

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting
Held on Wednesday 21st July 2021 in the Village Church**

Present: Councillor J Durham– (Chairman)
Councillor K Lewcock

Officers: Mrs Polly Doyle – Parish Clerk

In Attendance: Stan Jonik
Patrick Stayt
Jonny Marrion
Warrant Officer One Jeffrey Elson
Paul Gardener
Bill Kemp
Elizabeth Kemp

1/21 Welcome by Chairman of Erlestoke Parish Council

The Chairman, Councillor Durham welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

2/21 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from; Councillor F Morgan-Frise, Councillor J Hunt-Davis, Councillor C West, Councillor L Jones, Councillor T Reay, Simon West (Parochial Church Council), Governor Tim Knight (HMP Erlestoke) and Mercedes Henning (Headteacher Holy Trinity CE Primary School).

3/21 Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 1st May 2019

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 1st May 2019 having previously been circulated were signed by the Chairman, Councillor Durham as a correct record.

4/21 Annual Parish Accounts 2020/21

Prepared by Parish Clerk Polly Doyle for the Annual Parish Meeting on the 21st July 2021

The Council's financial year opened with a balance of;

Treasurers Account – £2316.25

Business Instant Account – £8,749.53

Total = £11,065.78

Closed with a balance of;

Treasurers - £3199.36

Business Instant Account – £9005.14

Total = £12,204.5

Payments over £100:

Clerk salary £2,893.88

Miles and Francis, grounds maintenance £790

CAF Bank Insurance - £331.56

The News Donation - £100

Donation to Erlestoke Church for use of meeting room - £100

Society of LOC annual membership - £180

Audit - £138

Society of LOC – CiLCA course - £410

The Council's expenditure totalled = £6,061.26

Precept for the year was £6805.00. This has remained the same.

5/21 Reports

5/21.1 Erlestoke and Coulston Cricket Club

The pandemic restrictions stopped play, but the club was able to resume activity more recently. The Club is currently at the top of the Saturday League and top of Division Four. They have hosted two county games of Wiltshire versus Dorset. Additionally, they have held a girls Wiltshire versus Dorset match and the Club has 30 younger members playing on a Saturday morning.

The 2008 planning permission for a new pavilion has expired. Architectural drawings of a newly designed pavilion have been drawn up and planning permission is going to be sought soon. Once this is secured then the fund raising will be started. Whilst the hosting of county games will help raise the Club profile, sponsors are keen on multi-sport facilities and it has proved difficult to join forces with other sports so far.

There has been an increase in the number of visitors to the woods. Most visitors are respectful of the area, but unfortunately some have tried blocking the road and preventing people from visiting.

Sadly, due to the pandemic the Club lost its main fundraising event, which is the annual bonfire. A decision is yet to be made regarding this year. A scheme has been set up which enables visitors in cars to buy an annual permit to allow parking at the site, whilst also supporting the Club.

5/21.2 Erlestoke Parish Church Report from Elizabeth Kemp

1.Situation. At the beginning of 2021 the Church was governed by a PCC with 3 members, the Rector Rev A Sinclair, Mrs Helen Diskett and Mrs Elizabeth Kemp. As forewarned, at the beginning of the year, both Mrs Diskett (Sacristan) and Mrs Kemp (Treasurer) resigned leaving the Rev Sinclair with no PCC. As it needs at least 2 signatories to manage the Bank account, all 3 are still signatories albeit, 2 without any official position. Mrs Kemp has continued to deal with the church finances until a new treasurer is appointed. Mr Simon West has since stepped forward and is part of what hopefully will become a new PCC. Efforts are being made to revive the Book Swap and offers have been made to organise flower rosters etc. They need supporting.

2. Worship. With Covid strongly influencing any activities and a declining congregation, it had been decided to hold a single monthly church service in place of the 3 previously celebrated. This is held at 11 am on the 4th Sunday of the month, and takes the form of a celebration of any adjacent or relevant occasions in the church calendar, and is extended to enable those who wish it, to take communion. It has the advantage that the date and time is constant so easily remembered. However, this solution is open to review as and when there is the demand for a more active program of worship.

