

Weston Under Wetherley Parish Council

Minutes of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held at 7.45pm,
11th April 2018, at the Village Hall, Weston Under Wetherley

Present:

Councillor Jeff Arnold (Vice Chairman)
Councillor Jenny Arnold

Councillor Nick Harrington
Councillor John Hammon

In Attendance:

Jane Chatterton Clerk & RFO

Councillor Trevor Wright - WDC

Villagers: 4

Councillor Jeff Arnold, Vice Chairman, welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Pam and Wallace Redford.

2. Councillor Nick Harrington on behalf of the Weston Village Hall Trust

The Annual Village Hall Trust meeting will be held on Monday 7th May 2018 at 7:30pm.

The Village Hall Trust is run by a team of unpaid volunteers managing bookings, caretaking and general maintenance for the building, fittings and grounds. They are keen to recruit new members for the Committee.

This is a well-run Trust trading on a sustainable basis.

Comments

It was noted that unfortunately there had been a few issues raised from users of the Village Hall that the facility was not always left clean and tidy by the previous user, resulting in this having to be cleaned (floor swept etc) by the incoming user.

Some felt that the Village Hall Committee could be more open, transparent and that contacting them for bookings should be made easier. Suggestions included that availability could be displayed on their website and a calendar shown.

3. Representative from the Wildlife Conservation Group

Councillor Harrington updated that it had been a challenging time agreeing areas for planting. Only safe places with no obstructions to traffic were approved. This process had involved officers from WCC.

There was a lovely display of daffodils on the bank by St Michael's Church.

The collaborative working had achieved a balance.

4. Councillor Nick Harrington on behalf of St. Michael's Church

St Michael's Church is now part of the Offchurch Group including St Margaret's Church at Hunningham, St Gregory's Church at Offchurch and St Anne's Church at Wappenbury. We have a new Vicar the Rev Hugh Priestner who has recently moved into Hunningham Vicarage. He sends his apologies as he is off on holiday today.

The group of churches continue with two Services a month and you can always find our services listed on the Village website.

Inevitably with such an ancient Building we are again fundraising for urgent repairs to the fabric with the responsibility for maintenance and repairs falling upon the parishioners of Weston. The latest heating repairs cost £550.00.

For those who do not attend Church, but would hate to see it close, there is the Friends of St Michael's Fund, which is ring fenced for repairs to the fabric of the Church.

"We are most grateful to the Parish Council for their annual Grant towards the cost of mowing the Churchyard".

The Conservation Group planted about 500 daffodil bulbs on the bank which are just looking beautiful.

5. Update from Friends of St Michael's Church

The stonemasons are booked to return at the beginning of September (hopefully without their bright pink lo!) for further urgent re-pointing and repairs to stonework and the replacement of some cast-iron gutters and downpipes.

Thanks to your support and the wonderful profit from the Open Gardens Weekend in June we have the necessary funds available.

Unfortunately, a section of old horsehair plaster has fallen from the ceiling some 35' above the font, which will require scaffolding to reach and repair.

The good news is that, thanks to Sir Dudley Smith, we are able to make a mains water connection from his garden to the Vestry – so we shall have mains water in the Church for the first time in 800 years! This avoids Severn Trent having to dig up the Rugby Road and saves us a great deal of money. We hope to install a sink and in due course, subject to many regulations, a WC.

The eventual hope is that we can make this wonderful old building more user-friendly for community use. Your continued support is so important to keep our building going, quite apart from long term aims for improvements.

The great advantage of regular covenants is that this enables us to plan ahead, so if any more of you feel able to commit to regular giving this would be so much appreciated. If so, please contact our Treasurer, Lesley Hyde, 4 Rugby Road, telephone 632710.

Again very many thanks to you all.

6. Weston Events

Chris Garden updated on the work of the Weston Events team, this is a small group of villagers who organise many events for the village. Three main events had been organised last year. The Village Fate had moved from its usually date in June to August and this had resulted in reduced numbers, potentially due to many being on holiday in August. This year the Village Fate would take place in June.

Two successful events had taken place in the past year including Scarefest in October and the Advent Windows in December. A celebration had taken place on the Friday before Christmas with choir singing. This had led to there now being an established choir group who meet every Friday.

