

Stogumber Parish Council

Review of the year 2009/10

Section 106 agreements

- These are the means by which developers agree to contribute money to local communities to reflect the impact of their developments. Before Stogumber Parish Council started to raise concerns, it was very unclear how much money West Somerset Council (WSC) was holding on our behalf and the uses to which it could be put. Following our intervention, new processes have been put in place and information is now flowing more freely.
- £1,000 came from the conversion of the old Chapel and has been given to the Village Hall to help pay for a shed in which to store the pre-school's equipment.
- £9,000 came from Magna from the new houses in Slade Close, and has been allocated to the play area behind Slade Close. Consultations have started on how to spend it.
- £18,000 will be paid when the fifth house at Archer's Close (Butts Orchard) has been sold, which we think may happen soon. It has not yet been decided how to spend it.

Station Road retaining wall and footpath

- The County Record Office found that the maintenance of the retaining wall below Hall Farm Barn had been in dispute between the landowners, Church, Parish, District and County Councils since the 1920s!
- Stogumber Parish Council called a meeting of representatives of the Councils, Church and landowners. With generosity and flexibility from all parties, it was agreed that the District and County Councils would repair the wall, the Parish Council would install a new handrail downwards slope of the slipway, and the Hayes family would permit a legal footpath to be created in front of the barn to safeguard the route for all time.
- After some disruption from road closures, the wall has been repaired to a high and robust standard, the footpath surfaced and fenced, and work on the handrail will start soon.

Replacement for 'Crowcombe Cars'

- People from Crowcombe have been co-ordinating a service using volunteer drivers (from both Crowcombe and Stogumber) to take people without transport to doctors' appointments, essential shopping, etc. Most of the journeys have in fact been for Stogumber residents, so not unreasonably, Crowcombe Cars have asked that Stogumber co-ordinate the service for this parish.
- The Parish Council has brought together a group of generous and public-spirited residents (more volunteers welcome!) and hopes that the Stogumber service will soon be up and running.
- The Parish Council is most grateful to Daphne Criddle, Bridget Weir, Miss May, Derek Illman and all the volunteer drivers for creating this new service for the parish.

Planning applications

- Stogumber Parish Council holds a site meeting for virtually every planning application, so that it can give West Somerset Council (which makes the final decisions) a well informed recommendation on whether the development is appropriate for the needs of this Parish. We support applications more often than we recommend changes or refusal.
- In the past year, we have considered 20 applications, and the final decision in 17 of these was in line with our recommendations, 2 partially accorded with our recommendations, and only 1 was contrary to our recommendation.

Salt bins

- The recent bad weather has highlighted the need for new salt bins, which Stogumber Parish Council is buying, to be placed at the top of Pickpurse Land and the top of Hall Farm drive.

Bus stop on Station Road

- The new bus stop on Station Road (beneath the Archer's Close wall) needs a roof. Gadds (who built Archer's Close) are not obliged to add a roof, but when approached by the Parish Council they agreed to do so, and we are hopeful that they will despite their financial difficulties.

Bus passes for students

- The Parish Council is astonished that Stogumber students aged under 18 must pay nearly £500 for a bus pass to travel to colleges in Taunton: given the limited public bus service this seems to us to be a tax on rural children pursuing their education. People living in places with a much better service pay exactly the same amount. We have been lobbying the County Council, but they are very resistant to addressing this inequity.

Precept (Council Tax) for 2010/11

- The precept is the amount of the Council Tax that comes to the Parish Council. For the year 2009/10 the precept was £3,000 which was equivalent to £9.44 on a house in Council Tax band D. Across West Somerset, parish / town council precepts ranged from £8.44 (Sampford Brett) to £92.07 (Watchet) on a band D house. Stogumber had the third smallest precept. The average parish / town council precept in West Somerset was £26.73.
- The Parish Council had actually reduced the precept in 2009/10 from £3,200 the previous year, and decided that it would not be right to force an increase on residents this year. Therefore, the precept for 2010/11 will remain at £3,000. However, this is less than our expected expenditure, so the Council's reserve will be eroded, and an increase in the precept will probably be necessary in a year or two.

Councillors

- Chris Bramall
Daphne Criddle
Clifford Matravers (Chairman until November 2009)
John Merrick
Kim Rew
Viv Sellick
Julian Spicer (Chairman from November 2009)
Mostyn Symes
Tracey Thomas

For a full record of the Parish Council's activities over the year, see the minutes on www.stogumber.org.uk or contact the Parish Clerk, Allan Weir at Clouter's Brook, Brook Street, or on 656 145.