3. Finance. The Church finances are no longer able to deal with the normal day to day expenditure. Loss of generous patronage leading to a shrinking list of gift aid donors, declining collections, and the inability to hold fund raising events has decimated the income. It would be gratifying to see villagers join the list of gift aiders as – whether or not they are active worshippers, even the Church building is important in the life of the village and if it is not funded, it will no longer be available. Last year we made a decision not to pay the full quota or share which goes towards clergy pay, pensions etc. We are paying £1854 pa and not £2770 as requested. The monthly income generated from Gift Aid standing orders, plus the £30+/- in collections just about covers the monthly outgoings for the reduced share and expenses generated by the Benefice Clergy team. For the record, we only have ONE paid member of the clergy. The vast amount of cover provided comes from a team of retired, part time and totally unpaid volunteers. However – to maintain the Church and keep it open both as a Church AND a Community building there are bills for electricity, insurance, safety equipment and checks etc, and the present income does not cover these, meaning we erode limited capital to the tune of about £2500 per annum.

We hold £4430.85 in the current account, £2649.65 in the general savings account and £2004.20 in a ring- fenced development account. (ie available only for something to enhance the Church eg Heating) Our total wealth today is £9084.70, about 4 years – if you are lucky.

Random thought.... You NEED a PCC. The future of a redundant church is not one of help or enhancement to the village, but while there is a PCC no one can dispose of/close it without their permission. Unlike the pub, there will not be a white knight in the offing. A Church needs its supporters and, come births, deaths and marriages people tend to need the church!

Erlestoke Parish Church Report from Simon West

Services at Holy Saviour's continue to be held once a month, usually on the last weekend. Details appear in The News.

Following many years of devoted service to the Parochial Church Council, some long standing members have recently retired. In order to avoid a vacuum, Simon West has volunteered to join the PCC alongside the vicar who is the only other member.

In the short term, Simon will be seeking volunteers to help with a spring clean and upkeep tasks. **He knows that there are a few people who are helping already and would like to thank them and ask if they could get in touch.**

There will soon be a work day arranged, primarily to clear the bell tower of many years of detritus and start on the road to returning the bells to use.

In the longer term it is hoped that the building can be made available for more community use, possibly incorporating a village history display and a nature guide. Ideas and volunteers are welcome.

5/21.3 MoD Report by Warrant Officer One Jeffery Elson RTR

Forestry

Phase 1 off the Ash-dieback removal was undertaken at the latter part of 2020. This dealt with all potentially dangerous trees adjacent to PROW and roads that posed a safety concern.

Phase 2 started on 12 Jul 21 and expected to run until October 21 and is dealing with all potentially dangerous trees on the steep slopes of the Erlestoke escarpment. There may be some diversions necessary for safety and areas being OOB to the public whilst work is ongoing.

Phase 3 will be the under-planting of new trees as an understory with various broadleaf varieties (Oak, Beech, Alder etc) being planted and allowed to develop into a new woodland over time. This will also help prevent soil erosion after the harvesting. It is an aspiration to expand the current woodland footprint at the same time in accordance with government guidelines and aspirations to increase the number of trees planted nationally.

Mountain Bikers

This **illegal activity** has been an ongoing issue since SPAM events were authorised in the woods some 10 years ago at Christmas. Although successful, it has encouraged illegal Mountain bikers to continue to use the woods and build ever more difficult and dangerous runs through the woods.

When identified these are demolished. A recent one is being demolished shortly.

Recently, a group of 3 males were arrested for criminal damage whilst caught rebuilding a MTB track. They were interviewed under caution and agreed to a Community Resolution which ordered them to make good the damage they had caused in the construction of their run.

SPTA FB page has been running an information line that these activities are not permitted and that they are not allowed on MOD land, and offenders may be prosecuted.

Ponds/Lakes

A structural survey of the dams was undertaken and they were considered to be sound and no further work is envisaged. The stopper for dredging the ponds, as well as some ecological concerns, was that there is the strong possibility that the Army might have used the upper pond in WWII for live training and there is anecdotal evidence that there might well be munitions buried in the silt. If we were going to dredge it a thorough EOD survey would be needed, but the resources are not available for this. Therefore we are not taking forward any dredging

Fencing/Signage

This is ongoing with some works already completed. The section that was raised as a concern ivo the Cricket club car park is awaiting materials from the supplier and then LSS will complete the task.

