

## STOKE GABRIEL PARISH COUNCIL

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2023 – 2024

First, I would like to welcome you all here tonight to the Annual Parish Meeting of The Parish of Stoke Gabriel.

I thought it might be helpful if I briefly explain why this meeting is required and the purpose of holding it.

All Town and Parish Councils throughout England are required by law to hold an annual Parish Meeting which must take place between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> June inclusive. Any such meeting should not commence before 6pm and must not be held in premises which are used for the supply of alcohol.

The purpose of the meeting is to give the Parish Council and other local organisations an opportunity to let local residents know what they have been doing over the past year.

It also is an opportunity for electors to have a say on anything they consider valuable to the people of the parish.

Traditionally we in Stoke Gabriel have used the meeting as an opportunity for local groups, clubs, societies and other organisations to review, highlight and publicise the wide range of activities which they provide in our village which might hopefully inspire more of you to join in and participate.

There is an opportunity later in the meeting to ask questions on anything pertinent to the residents of the Parish, but I suggest if anyone has any specific questions relating to the presentations by the various clubs and societies which are here tonight that they ask them after the presentation has finished.

In Stoke Gabriel we are very lucky to have a core group of people and organisations that assemble and create memorable events for us all to enjoy throughout the year.

Since the last Annual Parish Meeting, we started the year with the celebrations for the Kings Coronation. The Street Party, Childrens tea party, cream teas in the Old School Rooms.

In August we have are traditional carnival with a week of wide-ranging activities many of which are kindly sponsored by our business community for which we are extremely grateful.

November sees the Scouts having their firework party.

December our Church is beautifully decorated for the traditional carol and children's crib services and then the arrival of Father Christmas don by the Quay.

In January the traditional Wassail celebrations returned to the Parish Orchard which brought back over 500 old and new participants to the village lit up by the lanterns made by the Primary School Children

In between these celebrations we sadly saw Gill our vicar retire but fortunately some months later we welcomed Chris to the Parish as the new incumbent in the vicarage.

The Parish Council financially supports many of these local events as part of our policy to retain and where possible improve the activities and facilities within the Parish.

Mental wellbeing is an important issue which affects everyone in various ways and we are lucky enough in Stoke Gabriel to have a footpath network of rambling routes, The Parish Orchard and Playground and Hoyle Copse which offer solace and recreation for all ages. Our thanks to the team of volunteers led by Phill Bolt who help look after our green spaces and are still coping with the ravages of Aish Dieback to make a safe environment for all to use.

During the year the Council successfully purchased the Freehold of York House, the commercial office building on the Cavanna estate built a part of a planning obligation for the development. We were pleased that the whole building was subsequently let to a local organisation CAP caring and wish them every success with the occupation.

The rent received from this letting will also assist us in keeping the precept at a manageable level whilst hopefully not reducing the level of support we give to local facilities due to the pressures of cost inflation.

The Council are also aware of the recent acts of vandalism which have occurred in the village and the periodic mindless acts to mess up the public toilets. We are working with the Police to mitigate these issues whilst appreciating that the resources available to help our village are thinly stretched over a wide area.

We have further plans to invest to improve the toilet facilities, but these are unfortunately being delayed due to enforcement issues being taken on the drainage on the adjoining development site.

Speed is also a concern to many in the village and we have an ongoing project to install a speed sign close to the entrance to the village by The Narrows and also to set up a Neighbourhood Speed Watch group.

Changes in the management of the Council arising from the resignation of the temporary Parish Clerk saw the post being advertised and a selection process undertaken which resulted in Rose Rowe being appointed. I thank her for dealing with the various matters arising from the resignation and ensuring that all the statutory and legal requirements are in place for us to serve the Parish.

Lastly, I would like to thank our District and Local Councillors for their continued help, advice and guidance over the past twelve months. Many of the frustrating issues which we have had to deal with as a Council have quickly and efficiently been resolved by their assistance in either contacting the relevant person for us or helping us to direct problems to the responsible person.

Finally, the successful operation of the Council is only due to its Members giving up many hours of free time not only to attend meetings but also to go out and look at issues which have suddenly arisen. A lot of work goes on behind the scenes between meetings to resolve problems. Emma, Anne, Michelle, Jacqui, Len and Ian – thank you for all the work you do for the Council.

Thank you also to Mandy as vice Chair for being able to fill in for me when I have not been able to attend various meetings.

All the work undertaken by Members is greatly appreciated by me and I hope by all our parishioners.

We, as Members of the Council, do this because we want to secure the future of our wonderful, picturesque Parish. There is still one vacancy left to fill on the Council so if anyone would like to become involved then please come and see either me or the Clerk after the meeting.

Thank you