

**MINUTES OF NORTH WOOTTON PARISH COUNCIL AGM
TUESDAY 15TH MARCH 2016 AT 7.15 P.M.
AT NORTH WOOTTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

Present: Councillors Pulsford-Harris, Marshall-Grint, Border, Edwards, Duval, Cox, Merrey, Crome, Kilham,
In attendance: Mrs R Curtis (Clerk)

1. Apologies - Councillors, Nurse, Malik

2. Chairmans Report

Cllr Pulsford-Harris read the following report;

Looking back through the Minutes for the year is always an interesting exercise. It is also hard to believe another year has flown by.

Discussions took place with CGM concerning the grass cutting in the village and the council's dissatisfaction with the various areas left untidy. We have had several meetings, including site meetings, with CGM over the year to try and resolve the issues which have arisen.

We also asked Lord Howard if he could assist with sorting out the problems of flooding in Priory Lane during heavy rainfall. He advised the drain would need clearing out and offered to contact the Internal Drainage Board. The clerk also contacted Anglia Water and Highways to resolve the problem. The culverts under the road have since been flushed through which enables the water to flow freely into the Park drains. However, that situation has not been helped by residents whose gardens overlook the drains, throwing garden rubbish into them. The council has spent a lot of money on clearing the drains and dykes through the park ably assisted by David Irwin who has lent his expertise on a regular basis. Norse came with their flail and cut back the brambles, and other plants which were growing in the dykes and blocking the flows.

The dykes need to be kept clear if we are not to have flooding in the village and on the park – we have a very high water table here – only 1 ½ feet below the surface so any excess water has to go somewhere. I'm afraid that residents who complain about the work on the park and dykes being done do not understand the necessity of keeping the dykes flowing.

The council has been looking at the possibility of replacing the street lights with newer and more up to date lights – this will be a costly exercise but can be done over several years. We have had some quotes and are considering those with the discounts available.

One of our Parishioners had a bad fall on the uneven grassed area near to the school and either broke or badly sprained her ankle. Enquiries were made as to who owned the area concerned and their details were passed onto her.

The post office was relocated to the shops in St. Augustine's Way. The Post Office insists on referring to it as South Wootton Post Office ignoring the fact that the boundary runs down the middle of the road and therefore the shops are in North Wootton. We have written to the Post Office on at least 2 occasions but not had any reply. It would be better if the Post Office was referred to as The Woottons Post Office which would better reflect what it actually is.

Parking continues to be a problem outside the school and either side for some distance, and also using one side of St. Augustine's Way making it difficult for other drivers to see what is coming.

Drivers arriving to collect children from school, a number of whom live in the village and therefore do not need to drive, block the roads from very early before the school is due to finish and also in the mornings dropping children off. We have asked many times for a 20 mph limit past the school but this has been refused by Highways as no accident has taken place there. The police do monitor the situation from time to time and have issued parking fines in the past. The school is also very aware of the problem and does send letters to parents.

We were notified during the year that work was to be done in Priory Road with the demolition of some houses and the relocation of residents. This has caused a lot of worry to many of the residents and the council had a lot of correspondence with Freebridge over this. We received amended details of the plans including widening of the driveways but as yet, no date for work to be started.

Jason Law our County Councillor has attended several of the council meetings and has supplied us with information relating to Norfolk CC and likely to affect our village. He has been a welcome figure at meetings. Our Borough Councillor Lord Howard has also attended a couple of meetings and been available to answer questions from Parishioners. He always tries to help with any problems which arise.

A group of residents approached the council concerning a footpath at the back of Woodlands Gardens which the Ramblers Association were trying to re-open. The original path has long since fallen into the dyke and they were trying to say that the path ran through the back gardens of the houses concerned. However, according to maps of the area that is not so. This has been referred to Lord Howard as it is on his land and his Agents are now dealing with it. The Council has no objection to the path being reinstated and rerouted.

We unfortunately, had to complain to the Borough Council about a breach of planning regulations at the Rugby Club where a number of vans were parked overnight and large containers being used for storage by a local company. This was left with the Borough Council to deal with.

