

Minutes of Abthorpe Annual Parish Meeting

Held on Monday 8th May 2017 in the Old School, Abthorpe at 19:45

Present:

Councillors: K Fenwick (Chairman), M Berry, J Fordes-Cortes

Others Attending:- Cllr Peter Davies - District Council
Cllr Ian Morris – County Council

Representatives of: Tove Valley Broadband - Mr Eric Malcomson; St John the Baptist PCC – Mrs Barbara Malcomson, Mr Richard Tomalin. There were two other people from the village.

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The Chairman of Abthorpe Parish Council welcomed everybody to the meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from: Mrs Jan Miles, Old School Committee; Mr D Robbins, Parish Path Warden; Mr John Riches, Age Concern, Mr James Bloomfield, Silverstone Schools, Mr Ian Massey, Sponne School, Brackley Police

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting held on 16th May 2016 had been published on the web site and copies were distributed at the meeting. The Chairman asked if there were any errors or omissions. As there were none he signed the minutes.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. Chairman's Report 2017

I start my report this year on a very sad note. Sitting next to me should have been our clerk, Bob Carter. As many of you already know, Bob very sadly died last Thursday. For me, this was a personal loss. He was a great friend of many years. As Clerk he approached the job with enthusiasm and dedication. Over the years, the job of clerk has become ever more complex but Bob mastered all its intricacies. Bob was tenacious in dealing with the wide range of problems which have to be solved and in liaising with all the outside bodies involved in handling them. Bob was well-known for his jokes; some good, some bad, some simply unrepeatable. He will be greatly missed.

Looking back over the last year, there have been no major developments of note. We have spent some time considering the replacement of street lights. We cannot now obtain replacement sodium lights – the orange type – due to a change in regulations. We had to replace the light on the corner of Stanhill Row and Brackley Lane using a white LED light. Opinions differ about this new light which is more directional. Other lights will be replaced in due course, our intention being to do it in groups. We have looked at the effectiveness of lighting in other villages but welcome your views.

A further planning application from Mini Farm was made, to use the adjacent agricultural field for 3 more pitches and an amenity block. This was rejected by the District Council as the need had not been properly established for the pitches or the particular design of amenity block proposed. It is understood that an appeal has been lodged.

The village defibrillator has fortunately not been needed but it is there in the telephone box ready for any emergency.

The speed signs have been in use at both ends of the village but we still see vehicles travelling at an unsafe speed. Many accelerate far too soon when leaving the village.

The village green mower is coming to the end of its life. The pan is wasting away; repairs have kept it going this year but we are planning on replacing it next year using funds available from the solar farm at Handley Park.

It is good to see that the roads outside the village have been resurfaced but, of course, Brackley Lane remains a sea of potholes.

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Also using outside funds, we have purchased a laptop for the use of the clerk.

As usual, my thanks go to the councillors who give up their spare time to serve your community.

The Chairman asked if there were any questions. There were no questions raised.

5. Financial Report

The chairman presented the financial statement for the year to 31 March 2017.

Reconciliation		Notes
Balance Brought Forward	£4,602.73	
Income Treasurers Acct	£7,959.81	Includes £4,692 in grants
Income Business Acct	£1.92	
Income Petty Cash	£63.50	
Total	£12,627.96	
Expenses		
Regular	£4,848.25	
Section 137	£150.00	
Petty Cash	£61.65	
VAT £284.05		
Total	£5,343.95	
Carried Forward		
Free balance	£3090.83	
Allocated balance	£4193.18	For street lighting and printer
Total Balance to be C/F	£7,284.01	

Notes

The grants were for computer equipment for the clerk of which £193 remains to be spent plus £3,000 from Handley Park solar farm which is allocated to street lighting.

Donations of £50 each were given to Warwickshire & Northamptonshire Air Ambulance and Victim Support plus £50 to Abthorpe Church for the maintenance of the Church grounds.

Interest rates are even lower.

VAT was reclaimed during the year.

The Precept has not been increased for 2017-18.

There were no questions from the floor.

6. Organisation Reports

6.1 Abthorpe PCC– Mrs Barbara Malcomson

A new church warden has now been appointed to share the burden with Richard Tomalin. Congregation numbers remain about the same but there have been good attendances at special services such as Christmas and Easter. Harvest celebrations this year will be on 8/9 October.

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A benefice prayer walk will take place later this month visiting all the churches in the benefice. Mission giving last year was still 5% of unrestricted funds. The food box in the church is well supported; 1043Kg were contributed in the period to 21st March this year.