Walkers/Recreational Use

Ack that there has been a noticable increase in people coming onto the area for exercise especially during the first lockdown. The right to recreational access remains, however, it is policed as much as possible by MOD staff and Police.

Off Roaders, Motorbikes, 4x4 and Quads

This **illegal activity** continues, although we have had several sucessful cases against individuals and the message does seem to be getting out that there are consequences if caught. Will always be a nuisance and difficult to stop completely.

Raves

These are **illegal** on Military land. Cheverill Hill farm is a favourite location due to its remote location in a bowl and acoustic qualities. Gated and locked, it still is occasionally broken into for raves. Robust policing and intelligence has helped, and COVID has reduced the problem significantly. That may change as restrictions lift.

Parking

The Bylaws allow anyone to park up to 15 yards from a legitimate PROW off road to undertake their right to recreational access, **as long as** they do not interfere with military training.

Noise Pollution

There have been a number of complaints about noise levels generated by Mil training and Live Firing in particular. This is relative, as we are doing nothing different in terms of firing, training or types of weapons/ammunitions used. It is probably that people are less inured to it than they were, or those now working from home are more aware of it.

Useful numbers

SPTA RANGE OPS (24hrs): 01980 674951

Complaints Line: 01980 67620819

Plain Watch: 01980 674700



SPTA FB Page: HQ Salisbury Plain Training Area (see QR Code above)

5/21.4 Holy Trinity CE Primary Academy Report by Mercedes Henning

This has been the most extraordinary year of my headship, with the Covid 19 pandemic impacting on almost every aspect of our lives. However, at Holy Trinity, we have been delighted with the resilience and courage shown by our children and their families, and our team, as they have faced lockdowns, home learning, isolation, working in separate Bubbles within school, staggered timetables and interrupted learning for over a year.

We have had no outbreaks of the virus in our school, and indeed, even in those with a connection to our school, only a tiny handful of cases have tested positive.

We were very grateful to one of the talented parents at our school who set up and trained our teachers in the use of our Virtual Learning Platform, Moodle, in the weeks just prior to the first lockdown. He worked tirelessly and for many days to ensure that it could be rolled out successfully as soon as the Government called for the inevitable lockdown, and as a result, we were able to start home learning efficiently on the very first day of lockdown. The platform has proven very easy to use and intuitive, popular with teachers, children and parents and children did not miss a single day of learning.

Assessment of the children on their return from both of the Lockdowns, showed that they have continued successfully on their academic learning journeys through Moodle and the end of year assessments indicate that almost all our children continue to be on the learning trajectory that we would have expected even if they had been in school full time. This is a remarkable achievement due to the huge commitment of our teachers, our children and our families and we are very grateful to everyone involved. We are also delighted about all other aspects of their learning and development – they have returned to school as they left, creative, friendly, cheerful, aspirational young people. We are very proud of them.

The school has remained open to some children through the whole pandemic, even remaining open over the Easter holidays last year to provide childcare for keyworker families in our school. But we were very pleased to open to all our children at Easter, as we

did in September. School is not exactly as usual, of course, since children are kept strictly in their class Bubbles and cannot meet or play with children in other classes. They have had to come to school and go home in their own 10 minute time slot to prevent mixing at the school gates, and they have had to have playtimes and lunchtimes at staggered time slots so that no one comes into contact with anyone from a different class Bubble.

They spend a lot of time washing their hands, and all doors and windows remain open regardless of the weather – so everyone was dressed up very warmly over the coldest weather! No equipment may be shared, and we aim to keep items coming between home and school to the minimum. These measures help to ensure that we reduce the risk of infection if anyone is carrying the virus.

All of this means, of course, that school feels different to what they would have experienced under more usual circumstances. But the school community remains positive, cheerful, hardworking and successful. We have continued to provide a curriculum that is full of interest and breadth, having arranged to have a climbing wall on the field for a few days, archery on the field, a falconry display, a day of Bollywood Dance, a Hindu festival day, a day of reflection, a school party outside, a science display, virtual visitors and many other amazing learning experiences on our school site since we are not allowed to take trips further afield at present.

