

**MINUTES OF NORTH WOOTTON PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH (RESIDENTS) MEETING
TUESDAY 17TH APRIL 2018 AT 7.15 P.M.
AT NORTH WOOTTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

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

1. Apologies – Councillors Hughes, Cox, Edwards, Nurse, Tite

2. Chairmans Report

Cllr Pulsford-Harris read the following report;

This is another year which has flown past and a lot has happened to do with the Village Hall. We were also very pleased to welcome in June, Keir Hughes as a member of the council and he has been an asset to the council. Keir also joined the new Village Hall Committee together with Will and Wendy Border.

To deal with the village hall first as that was the most important change this last year. The previous hall committee had notified the council earlier in the year that they wished to relinquish the hall and hand it back to the Parish Council. After a lot of delay a Resolution to that effect was received by the council in April and having conducted a survey of the village hall in 2016 the Council decided to take it on. A public meeting was called in July and residents backed the idea of retaining the hall and bringing it up to standard. A committee was formed of interested residents and further meetings were held.

In the meantime, we contacted our Solicitors to arrange for the Deed of Trust to be varied. This took some time to arrange (the law does work slowly) but eventually it was received and our Clerk took it to the outgoing committee for signature. We had also looked at the possibility of sharing accommodation with the Rugby Club but that was not deemed feasible after investigation and it was felt the village hall had to remain part of the main village and not be shunted off some distance away.

The new village hall committee hit the ground running and organised a number of events leading up to Christmas and also a Christmas Craft Fair which was attended by the Borough Mayor Councillor Carol Bower and our local Councillor, Lord Howard and his wife. Various organisations exhibited and the hall was full. Other organisations booked the hall for various events including the Macmillan Big Coffee Morning. In March 2018 a new Chairman was elected and members of the hall committee took on different jobs. They have a number of ideas for future events for the hall. Repairs have been done to the hall and its surrounds and the conifer trees which were overgrown and dying have all been cut down. The hall has been painted and freshened up and the next big job is the heaters and refurbishing the toilets to include putting in a toilet for the disabled.

The Parish Council is the Trustee of the hall and receives copies of the minutes and accounts on a regular basis. As Chairman of the Trust, I have attended some meetings with the committee. The outcome of various grant applications is awaited and it is hoped these will be forthcoming shortly to enable the various works planned to be carried out.

So far as the village and council is concerned: The Picnic in the Park went ahead in June and various reports were made to our clerk concerning the street lights. As part of the village hall handover, we also obtained valuations of the hall and its land which proved very useful. The old

telephone kiosk is being managed by members of North Wootton WI and there are books and copies of the YLP newspaper placed there as well as adverts for events. The Borough Mayor Councillor Carol Bower attended the official opening!

There have been a number of incidents of vandalism in the village over the last few months. Not least was the ripping down of new guttering on the bus shelter, the theft of the solar panel and battery and damage to a bench and table in the park by fire. Two culprits were apprehended by the police over that. One lad admitted responsibility and is being dealt with away from the courts. The other lad refused to admit guilt although the police felt he was the ring leader. Unfortunately, it means we get no compensation due to the family of the boy who had admitted it, coming from a deprived background. The Lynn News kindly did a front page article about the vandalism. Despite that, vandalism continued. It is crucial that residents report anything suspicious to the local police and to the council.

A new barrier was ordered and erected for the entrance to the football club car park. Many complaints have been received from residents in the area about inconsiderate parking. Cllr Border was looking to make the area more open to prevent youths and cars congregating late at night and causing problems. Trees would be coppiced under the guidance of an arborist to ensure it was done in such a way so as not to alter the wood too much. Residents confirmed they would be happy to help with locking and unlocking the new barrier. Cllr. Border also reported that the roof of the pavilion had been painted with anti-climb paint and the floor was due to be painted.

We continued to try and get information out of Enterprise Inns concerning the House on the Green which had stood empty since January of 2017 without much success. They appeared to have been deliberately obstructive in their replies. Suddenly and recently the pub re opened but just for 2 weeks as it turned out it had been sold in the meantime. The new landlords were turfed out somewhat unceremoniously and have now taken on the tenancy of a pub in Watlington. I am sure we wish them well. We have been advised that the pub has been bought by a local business man who intends to turn it into a fish restaurant and build on the old bowling green at the back. The Council will consider any change of use application as we do not want to lose an established pub. A new license has also been granted to the Black Horse at Castle Rising but no further information has been received as to when and if this will re-open.