Key members of the events team were moving from the village or had stood down from the group. New faces were needed to help out, it was lots of fun and very rewarding to help bring villagers together for events.

Thanks were recorded to Bren Boardman who has been organising events for sometime and Glennis who would both be a big loss.

The Vice Chairman also added his gratitude to Bren who had done a remarkable job.

Comments

Councillor Jeff Arnold – a request had been received for old copies of the Village Newsletter, if anyone had any, could they please let Councillors Jeff or Jenny Arnold have them to be passed on.

7. Annual Report Councillor Pam Redford Chair of Parish Council

Councillor Jeff Arnold read out the Chairman's report

During the past year your Parish Council has maintained and repaired all of the village assets and has organised some small improvements to one of the benches to put in a hard standing.

The hedge along the Rugby Road from St Michael's Close to opposite the junction of Sabin Drive has now been cut back.

Repairs to some of the pavements have already been carried out and further works on other pavements will be undertaken by WCC in due course. Unfortunately we are not the only village with some pavement issues, so we will have to wait a while as WCC clearly have to prioritise. Your Parish Council will of course keep on top of this issue.

The Chairman and Cllr Jenny Arnold are planning to meet with David Moorcroft to discuss with him some idea for enhancing the village welcome gates, by possibly making a further planting area around the front of each of them. At this point I would like on behalf of the Parish Council to thank Julia Volante and Wendy Bell for their generous work on the planters it is very much appreciated.

The Conservation group continue with their hard work on the churchyard and the bank alongside the churchyard and have after consideration decided not to plant wildflowers in the other area approved by WCC and WDC, this has been planted with spring bulbs. The damaged trees have been replaced by the WDC contractor after some rather ruthless strimming damaged the bark. The new replacement trees have been planted in the Community orchard.

The fence around the playing field will be replaced by WDC and negotiations are taking place.

Part of the aspiration of the village plan was the desire to achieve a footpath/cycleway from Weston to Cubbington. With the work starting this year on HS2 and the new Community benefit fund set up by HS2 we as a Parish Council decided to try and secure some funding for this project. However, I have to report that at present we are unable to move much further toward our goal. We have undertaken several meetings with different officers of WCC and HS2, have also been given advice on several areas, but the sticking point is now ownership of the land on which the verge runs. This is apparently unregistered land. Our clerk is looking into the implications of the Parish Council registering the land. However, this may not be an option if the implications suggest that as a small PC, these implications are too great. We can, as a Parish Council only put in a bid for land that we own and clearly we do not own the verges. Only two weeks ago we had our most recent meeting with HS2 about this issue. So now we are at the point of trying to get WCC to agree to support our bid so that we can write formally to HS2 with WCC support.

This year the parish council has given grant monies to the Wildlife Conservation Group of £150 and £650 towards the mowing cost of the churchyard.

The Annual Return for 2017-18 has been prepared and will be sent to the internal and external auditors in May.

Budget

At January's meeting the draft budget for 2018-19 was discussed in detail. Cost savings were identified where possible and the budget for 2018-19 was agreed at £8,655.00.

There would be financial implications for compliance with the new GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) but currently this was unknown.

A sum has been allocated for grants and donations and applications can be made via the Grants and Donations Policy, available from the Clerk or on the website.

Precept Request

The precept request for 2018-19 was considered and set at January's meeting.

It was reported last year that there had been a significant reduction in the concurrent grant and council support grant from 2016/17 to 2017/18. Further reductions for 2018/19 were:

The Concurrent grant had reduced to £0.00, the Council Tax support grant had reduced to £117.00.

For the required income to meet the agreed budget of £8,655.00. The precept was increased to £9,000.00.

The closing balances as at 31st March 2018 on the bank accounts were £18,617.07.

Your Parish Council will continue to work on behalf of all residents of the Parish and will endeavour to make improvements to enhance the village for the benefit of all.

**8. Annual Report by Stoneleigh & Cubbington Ward Councillor, Cllr. Trevor Wright
Warwick District Council activity**

WDC has for some 5/6 years frozen their Council Tax, however, over the past two years it has, regrettably, risen slightly. This year the average increase is £5 or 10p per week. Further our tax including parish precept is in the lowest quartile in the whole Country and possibly the lowest in the County.

