



Chew Stoke Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 22nd May 2025

in The Village Hall, Chew Stoke. ▲

- 1. The minutes of the meeting of 2024 were approved and signed**
- 2. Chair's report:**

Good evening all and welcome to the Chew Stoke Annual Parish Meeting. Thank you very much for coming it really does make a difference to us as a Parish Council to have active interest and hopefully participation in what we are doing. In case any of you don't know me I am Steven Read and I have had the pleasure of acting as Chairman of Chew Stoke Parish Council for another year, which I have really enjoyed.

First up I would like to remind you who my fellow Parish Councillors are: starting with the vice Chair Nick Baker, Nicola Ainger, Rowan Coleman, Alex Cooke, Steve Hicks, Nicola Wilson.

I would at this point also like to thank my fellow Councillors very much for all their hard work during the year, it is often thankless tasks that we do, but every member throws themselves in with enthusiasm and I would say that we are fortunate to have a wide range of skills experiences and interests amongst us all. This means that there always seems to be someone willing to pick up whatever needs doing.

We also have one employee (officer) of the Council and that is Sarah Jane (SJ) who is our Clerk. Put simply, SJ is incredible in what she does for us, and I know that all of my fellow Councillors would want to thank SJ for all the work she does, especially keeping us on track when we are in danger of straying away from correct procedure or are not sure of the way we should do things.

We also have a regular village cleaning contractor – Hugo King who helps us manage the mowing, bin emptying and general maintenance around the village and we would also like to thank him and his colleagues for all their hard work during the year.

We currently have two vacancies on the Parish Council. This is due to the resignation of two very long standing Councillors, Ali Cunningham and Carol Dyer who have served many years on the Council and worked hard for the Parish. For personal reasons they have both decided that now is the time to step down. I would like to thank Carol and Ali for their significant

contributions over many years and if anyone is interested in serving as a Councillor then please come up and have a chat to us this evening.

As a reminder we meet the first Thursday of every month at 7.30pm here in the Village Hall and parishioners and members of the public are always welcome. Before the meeting starts we have an open 'surgery' (from 7.15-7.30pm) where we can meet up with anyone on an informal basis. Once the meeting starts we have to be a bit more strict and members of the public can address the meeting but only on matters on the agenda.

The overall aim of the PC is to listen and pay attention to the needs of our community whilst following protocols and rules. An example of this is that we are formally consulted by B&NES on planning applications and Nick will explain a bit more about that later on, including a possible housing needs survey for Chew Stoke and the potential impact to us of the revised Local plans for housing.

I will now spend a few minutes highlighting the main items that we have dealt with during the year. You will probably recognise some of these items as recurring issues!

Village Hall

It is now more than 12 months since the Church Hall converted to being the Village Hall since the PC became the Custodian Trustee of the Hall. The main purpose of this change was that hopefully more funding and support can be obtained for the Hall once it is not part of a Church organisation. In truth we are still exploring exactly how this can work, including exploring charitable status and we are seeking as much advice and support on this as we can. We will hear from Ruth more on the Hall later this evening, but I would like to take the opportunity to thank Ruth and the hall committee for all hard work and dedication they put in to this community asset.

Village Green spaces

We are very fortunate to have several very different green spaces in the village: Bilbie Road play area, Rectory Field and more recently the Westaway Fields and Cooks Meadow. We are proud to say as a Council, extensively supported by the wider community, that we have made even more progress in the last 12 months on improving biodiversity, access and amenity value for everyone. The farmed part of the Westaway land continues to be leased and used for more regenerative farming practices, there is of course the trail through the woods at Cookes meadow and the opportunity to purchase a memorial tree has now been taken up by many residents. Similarly in Rectory Field more work has been done on increasing biodiversity and amenity value. This includes the planting of more trees within the coppices and some hedging, and over last winter the planting of a small orchard. At the same time we strive to keep the recreation open space and vistas open for everyone's enjoyment. Again all of this has been well supported by the village. Also in both Cooks Meadow and Rectory Field we have been well supported and advised again by Chew Valley Plants Trees - thanks especially to Ben Moss for his help.

