

ST SAMPSON PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT
31 MAY 2016

Welcome

May I firstly take this opportunity of welcoming you all to this annual general meeting of St Sampson Parish Council. I would particularly like to welcome and thank those who will give a report at tonight's meeting. Their contributions and those of the organisations they represent are greatly appreciated by this Council and, I am sure, all of our Parishioners.

I have said it before that we are very fortunate to have many organisations and individuals in this Parish who do excellent work for the benefit of the community. This is particularly striking in such a small Parish and long may it continue.

A Word on Resignations and Appointments

I am delighted to report that, even though we are a small Parish, we currently have a full quota of Councillors serving this community following the Co-option of Councillor Anderson in the Autumn of 2015. We have otherwise had no resignations and have maintained a fair degree of continuity among the majority of Councillors for several years now. That makes for easier functionality and more informed debate among our number and is an important aspect of our proper accountability to you, as Parishioners. A word of caution is necessary here though. We are soon likely to find ourselves without two Councillors who anticipate tendering their resignations in the near future, largely due to personal reasons. One of those Councillors will be me. Of course, no one is irreplaceable and I therefore urge fellow Councillors to rise to the challenge of filling this seat in early course and urge Parishioners to put themselves forward for co-option to facilitate a continued full quota of individuals serving this community in the future.

A brief word about village assets.

At the last AGM, I reported that, we had begun at that stage to investigate a possible community asset transfer of the freehold of Golant halt car park and public toilets from Cornwall Council to this Parish for a nominal fee. I spelt out the many advantages to this Community of successfully achieving that objective, including securing control of the car park (our principal income generating asset) in perpetuity, avoiding lease rental costs and providing us with the basic means of reopening some form of public toilet facility within the Parish following closure of that facility by Cornwall Council several years ago. I am delighted to report 12 months later that our community asset transfer application for both the car park and toilets has been successful and has been approved by Cornwall Council. The formalities of implementing the application are likely to take place in the 2016/17 financial year.

I am also delighted to report that we have achieved, if not exceeded, our objective of providing a basic form of public toilet facility within the Parish. Following negotiations with Cornwall Council for a tenancy at Will of that building and not insignificant hard work, we have, since July of last year been operating a 24 hour 365 day facility. No mean feat for such a small Parish.

A mention about the Village Green at Golant. Work continues to be done at a modest level to maintain and improve this vital community asset. Councillors here know my views on this asset, namely that it is one which I believe we may take a little for granted as a Parish and which has yet to realise its true potential as a facility truly fulfilling its potential for community benefit. It remains a strategic aim of this Council to further improve the Village Green and views/ideas from Parishioners about this issue are always welcome.

Neighbourhood Plan

As many of you will know, this Council has committed itself, as sponsor, to the St Sampson Parish Neighbourhood Plan which Councillor Reardon spearheads on our behalf. Having a Neighbourhood plan remains a vital community objective in the assessment of this Council. In effect and in the words of Councillor Reardon herself, 'it is an opportunity for the whole community to write its own planning policies. Without it our voice is not being heard'. Initial public consultation by questionnaires and by a public information event held in this hall has proved to be highly constructive and informative. Already we have a clear feel for the priorities of Parishioners on a variety of issues affecting this Parish. Those views will, in time, form the bedrock of the Plan itself and will hopefully enable Parishioners to speak with one, legally cogent voice, on planning matters in the future. Work on the NP has also led us to address two other worthy community issues namely the possible listing of the Fisherman's Arms as an asset of community value and an agreement to formulate a Community Emergency Plan. The work of Councillors Reardon and Anderson on the NP are to be commended and I would like here to express my thanks to them for their continuing hard work on your behalf.

Finance.

A comment on finance. At last month's meeting our clerk reported that your Council's accounts stand to our credit with a balance of £22,601.65. This is a differential of some £4200 from last years April meeting when I reported a credit balance standing then of £26,795.72. This reduction in capital funds of some 16% largely reflects the outlay of capital expenditure on getting the toilets up and running (for which we originally budgeted some £4500) and our concerted attempt to channel an appropriate proportion of our long standing capital reserves for the direct benefit of the community. Overall, our financial position remains a healthy one, particularly when viewed in the context of our current precept income of some £3800 per anum. Your Councillors and clerk should be given credit for that.

Our healthy financial position has enabled us not only to take steps to improve assets and open the public toilet facility but also to benefit a wide ranging array of community groups and items including:

In the area of connectivity

Funded the installation of superfast broadband in the Village Hall.

Paid the running cost of the Golant.net website which is £100.66 per year.

Made a contribution to the running costs of the Golant Pill newsletter.

In the area of health and wellbeing

Made a donation to the Fowey River Canoe Club.

Funded a First Aid course for villagers to complement our previous investment in the defibrillator installation at The Fisherman's Arms

On environment

Commissioned tree surgery works to improve the visibility of the river from the Saint's Way.

In the area of history and heritage

Purchased the calendars produced by Golant Heritage Group for all Parishioners

Made a donation of £1000 toward the costs of renovation of the Church organ.

Website.

In this report to 2014's AGM I first mentioned the need for a dedicated Parish Council website. That was fortuitous since in April 2015 all Parish Councils' were required, by law, to put dedicated websites in place. Thus, in my report to the AGM last year I confirmed that your council had agreed at that point to establish its own website. For those of you who don't know, that website was launched last year and is an easy to navigate and readily accessible source of information about the business of this Council. Another objective achieved.

Thanks.

Finally, some words of thanks. My thanks to Sue Blaxley, our clerk. Sue is a huge asset to this Council. I have said it before. She is highly competent and organised and has a quiet steeliness to her character which has been invaluable to us over the last 12 months. We look forward to working with her for many more years in the future.

My thanks also to all your Parish Councillors for their hard work on behalf of the

Parish over the last 12 months. I have said this before too. Your Councillors do the job that they do in the public interest, without charge or fuss and sometimes at great inconvenience to private, working or family life. They are rarely thanked for their efforts but when they are, such public acknowledgement is very much appreciated. I therefore urge Parishioners to take time out from time to time to express their gratitude to councillors, when deserved of course. In the meantime, my thanks to them for the work that they have done on your behalf over the last year and for making my role as chairman over recent years a most fulfilling one. Thank you.