

Chairman's Report for 2017-18 for the AGM of Stretton-on-Fosse Parish Council, 9th May 2018

Some of the aspects of this year's report will unfortunately sound like a repeat of last year's as a couple of issues seem to be mired in mud. Firstly the start of the improvements to the Portabello Crossroads has been continually postponed – now for over a year – and obtaining any information about what is or is not happening has been an uphill struggle. On every occasion that there has been an update, the parish council has learnt about it from the local newspapers or Shipston town council, although the crossroads are in our parish and I have sent and received several emails assuring me we will be informed. The latest information (again courtesy of the local paper) is that the work will start in late summer.

Our other seemingly never-ending saga concerns the 5 houses to be built at the end of Harolds Orchard, for rent to local people and to be owned by Warwickshire Rural Housing Association. It is now 5 years since a survey produced the evidence that these houses are needed. The developers were due to build these houses at the same time as 11 houses in Shottery as part of their contribution to the community (called Section 106). There has been an incredible amount of delay by the developers (and to some extent Stratford District Council) and we are now waiting to hear the outcome of an application by the developer to be excused from building our houses at all. We are hoping that WRHA may be able to take over the land and find the extra money needed to get these houses built.

The parish council and the village hall have started a major fund-raising drive so that we can replace the wooden play equipment over the next couple of years. The playground is inspected every year for safety and they have advised that the wooden structures are beginning to deteriorate (especially below the surface). Already a very healthy amount has been raised through village events, events organised by the pub, donations from village organisations and grants. There are many other events planned and grants will be applied for. This all has the great advantage of bringing the village together. Thank you to all the enthusiastic event organisers and to all those who are donating so generously.

Our finances are still looking healthy. This year we asked for an increase of £250 so as to be able to donate a little extra to the fund for the new playground. We have benefitted from an extra year of Stan's (of SJ Mowers) grass-cutting since he was due to retire last year but is doing one final year. We anticipate we will need to pay considerably more for grass-cutting in the future.

There have been the usual number of contentious planning applications and of particular mention is the Pitstop Cotswold Car site at Rowborough. The parish council agreed with the agent for the owner a detailed landscaping of the site with hedging, trees, planting of bulbs with the aim of making the site look more in keeping with the rural area. After various attempts by the owner to vary the conditions set for allowing the business, after months of promises to carry out the landscaping and after flouting most of the conditions, the latest attempt to change the conditions has been turned down. We await the next stage...

One major change for 2018-19 is the introduction of the new law relating to data protection which requires even parish councils like us to obtain specific permission from each individual to email information concerning the village and other events. Emails will shortly be arriving in inboxes to ask for your permission. The parish council Privacy Policy will appear on the website (strettononfosse.com).

Since last May we have a new County Councillor, Jo Barker, who is also our District Councillor. I want to thank all the councillors representing Stretton for their help and participation again this year and especially Sue Finlay, the parish clerk for all her work and her help in keeping me calm.