In November some members of the council took part in the WI Quiz. From recollection I think we came 3rd which was not a bad result.

The question of the Right of Way behind the houses on Woodlands Garden was raised again. However the council felt they had done all they could and it was now up to the residents affected to either consider Lord Howard's offer or deal with it themselves.

The owner of Flowers on the Green reported flooding of her property from a drain. This is being dealt with by the water company concerned and it looks as if the owner may well be responsible as the drain is on her land.

Quotes were received to repair pot holes in the lane behind the village green. These were felt to be excessively high so a temporary repair has been done with cold tar. Further quotes will be obtained to finish the job off. Flooding had been reported on Wootton Park over the Christmas period and it seems the ditches require dredging. Cllr Border was taking this up with the WPA. The water level in the rill at Rill Close was rising and this was reported to SWPC. The Precept for the year was discussed and agreed a 3% increase for properties in Band D.

A lady had complained to the council that her daughter fell whilst getting off the bus and complained about lack of street lights in the area (just by the entrance to Carlton Drive). Our clerk met with the lady concerned and it appeared that having got off the bus and instead of following the proper path, she cut across the grassed area, slipped on the wet grass and fell banging her head on one of the posts. There is no liability to the parish council in those circumstances. People have an obligation to look after themselves and take responsibility for their actions.

Councillors were concerned at reports of some men in a white van labelled Trawler Fish, trying to sell substandard fish from door to door. It was felt they were in fact checking to see which houses were occupied during the day. Residents were to be put on their guard.

A fence damaged some 18 months ago on the boundary of our two councils has still not been repaired and it is in front of a deep ditch. SWPC clerk is taking this up with Highways to find out who is responsible as it remains a hazard.

The village is looking lovely at present and the village green is a mass of daffodils. Thanks go to all the residents who take great pride in their homes and gardens which enhances the look of our village and makes it pleasant for others. It's nice to see some sunny weather after we suffered the Beast from the East and the Mini Beast as well as torrential rain which seemed to fall day after day with no let up.

I take this opportunity of thanking the councillors for their support throughout the year and also to our clerk Rachel who is, as usual, a tower of strength and very knowledgeable on council matters.

That concludes my report.

3. Responsible Finance Officer's Report

Cllr Border read the following report;

In the financial report last year I did mention some of the expenses that we would incur this year, that are above and beyond the normal. Our net expenditure to the end of the financial year 2016-2017 was £ 44240 versus a budget of £36740. Most of this overspend was at the beginning of the year due to the capital expense of putting in the traffic calming signs outside the village school, which have had a positive effect for the village. This had been agreed in 2016/17 so it was not a surprise to the committee.

Most of the costs for the year were as budgeted. There are a few interesting cost that are worth mentioning. There have been a few costs in connection with the Village Hall, while going through the legal changeover of committee. We have paid over £1000 in bills on behalf of the Hall while bank accounts etc. are being transferred into new names. This year we have also spent over £1030 in the village & park repairing items that have been vandalized.

Wootton Park gross costs were less than budgeted, we had allowed for £7000 and the costs have come in at £5266 after the rebates from SWPC for the year. However I will be budgeting for a similar amount of £7000 for next year, because there are still some major projects that may require some financing from the two parish councils. More details of this will be covered in the Wootton Park Report.

The Council debated the precept for 2018-19 and it was agreed that we should ask for a precept increase of 3% this was passed as acceptable at the January meeting due to the ongoing costs to

replacing our ageing street lights and the potential issues we have with the current Village Hall. I have set the budget for this year at £38880 and will hope to come in just below.

We start the new financial year with reserves of over £37000 this is equivalent to a year's worth of the 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 no real new expenditures that we will need to allow for in the forthcoming year. There may however be some unforeseen costs associated with the future of the Village Hall. Even with all this I conclude that our finances remain sound, and our reserves are sufficient to address any future unexpected expenses or capital projects.

