Council to report what it has been doing to parishioners;</li> <li>• most importantly, gives the parishioners the opportunity to question the Parish Council about its activities (or lack thereof!); and</li> <li>• allows parishioners to inform the Parish Council about issues they consider should be addressed.</li> </ul> |
| 2 | <p><b>Apologies for Absence</b><br/>         Eddie Perry – Ward Councillor<br/>         Kevin Collins – Ward Councillor</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 3 | <p><b>To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on:</b><br/>         i. <b>Monday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022</b><br/>         The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting.<br/>         There were no matters arising therefrom.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 4 | <p><b>Central Bedfordshire Ward Councillors Report</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None present</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 5 | <p><b>Report of the Chairman</b><br/> <b>SEE APPENDIX 1</b><br/>         Also mentioned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MOP thanked the Parish Council for all their work and commented that it is a shame that more residents don't get involved in the community and Parish Council.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 6 | <p><b>Report of the Vice-Chairman – Planning Matters</b><br/> <b>SEE APPENDIX 2</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 7 | <p><b>Public Question Time</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Des Salmon clarified that the village hall floor was paid for by grants and village hall funds.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

Meeting closed at 9.42pm

Signed

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

#### **Introduction**

- We have had a very busy year (or so it seems). We have had some successes and some frustrations. Post-Covid normality has returned with all meetings having been held in person but the lasting change is that we now use this main hall and not the committee room at the back.

#### **Parish Council**

- Consists of 7 Councillors and Sally Harrop, our Clerk.
- The Parish Councillors are Mark Poyner, Chrys Smith, Alan Wright, Geoff Shute, Lynne Smith, Mo Rashid and me.
- We do operate through an allocation of portfolios. Key amongst these are:
  - Mark Poyner as Vice Chairman and leading on Planning issues and relations with SKAW Good Neighbours. Mark will speak about these in a moment;
  - Chrys Smyth covering highways issues and relations with the Playing Fields and the Sports and Social Club;
  - Geoff Shute dealing with footpaths, issues relating to Studham Common and the parish gardening contract;
  - Alan Wright covering website management, parish emails and defibrillators;
  - Mo Rashid is liaison with Studham School and the Neighbourhood Watch; and
  - Lynne Smith provides our Welcome Packs to new arrivals and acts as liaison with the Village Hall Committee.
- Our formal operation is through regular meetings; normally 11 monthly meetings per year for general business (we usually miss out July or August) and a number of additional meetings to look at planning applications and occasional ad hoc issues. The unexpected aside, this is our last meeting and following the election there will be a new team who will decide how they wish to run the Council's affairs.
- Where permissible Zoom is still an option for some of our other discussions.
- Between the meetings there is quite a lot of email traffic either between the Councillors or with third parties such as Central Bedfordshire Council (and its Ward Councillors Eddie Perry and Kevin Collins), local organisations and local residents.

Signed

## **What Have We Done In The Last Year?**

### **1. Planning Issues and Neighbourhood Plan Abandoned**

We have spent a lot of time this year dealing with Planning issues but I'm not going to tell you about that. Mark Poyner, our Vice Chairman who leads on that, can tell you all about it once I've finished.

We decided to abandon the proposed Neighbourhood Plan. Mark can tell you about that too.

### **2. Money**

Last year our income was about £23,800 and we spent £21,800. The vast majority of the income (£23,100) came from the Parish precept collected through the Council Tax bill.

Expenditure was below what we had budgeted for a couple of reasons.

- The money we had set aside for progressing the Neighbourhood Plan was saved with its abandonment.
- Our contingency allowance for unbudgeted expenditure has been little used.

### **3. Administrative Matters**

Over the term of this Council's office, we have been doing quite a lot in the background to update how the Council is run and managed. We have continued with that process this year. Notable points are:

- Our banking procedures are now all online.
- We now use a specialist Parish Council accounting software package.
- We have this year changed our auditor and one of the key benefits of that change will be a primarily electronic instead of paper-based interaction.
- We have undertaken a thorough review and revalidation of our Asset Register (which took an inordinate amount of my time!).
- Three more policies and procedures were added to our increasing pile: a Civility and Respect Pledge (which is being adopted by many Councils around the country), a Fixed Assets Policy flowing out from the work on the Assets Register and a Risk Assessment and Management Register. We now also review all our procedures once a year and we try to get this done in July. There is still some more to do covering such things as Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Information Security.

