

STANTON & STREATLAM PARISH COUNCIL

Meeting held on 28th November 2024 in Stainton Village Hall

Present J Teasdale (JT) A Dobinson(AD) J Rowlandson (JR)
B Toulson (BT) S Chapman (SC) (Clerk)

1. **Public Participation** None present
2. **Apologies** JM Taylor (JMT) N B Hutchinson (NBH)
3. **Declarations of Interest** None
4. **Dispensations** None
5. **Approval of September Minutes** Proposed by JT seconded by BT
6. **Progress or changes since last meeting**

6.1 The soldier silhouettes have been removed but have not been relocated as unfortunately they are too damaged to be usable again. A suggestion was made that in their place it would be nice to have an ironwork bench in the memorial garden, possibly with a poppy motif for remembrance and to serve as a place to sit and enjoy the peaceful location. The clerk will make enquiries about possible costs for a bench to either be commissioned and made or purchased as an already manufactured item. Also during 2025, the Council will look to removing the compost heap in the corner and reseed the area with grass. It is possible that on removal of the area it will reveal some good useable compost that may be used in the village planters if suitable.

6.2 There have been no further reports to the Council of problems with rat infestation so it is hoped that the issue has been resolved. When it was first reported to the Council, advice was sought from the Environmental Health department at DCC. As the Council has neither the facilities nor the power to address the problem directly, it was decided to deliver the information to homes in the immediate vicinity of the reported issue with the advice received from DCC as to what steps could be taken by anyone affected.

6.3 Remedial work, as advised in last year's tree report on the condition of the trees in the War Memorial Garden, has now been carried out on the tree in the War Memorial Garden. The arboreal contractor has also quoted to reduce the crown and reshape the cherry tree on the village green as well as hard prune the line of trees overhanging the road just inside the village entrance and this quote of £480 has been accepted.

6.4 Bus shelter at Stainton Grove – as even a pre-planning application to DCC for a new shelter requires knowledge of the materials used in the construction of a new shelter, it will be necessary to get a couple of companies out for a site visit in order to get a quote with the information DCC Planning would need. This to be done early in 2025. It would appear that an aluminium framed shelter with toughened safety glass could be the best option. Aluminium, because once in place it would not require repainting at set intervals as a steel frame would and toughened glass rather than polycarbonate panels as the polycarbonate can yellow and discolour and potentially require replacement. A stone built shelter was also suggested but as North Star Housing have already advised that they would have no objections to an aluminium and glass shelter provided all planning conditions were followed, that type of shelter is probably best.

6.5 As yet we have not found any old photos of the village green so we can see how they compare with the current area of grass.

6.6 The ceremony to unveil the memorial plaque for Group Captain David Haward was very well attended. The Parish Council made a donation of £50 towards the organisation of this event and were represented on the day by Councillor Taylor.

6.7 The Parish Council are in agreement to having a gov.uk email address for the council and the clerk but councillors did not want individual email addresses as they felt that residents can and do already contact them directly, as and when necessary. The current website provider to be contacted for more information and projected price for this service.

6.8 The hedge on the Runa Farm side of town Pasture Lane does appear to have been trimmed back which has improved visibility for drivers.

6.9 The new door for the village hall is being produced now. Although planning permission was not required for it's installation it will be subject to building Control regulations and this will cost £320 + VAT.

6.10 Issues have been reported on Town Pasture Lane during a recent spell of bad weather. As this is a minor road it does not get gritted and this caused problems for several drivers as their cars were skidding on the icy road. Fortunately they were aided by a local resident who lives adjacent to the lane but with further bad weather probable over the winter months, councillors are concerned that traffic to and from Runa Farm (which now has only the Town Pasture Lane entrance/exit) could be at risk of accidents. DCC to be contacted to advise of these concerns.

7. Correspondence sent/received

7.1 The Council was contacted by a member of Woodland Parish Council about the proposal to build up to 70 holiday lodges within Hamsterly Forest and also set up an adventure rope trail facility, Go Ape. Woodland PC are opposed to the application on several grounds – that the area is home to a diverse natural habitat, that the roads in and around the location are rural in nature and not appropriate for the vastly increased volume of traffic that the proposal would generate both during construction and once fully opened to the holiday trade and that the venture would be detrimental to the surrounding villages and residents. He is asking that parish councils within County Durham petition the planning authority to delay making a final decision until late January so that objections can be formalised and more information sought regarding the impact the development would have and whether even more development would follow. At present this council will wait until the full proposal is ready to go to planning committee.

8. Financial Report and payments for approval

Account balance as at 30th October 2024

£11,279.24

(cheques 100489 £30.00 and 100497 £30.00 not yet presented at this time)

S Chapman	Poppy wreath	£24.49
Village Hall	Hall hire	£30.00
HMRC	Tax on Clerk's wage (two months)	£102.80
Jopling's Tree Services Ltd	Remedial tree work in Memorial Garden	£210.00
AR Toward	Grass cutting	£250.00
S Chapman	Clerk's wage + backdated (two months)	£411.20

A £480.00 payment to Jopling’s Tree Services to be made after agreed work is completed next month.

9. **Precept request** As previously advised, the LTRS grant has been reduced this year. It has gone from £160.00 last year to £13.00 this year – with this decrease it will be necessary to raise the precept requested by 1% to keep the precept at a ‘standstill’ level. Based on expenditure this year and budget forecasting this would allow for 2025 – 2026 projected expenditure with a reasonable reserve for any unplanned or unexpected financial necessities. Therefore a total Precept of £8,360.13 for 2025 – 2026 was approved by councillors.

10. **Budgetary expenses forecast** Based on expenditure during 2024 excluding ‘one-off’ payments (such as the new gates, railings etc.,) but inclusive of ongoing expenditure such as grass cutting, wages, hall hire etc. it was found that this totalled £5,085.00 . No major projects are planned for the coming year but it was thought advisable to factor in a potential 10% increase on that expenditure bringing that to £5593.50 projected spend. As the account balance is presently approximately £11,000.00 and the precept will add to it, the council feels this amount will ensure the council can meet all financial obligations in 2025-2026.

11. 2025 Meetings

Dates for meetings in 2025		
January 23 rd 7.00 pm in the Village Hall Parish Council Meeting	March 27 th 7.00 pm in the Village Hall Parish Council Meeting	May 8 th 7.00 pm in the Village Hall Annual Parish Meeting followed by the Annual Parish Council Meeting
July 24 th 7.00 pm in the Village Hall Parish Council Meeting	September 25 th 7.00 pm in the Village Hall Parish Council Meeting	November 27 th 7.00 pm in the Village Hall Parish Council Meeting

12. Any Other Business

12.1 Community Walk Through of Stainton and Stainton Grove. This is suggested for the end of February or early March when hopefully weather conditions will not be too bad. Possible dates to be put forward at the January meeting then observations from the walk through can be brought forward at the meeting in March. This will probably need to take place on a Saturday to allow councillors who work during the week to be able to attend.

12.2 It has been noticed that a small number of local residents have been observed driving through Stainton at speed with the potential to cause an accident. The council will contact the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner to enquire about the possibility of setting up a Speedwatch group within the village as this could help resolve the issue.

12.3 The village hall has acquired a second storage shed at the rear of the property. This is presently being used by both the crafting group and the village hall. As our insurance is coming up for renewal it will be checked that the additional shed is also covered on the policy.

Date and time of next Parish Council meeting

Thursday January 23rd at 7.00 pm.