

**MINUTES OF NORTH WOOTTON PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH (RESIDENTS) MEETING
WEDNESDAY 5TH MAY 2021 AT 8.45PM
VIA ZOOM DUE TO CORONAVIRUS RESTRICTIONS**

Present: Councillors Marshall-Grint, Border, Kilham, Merrey, Cox, Lamb, Edwards, Nurse, Simpson, Melton
In attendance: Mrs R Curtis (Clerk)

1. Apologies – None

2. Chairman's Report

The last two years have seen the focus and activities of the Parish Council affected by national circumstances.

Having expressed our sincere thanks to Dorothy Pulsford -Harris for her leadership we were pleased to have Sarah Crome at the helm during a challenging time with changes to the way we have been able to communicate and service the Parish.

There have been changes to the council throughout this time and we are grateful to all those who have given their time to the community. In particular our thanks go to Sarah in moving the council into the last year of working within the pandemic.

Having recently taken over the chairman's role this report is divided into agenda areas for simplicity. Throughout the past year we have all been thankful for our clerk who has kept all of our cogs turning smoothly thanks Rachel.

Law and order

There have been a number of reports of ASB on Wootton Park involving climbing on the pavilion roof, motorcycles being ridden around the park causing damage to the grassed areas. Groups of youths have caused concern, difficulties and annoyance. Trees have been pulled up and the bug hotel being torched. Littering continues to be a constant annoyance and H&S hazard including fly tipping. Muntjac hunting.

Open Forum

We have been grateful for input here from our Borough Councillor Elizabeth Nockolds who has kept us informed about the borough councils approach to the Covid pandemic as well as all things planning wise and of course grants available.

Also parishioners have joined us on Zoom contributing to planning issues among other things.

Finance

As a council we have been well served by Will and Rachel who have guided us through precept setting, budgeting, monthly reconciliation to CIL applications for street lighting and car park development. NWPC have once again kept the increase in precept low.

Highways

The main issue has been the heavy haulage of agricultural vehicles and products through the village. Rangers have been busy in the village. Duck crossing signs have been put up. Consideration of resurfacing the 'road' across the village green. Flooding in various parts of the village has been a problem.

Culverts and dykes are currently a problem.

Wootton Park

The play areas have seen damage to the skate board ramps amongst other items. A bug hotel was built then torched and two further bug hotels were rebuilt. Trees have been planted as well as wild flower areas and snowdrops.

Vertical drainage has been tried on the field. Flooding has been a significant problem. Pavilion has been repainted and guttering repaired.

Car parking for events such as soccer is a serious issue.

Street lighting

Some replacements have been made as lamps need attention. A survey was carried out as a step towards all LED lamps.

Planning

A variety of planning applications have been considered. The PC have worked in conjunction with CR and

SW Parish councils on the Knights Hill development and appeal. The House on the Green development has been a live issue for quite a while involving an application for Asset of Community Value. The PC are currently starting the process of a Neighbourhood Plan.

Village Hall

The hall has continued to develop in quality with a hard working committee bringing a variety of bookings including bingo, yoga, markets and elections.

Car parking and path has been improved around the hall.

The Village

The bus shelter project was investigated fully and found to not be a viable project. The brick bus shelter lighting has been improved. The Remembrance Day event happened. Traffic calming measures have been considered on Priory Lane. PC and the primary school are looking at car parking options for the school site. Daffodils have been locally donated and planted around the village.

Thanks to all members of the Parish Council both past and present for their time and commitment as a team in servicing our wonderful North Wootton Parish.

3. Responsible Finance Officer's Report

Cllr Border summarised his report as follows;

Expenditure for the financial year was £40,993.92 and income £46,357.52. No expenditure was incurred that was unexpected, the pandemic meant that costs were associated with maintaining essential services within the Parish as we were unable to carry out large projects due to restrictions. The PC had enough reserves to set the precept without increase and the reserves are more than adequate to meet the recommended normal range for a Parish Council (between 3-12 months gross expenditure).

4. Wootton Park Report

This year the park has been used more than ever, with new people discovering it on their daily walks. At a time during this Pandemic, it has proved to be a great asset for everyone especially the residents of the Wootton's. Let us hope more people will come to treasure it and look after this wonderful open space we have.

Unfortunately, the bug hotel that was built with the help of the children from the Wootton Academy last Autumn was a target of arson and was burnt to the ground. An outpouring of anger from the residents and people further afield meant that it was a great community effort to get another bug hotel built in record time. A big thank you to all who helped with this, giving their time and all the offers of materials to make the bug hotel look as good as it does. We had a lovely surprise too, when we went over the next day and a local resident Paul Edwards had built another bug hotel, so we now have two. The local children have been busy filling this one with cones, moss, twigs etc. A large willow tree had to have a few branches cut down, so we made some little seats to put by the bug hotel from the cut logs.