In the coming year we will want to turn our minds to some long overdue archiving.

Signed

#### **4. Website and Communications**

We continue to maintain the parish website and to grow the parish email address list; many thanks to Alan in particular for all the background work involved in that. We also publish occasional messages on the Studham Village and Studham Villagers facebook groups.

#### **5. Defibrillators**

We manage the operation of our 3 defibrillators which are supported by the London Community Heartbeat Trust. Alan co-ordinates this work with our team of volunteers and notably organised a successful defibrillator training session at the end of February.

#### **6. Highways, Byways and Gardening**

Chrys Smith and Geoff Shute manage our liaison with CBC to ensure they adequately maintain our roads, footpaths and public rights of way. This is a considerable effort and very much demands the personal touch at times. CBC is, however, usually very prompt in clearing any fly tips which are reported.

We manage the salt bins around the village for use in icy weather. This is done with the help of a team of volunteers co-ordinated by Geoff Shute.

We contract a part-time gardener to perform gardening services which mainly cover the triangle on the road outside the Village Hall, the Village Hall hedging and the Meads footpath. The Meads footpath has been a cause of recent concern but we are hoping to get this improved in the near future.

### **Some Specific Items**

#### **7. Telephone Mast**

Yet another year has passed and we still haven't got one!

The current proposal, as reported last year, is a mast sited in Whipsnade Zoo. The latest expectation is that a planning application for this site will emerge in the next month or two. We will keep chasing this.

#### **8. Full Fibre Broadband**

Much more positive news here with Openreach now implementing Full Fibre Broadband in Studham and Whipsnade supported by rural funding from the Department of Digital, Communications, Media and Sport. This has been supported by Whipsnade and Studham Parish Councils but the real credit for getting this implementation off the ground must go to a group of local residents led by Michael Stott.

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## **9. Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee and His Majesty's Coronation**

Studham celebrated the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee last June. The Parish Council helped to co-ordinate and fund with others some events and lasting tributes to mark the event which included:

- A special meeting of the Women's Institute with a guest speaker who has written about the Queen;
- Some games and sports events at the Playing Fields and Sports and Social Club;
- A tree planting of Bedfordshire related apple trees on Studham Middle Common with assistance from the local scouts, beavers and cubs; and
- The creation of a new waymarked 4 mile circular Platinum Jubilee Walk which links up existing public footpaths and Studham Common supported by a guide leaflet. Thanks in particular here go to Paul Hocking and Joan Stone.

We marked the passing of Her Majesty with a public proclamation of His Majesty's accession to the throne in the process of which Ian Milne, our flagmaster, and I learned an awful lot about the flag-flying protocol associated with such matters. Now, very soon, we have the Coronation and the Parish Council is keen that the event is celebrated in an appropriate manner. We are currently expecting to see some festivities being organised at the Sports and Social Club.

## **10. Village Hall Replacement**

Over the last year the Parish Council has engaged with the Trustees of the Village Hall in appointing a firm of architects to come up with a proposal for replacing the Village Hall. We are hoping to be in a position to share the proposal with parishioners at a public meeting next month. Assuming all is good, we then merely have the issues of getting planning permission, finding funding and getting it built.

## **11. CBC Tree Planting**

In late October, CBC's Highways Department planted some trees without prior notice in Church Close and we subsequently discovered that they were planning to plant many more in Holywell Road without any consultation with the residents as to whether they wanted the trees, where they were to go or the varietal selection. Legally, CBC had the right to do this but it is insensitive to local feelings. We managed to stop the Holywell Road planting pending the holding of a public meeting and provision of a report to CBC's Highways Department as to the results of our consultation.

We have provided our report and this was studiously ignored by the Trees Officer concerned. Kevin Collins, our CBC Ward Councillor, is still engaged in discussions within CBC about two of the trees planted in Church Close.

