

Studham Parish Council

Annual Report 2009/10

Introduction

This annual report sets out to describe some of the main achievements of the period May 2009 to April 2010 and to highlight some of the issues raised. It also gives details of the services provided by your Council.

Your Parish Council www.studhamparish.co.uk

The Council meets on the first Monday of every month and members of the public are welcome to attend. Your seven Parish Councillors are elected every 4 years and the next election is in May 2011.

The current Councillors (with their areas of responsibility given in brackets) are:

Des Salmon, Chiltern Lodge, Old Hill Wood tel: 872389 desstudham@btconnect.com
Chairman (Finance, Village Hall, Planning, Road Safety)

Tony Gatehouse, 29 Bell Cottages tel: 873959 hereisantony@aol.com
Vice-Chairman (Police matters, Planning, Road Safety, Web Site)

Andrea Maxted, 32 Church Road tel: 83215 andrea.maxted@fsmail.net
(Parish Link, Public Relations, Planning)

Chrys Smith, 38 Church Road tel:872989 smithlaws@hotmail.co.uk
(Highways, Street Lighting, Playing Fields, Road Safety)

Geoff Shute, 90 Holywell Road tel: 872732 geoff.shutelu6@talktalk.net
(Friends of Studham Common, Planning)

Lola Harris, 8 Holywell Close tel: 871024 lola.harris@btopenworld.com
(Environment, Planning, Web Site)

Currently 1 Vacancy

Parish Clerk Mrs Carol Stephenson, Brambles, 248 Dunstable Road, tel: 872231 or e-mail clerk@studhamparish.co.uk was appointed as Parish Clerk in November 2009 in place of Mr Les Randall, who resigned.

Council report

This has been a busy year and as usual your Council has been working hard behind the scenes on your behalf to try to improve life in our beautiful village. In fact, so much has been going on that we found it exceedingly difficult to pick out the main highlights to put in this report.

We had to say 'Goodbye' to 3 of our number during the year. Both Fiona McDougal and Jill Lee stood down from the Parish Council at our AGM. They were thanked for all their hard work and commitment during their terms of office by the remaining councillors who knew that they would be hard to replace, and in September our Clerk, Les Randall, proffered his resignation but agreed to stay beyond his notice requirement to ensure a smooth transition with his replacement. A commitment appreciated by Councillors and the new Clerk, Carol Stephenson. We co-opted a new Councillor, Mrs Lola Harris, who despite being on a steep learning curve has already attended several training courses and is settling in well. Councillors also attended the funerals of two retired Council members Bill Hillier and Clifford Grove who had given long and active service to the Parish both in their Council and Christian roles and they will be sorely missed by Councillors and Villagers alike.

In March 2009 we had changed from having two authorities, South Bedfordshire District Council and Bedfordshire County Council, to just one unitary authority, Central Bedfordshire. Teething problems from the change still caused some concerns; the changes in personnel with whom we had had contact, and budgeting restraints were both issues, as were the problems with contracts already agreed such as the installation of kissing gates instead of stiles around the area. Hopefully all these are now well on the way to be resolved. The Annual Parish Meeting held in April 2009 raised one or two questions from members of the public and these led the Agenda for the beginning of the year.

Police & Home watch

We were asked by our Beat Office PC Wes Hall to identify two areas with which we had most concerns, and after a great deal of discussion, (mainly because we could think of about 6 areas), we settled on speeding and parking as being the most contentious to the majority of residents. It was felt that the new VAS signs had made some improvement regarding speeding and the Road Safety sub-committee hoped the establishment of a 20mph zone in the centre of the village would also help. The only complaints received so far is that this zone is not long enough. We are continuing to work to get this extended and try to consolidate the speed limits throughout the whole of the Parish, but this will not happen overnight. With regard to the parking issues, improvements have been made to car parks on the East Common and Village Centre, and the enlarged car park for staff at the School is now completed. Whilst the problems are certainly reduced, they still exist at certain times of day and these are being monitored. Bedfordshire Police have an interactive Website where you can look at crime statistics. We are under Kensworth, Whipsnade and Studham so remember that the figures shown are not just for us! In August we reported in the 'Link' that there would be additional Police activity in the area because of a 'terrorist assessment' being made as we were considered to be at risk due to our proximity to the airport. It did mean that during August we had no reported crimes except for the theft of four drain covers from Dunstable Road and these were replaced within 24 hours! Other crimes over the year have been 15 burglaries & burglaries other, 16 thefts from cars and 45 other crimes. There were also reports of a 'stranger' on the common and around the school in January and a further stranger on a bicycle during April. Beat Manager PC Wes Hall, and Community Support Officers, continue to patrol the village on a regular basis.

