Kay Brown – Clerk

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FRETHERNE WITH SAUL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Fretherne with Saul Parish Meeting held at Saul Memorial Hall at 7:00pm on 24th May 2023

Present: County Cllr S Davies, Dist Cllr J Jones, PCSO M Treble, PCSO S Robinson, Parish Council Chairman A Lever, Cllrs B Findlater, P Van Der Hooft, L Jeffries, S Cobb Clerk K Brown

- **To receive apologies** – Cllr Bierer, S Robbins on behalf of the Canal Conservation Group
- **To approve the minutes of the meeting 25th May 2022**
  Proposed, seconded with all in favour

  Chairman moved to bring PCSO Trebles presentation forward on the agenda.

- **Police Report – PCSO M Treble**
  PCSO Treble presented Crime statistics from this period last year to the present; 16th May 2022 to 22nd May 2023 there have been 21 crimes in the Parish. Compared to the previous year there were 28 crimes, so the trend is down despite many more crimes having to be recorded these days.
  The crimes in the past year are – 3 harassment, 3 assault causing injury, 2 stalking, 2 malicious communications (this is a crime normally linked to internet offensive stuff), 3 crimes of public fear, alarm or distress, 2 assault without an injury, 1 rape of female 16+, 1 sexual assault of a female, 1 burglary, 1 theft from a vehicle, 1 unauthorised theft/taking something, 1 criminal damage to a dwelling.
  Overall, things are really good in the Parish, there hasn't been much information about drugs in the Parish.
  It was raised with the PCSO's that there are suspicions of drug dealing in the Parish which has been noted.
  Also raised were parking issues at the end of Moor Street over the River Frome. Restricting visibility and putting vehicles into the line of oncoming traffic. The white lines are advisory, will Highways do a site visit and consider changing the road markings. County Cllr will look into whether the Neighbourhood Warden will make a site visit.

  PCSO's Treble and Robinson left the meeting at 19:10

- **Fretherne with Saul Parish Council report – Chairman**
  Firstly I'd like to thank Carl for holding the fort as Chairman and to say 'welcome' to

our new Councillors, making us up to full strength. Also, thanks to Councillors who remain in post for their continued commitment to support our community.
We are now well past the interruptions and restrictions caused by Covid and have increased engagement within the Community and local organisations. Councillors have done great work in communicating and working variously with the Canals and Rivers Trust, Highways, Framilode Canal Group, Saul Memorial Hall Committee, Allotment holders, Gloucester Association of Town and Parish Councils, Severn Voice as well as building relationships within Stroud District Council, all to the benefit of the Parish. As ever, thanks to County Councillor Stephen Davies and District Councillor John Jones for your invaluable help and advice.
The effort put in by all Councillors is bringing us back to our main purpose of working for, and with, our community and its future. The final fruit trees from the Environment Agency were delivered and distributed and will certainly be bearing fruit this year! Our Coronation Bee Squared wildflower seed packets were very well received and people are very engaged with the three Coronation Oak Trees which will be planted in Saul playing fields, one for each ward of the Parish. We are hoping for funding from the Build Back Better Scheme for this following a successful application for lifebelts for the Framilode Canal, which have arrived and are awaiting installation.
A locally organised event for the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee was a success and supported by the Parish Council. Our Facebook page is seeing increased interest so thanks to our Clerk Kay Brown for being the page's Admin, it's an invaluable communication tool. This is a good moment to say huge congratulations to Kay for her hard work, time and commitment in gaining her Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) qualification - really well done!
A speed monitoring exercise was carried out in Saul High Street after Parishioners complaints but with mixed results, however, we believe there is a need for traffic calming measures in certain areas. Work continues on the village gateways, one method of traffic calming, and which also helps to create a stronger Parish identity. We continue to address concerns regarding dangerous parking in areas within the Parish and there are plans for a Christmas event on Saul Pound, but let's not wish the summer away!