This is an example of where the Parish Council can have an effect on matters which

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are not mainly within its ambit but you can never be sure about how things will eventually pan out!

## **12. Studham Common SANG and Chilterns Beechwoods SAC**

In some ways similar to the Tree Planting saga, the Parish Council was recently suddenly made aware of the unexpected consequences for Studham of CBC's efforts to resolve with Natural England the issues regarding the impact of excess visitor numbers in the Chilterns Beechwoods (Ashridge to you and me!) Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Studham Common is being designated as a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG).

This is still very much an ongoing issue. It looks to be as if CBC have presented a fait accompli as regards the SANG designation but the Parish Council will be looking to ensure that CBC engages with our parishioners as to what it means in practice and to take due account of local views about the issue.

One issue is undoubtedly car parking and I reported at last year's APM that we had started talking to CBC about the provision of additional parking facilities in the centre of the village. It seems that the SANG designation might well allow us to take that discussion forward on the basis that funding could now be available.

## **The Coming Year**

From May, we will have a new Council. I will find out later this week whether we have 8 or more candidates which will result in there being a ballot on 4 May.

## **Thanks**

This is the end of the term of this Council and some of our Councillors have decided to stand down and not seek re-election. Obviously, I would like to thank them all for their efforts and for helping to guide me in my role these last 4 years. In particular, Mark Poyner and Geoff Shute have given many years' of service which has been much appreciated. Thank you also to Sally Harrop, our Clerk, for all her efforts in the last 12 months and, in particular, for keeping me out of jail.

Finally, I would like to give a big thanks to all those in our community who offer their services and help to make our village what it is. I cannot name them all but we have those who help organise events such as the May Fair and those who provide unstinting ongoing assistance in running things like the SKAW Good Neighbours Scheme, the Playing Fields, the Sports and Social Club, the Village Hall, the Neighbourhood Watch and the Friends of Studham Common. There are many others. Thank you all.

***That's All Folks! Happy to Answer Questions.***

Signed

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **REPORT OF THE VICE-CHAIR INCLUDING PLANNING MATTERS**

#### **Introduction**

Good evening.

Studham Parish Council ("SPC") have had another very busy year in terms of workload, planning matters and other community projects.

I will briefly comment on the following:-

- General Update (April 2022 to March 2023)
- Major Planning Applications
- Neighbourhood Plan
- Future Development
- Conclusion

#### **Part 1: General Update (April 2022 to April 2023)**

I normally start with a few facts and figures.

#### **Personal Workload**

I have attended 34 separate meeting events (down from 40 in 2021/2022).

These included:-

- Monthly Full Parish Council Meetings
- Annual Plan Meeting
- SKAW (Good Neighbours Scheme)
- Planning Meetings
- Meetings with developers
- Village Hall – Rebuilt Project
- Parish Surgery Events
- Meetings with CBC representatives
- Meetings with residents

#### **SKAW (Good Neighbours Scheme)**

I sit on the Working Group and I am amazed at the commitment of the volunteers, and the fantastic team involved.

The three villages (Studham, Kensworth and Whipsnade) are very lucky to have such a team in place, and from me, a very big "thank you" to them for all their continuing efforts.

Signed

### **Planning Applications (in Numbers)**

SPC have reviewed 38 planning applications (down from 43 in 2021/2022) but it did not feel like that!

26 – Planning Applications (down from 28)

8 – Tree Protection Orders (previously 13)

4 – Variation of Condition/Certificate of Lawfulness (up from 2)

### **Role of Parish Council (in Planning Terms)**

I say this every year, but SPC does not decide any planning application that is submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council (“CBC”).

Our role/job is to review each application made, allow for local feedback and/or representations where possible and to then submit our comments to CBC based on our experience and the feedback received from residents.

Essentially, we act as a “voice” for the residents of Studham.

We normally request developers for larger projects to hold consultation meetings to allow the developer to explain their proposals and for residents to ask questions.

Sadly, they do not always listen, nor engage with us.

Each planning response is a written letter, and all correspondence can be found on our website or on CBC’s website (logged under each application).