The council have continued to monitor the trees in the village and have work carried out where needed to make trees safe particularly following high winds.

Concern has been expressed about heavy lorries travelling through the village, some at speed. This has been taken up with Highways who have confirmed there is no weight restriction on the roads concerned. This is ongoing as the council feels it is unacceptable for HGVs to drive through the village at unsocial hours, causing damage to grass verges and kerbs and putting children at risk who have to walk to Station Road to get to the scout hut. However, Highways say that as there have been no accidents in the last 5 years, it is a low priority given their funding position.

A new Chairman has been voted into Wootton Park Association – namely Will Border who is our Financial Officer. Will has many ideas to take the Park forward including using local tradesmen to do any work required on an ad hoc basis. Small jobs could be done by a working party. The football club is also now paying 75% of its usage of the water and electricity bills in addition to its annual payment of £950. If anyone can offer help to Will for a working party, then contact either him or the Parish Council. Also ideas required for fund raising so that the Park Association has a steady annual income. The Football Club also has plans for an event on the park on the 18th/19th June.

The Council is also sourcing prices for additional dog bins in the village as at least 2 more are needed as dog walkers are using the normal litter bins instead which is unacceptable. The Borough Council is stopping the litter collection from our litter bins and arrangements are in hand for the bins to be emptied using the dumpster outside the village hall. It is anticipated that that bin will

need to be increased in size but the litter collection is being monitored to see how much is collected before any change is made. We are in touch with the Village Hall Committee over this.

My thanks to all councillors for their continued support and particularly to our Clerk Rachel who has now been in post almost a year and does a great job.

That concludes my report.

3. Responsible Finance Officer's Report

Cllr Border read the following report;

Our net expenditure to the end of the financial year 2015-2016 is estimated to be £31,500 versus a budget of £30,500. We set the precept for the year at £33475.00 which included a Council Tax Grant of £685. So the expenditure is above what was budgeted but not more than the total precept that was given for the year. Therefore we have not had to use any monies from our reserve.

Most of the cost were as budgeted. There has been an overspend on the Insurance but this was to take up a 3 year deal which cost us £1454 so there is a saving to be had in Year 2 & 3 of the policy.

Wootton Park gross costs were as budgeted, we had allowed for £7000.00 and the cost have come in at £6890.00 for the year. I will be allowing a little more for next year, as I have been told by the chairman of the WPA that there are a few projects that he would like to do next year.

The Council debated the precept for 2016-15 and it was agreed that we should ask for a precept of £32,790 which includes a Council Tax Grant of £549. This was passed as acceptable due to the ongoing costs to replacing our ageing street lights and the associated costs that we incur from the Wootton Park Association.

We start the new financial year with reserves of over £32,000 this is equivalent to 12 months of the 2015 -16 gross expenditure. This is at the higher end point of the recommended normal range for a Parish Council Reserve (between 3-12 months gross expenditure).

There are some new expenditures that we will need to be allow for in the forthcoming year. The allowance for circa £520 for the emptying of the village litter bins + a contribution to the Village Hall to allow us to tap into their waste stream. Also there will be a few projects around the village to improve some of the assets of the village, new litter bins, dog waste bins and general reinvestment within the village to keep it tidy. The idea will be to call on the services of the trades from the local community to carry out the jobs that will be needed within the next year. This is going to be the year to invest in the village creating a village that we are all proud to live in. I therefore conclude that our finances remain sound, and our reserves are sufficient to address any future unexpected or capital projects.

4. Wootton Park Report

Cllr Border read the following report;

This year has proved to be an interesting year for the Wootton Park Association, with a few changes in the dynamics of the committee. Unfortunately Mike Narborough, decided that he had done enough good work on the park and so handed in his resignation at the end of the 2015. I would like to publicly thank him for his commitment to the WPA and the effort he put into running it while at the helm. As you are aware I have only taken over as chairman from January 2016. There is now a

more balanced feel on the committee with both South & North Wootton Parishes being equally well represented. We are still looking for the last member of the team of trustees, but we are hopeful that this is going to come from a representative of the football club in the near future.