- **County Council report – County Councillor S Davies**
We have asked taxpayers for an increase in council tax of 2.99% for next year, together with a further 2% Adult Social Care Levy. That will represent an extra £1.39 a week for a Band D council taxpayer. The total increase is, though, lower than inflation, lower that the increase in pensions and lower than most pay-settlements this year. We only asked for that sum, though, on the basis that it is needed to maintain our essential frontline services and hope you understand that considerably more than half of GCC budget is spend directly on statutory care packages for those adults, children and the disabled who need our care and support.
Our funding from central government was increased by 11.1%. This is a pragmatic settlement and the biggest increase for 10 years. It is needed as our budget demand for Adult Social Care needs to rise by over 11% next year and for Children Services by over 12%.
I specifically wish to highlight, though, an increase on the Highways Maintenance base-budgets of 22%. That is the biggest annual increase on that budget that we can trace-back.

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That is in addition to our current Major-scheme Resurfacing Budget of £100 million. Hopefully that increase in budget can help keep up with more maintenance locally - and as you know I also have a Highways Local budget of £30,000 a year to help fund some of those schemes which are most important to us here locally.

In the past year GCC undertook 39,000 repairs to the road network. Last December was the coldest December for over 100 years and this Winter we've needed many more Grit runs than in 2021/22. Inevitably we expected the worst in respect of potholes. A glimmer of good news is that pothole numbers are down on those major roads where we've invested in re-surfacing - so that's encouraging for the long-term. However, we all know there remain many potholes that need fixing in the coming weeks on the minor and local roads. Can I urge anyone who sees a pothole or other road safety defect to report it on the very good online map at: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/reportit

And more money is being invested on Road Safety Schemes, Grit Bins, Rights-of-Way and funds for youth activities through your Councillor Community Build Back Better Grants. We are also investing over £3 million investment in our Fire & Rescue Service to ensure our firefighters have the best equipment.

In the past year the county council has played the key role in helping more than 1300 Ukrainians settle in Gloucestershire, fleeing from Putin.
In recent weeks we've seen a lot of rain and some localised flooding. If you need information on what to do and who to contact in wet conditions, there is a very useful flood-guide on the home page of the county councils website.

I do want to assure you that the council is committed to helping to mitigate climate change and this is embedded in our work and we're exceeding our own in-house target to cut emissions. We're also planting thousands of trees and do please contact me if you know of any suitable locations for more tree-planting locally.

- **District Council report – District Councillor J Jones**
  Although the Council is still led by an Alliance of Labour, Green and Lib-Dem parties, the make-up of the Labour party element changed during last year, with that group splitting into three factions, Independent Left, Community Independent and Labour itself, all however supporting the Alliance.

  Projects included to be improved in the coming year are more renewable energy schemes, which include Stratford Park Leisure Centre, The Pulse in Durley, and the Museum in the Park. SPLC management contract ends in the Autumn of next year, and because HMRC has made changes to the recovery of VAT on the likes of hire charges, letting of facilities and so on, it is now likely the running of the LC will be taken back "in house" , as is The Pulse in Dursley currently, though this has still to be confirmed. Better walking and cycling facilities, extra funding for Council owned play parks, funding for refugees from conflicts, and no increase in charges in the majority of Council-owned car parks were all included in this year's budget.

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An increase of 2.99% in Council Tax for services delivered by Stroud District Council was set in February, meaning an increase of 13p a week for4 the average Band D property. Of course, to that is added the County Council, The Police and Crime Commissioner's and the local Parish Precept share. The Council is continuing with 100% support of Council Tax for people in need. Replacement vehicles in the Ubico fleet have included the purchase of an electric road sweeper, electric waste and recycling collection vehicles, while new vehicles used by the Neighbourhood Warden Service also include electric models.

Recognition of the waste and recycling collection service run by Ubico on behalf of the Council was given for keeping the service functioning without hardly a glitch during the Covid pandemic.

Planning still plays an important part in District Council work, and shortfalls have been identified in that service. Extra Development Control Officers have been recruited to move the service forward, and more Planning Enforcement Officers are now in place, as that part of the service is recognized as being severely undermanned. It is to be hoped that with the extra staff in place, results will improve in the near future It must be said that Stroud is not the only Council experiencing staff shortages in the Planning department, as rewards for staff are greater in the private sector of the industry.

The District Council and the District itself were rated above the national average again in a recent independent satisfaction survey of residents and businesses.

