

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 19th MARCH 2013 AT 7.15P.M. IN NORTH WOOTTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL.

Present: Councillors Armiger; Cox; Kilham; Malik; Merrey and Milne
In attendance: Mrs. E. Wymer (Clerk)

The chairman welcomed councillors and parishioners to the annual parish meeting for 2013.

1. Apologies – Councillors Crome, Edwards and Pulsford-Harris:

2. Chairman's Report –

First of all, I'd like to thank Councillor Dorothy Pulsford-Harris for her many years as an excellent chairman of the Parish Council. Her hard work and dedication has benefitted all our parishioners generally, and many individually as she represented and supported their particular issues, while ensuring that the day to day functions of the Council were effectively and efficiently carried out. She is a hard act to follow!

This year's report is in two sections. First, a section prepared by the former chairman covering the period up to December 2012, followed by my additional comments.

Starting with Councillor Pulsford-Harris's review:

“This has been a very exciting year with the 60th Anniversary of the accession to the throne of Queen Elizabeth 2nd.

A highly successful Picnic in the Park took place in June immediately followed by the three Parish Councils of North and South Wootton and Castle Rising getting together on the Bank Holiday Monday for fireworks, picnic, lighting of the Jubilee bonfire and various rides available for the children to play on. Lord Howard had paid for this himself so the Parish councils reimbursed him for the expenses as to 1/3rd each.

This was followed by the Olympic Games and the Paralympics – a wonderful spectacular that everyone enjoyed. Several people from this area went down to London as Games Makers and contributed to the success of the various events.

We have continued to be involved with the other two councils in relation to the Local Development Framework and I have attended meetings with the Chairs of those councils and a representative from Bidwell's who are our Land Agents dealing with this matter for us. Many reports have already been submitted to the Borough Council raising various objections and backed by scientific formulae. The result so far has been that nothing further has been heard and the Borough Council has effectively been overwhelmed with the amount of information we have sent them. That is not to be complacent and we must remain vigilant to protect our 3 villages from the over development planned and the loss of natural important habitats for flora and fauna.

There has been some petty crime in the village mainly vandalism, anti social behaviour and some criminal damage. Fortunately, nothing very serious has taken place and the police still view North Wootton as a safe, quiet area. Unfortunately, there was a burglary in Wheatley Drive which was reported to us by the police but no other details were known. Villagers were advised to keep doors and windows locked. Gone are the days when you could leave your house unlocked whilst you popped to the shop.

The Parish Council has continued to monitor various activities around the village, including the ongoing saga of the Wootton Park car parking at the bottom of Cranmer Avenue. The whole structure of our involvement in the Wootton Park needs to be revisited and proper procedures put in place for the day to day management of the park and the football clubs who use it. This remains a matter to be resolved between us and South Wootton Parish Council.

We continued to see if we could acquire land for village allotments but there is simply none available which we can use or have donated to the village. The same problem occurred with the cemetery extension some years ago. All spare land has either been built on already or is in an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Flooding had occurred in Manor Road during heavy rain which caused a lot of inconvenience to road users and adjoining properties. Extra drainage was put in to try and alleviate the problem which so far, seems to have worked.

The Council has continued to keep an eye on the trees for which it is responsible, cutting down and trimming back where necessary. This is a large expense for the council as many of the trees are now over 60 foot tall and need constant watching. We also repair lamp standards where necessary with the aid of our contractors and replace lamps when they blow out.

Thanks go to Dr. Rule who keeps the plants under road signs in good condition, replacing where necessary and it all adds to the enjoyment of the village. Snowdrops and daffodils continue to appear each spring on the village green and every villager makes an effort to keep their hedges and gardens tidy.

One of our local public houses, The House on the Green, has had a chequered history over the last few months and stood empty for some time. There are now new people running it and we wish them every success in their venture. I do urge villagers to support our two public houses. Without that support we could lose at least one of them in the future. I think we would all hate to see more houses built on the land where the House on the Green stands. It is a lovely old building.

We continued to support residents of Meadow Close who were increasingly disturbed by the large skip hire business being conducted from one of the properties. The local MP, police, Borough Council and County Council have been involved at various times which culminated in the County Council issuing an enforcement notice. This has had the result that movements of skips and unloading of those skips appears to have stopped. The Borough Council is looking into renting a piece of land to the occupants on the edge of King's Lynn from which to conduct their business without causing more disturbances to the residents of Meadow Close.

Once again, my thanks to my fellow councillors for their support over the last few months. I stood down as chairman in December 2012 due to increasing pressures of work and Councillor Jim Milne took over as Chairman in December 2013. I know the council is in good hands."

I'll now move on to my additional comments. At our December meeting, I became chairman, and Councillor Nigel Armiger took over from me as the responsible Finance Officer. We also welcomed Paul Edwards as a new member of the council, replacing William Kerkham, who resigned from the council in 2012. I'd like to take this opportunity to record our thanks to William for all his hard work, for his dedication to supporting Wootton Park, latterly as chairman, and in particular for helping to make the two Picnic on the Park events as successful as they were.

Some key issues which continue to require our careful attention include proposed housing development, our finances, the skip hire business in Meadow Close, management of Wootton Park, and the proposed incinerator at Saddlebow.

Councillor Pulsford-Harris is continuing to lead for us on housing development, and I hope that her efforts and those of neighbouring councils will ultimately lead to an appropriate outcome for our parish.

Councillor Armiger will present his finance report shortly, but I would like to refer to what appears to be a significant percentage increase in our precept this year. Parishioners will see it as an increase of 18.6% on the Council Tax bills, though it's important to stress that this increase represents only about 15 pence per week or less per household, depending on the band. For the past few years, parishioners have benefitted from minimal

increases, but after carefully considering where we could reduce expenditure, we were forced to conclude that a larger than usual increase was the only option, for reasons which Nigel will explain.