Homewatch were pursuing the use of Smart Water by all residents and the Council agreed to fund the roadside signage as it was felt that it would benefit all parishioners and despite several 'false starts' because of the weather, these were finally erected in March. Details of the scheme are available from your Homewatch co-ordinator.

Planning & Development.

During the year 13 Planning Applications had been received and discussed. This remains one of the most contentious areas of the Parish Council's work as the final decision always rests with Central Bedfordshire. We have listened to talks from such people as New Communities Officer & Rural Housing Enabler, and completed several surveys regarding 'Affordable Housing' in the area. Members of the public attended Council Meetings to discuss several issues concerning land within the Parish. A Residents Group was formed which circulated a petition to be sent to our MP and Central Bedfordshire. The Parish Council agreed to support the petition and to write to Central Bedfordshire strengthening the position by the inclusion of 3 additional conditions. Whilst the Parish Council are kept fully informed, all further information is available by direct contact with the Residents Group.

Highways

Potholes and lighting issues continue to be reported through the new Helpdesk which appears to be working well. Several areas of the Parish were highlighted as needing structural repair and these were added to the 5 year plan. Dunstable Road was re-surfaced. Members of the public attended a meeting to object to the proposed kerbing of Valley Road. After discussion, it was agreed that this would not take place. Several issues were raised as a result of the bad weather including gritting, salting and snow clearance especially on School Hill. Discussions for additional salt bins and the possibility of local contractors being used for snow clearance have been started with Central Bedfordshire. Members of the Road Safety sub-committee attended a meeting at Little Gaddesden concerning the A4147 which is to be down graded after the new M1 link road is built. Maps showing the new proposed cycle routes had been circulated and were discussed and the survey was completed. Councillors felt that although cycling was the green option, none of our roads were wide enough for the addition of cycling lanes and that the current footpaths were also unsuitable.

Friends of Studham Common received their second Green Pennant Award for work done on Studham Common although not everyone was happy with the work they were doing and a petition was circulated by some parishioners and passed to the Parish Council. It was decided to hold a public surgery on the matter in November which resulted in Central Bedfordshire, the managers of the Common, taking parishioners comments on board when preparing the next work schedule.

General

Councillors have attended several training sessions and external meetings on a variety of subjects over the year as well as being trained 'in-house'. We have discussed several consultation exercises from Central Bedfordshire such as the Bus Service Review (although our route is not affected at the moment), and the Community Safety Partnership which comprises the Police, Police Authority, Central Bedfordshire Council, NHS Bedfordshire and the combined Fire Authority, but we felt it was unnecessary to pursue a consultation exercise into the siting of a Hackney Carriage stand in the village. We have requested collection of several incidents of fly tipping, and continue to harass those who make our village untidy by littering and dog fouling. We attended the Remembrance Service in November and laid a wreath to remember those who had fallen in both World Wars. Welcome packs have been distributed to all new residents – it is not always possible to know of everyone who has moved in, so if you know of someone, or if you have moved in and not got one, please tell one of your Councillors. The Parish Website has been 'updated' over the year and it is hoped that developments will continue as and when required. It has also been agreed that the 'History' page will be updated on a regular basis using stories from parishioners. The Parish Council would like to continue the Surgeries during the coming year and would welcome ideas you may have for discussion. Please contact the Clerk. It was agreed that a committee should be set-up to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012. Members agreed that whilst the Council should be represented, the main body of the committee should be from organisations and interested parties within the village. In September Councillors were invited to help Studham School celebrate their 50th anniversary at the current site and the opening of the new Pre-School extension. Thanks to Chris Patton who has the gardening contract for the Parish Council and keeps everything tidy for us. In addition, the Council works closely with many village organisations such as the Village Hall Management Committee, the School, the Church and Chapel, the Friends of Studham Common, the Sports and Social Club and the Playing Fields Association. We are grateful to all those in the village who work so hard to keep all these valuable village activities going and which help to make Studham such a wonderful place to live.

Some of these things may not sound like much, but they take a lot of liaison with, and leaning on the appropriate authorities – quite a task.

Set out below is a Financial Statement which shows how your money has been spent in this period.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT
Year to 31st March 2010

Summary	31.3.09 Bank Balance	15,773
	Income	16,700
	Expenditure	<u>(13,719)</u>
		18,754

Income	Precept	16,690
	Bank Interest	<u>10</u>
		16,700

Expenditure	Administration	8,116
	Service, maintenance of public Buildings, Equipment and open space.	3,278
	Grants/Donations to Village Groups	<u>2,325</u>
		13,719

The Parish Council is only effective if residents express their concerns, support initiatives, respond to petitions and questionnaires, attend meetings and communicate with Councillors. Unfortunately the vast majority of villagers rarely get involved – disappointing when so much more could be done with help and support. It is easy to have a view after the event or moan to others if dissatisfied. Team work is the key. Get to know your Parish Council and together the Village will benefit from a proactive and innovative community.