A more detailed response is submitted for any “significant or large scale” planning application, and this year – we have submitted 10 such replies to CBC – far more than normal (where we have 2 to 5 per annum).

The key ones were:-

Studham – Land North of Eagle Field [CB/22/01957/FULL]

Refused.

Studham – Knoll House, Dunstable Road [CB/22/02653/FULL] [No.1]

Withdrawn.

Studham – Venture, Dunstable Road [CB/22/3358 & 03359/FULL]

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Refused.

Studham – Mile Barn Farm, Dunstable Road [CB/22/04134/FULL]

Outstanding.

Studham – Knoll House, Dunstable Road [CB/22/04458/FULL] [No.2]

Refused.

Studham – Land Rear of 48 Church Road [CB/23/00576/FULL]

Outstanding.

### **Trends**

I always like to outline “planning” trends that we have seen during the last 12 months.

- An increasing number of “significant or large scale” development.
- A small reduction in “householder” planning applications such as small extensions.
- A reduction in the “TPO” applications seeking permission to reduce/crown or cut down trees.
- An increase in applications wanting to vary or alter existing planning consents.
- An increase in people undertaking building projects without obtaining planning permission before so doing (including the construction of outbuildings in rear gardens).
- An increase in “Enforcement” engagement from CBC in Studham.

### **Part 2: Major Planning Applications**

All planning applications are important, but some are more large scale than others, or will have a significant impact on the surrounding area.

The Parish Council is happy to see development and/or investment into the village but it has to be the right development or investment.

I highlight the following four situations:-

#### **Equestrian Centre at Clements End Farm – CB/21/01831/FULL**

Planning consent was granted on 24 September 2021 subject to 26 different conditions (of which 10 required further approval by CBC) including highways resolution.

This application concerned a change of use of agricultural land to an equestrian development providing 23 stables, a large indoor arena/barn and a tied dwelling.

Signed

### Planning Process

An Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting was held on Monday 27 June 2022.

This meeting discussed the various issues regarding (1) the planning process; (2) the referral to CBC's Development Management Committee and (3) the actions of our Ward Councillors.

In conclusion, the Parish Council remain of the view that the matter should not have been referred to DMC by Ward Councillor Eddie Perry and the Parish Council passed a vote of "no confidence" in Ward Councillor Eddie Perry as to planning matters.

### Enforcement

Unfortunately, the developer commencement building works on-site in May 2022 without satisfying the previously mentioned planning conditions.

We subsequently requested input/action from CBC's Enforcement Team who finally issued a Temporary Stop Order (for 28 days) against the developer on 17 October 2023.

We still do not understand why it took CBC over four months to take the appropriate action.

### **Mile Barn Farm, Hemel Hempstead Road - CB/22/04134/FULL**

This is the third application for this site requesting planning consent for 9 residential dwellings, office space, associated landscaping, parking and vehicle access.

We submitted our formal comments to CBC on 12 December 2022.

The original plans were for an "urban housing" development for circa 30 homes, and over the last three years, we believe the developer has taken into account the views from CBC's Planning Team and the Parish Council, and the latest proposal is now a smaller development comprising 9 residential homes in more rural/farmstead style.

The planning application remains to be decided by CBC.

### **Knoll House, Dunstable Road – CB/22/04458/FULL**

The (second) application (first was withdrawn) was for the redevelopment of the site as eight residential dwellings (in three blocks).

Signed

There are a many of issues involved here including poor access via Studham Lane.

It was refused planning in January 2023.

### **Land Rear of 48 Church Road (Church Mead) - CB/23/00576/FULL**

I mentioned this site at last year's Annual Parish Meeting.

As an update, the developer is now working in partnership with English Rural (a Housing Association) about redeveloping the site for three "affordable" homes, and we discussed this application at our March Parish Council Meeting.

We submitted our formal comments to CBC on 21 March 2023.

The planning application remains to be decided by CBC.

### **Part C: Neighbourhood Plan**

Bob Wilkin briefly mentioned this.

SPC decided at our monthly in September 2022 not to continue with a Neighbourhood Plan ("NP") for the village/parish.