Plans are being developed for a servery in the area cleared of seats with a toilet to follow when funds permit. The Quinquennial inspection last October pointed to some minor work but nothing major.

Church activities are advertised on the church notice board, in Abtalk and by flyers.

6.2 The Old School Committee – Written Report from Mrs Jan Miles

The report highlighted that various activities of the past year – pig roast for the Queen’s 90th birthday, truckers’ breakfasts, Christmas Fayre and plant sale. Other activities which benefitted were a car treasure hunt, coffee mornings and outside use of the hall for elections, parties, etc. The hall is currently used for regular yoga sessions plus occasional use by the church, the parish council, Tove Valley Broadband and private events.

Current focus is on obtaining grants for improvement work to the main hall. Once funding is in place, a detailed plan of the work to be included will be drawn up; the village will be consulted at that stage.

6.3 Parish Path Warden – Report submitted by Mr David Robbins was read by the Clerk

There have been no major issues in the past year. The condition of many stiles is a concern, although some have become redundant due to the removal of fences. The bridleways in Bucknell Woods are still in place. The recent dry spell has enabled the paths to recover. Remedial work is planned but resources are limited.

Mr Robbins provided updated contact details.

The County Council have asked which footpaths are favourite in order to concentrate effort on them. Guidance from the parish is welcome.

There were no questions from the floor

6.4 Age UK – Mr John Riches.

A written report stated that no request had been made for services. Mr and Mrs Riches remain available to put local people in touch with appropriate support.

6.5 Silverstone Schools’ Federation

Mr Bloomfield provided a written report highlighting successes in the past year and showing progress on the new building which should be occupied from September. The number of available places will gradually increase over the next few years as two forms are introduced in each year.

6.6 Sponne School

Apologies were received but no information provided.

6.7 Tove Valley Communities Broadband - Eric Malcomson, Chairman.

We are into our third year of operation with the fibre network (our 14th year overall) and I can report that the service continues to grow in Membership.

During November/December 2016 and January 2017 we had disastrous failures of our backhaul to London which was eventually traced to circuits which were being changed in Poplar. Hopefully we will not suffer such outages again.

Despite these outages, we have an overall reliability of better than 99% Even so, the reaction of Members to the lack of service shows how heavily we rely on internet connection these days.

There are 108 properties in Abthorpe Parish connected to our service with 10 properties enjoying 1,000Mbps symmetrical service as they are connected directly to the fibre-optic network. Our wider network supported by their

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own communities includes Adstone, Blakesley, Helmdon and Whittlebury giving a total number of Members of just under 600.

There is much evidence of the value of the service to commercial undertakings and work from-home people who contribute to our area's economic stability but it is all Members who, through their support, keep the service up and running.

6.8 Neighbourhood Watch

A volunteer is still required. The only arrangements in place at present enable email alerts to be sent out.

6.9 Leeson Trust

The chairman reported that £1,200 had again been distributed. £600 was split between Sponne and Silverstone schools, mainly for books. The remained £600 was split between two local charities.

There were no questions from the floor.

7.0 County Councillors Report. – Cllr Ian Morris

Cllr Morris started to express thanks for those who had elected him last week.

On transport, the County Connect bus service will continue to be funded and an increased programme of road resurfacing is in progress.

The budget is in balance but under considerable pressure. NCC is keen to change to a Unitary structure by combining County and District councils. Proposals are expected in due course for public consultation.

NCC has broken the BT monopoly on broadband by contracting with Gigaclear, although obviously not in the Tove Valley Broadband area.

8 South Northamptonshire District Councillor - Cllr Peter Davies,

Cllr Davies started with the pressure on local government finances, with falling revenue support and uncertainty about the impact of business rate changes. The District has a high number of small businesses which pay not rates. However SNC has balanced its budget for the last 3 years.

Savings have been made through joint working with Cherwell Council and this is being extended. He discussed the debate about the abolition of district councils and mentioned the logistical problem of providing local services from a more distant hub. He also expressed concern about being linked to debt-laden councils.

SNC currently takes about 11% of council tax, 70% goes to NCC and 13% to the police. Parish Councils received about 2%.

The New Homes bonus will yield less in future as the payment period is being reduced from 6 to 5 years in the current year and to 4 years in the next financial year.

The Local Plan is currently looking at village confines. Now is the time to consider if changes are wanted. SNC currently has more than the required 5 years housing land available.

Question from the floor:

Why was the Towcester relief road only going to be a single carriageway with roundabouts. Both the District and County councillors responded saying that the finance only permitted the present scheme. It was expected that the road would open in 2020.

10 Any Other Business

No questions were raised.

There being no further business, the meeting finished at 20.55