- We have not cut any of our services and have continued to support our poorest areas with grants totalling £300,000 per annum. Council house rents have reduced for the second year running, due to efficient and responsible management.
- Up until recently WDC did not have a policy of prosecuting fly-tippers but following a decision by WDC a partnership has been entered on a pilot basis with Rugby District, to combat fly-tipping, which as we all know is becoming a real problem within this District. Rugby have had success in prosecuting persistent fly-tippers and it is hoped that this will be the case within our District.

Continuing with theme of prosecutions as a result of fraudulent activity and public safety the council have succeeded in prosecuting a number of fraudulent claimants recovering circa £150,000 in the process, in addition to this there have been successful prosecutions and closures for both food safety issues and noise issues within the district, these actions are there to safeguard our community whilst at the same time protecting your money and our community.

- Planning has been granted for the new WDC HQ, Covent Garden car park will be demolished and the new HQ offices and apartments together with a new car park for approximately 500 cars will be built on the land.

This is the subject of much ongoing debate currently with many of the facts being omitted, particularly in terms of savings over the long term and the costs that would be required to refurbish Riverside house and replace the Covent garden car park which has serious structural issues.

To help the public understand the plan in more depth a public exhibition will take place in the Royal priors in May.

- The upgrade and improvements to WDC Leisure facilities continues and Newbold Comyn Leisure Centre should be in full use by the summer. The next phase of improvements is in the pipeline and consultants for Kenilworth swimming baths and Castle Farm Leisure Centre are in the process of being procured.

We recognise there are still issues around bin collections and contracted grass cutting but with increased staffing within the Contract Services department these issues should be addressed as part of the revised contract currently under negotiation.

Policing

Following a letter sent to the Police Commissioner by the Stoneleigh and Cubbington WDC and WCC councillors our police levels in Stoneleigh and Cubbington ward which had dropped to an unacceptable level has at least been returned to the level before the retirement of PC Wendy Burrows. We would like to record our thanks to CPSOs Ed and Sharon for their sterling work over the period since Wendy's retirement.

Planning

We recognise the concerns and issues raised with regards to the enormous amount of planning activity around the area including: -

- Coventry Airport
- Cubbington
- Gateway 3
- HS2
- Kings Hill
- Stoneleigh Abbey

We are very actively involved across all developments to facilitate the overall best possible outcome for our constituents by presenting your concerns and issues within our scope of responsibility and control.

We also recognise the traffic issues that concern you all and are working with all the developers on an ongoing basis to get the best possible outcome we can.

Whilst I have only been in place around 6 months over the past year Cllr Pam Redford and I have worked tirelessly on your behalf with all issues from waste collection to planning and all queries that are raised from many other issues.

As a team we will continue to do so whilst at the same time using our positions both on the Finance & Audit Committee and the Overview & Scrutiny committee to deliver what's best for our constituency and Warwickshire.

Open Forum

Village Hall

It was noted that next year the village hall would be 20 years old and perhaps a celebration could be organised.

St Michael's Church

Information was requested on the value of donations to Parish Council made to St Michael's Churchyard.

In previous years the Parish Council had made donations towards the mowing cost. In 2016-17 there had been no donation made. In 2017-18 financial year a donation of £650.00 had been made. The usual amount was £500.00.

It was requested that the Parish Council gave consideration to increasing its donation to the Churchyard, it was agreed that the Church was a prominent asset in the village and should look well kept.

HS2

Question was raised in relation to what was being arranged to prevent HS2 construction traffic passing through the village.

It was confirmed that no HGV vehicles were permitted and an agreed route would be provided to all contractors. An ANPR system would be installed in some areas and a list of roads had been

excluded from the route including Weston. Serious actions would be taken against any vehicles which did not adhere the agreed routes.

Agenda Items for Parish Council Meetings

A request was made to include items on the next Parish Council meeting agenda.

1. HS2 traffic
2. High speed broadband
3. Neighbourhood Plan

Meeting closed at 8:45pm

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