There were several factors which led to this decision including:-

#### **Green Belt ("GB")**

#### **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty ("AONB")**

#### **Area of Great Landscape Value ("AGLV")**

Studham has "protection".

As Studham is washed over by the GB and is within both an AONB and AGLV, the Parish Council is content that this will give significant protection to the village going forwards.

### **CBC's Local Plan Framework (Approved)**

This approved document does not materially impact on Studham, nor the GB, AONB and AGLV protection.

### **Planning Applications and Residential Development**

Since the start of the Neighbourhood Plan process in 2014, SPC has seen more and more planning applications (for significant developments) within the parish boundary which would not have been impacted by a NP if one had existed.

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These applications have resulted in a significant amount of residential development, equal to circa 10% growth in actual housing numbers.

These include Bell Farm (23), Bell Cottages (5), Clements End Farm (8), Chelsea Direct (3) and Studham Nursery (3).

42 new homes in total.

The existence of the GB, AONB and AGLV have put significant constraints on the development particularly the need to demonstrate “Very Special Circumstances” to support development in the Green Belt.

Major applications have been refused, withdrawn or been subject to major scaling down in terms of the number of housing units involved.

### **Covid-19 Impact**

With the outbreak of Covid-19 and the resultant delays, this meant that some of the collected research/data would have to be undertaken again (at significant cost).

At the end of the day, the Parish Council have this information, and this will no doubt influence our decision making going forwards in planning and other matters affecting the village/parish.

### **Local Sentiment**

Whilst we started the process in 2014 and conducted local consultation in 2016, the reality is that there has since been little or no interest locally for moving the NP forward.

There has much more interest (and debate) in improving the broadband infrastructure and resolving the lack of a “mobile mast/signal” issue for Studham!

### **Decision**

The conclusion was that the Parish Council did not feel it should continue with a NP with named developments therein (positive obligation for development), and that this should be left to market dynamics based on the relevant (and individual) planning arguments for each application in the future.

I would like to take this opportunity to formally thank the members of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group including its Chair, Mike Dowd, for all the work, effort and time involved between 2014 and 2022.

It is much appreciated.

Signed

## **Part D: Future Development**

There will be more development in Studham.

What that will be, we do not know yet.

### **Mobile Phone Mast**

Bob Wilkin has already mentioned the ongoing “Mobile Phone Mast” situation and I do not propose to run through this again.

### **Studham Village Hall – Rebuild Project**

This process was just re-starting (this time last year) after the “Covid” period, and significant progress has been made in the past 12 months.

As Bob Wilkin has stated, we hope to be in position to update the village in probably May/June 2023.

### **Potential Development Sites**

Besides Clements End Road (residential and the Equestrian Centre), there will no doubt be future development proposals in Studham going forwards as seen from previous and ongoing applications.

Developers will continue to look at Studham as being an attractive place to build new homes.

The Parish Council will deal with all such applications in a consistent way.

## **Part E: Conclusion**

### **Workload**

As outlined tonight, SPC continues to have an extensive workload, and I cannot see that changing anytime soon.

Signed

## **Standing Down**

I decided last summer that I would not stand beyond my current term as Parish Councillor (ending April 2023) and I announced this back in September 2022 so that new Parish Councillors could be found.

From my viewpoint, being a Parish Councillor has been a very rewarding experience.

I have thoroughly enjoyed:-

- Trying to help the community.
- Understanding “local issues”.
- Acting as a “voice” for the village.
- Being the “link” to CBC and the relevant Ward Councillors.

I will miss it but not the time/energy it takes!

## **Thanks**

Thank you for everyone who has assisted me over the past 12.5 years, too numerous to mention everyone but I will never forget (or should I say forgive) Des Salmon and Tony Gatehouse for co-opting me onto the SPC back in October 2010!

Whilst I have been asked (and I have accepted) to remain part of the Studham Village Hall project going forwards, I wish the new Parish Council (and its new Councillors) all the very best for the future.

That’s all from me, “over and out”.

Any questions.

**MP 3 April 2023**

Signed