We challenge the idea that this is a lost generation. The difficulties they have experienced will have given them courage and resilience and will have helped them gain life skills which will improve their lives in the long term. Every generation has difficult things to deal with, and every generation makes a success of their world. We are standing ready to help every one of our children to continue on their learning journey with a sense of fun and excitement. This is going to be a generation to be proud of!

Only about 40% of our children come from the four villages that comprise our designated area – this amounts to about 60 children. If we had only these children, the school would probably have to close. We are very grateful for all those parents who choose to transport their children from other places in Wiltshire to attend our school. We have children coming in from Devizes, Warminster, Seend and Trowbridge, as well as the more local villages.

I expect most people know by now that I shall be retiring at the end of this academic year, and we have been extremely fortunate to have been able to appoint Mrs Anna Woodman as my successor, a person of talent, experience in leadership and with tremendous vision and understanding of what is really important in a small primary school. Mrs Woodman and I have worked closely to ensure that handover and transition from one leader to the next is seamless and positive and I know that Holy Trinity will continue to excel and to be beacon of outstanding education for children in the area over the years to come.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank every member of our community for the all support they have given the school, and me personally, over the years. We are a small, rural school, but our academic achievements put us in the top few percent of primary schools in the whole country – this is something for the community to be very proud of. But more importantly, our children go on to their next phase of education as wonderful young people,

compassionate, courageous, aspirational and joyful. They are a delight in all aspects of their lives and grow up to be successful adults who will lead fulfilled and useful and happy lives.

This is your village school – please do come and visit us if you would like to. I also encourage you to click onto our webpage from time to time – the weekly newsletter is published there and I update the photographs regularly. www.holy-trinity.co.uk You can also follow us on Facebook, if you use that platform.

Mercedes Henning.

5/21.5 Erlestoke's George and Dragon Pub report by Paul Gardener of The Chaffinch Pub Company

Paul Gardener has a chemical company background, started producing hand sanitiser and then diversified by buying two pubs. The George and Dragon in Erlestoke and The Bath Arms in Crockerton. Both are big projects and have had no money spent on them in recent years. The pub was inherited with the interiors removed and no kitchen equipment. The kitchen equipment is on order. The interior has nearly finished being redecorated and many reclamation items and antique furniture are waiting to be moved in.

The rear car park has been removed to allow for a pub garden and the plan is for the area to be cobbled. The four rooms are in phase two and will be opened next year.

The plan is for the pubs to be food driven, but with good local beers, cider from Bradford and Avon and lager from Somerset. A chef will be moving from London who has previously worked for Jamie Oliver and will be producing French cuisine. The aim is to offer high class food and the achievement of Bib Gourmand status as well as an all-day pub menu, snacks and Sunday lunches.

The licence held is from 11am to 11pm and will be employing 12 people; chefs, bar staff and front of house waiting staff. The pub will be able to host small weddings of 50 to 60 people. The website is currently being developed, but will be launched soon. It is hoped that the George and Dragon pub will open in August, possibly the bank holiday.

6/21 Erlestoke Parish Council Chairman's Report 2020 - 2021 by previous Chairman Stan Jonik

It seems I start all my annual reports with "it has been a strange and busy year for such a small village", well this year as we all know has been strange and busy coping with Coronavirus and Zoom meetings. I would like to thank our councillors for their total commitment to making Erlestoke safe for our residents and giving thought to our neighbours who don't have access to the outside facilities that we enjoy. We know of five people who recorded positive with Covid and thankfully all pulled through successfully with no long-term effects.

The knock-on effect of the Covid pandemic is that the number of visitors to Erlestoke has increased, the council has introduced a number of procedures and installed fencing to help direct visitors in a more controlled way. Up to now Erlestoke has been a quiet and in some ways hidden village, but "the times they are a changin'" and we must cope and move with the times.

You will remember that the Council elections should have taken place last year but the Government stopped the elections and Councillors were to do an extra year. This year elections are now going ahead. Unfortunately, Councillor J Simmons decided to resign from Erlestoke Parish Council. The Council are sorry that Councillor Simmons decided not to continue and wish her all the best. There are two changes this year, we are pleased to have Caroline West as a new Councillor, Caroline has already proved constructive and is focused on the speed limits on the B3098 and litter picking. The second change is I am stepping down and making room for new ideas and focus.