Tree surgery has been on going in the park with one tree having a split in by the car park and having to be taken out completely this was an oak tree. Another tree in the car park is the big willow tree, this is having a few branches taken off as, again there is a split in one of the upper branches.

The skateboard park has been repaired, this did take longer than expected because of the large area and the company not having the material in stock. The wire fencing that was put in place to keep the children off, was challenging, having to be put back and tagged almost daily. This has now been completed.

We have planted over 300 snowdrops in the park, mostly in the wooded area by the bug hotel and by the dyke edge, hopefully these will look amazing next year.

The wildflower strips on the North and South Wootton Gaps always look so good, we plan to do this each year and my thanks goes to Nolan Mills for his hard work and for keeping an eye on this project throughout the year. We have had some Wildflower seeds donated to us from Heath Farmhouse Ltd at Great Bircham who saw the post about the bug house and wanted to do something to help. We are looking at a good place to put another strip in the park at the moment.

The WPA 200 Club is now in its fifth year, this is another way of raising much needed funds for the park, we cannot seem to get any more members than 120, if some members do not win in the year, they do not renew! Therefore my aim of getting 200 members with a waiting list is getting further away! But it is much needed funds, so I am very pleased with the result. In the last year, this has paid for the installation of another new bench on the park and we have purchased litter picking sticks and hoops to loan to the residents that are happy to do litter pick in the park to keep it tidy. My thanks goes out to these anonymous wombles for their

efforts. We will continue to promote the 200 club as much as possible.

I am pleased to report that the club finances are as solid as they were last year. I was disappointed to have £1000 taken from the Wootton Park funds, as I do a lot of volunteering in the park, along with other residents to keep the costs of tradespeople having to be paid out of the budget in order to save money. The payback team also do a lot of labour intense work to help on the park. The breakdown for the rest of the accounts will be covered at greater length in the treasures report. My thanks go to Tracey for holding the roll as treasurer and keeping an eye on the expenditure on Wootton Park.

The community payback team continue to be a great benefit to the park with various jobs being tackled over the year. This has ranged from general pruning in the park, dyke maintenance and distributing wood chippings. We are now having them come to the park once a week, which is a great help with labour intensive work.

I have been in touch with the drainage company to look at the wet areas on the park, as this winter it was very wet with puddles near the pavilion and down the cycle path. I have taken pictures which I have sent to them, I am just waiting for them to come to the park to have a look at what they feel needs to be done. I did put out a piece in the parish magazine and the newsletter asking anyone if they had old maps that show any underground springs, but so far nothing has been received.

I would lastly like to extend my thanks to everyone on this committee for their continued support and encouragement. I look forward to another year on the park and hope that the weather this summer is as good as it was last summer.

5. Village Hall Report

Due to Covid restrictions the Hall has been closed for most of the year, however finances are in a good position as the Hall benefitted from Covid Grants from the Borough Council. The area to the west of the Hall has been made into usable car parking space which will help with parking. The committee are looking forward to welcoming hirers and the public back this summer when restrictions are hopefully lifted and the Hall can enjoy every success.

6. Trinity Hospital Report

Cllr Kilham reported the following for Trinity Hospital;

Residents Wellbeing

The six units continue to be occupied by long term residents. Heather Scott is becoming more fragile but remains bright and cheerful. All except Marie Church are in reasonable health. Marie finds keeping warm difficult and her heating has been boosted. Vicky Jackson is invaluable in helping to monitor the ladies and to report regularly. She manages the oil and other day to day issues well. Recently, she has dealt with another bird down a chimney and has asked if cowls could be placed on the open chimneys to prevent further intrusion.

Mercer's Company Grants

The mandatory and additional £15,000 grant have both been paid again this year and expenditure, except for that on the heating, is much as anticipated in the Clerk's Costings and the 5 Year Plan. The Clerk has replied verbally to the Mercer's representative.

Other Repairs

Redecoration was postponed from 2020 to Summer 2021 when hopefully a fuller programme of external decoration will ensue.

Windows

These will need some external repairs in the Summer but most are contemporary and not replaceable. Internal double glazing needs replacement; it is 50 -55 years old and a costing has been sought and the best figure to date is £13,770 + VAT i.e. £16,524 for all units and the dining room.

Chapel Crack

This is to be repointed and the chapel will need at least partial redecoration.

The South Gate

This is to be replaced and the North Passage Door ironmongery overhauled.

Two House Doors

Numbers 4 and 5 are in need of help from warping and draughts. This is being addressed.

Dampness

In Number 5 and the passage outside requires re-rendering and re-plastering of the walls similarly areas of the Porch need re-plastering.

Heating

It is largely functioning but requiring attention to individual areas on a regular basis.

Chimney Cows

These are being assessed for appropriateness and costs.

Weekly Maintenance Contributions

These are to remain at their present level to be reviewed in September.

The meeting closed at 8.55pm

Signed Chairman Date