

**MINUTES OF NORTH WOOTTON PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH (RESIDENTS) MEETING
THURSDAY 11th MAY 2023 AT 7.00PM
At the VILLAGE HALL**

Present: Councillors Harper – Chaired the meeting, Border, Merrey, Cox, Edwards, Simpson, Blood, Lemmon
In attendance: Mrs R Curtis (Clerk)

1. Apologies – Cllrs Marshall-Grint, Nurse, Lamb

2. Chairman's Report

Thank you to all the Parish Council for all their hard work during the year. During 2022 your Parish Council has been busy working to improve our community.

A special thanks to Simon Kilham who has stepped down from official duties after 41 years of dedicated service. We have also said a big thanks to Borough councillor Elizabeth Nockolds for all her support, who has moved away from the area.

During the last year we have made great progress to secure the purchase of the triangle of land on Priory Lane for the village, this will be maintained as a green space for all to enjoy.

The project to install more efficient and environmentally friendly LED lamps through the village has been completed. We have new village notice boards and projects to install new village gateway signs and SAM 2 signs to help reduce speeding motorists are moving towards completion.

A CIL application was gained for the hardcore of the Wootton Park car park and the work completed to a good standard.

Parents of players are encouraged to use this on match days. However we do note that parking is still an issue on match days as people are leaving spaces in the car park, preferring to park on the side of Cranmer Ave and along All Saints Drive. This is constantly being monitored and a new project to help even further is being looked into.

We still have issues with heavy haulage coming through the village and the PC has met with representatives from the landowners to make them aware and try to improve the situation during the harvesting season.

Village Hall events continue to keep our village spirit and we thank the management committee for their continued work. Grants were received for the Platinum Jubilee and Coronation celebrations and also for the Christmas decorations. The Village Hall porch extension has been an excellent addition to the Hall this year. Regular work on the day to day running of Wootton Park and the village greens including tree planting and grounds maintenance, security and duck crossing signs continues. And the improvements to the toddler play area have been met with positive comments from those that use it. The North Wootton Parish Neighbourhood Plan is nearing completion led by Jason. This will be a good investment for the future.

The village gateway signs are up and the village sign is currently being renewed- a good celebration for the coronation of King Charles.

We have throughout the year been fortunate through the dedicated work of colleagues to secure project specific grants which have enabled us to improve our community in various ways. This has been done without any recourse to using precept raised funding.

Many thanks to Councillors for their hard work and commitment and for residents continued support.

John Marshall-Grint

3. Responsible Finance Officers Report

Before I start going through the figures, I would just like to say that as a Parish Council we have been very busy this year, completing projects that have been on the cards for a long time. In the financial report last year I did mention some of the expenses that we would incur this year, that were above and beyond the normal. These have included the streetlight conversion from old 70 watt bulbs to new brighter LED's, a new refurbished toddlers play area in Wootton Park, and the on-going progress of the Neighbourhood Plan. Even though these projects have been allowed for in the accounts. It has proved interesting to keep the funds at an acceptable level. We do go into this financial year with an acceptable amount in the pot.

Therefore our gross expenditure to the end of this financial year of 2021/22 was £11,3614 versus a budget of £83,000. However most of this overspend can be accounted for by the major project that was held on Wootton Park to make the toddlers play area complete. There was an over spend of £18344 due to the cost of raw materials going up at an alarming rate in the summer last year, we did however receive most of this back from other parties including Picnic on the Park, South Wootton Parish Council from a grant from Cllr Daubney, North Wootton Village Hall and the Wootton Park 200 Club, we also reclaim the VAT on this project which was £8,958.

The other large expense for the year was the cost of the LED Lighting conversion which came in at £33,032 but we had received a CIL Payment of £10,000 for this from the Borough Council. In hind sight we should have asked for more fund-

ing to cover this. Although it was a large expense, I still think it was the right thing to do as even with the LED lights in the cost has increased considerably, so I would hate to see the bill if we had not done the conversion when we did. The Council debated the precept for 2023/24 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 increase with the cost of living generally. The total that we have received for the next financial year is £44,186.

I have set the budget for this year at £49,500 and will hope to come in just below. I think we need to be vigilant with the finances this year and try to obtain grants for anything that is not a budgeted spend. I am unaware of any new expenditures that will need to be allowed for in the forthcoming year. There will be some costs associated with the purchase of the open space at Woodland Gardens.

