

STOKE ORCHARD PARISH COUNCIL, CHAIRMANS ANNUAL REPORT, 04/05/10

2009 and 2010 have been above all, community building years for our parish as we broadened our focus from mainly drainage projects last year, into an essential re- visiting of Stoke Orchard and Tredington Parish Plan, and launching our parish website.

It has been a year that has been very notable for a parish council that has been rock solid and indivisibly united in its endeavours. May I thank the clerk and the council as a unit, for being as strong and resolute as we have been throughout all of the last year.

The Parish Plan Steering Group initiated and established by Mike Masters, as planned last May, issued a searching and consulting questionnaire. From this has been produced a draft plan, which provided a clear indication, as in the previous Parish Appraisal, for the continued support of the majority of residents, and therefore the council, for the proposals for the regeneration of the CRE site.

Steven Darnell, has now launched online our website. At this stage the website is in the building process, (as it always will be) and Steve sincerely welcomes new populating content and contacts, including any volunteers to assist, remembering that the site is primarily a village tool, and not for the exclusive use of the parish council. The draft parish plan is a part of the web site information, and is open for public feedback via the website. Much of the plan is focused on the mainly abandoned CRE brown field site.

The CRE planning application proposals enlivened and invigorated the community debate, on an old chestnut subject. As a community, as before, we were unanimous on the question of what should happen to the old CRE site, that it should be redeveloped in some way.

Where there was divergence, very understandably, it was on the question of scale. What the council said to the Tewkesbury Borough Site Inspection Panel, on the CRE site in April, was that in a way, to use a metaphor, it was like a (village) heart transplant. Yes, indeed, a substantial undertaking, but you cannot transplant a heart, a chamber at a time. With £1.75m of incoming site remediation and vital watercourse re- contouring, is it economically feasible for a half hearted regeneration? All the evidence so far, indicates a need for a comprehensive approach.

It is a substantial relief to our parish, and it's residents, that on Thursday April 29th, 2010, Tewkesbury Borough Council Planning Committee, by a clear majority, voted in favour of granting permission to the Ashfield Land application for 129 homes, and new commercial premises. The permission is subject to verification by The Secretary Of State, after the election, as are also the legal conditions.

May the Parish Council express it's most sincere and deeply felt thanks and appreciation, to both Cllr Allen Keyte of Tewkesbury Borough Council and Cllr Gordon Shurmer of both Tewkesbury Borough and Gloucestershire County Councils. They have both been absolutely pivotal in their consolidated support for many years. We can only describe Cllr Keyte, as being heroic on April 29th.

One thing that is naturally very important to our community, is its cohesion and harmony especially under the challenges of change. The council has for some time, had an open secret weapon of

warmth and good humour, which we can now reveal. It is our clerk. Thank you very much indeed Cathy. We are sure that all of our community will pull together as the future gradually unfolds.

At this time of year, it is always a pleasure to see our village green in such great shape, thank you Colin for all your voluntary efforts on our behalf.

Andrew Troughton, on behalf of our community, is currently investigating with the landowner, to see, if we as a community, can have any influence on the restoration of the old orchard from its current abandoned condition. Watch this space.

Richard Chatham, as always, has been a sterling Vice Chairman, always acting with experienced dedication on behalf of our two village community. It was so telling, when Richard, through thorough research, finally found harmony with Gloucestershire Highways, with seemingly economically viable proposals for improving the flood resilience of the river Swilgate at Tredington bridge. This was when the budget feasibility of either a new bridge, or enhanced flood capacity with new flooding flow relief culvert inserts, came under close scrutiny.

The highway in Stoke Orchard, outside the Old Chapel, is currently one lane only with traffic lights. The Parish Council has got well documented reporting evidence of the instability of this stretch of highway going back many years. It is not much comfort to us for us to keep reminding Gloucestershire Highways about our long held cautions and concerns.

We must however thank Highways and the County Council Flood Resilience team for authorising and funding the best quality ditching work that has ever been undertaken in our parish.

There is still much to do on drainage, and we will continue to work with Highways throughout this year, on proposals for the installation of new drains under the highway in the centre of Stoke Orchard.

Similarly, we are thankful to Gloucestershire County Council, led by Terry Gibson, for legally retrieving the funding from the Dean Lane housing developer, and effecting, the good quality Dean Lane final road surfacing.

Speeding continues to be a focus for both villages. Two long lists of speeding offenders have been produced by enforcement action outside St John's Court in Tredington. A short list of offenders was produced outside Old Forge Cottages, Stoke Orchard. The council is seeking an extension of the 30mph limit at Tredington, to be concurrent with the boundary change at Tredington Hospital.

On waste issues, because of the emerging proposed changes to waste infrastructure, the council has adopted a formal policy in preparation. Andrew Troughton and myself continue to liaise closely with our Parish neighbourhoods, and Cory Ltd. The council, through the liaison group, has initiated litter picking initiatives. We have also put a great deal of work and consideration into the Grundon planning application proposals, which will be determined in July.

May we look forward to more of the same community building progress during the course of this Parish year.

Thank you