After Covid the next big change for Erlestoke is the George and Dragon Pub has now been purchased and the new Landlords are making the building smarter and ready for business. We wish them all the best and give them our full support. I would like to thank Keith Lewcock who ran the campaign for the "Erlestoke Hub" in conjunction with the Parish Council for at least five years highlighting benefits and correcting inaccurate publications. We were also helped with the fact there was always at least one interest and sometimes two interested parties in buying the George and Dragon as a pub not as a residential property.

Back to more normal Council business, every year we organise a maintenance program fixing fences and making sure the play area is safe. The Play area was closed at the start of 2020 because of Covid but now we have managed to upgrade the area and its back in use. We have had three flood issues that needed looking at, the drains through the village and down to outside The George and Dragon were constantly being blocked after a heavy rain storm. This is now resolved by Wiltshire Council who have cleared the drains and put Erlestoke on their list to be checked every two months. Having said this the drain at the bottom of the Garden Road leading to the Secret Garden still needs unblocking. The second flood issue is the flooding under the railway bridge along Lower Road, the reason for this flooding involved negotiations between Highways and British Rail. The communication between these seemed to delay the resolution by at least two months thankfully now the road is cleared for use. The third flood is the area behind the houses in the Park, the road is used by the Water Works some temporary work has been done and may still require attention this summer.

Traffic on the B3098 is always on the agenda, last year we received notice of a number of cars that have overturned on bends. The pandemic has changed the road usage in the village with more people visiting and enjoying the area. We have introduced "SLOW DOWN" signs to help but a more permanent approach has been taken and we are asking Wiltshire Council to move the 30 mph limit signs on the B3098 at the West and East end of the village by at least 100 metres further out. In conjunction with this we would like the speed limit reduced to 20 mph.

The SSE Sub Station in the Park has been upgraded, this seems to have taken a long time although still untidy has been fenced off so it is safe. The Council are still waiting for the agreement to be finalised from SSE, it seems a David and Goliath situation and we are the David.

There have been a number of reports of motor bikes and mountain bike users across Erlestoke Woods that cause issues with walkers. Now we have generated a comprehensive map of all public footpaths this is now displayed on the Erlestoke web site www.erlestoke.org. The

Pandemic has raised stress levels of some people and a number of incidents have been reported. The issue for the Parish Council is the woods and fields South of Erlestoke are MOD property and Councillor Jones works closely with the MOD trying to help out. The MOD have now increased the policing of the area to solve these issues. Councillor Morgan Frise and councillor Jones are working on a notice board and leaflet box to help with do's and don'ts in the woods.

The Erlestoke Woods are going through a major forestry program removing a number of Pine and Ash trees, they are replanting with broad leaf trees for future generations to enjoy. The church AGM is on Sunday 25th April this is an important meeting and will determine the future of the church as Hellen Diskett and Bill Kemp have stood down and there is nobody to help run and administer the running of the church. The Parish Council use the church we hope a solution can be found. The litter pick was well attended by 10 people we collected a massive amount of litter from around the village and very little from the wood road where visitors roam. Again, Jane Batt and Mandy McCaan have done a stern job picking up litter and dog poo so residents and visitors have a clean path to use, a big thank you to both as well as the 10 who attended on the 11th April litter pick day. The Council work to a tight budget and must be very careful what we spend our money on and this year we decided to keep the parish precept the same as last year at £6805.00 for 2020/21. I would like to thank all our councillors including Richard Gamble who is standing down this year and Polly Doyle our Clerk for all their help and advice throughout the year.

Stan Jonik Chairman Erlestoke Parish Council

7/21 Erlestoke Community Database of Contacts

If anyone would like to be included on the community database to receive news about Erlestoke and local area please contact the Clerk, Polly Doyle on erlestokepc@gmail.com

8/21 Neighbourhood Issues

No items were raised for discussion.

9/21 Questions from the floor

No questions were raised.

Meeting finished at 9.10pm.