- **Stroudwater Canal Restoration Team submitted a report to be read out**

The Stroudwater Canal opened fully to Wallbridge Stroud in 1791, providing a water borne transport link from the coal mines in Staffordshire via the Staffs & Worcester Canal and the River Severn, and later those in South Gloucestershire and the Forest of Dean, also via the Severn, to the weaving mills in Stroud.

The canal was built for commercial traffic only – pleasure boats were charged £1 (close to £150 in today's money) to pass through each of the 11 locks (including Ryeford Double, a staircase lock) connecting the River Severn to Wallbridge in the centre of Stroud. It followed closely the path of the river Frome, incorporating sections of the river where convenient. It was one of very few canals built without a towpath suitable for horses, boats being bow-hauled by men.

Framilode (a word first recorded in the 7 th century meaning Frome crossing point) had, prior to the building of the canal, little more than a woollen mill that converted to tinplate manufacture around the time the canal became fully operational all the way to Wallbridge.

The opening of the canal necessitated the construction of a lock-keeper's cottage (Lock House - listed), a warehouse (Trow House - listed) for storage of the sails of boats once they had entered the canal, a series of cottages (Canal Row) for workers, and some "amenity properties" (pubs and places for sailor comforts!) for boat crews awaiting a suitable tide on which they could re-join the Severn. The Stone Walls forming the entrance from the River Severn to the stroud canal are also listed and in a state of disrepair.

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The canal at Framilode fell into disuse by the 1920's, boat traffic having been rerouted via the Gloucester Sharpness canal. The last time a boat used the Framilode lock is believed to be 1949, when a final delivery of coal was made to the coal merchant who operated from what is now Ash Cottage. (Moor Street End). Following an unfortunate incidence with a digger, east of Moor Street, the canal was dammed which is now in need of repair. A couple of hundred yards further east, the canal was infilled all the way to the junction at (Saul Junction) with the Gloucester Sharpness canal.

During the following one hundred years, apart from dredging undertaken in the area of canal immediately outside the Ship Inn (Late 80's early 90's) and continued maintenance in the form of reed clearance of that section by the owner of Burnt House Farm (Geoff Martin), little to nothing has been done to preserve this significant piece of England's industrial heritage.

The result of this is: -
- The heavily used towpath side gradually collapsed into the canal.

The Stroudwater Canal at Framilode
- Reed growth continued unabated until the full width of the canal became choked up.
- The brickwork wall outside Canal Row cottages started on a slow path to disintegration.

Shortly before the Covid pandemic, a group of locals decided to attempt to rescue some aspects of this "industrial heritage", in particular.
- The towpath.
- Swing bridge areas.
- Stone Capping in front of Canal Row Cottages
- Stone Capping adjacent to Ash Cottage.
- Improve the mixed aquatic life that the canal had once supported.

The method chosen was one recommended by an environmentalist who had been working for Cotswold Canals Trust, and over the course of the next few years, this task has been largely completed all the way from Moor Street to the start of Canal Row cottages. For the avoidance of doubt, this stretch of canal is a part of our "nation's industrial heritage". During our work, we have recovered many artifacts dating back to the pre-war period (including a late Victorian kettle, glass bottles from defunct local breweries, domestic wares etc) and exposed two previously unknown and unrecorded mooring rings. There is more to be found.

And there is a story to be told about how modern-day Upper Framilode came into being.

Plus, Points Since Volunteer Group Started January 2020.
- Obvious increase in Ducks, Moorhens, coots.
- Regular sightings of Egrets.
- Return of Kingfishers & sedge Warbler

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- Increased fish stock (unit 2023).
- Safer / more usable towpath. (Increase in users local & visitors)
- Better understanding of endangered species, including professional training.

Requirements,

- Information boards.
- Continued managed maintenance.
- Dredging.
- Removal of Willow saplings.
- Stable Water levels.
- Floating Platform. (Pete Cole)

- **Memorial Hall Committee**
  No report was submitted from the Memorial Hall Committee

Signed:

Members are reminded that the Council has a general duty to consider the following matters in exercising any of its functions: Equal Opportunities (race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status and any disability), Crime and Disorder, Health & Safety and Human Rights

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