4. Wootton Park Report

Cllr Border read the following report;

This year has proved to be a challenging year for the Wootton Park Association. The year can be summed up in a few words; vandalism and very wet weather!! Both of which I will talk about in a moment.

Some of the projects that have been done over the year have included, clearing and planting an area on the cycle path next to the North Wootton School gate. This will hopefully mature over this summer and start to produce a splash of colour. South Wootton strip has been flailed back, and the laurel hedge has been bought back under control. One of the foot bridges on north Wootton strip has been replaced as it was showing signs of decay, and would have become a danger in the future. Gates have been put up on both the entrances of Bede Close & Cranmer Avenue this year. The gate on Cranmer Avenue going into the car park and is being shut & locked during the hours of darkness. This has had a very positive effect on the levels of litter & anti-social behavior in the car park.

A lot of the year has been marred by a few acts of anti-social behavior on the park. As I report this year we have had still two investigations by the Police, The vandalism has ranged from graffiti on the skate board ramp to a full blown arson attack on one of the picnic tables. One of the culprits admitted to being part to the arson and has been put forward for a "Challenge for Change" Scheme, so with the help of the youth offender's team, it is hoped to re-educate the youngsters without giving them a criminal record. These incidents are very frustrating as it soaks up money that could be better used on other projects in the park. All we ask is for parishioners to be vigilant and report incidents straight away.

The Picnic in the Park this year was held in June and the weather was fantastic for it. I feel both the People on the Picnic in the Park Committee and the Football Club rose to the challenge on the day to make it a really good event. We did raise some funds that is being held by the Picnic Committee until a suitable project is approved for the expenditure. I would like to personally thank everyone that helped out on the day to make it such a success, especially Councilor Bridget Nurse for her guidance in how to plan such an event.

The WPA 200 Club is now in its second year, this is another way of raising much needed funds for the park, this currently has 86 members with a top monthly prize of £34.40 from this we have managed to give away over £1100 in prizes, and have put £1000 into the Wootton park account. It would be really fantastic if we could get the number up to over 100 members.

I am pleased to report that the club finances are as solid as they were last year. We started the year with £2040 in the account and we end it with just over £2787. The breakdown of this will be covered at greater length in the treasures report.

The services of the community payback team continue to be of benefit to the park with various jobs being tackled over the year. This has ranged from general pruning in the park to painting the pavilion floor. One of the most satisfactory tasks was achieved over the winter months when a vast amount of wood chippings that were down in the car park to stop it getting too muddy. We really did see some benefit from this.

This brings me onto the weather! This winter has been exceptionally bad for general rainfall in the area, and according to the Kings Lynn Drainage Board the rain water flowing into the rivers has been exceptional. We have seen the effect of this on the Park over the past 6 months where some parts have never really dried out. This has really shown us the need to keep on top of the drainage issues on the park and especially the low lying area immediately by the bridges that lead into the car park. This has also been a problem for the football club using the car park, and the fact that the pitches which have been unplayable for a lot of the winter.

Therefore my vision for the next year is to try to continue to raise funds for the park and then start to address the drainage issues on the park, as if we are going to have wetter winters this will become a priority. I would lastly just wish to extend my thanks to everyone this year who has helped in the park. These range from the parishioners that have rolled up their sleeves, to the locals and friends that have come along and supported the fund raising events. To all those at the football club that have helped out at the joint events held on the park. Not forgetting this committee for keeping me on the right path, with many a word of wisdom. Without everyone's commitment it would be an impossible task to complete

5. Village Hall Report

This was included in the Chairpersons report.

6. Trinity Hospital Report

Cllr Kilham reported the following for Trinity Hospital;

Trustees met twice - in September 2017 and also February 2018 for Founders Day. The latter included a church service, lunch and a meeting at which the Clerk, Treasurer and Wardens all gave reports.

There are 6 units, and currently 5 ladies in residence leaving one vacancy. The heating system has been updated to provide individual control thermostats in each unit. Some parts of the building have woodworm which requires treatment and the North and East facing roof areas have some moss which requires clearing.

The meeting closed at 7.35pm

Signed Chairman Date