

STOCK PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2006/2007

Council Membership

Once again during the past year we have seen changes, with the resignations of Keith Blackburn and Judy Williams as councillors. As no elections for these vacancies were requested, the posts were filled by advertising for applicants. Accordingly Charles Phillips and Bob Hale were appointed councillors. Since the resignation of Judy Williams was within 6 months of the elections we were not permitted to fill this vacancy. We should like to take this opportunity to remind you that the elections for the Parish Council are due shortly and we would very much like to see new faces bringing new ideas, so encourage you to consider standing.

Both our County Councillor, Lord Hanningfield and Lord of the Manor, Lord Petre attended meetings last year. Ian Grundy, our Borough Councillor, continues to attend all our meetings and provide updates each month of any news or developments which concern our village. We are all very grateful for his active and practical support.

Planning

Planning continues to be a difficult issue because of the sheer scale and numbers received each month, requiring a great deal of consideration. Consequent building works result in changing street scene, disruption and noise, with damage to verges. The Parish Council has always stood by the parishioners' will that the Green Belt and the village's rural aspect be maintained, and we have had some success in this regard. However we cannot change statutory planning laws.

Policing

The Parish Council has made great progress in establishing a good working relationship with the police, thanks to the committed and ongoing support of Inspector Cheryl Callow. As a result there has been an increased police presence in the village and a police representative now attends every Parish Council meeting, or provides a detailed report. Additionally, a mobile police station has visited the village and future dates for this are planned. We are pleased to announce that Inspector Callow will be the key speaker at the Annual Parish meeting on 19th April, which we urge you to attend.

The Neighbourhood Watch scheme continues to play a key role, but more coordinators are needed: please consider if you could help.

Local Amenities

After many years, and through the work of the Essex Rural Housing Trust, we have succeeded in fulfilling the wish of the majority of villagers for Affordable Housing. The application for 10 units of Affordable Housing for residents with Stock connections was

recently approved. We understand Stock has been praised by Chelmsford Borough Council for being only the second Parish in the Borough to work towards providing Affordable Housing, which is much needed.

The Parish Council totally supports the retention of the Post Office and will continue to fight against any threat to the existence of such a key amenity.

We continue to support the Cricket and Football Clubs by making substantial financial contributions towards the grass cutting of their pitches. It is our hope that the village, like so many others, may be able to have its own playing field which could also be a permanent home for the Football Club. Any suggestions as to suitable land would be greatly appreciated.

Another future project requiring land is that for allotments: both the Parish and the Borough Council have received a number of requests for allotments in the village and we are pursuing a couple of possibilities, but again any suggestions as to suitable sites would be gratefully received.

The Parish Council has been active, in conjunction with the school, in planting spring bulbs around the green and pond. These can really be appreciated at this time of year. Trees will be planted around the green to replace those that have died. We continue to place benches, notice boards and litter bins where requested, and maintain existing street furniture. The historic crossroad sign in the village has been restored to a high standard, making it a key feature of the High Street. Recently work was completed to reinstate the track in front of the Almshouses, which had been badly eroded by inappropriate traffic: after discussions, Chelmsford Borough Council has agreed not to drive the heavy refuse collection lorries along it. We thank Gary Stringer for his most helpful assistance with this project.

Jenny Berkley is in the process of producing a map of all footpaths in the village, together with a booklet of suggested walks, which will be funded by the Parish Council. We thank Jenny for all her hard work and effort in producing these.

Village Environment, Village Design Statement and the Best Kept Village Competition

The Parish Council is disappointed by the apparent lack of volunteers prepared to contribute to the Village Design Statement, which is key if we are to maintain the heritage of Stock. There seem to be only a few people prepared to give something back to the village.

We were not successful in Best Kept Village competition last year so we will be making even greater effort this year, but we cannot do this alone. Accordingly could we please ask you all to do your part by tidying-up around your property, particularly those that are undergoing building work. Our annual 'bin-it' day is scheduled for 21st April, starting at 10 a.m. on the Common and we would be delighted to see more volunteers this year. But a pleasant environment is not achieved by a once a year event and we are discouraged by the amount of litter around the village and a general lack of interest in maintaining a pleasant environment. We look to everyone to do their bit on an everyday basis by picking up litter, not parking on the verges and reporting any council property that requires attention. Additionally we are looking into running a "Stock in Bloom"

competition this summer to encourage people to enhance the appearance of our village through having more hanging baskets, plant containers and attractive gardens.

Traffic

Together with the police, we continue to work towards addressing problems of speeding traffic. The temporary speed device on the High Street a few months ago received positive feedback, so we are investigating the possibility of erecting permanent devices. At the Annual Parish Meeting we will discuss whether it would be appropriate to impose parking restrictions by having yellow lines painted on certain roads to improve congestion caused by inconsiderate parking.

Website

Cllr Watling continues to do a sterling job compiling the data for our excellent website, www.stock.org.uk, where you can find all our notices, agendas and minutes that are instantly available to download, along with contributions from various organisations and villagers.

Thank you

We work hard to maintain a pleasant village environment and to represent the views of the village in our interaction with the Borough and County Councils. Accordingly I should like to thank all the councillors for their support and our Clerk, Lorraine Green for her invaluable assistance.

We would appreciate much more active participation from everyone in the village, particularly at our meetings, which are generally held on the last Monday of each month at 7.30 p.m. at the Village Hall.

Sally Easton
Chair, Stock Parish Council
March 2007