Regarding the Meadow Close skip business, Norfolk County Council have been effective in addressing the processing of waste on the premises, and as Dorothy said, this appears to no longer take place. I have met the residents, and had a meeting with the Chief Executive of KLBC, along with his planning and property representatives. I'm pleased to report that they have agreed to investigate whether the business is such that planning permission would be required, and take whatever action is necessary.

We are in dialogue with South Wootton Parish Council over the management of Wootton Park, including options for addressing car parking on football days. Both councils are committed to reaching a mutually agreed conclusion and I am confident that we will work together effectively to manage this important asset for our parish. Further discussions will take place later this month.

The Parish Council continues to contribute to the opposition campaign against the Saddlebow waste incinerator, and is part of a consortium of parish councils (including North Runcton, Castle Rising, Middleton, West Winch, Gayton and Tottenhill) who commissioned, via KLWIN, a report on the carbon footprint, which will be presented by KLWIN and the consultants, Eunomea, to the Public Inquiry. The report concluded that Cory Wheelabrator's figures were wrong, and that in the expected scenario carbon emissions will be significant. The parish council case, including the carbon emissions and various other objections, will be presented to the inquiry by a councillor from Middleton on 9th April.

Finally, I'd like to thank all councillors for their support, and look forward to a constructive and successful year.

That concludes my report.

3.Responsible Finance Officer's Report

Councillor Armiger presented his report:

The precept for the financial year ending on 31 March 2013 amounted to £25,500 but partially due to unforeseen expenditure and cost increases, I anticipate our total expenditure to be a little in excess of £29,000. The overspend of approx. £3,500 will be taken from our reserve and is mainly attributable to street lighting (both power and repairs), our share of running Wootton Park and maintenance of other open spaces including grassed areas and trees. In order to achieve only a small increase in the precept for the current year, a reduction in reserve was anticipated and budgeted for as detailed in last year's financial report.

Excluding the aforementioned, the council has agreed a contribution of £3,400 to the skateboard project on Wootton Park and has set aside £1,000 for future costs which might arise from expert advice and reports regarding the ongoing wider planning proposals likely to affect our village. These sums will also be taken from reserve. After allowing for these provisions it is anticipated the council will have a reserve in the region of £20,000 to carry forward to 2013/2014.

I am pleased to report that the loan of £1,981 to the village hall has now been repaid in full.

This year has seen a major change in the way the Borough Council calculates our precept relative to the overall council tax bill and as a result the percentage increase is likely to be distorted. Our precept for 2013/2014 has been agreed at £30,000 but £880 will be a special grant from central government and the actual precept will therefore be £29,120. This does represent a substantial increase over last year but I believe this is necessary to enable the council to maintain services at the current level. Maintaining the open spaces and trees within the village in addition to our share of 37% of the cost of running Wootton Park jointly with South Wootton Parish Council, is

expensive and this, coupled with anticipated increases in power and maintenance of the street lighting has necessitated the increase.

The council has not provided for any further capital expenditure or projects save those already mentioned above. The council will continue to support worthwhile community projects wherever possible and a small sum has been provided for this.

The council has agreed it's prudent, and in line with standard practice, to retain the equivalent of between 75% and 90% of the current precept in reserve for unforeseen expenditure. The precept set for 2013/2014 should achieve this aim and will ensure the council continues to be in a sound financial position.

That concludes my report.

4. Wootton Park Association Report

The vice-chairman of Wootton Park Association, Mr. M. Narborough, gave his report:

Pavilion – During an inspection timbers were found to be rotting in the roof so it was agreed that vents should be installed to improve ventilation. This has been carried out. A quotation by Jarvis Roofing to strip and replace with fibre glass for £9,100 was approved and South Wootton Parish Council has applied for a 100% grant to cover this.

Play area – The skateboard has been ordered and just waiting for the weather to improve to install. An inspection of the play area by Norse found it to be in good condition.

Dykes – A quotation for £1,600 by Garrod Groundworks to carry out clearing of the dykes was approved and will be funded from Wootton Park Association finances.

Trees – Work on the trees is ongoing. There are 5 more trees which need reducing in size which back onto parishioners houses and are blocking the light.

Football Club – A new 3 year agreement was signed last year. The fees were raised from £875 to £950 in September 2012.

Car Park – Discussions are still taking place between North and South Wootton Parish Councils and it is hoped that a satisfactory conclusion will be reached.

Wootton Park Association – A committee is voted in to run the park on a day to day basis. The accounts need to be audited and it is estimated that approx. £1,400 profit was made from the Picnic on the Park.

A parishioner asked Mr. Narborough about the condition of the pond and it was said to be good.

That concludes my report.

5. Village Hall Report

The Village Hall Representative, Councillor Kilham presented his report:

Councillor Kilham reported that finances are in a much better position due mainly to two groups hiring the hall on a regular basis.

Income for 2012 was £9,991 (compared to £6,554 in 2011 and £2,800 in 2010).

Expenditure is up mainly due to increased electricity charges and insurance.

Surplus for 2012 is £1,493 (compared to £2,666) but £981 was repaid to North Wootton Parish Council towards the loan. The loan was paid in full at the beginning of 2013 with a final instalment of £1,000.

The committee has met three times over the past year.

The leylandii hedge was cut back at a cost of £430 and the Mums and Toddlers shed has been taken down.

Three heaters are working properly by using parts from the fourth. If there are any problems in the future, parts are no longer available.

Unfortunately, no other persons have come forward to join the committee which is of concern as a younger element is needed to take over the running of the hall for future years.

That concludes my report.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.54 pm.

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