<u>Summary of The Bee Event I attended at Eccleshall Community Centre on Tuesday 11th June.</u>

Stafford Borough Council have a team working on creating Bee Friendly environments across Stafford. As a result, they were awarded the status of being a Bee Friendly Town in 2024 on International Bee Day – Monday 20th May. Due to this success, they are trying to roll this out to all the other towns and villages across the Borough, in the hope more, and more bee friendly environments can be set up, which can then be mapped, and bee numbers monitored. Several community workshops have been organised with local experts talking to residents, businesses, and schools about the importance of bees

The presentation was split into three sections: -

1) A talk by Ron Rock - (a specialist on bees). Starting with how bees and their fellow pollinators are vital to the healthy existence of us, the economy, and our natural world. Without them, our food supply would collapse. So, the need to increase the number of bees, because of their rapid decline over the years, is essential. He went on to explain about the different species of bees. How to create different nesting sites for them and how to create the different habitats they need to survive. For example, wildflower environments, grass environments etc.

2) The Environmental Officer for SBC talked about the various projects they had set up across Stafford (since 2022) which led to them receiving the award. Their projects include: - improving 14 hectares of flower–rich meadows on Stone Meadows and Ferndown Local Nature Reserves, conservation grazing at Barlaston Common – with an increase in heather and other plants and creating a meadow area at Eccleshall Road cemetery in Stafford.

3) An interactive section where attendees could suggest ideas for creating bee friendly habitats on the various sites; they had large photographs on display boards laid out across tables so notes could be pinned to them with attendees' comments and suggestions. For example, a school playground, a new housing estate, an industrial site, play area and many more.

4) At the end of the presentations and interactive session they asked if any Parish Councils would be willing to work on encouraging bee friendly environments within their Parish.

5) Stone and Eccleshall are planning to put in an application for 'Bee Friendly' town status next year.

In the interests of our Environment as a whole, I feel it would be good for the Parish Council to become involved in this initiative as it could provide a solution for the Community Garden. Areas under the fruit trees could be planted with grasses and wildflowers that encourage bees and other wildlife. The fencing could be replaced with hedges and information boards could be put around the garden informing people about the various species of bees to look for in the garden. (It could provide an activity for children who visit the garden to take part in)! A sign could be displayed to inform residents and visitors that we are involved in this project, which is why the areas under the trees are overgrown but keep the grassed areas in the middle cut!

The Orangery are already working in conjunction with other groups to increase their areas of wildflowers and grasses etc. The golf course has loads of areas that have been set aside to encourage bees and other insect life. Ingestre Hall are going to be adding their support by working with The Orangery, so it would be wonderful if the Parish Council felt they could add their support to this much needed initiative.

There is funding that can be applied for.

On a different note - for the Community Garden; would it be an idea to contact secondary schools to see if any of their Duke of Edinburgh Award students are doing any community work. It might be possible to persuade them to work on the community garden as one of their projects? Just a thought! We would not be able to follow up on this until next year, although negotiations with secondary schools could start in September, if members of the Parish Council agreed.