We of course can't cover this topic without showcasing the work on Village Bloom by Nicola and her excellent and dynamic team of volunteers. Much of the progress that I have just described was down to their enthusiastic and energetic activities. I am also pleased to

remind everyone that thanks to these efforts Chew Stoke won a Silver Gilt award in our first year of entering the competition, and the Primary School was also a winner in the “it’s your neighbourhood” category. It isn’t winning prizes that is the most important aspect of this, but the noticeable improvements to the village environment and the sense of community that comes from the activities undertaken and it is not just about flowers and plants! Since Nicola will be giving us an update on all the activities during the year I will not steal her thunder further at this point.

Parking

Parking is an ever-present issue and we have focussed again this year on working with the Police, the Primary School and Rugby Club and Pub to try and stop pavement parking and parking in dangerous places, causing obstructions. Of course we have still only been partially successful. We are instinctively against filling the village with lots of double yellow lines, but in consultation with B&NES we did agree to some limited double yellows along Chew Lane to help with the issue of blind corners when overtaking parked cars. At the same time, we requested white lines to be painted across driveways to prevent driveway blocking.

Speeding and traffic issues.

We do have a Community Speedwatch initiative in the village but despite a couple of gatherings to try to kick this off we had a lack of volunteers to 'take up the gun'. Nonetheless with the returning of Steve Hicks to the Council we are kicking this off again in 2025 and hope that this can make a positive impact to speeding in the village. A Road Safety Working Group has also been set up in the village, with Councillors Cooke and Hicks providing support from the Parish Council. The group have set their priorities which include: Chronic speeding through the village; antisocial speeding of cars and motorbikes on approach roads (Heron's Green for example); looking at the possibility of footways on Stoke Hill and Pagans Hill and resurrecting community speedwatch as just mentioned.

Of course I can't cover the topic of parking and speeding without mentioning the works that were undertaken in the village near the shop / Quarry Hay. The purpose of the works was to create a safer and accessible crossing point for the village near the shop and the route to the Primary School. The PC did request a more formalised crossing (like a zebra crossing), but this would have necessitated street lighting for safety reasons. We took the decision as a PC that we did not want increased lighting in the village. Hence B&NES came up with the scheme that is now in place. I think it is fair to say that the bollards that were installed as part of this scheme have not been universally welcomed. The truth is that the bollards simply prevent parking where parking was illegal in any case (on the pavement) and ensure safe sightlines for people crossing by Quarry Hay.

Finances

We continue to operate within a tight budget, whilst still supporting village initiatives where we can. In addition to the monies that we get from B&NES (the Precept - which actually comes from all of us) we receive CIL monies from eligible developments within the village, plus we also have the rental of the agricultural part of the Westaway land. So if anyone has any village projects or needs that they think we can help with then we are always open to a discussion.

We are proud to say that we have not increased the Precept again this year despite a challenging inflationary environment so we are trying to ensure that we don't add to the burden on households in the village despite all of our costs increasing.

Flooding and Safe routes to School.

The flooding around the ford at the end of School Lane, whilst very short in duration on each occasion, does cause a lot of disruption to the School. This along with the parking congestion that we are all aware of means that we have actively looked at ways to improve the situation. As such we suggested the development of walking routes from Church lane (via Mill Lane) and from Stoke Hill across the fields into School Lane could be established. The Footpaths team at B&NES were very responsive to this and we are very pleased to have seen the improvements in the footpath at the top of Mill Lane and from School Lane into the fields behind Stoke Hill, with the latter route now being extensively used as a walking route to School.

Other Community Activities

During the year the PC has also purchased another bleed kit installed alongside the defibrillator here at the village hall and also a defibrillator and bleedkit to be sited at the GP Surgery.