There have only been a few projects that have been carried out in the last year, and these have been carried out successfully and without incident. The last of these was the clearing of the dyke at the North Wootton end of the park, this was completed in Jan 2016 and since then we have seen a vast improvement in the flow of water coming from Ling Common. There is more work to be done on this as it has moved the problem around to the Pavilion area.

Last year's Picnic in the Park was another success and everyone enjoyed themselves. I would like to thank the subcommittee for organising this and all their hard work that goes into pulling off an event like this. The money that has been raised from this event has been earmarked for a defibrillator for the pavilion.

The Football Club goes from strength to strength and I have been told that it now has over 200 members. Last year saw the purchase of another set of rolling goals, this was a combined effort of a grant and contributions from both Parish Councils. The Football Club have also come up with some improvement ideas for the pavilion. This is to move the kitchen to the front and have a serving hatch type of arrangement. So that it becomes more of an asset on big match days. This is going to be funded by calling on all the skills of the parents from the football club.

Looking at the finances of the Park we are in a better position than at the beginning of the year, we started the year with £2446.96 and have ended the year with £2906.97, this is an increase of £460.01. This has been helped by the fact that we have received back the 75% of the utility usage for the pavilion from the Football Club. We have also received another £30.00 from the Ashley Fountain Soccer School, who have used our park on a couple of occasions to run a training school for toddlers.

So as the new chairman I am now looking forward to the next year with the challenges that will be presented to me. My priorities are going to be to try and raise awareness of this beautiful asset that the villages have and to encourage more parishioners to have an input into its upkeep. To raise much needed funds so that the WPA will be able to fund its own projects, and rely less on the generosity of the two Parish Councils. However there is much work to do initially with some general clearing of growth that has taken hold in the last few years, and some tidying of the trees to bring it back to a managed park. So I would say that initially we will still be coming to the parish councils with a proposal of work & costings to be considered, these are out to quote as I speak, but I will hope that these calls for funding will become less as the year goes on.

If all goes to plan I will hope to come back in a year's time to report on a healthier, wealthier and more vibrant Wootton Park Association.

5. Village Hall/Trinity Hospital Report

Cllr Kilham reported the following for Trinity Hospital;

Founders Day was commemorated in February where there was a service in the Chapel officiated by the Bishop of Lynn. All ladies were present wearing their traditional cloaks and hats, followed by lunch. Then the Clerk, Treasurer and Warden all gave reports and all residents are happy. Each unit has been extended in size and the fee increased by 50p per week. The 400th Anniversary was celebrated last year with a marquee in the garden with special visit from the Queen.

Cllr Kilham reported the following for the Village Hall;

The committee met on 14th March where the treasurer gave a detailed report. It has become apparent that finances are not quite as good as thought. There is approximately £1,000 in the bank with expenses in the region of £480 per month. Income from hirers is around £200 per month including, Slimming World, Heartbeeps, Art Club, Indian Dancing, Keep Fit and children's parties. The AGM will be held at the village hall on Monday 11th April 2016.

6. AOB

Cllr Crome spoke of her concern about the outline planning application on Gatehouse Lane for a dwelling. There is little detail about the proposed structure, but it is thought to be located near the pond opposite the Rugby Club.

Bus Shelter – Cllr Border reported that a contractor had been to look at the Bus Shelter after finding that some guttering had been removed by vandals. The quote to replace is £95 including materials and labour, the Council agreed to accept this. The contractor also gave a quote to put down hardstanding at the side of the shelter to allow for wheelchair access to read the notice board when it is placed there and also put railings around to make it secure. The Council agreed to obtain 2 further quotes for this work.

Dog Waste Bins – The Council agreed to purchase 2 new dog bins, one to be located on the green near Ford Avenue and one on the green at the junction of Manor Road and Priory Road. Clerk to order.

Litter Bins – The Council agreed to replace the 2 litter bins either side of the bus stop with models that have protective hoods so that the bin bag doesn't fill with water when it rains. Clerk to order.

The meeting closed at 8.05pm

Signed Chairman Date