Now is also probably a good time to mention the Chelwood Bridge Rotary Club Community Award, where we were delighted to hear that our nominee was the chosen recipient for 2025. The Parish Council were unanimous in proposing Ruth Dunlevy for the award due to the significant contribution across a wide range of activities that Ruth gives her time and commitment to throughout the year. So many congratulations, Ruth, and very well deserved.

So all in all another busy year - and what is great to see is lots of various community engagement projects on the go.

One final reminder: we are always conscious of trying to improve communication to all parishioners and mindful that not everyone utilises Social Media so we have set up an emailing list for a newsletter and other time sensitive communications – so if you haven't done so already and you would like to sign up for this then please give your details to SJ this evening.

Steven Read

Chair, Chew Stoke Parish Council

- 3. Chew Stoke Village Hall** – the hall is 15 months into the new relationship with the Parish Council who are now Trustees of the Village Hall. It has been a busy year for a small team. The hall continues to be used well, and we are generating a small profit. There is a plan to paint the hall in June and update blinds and curtains at a later date. The hall is used by an Art club, Cubs, exercise group, choir, WI, Film Club and the parish council. There are also a number of one-off bookings for parties etc. We will continue to make the hall available for everyone, promoting the facilities. We have

raised £5000 this year, the Winter Ball donated half their proceeds.

4. **Village in Bloom** - Work is well underway to make the village look as good as possible prior to judging day in July. Nicola is compiling the portfolio and selecting photos for it. There is a great community spirit from those involved, the school is a great source of help too. Grants have been donated by Joanna Tiley, the Film Club for which we are most grateful. A Bioblitz event has been organised for two schools, eco club and Beavers have been invited. About Bat Walk has also been planned.
5. **WI** – the WI is a unique organisation, it is a charity but fundraises for other charities eg Dorothy House. Challenge for local WI's over 100 years, seeing dynamic changes with members. WI membership is only £5 a month. Subjects discussed include equal pay, climate change, domestic violence. Chew Stoke is very friendly and organises social events, speeches, outings. It runs on the third Wednesday of every month in the hall, currently 45 to 55 members. Looking to encourage younger members this year.
6. **Community Speedwatch** - Steven covered the priorities for Community Speedwatch in his speech earlier. Community Speedwatch is yet to get off the ground, still looking for volunteers then we will be able to submit names and details to Avon and Somerset Police and B&NES for training. Up to six volunteers are needed. Considering the use of cameras on Herons Green and Wallycourt Road, Stoke Hill & Pagans Hill. The Parish Council would be prepared to purchase them. Other options include a site on Stoke Hill, pavement extensions. To request an increased police presence at the lake to combat all the speeding issues.
7. **Planning applications this year** - The Parish Council planning group includes Councillors Nick Baker, Nicola Ainger and Rowan Coleman. Our role is to comment on matters of policy and give local knowledge and context to planning applications. The Parish Council is not responsible for decisions, that is B&NES. All responses are either support or oppose there is no ambiguity. We always support appropriate applications where possible. This year there have been 12 planning applications which included six household extensions of which we supported four, opposed two, one was withdrawn and 1 was amended. We also had one riding arena, one agricultural and one change of use. All these we supported 12 and opposed two of them. We also review planning applications for tree works in the Conservation Area. Consent is required for all works, there were 7 applications and all were supported. It should be noted the Parish Council is keen to support proactive tree work. A bigger picture is that we're about to enter a new review on the Local Plan Reset, the local plan dates back to 2017 and has had various revisions. It is possible that Chew Stoke may be suitable for sustainable development due to the facilities in the village, potentially giving us a new target allocation of 20 houses. We are also looking that undertaking a village Housing Needs Survey to help and inform and influence housing that may come forward with these targets.
8. **Yew tree** - Is becoming more rundown, it is still designated as a pub but is vacant, once ownership is determined that will prompt its usage.