We start the new financial year with reserves of over £20,505 this is equivalent to a 5 months worth of the gross expenditure based on the budget that we will try to keep to. The recommended normal range for a Parish Council Reserve (between 3-12 months gross expenditure) I am therefore happy to report that our finances are in a good a position as they could be in the current circumstances. I would just like to thank the rest of the committee for their continue support and encouragement.

Will Border

4. Wootton Park Report

This year has been a good year in the Park, we have achieved another big project, which has been on the to do list for some time, to replacement the old infants play area. This has been a great success and has been very well used. This was made possible by a grant of £48,000 and the shortfall being paid by both North and South Wootton Parish Councils, grants from Nick Daubney, Wootton Park 200 Club, North Wootton Village Hall and Tesco token appeal. We have just one more part to do and that is the edging, the wood has been kindly donated by Timber Services and £1000 grant from Cllr Middleton. The new play area was opened by Mayor, Lesley Banfield, and goodie bags given out from Wicksteed play equipment. Cinderella attending too!

The old cycle restrictors have been removed and wooden bollards with defectors have replaced them.

We have had a number of trees that have fallen down due to the wind, we have planted new ones in both North and South Wootton gaps as well as the park, these are doing well with the help of plenty of water over the dryer period, my thanks to Nolan and Stella Mills, John Merry for watering them.

We have redone the 200 Club advertising with new posters, banners and leaflets, we have delivered some of these and over the coming months will deliver more to all over North and South Wootton, this will make it easier to join the club. Picnic on the Park - to celebrate the Queens Platinum Jubilee was a great success last year, we will be doing it again this year to celebrate the Kings Coronation on Saturday 10th June, a little later than the coronation but the weather is better in June for an outside event, fingers crossed.

Next year the priority is flooding on the park, we have seen an unprecedented amount of rainfall and flooding seems to be getting worse, we have asked a drainage expert to do a report on the flooding so we can address this issue, this has just come in and will be discussed at the next WPA Meeting.

The wildflower strips on the North and South Wootton Gaps always look so good, we plan to do this each year with the help of volunteers throughout the year. This has been missed this year due to a miscommunication between the WPA and South Wootton in Bloom.

I am pleased to report that the club finances are as solid as they were last year. My thanks go to Tracey for holding the roll as treasurer and keeping an eye on the expenditure on Wootton Park.

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.

Will Border

5. Village Hall Report

The Hall has gone from strength to strength in the past year, with bookings being consistently high. Events held for the Platinum Jubilee and Coronation were a huge success with many people from the community attending and enjoying the celebrations. The finances are sound with a good level of reserves which allow for planning of maintenance projects on the floor and roof in the near future. Hourly hire rates have not increased, and hopefully this will benefit small community groups who use the Hall. The management committee work very hard and thanks is extended to them from the Parish Council.

Jason Harper

6. Neighbourhood Plan Report

In the past year, we have made great progress with the Neighbourhood Plan.

Green Spaces, Non-designated Heritage buildings, and local views have all been catalogued and submitted. Members of the steering group prepared the evidence to support the inclusion of these features, and a great deal of excellent support-

ing documentation was written.

Together with the consultants, 14 policies to put into the final plan were identified and agreed by the steering group. The first draft of the plan was produced in September 2022. This was then further updated in November 2022. The draft was then viewed by the Borough Council and an independent local resident with relevant experience. Comments were received from both parties, and these were discussed and actioned in January 2023. The comments were largely supportive and only some minor changes were required.

Following amendments made based on the comments, a public consultation was held, running from 13th March to 7th May 2023. An event to discuss the plan with local residents was held in the Village Hall on the 25th of March. The draft plan and accompanying evidence were also sent to several statutory authorities as part of the consultation, to give them a chance to comment on the plan.

The consultation period has recently ended and results need to be compiled. Once this is complete, we will have a clearer idea of any changes that need to be made to the plan before the final submission.

Hopefully, the final plan will then be agreed by the Borough Council. Once it is, a referendum will be held in the village to make the final decision about whether the Neighbourhood Plan comes into force or not.

I would personally like to thank all members of the steering group, who have put a lot of time and effort into getting this far in the process. In addition, thanks are due to all the residents and other stakeholders who have given their views or been otherwise involved in the production of the plan. I hope that in the next annual report I will be able to announce that the Neighbourhood Plan is up and running and that the village is benefitting from the protections and opportunities that this will bring.

Jason Harper

7. Trinity Hospital Report

From the minutes of the last Trinity Meeting the Clerk highlighted the following;

There is a full complement of six ladies who continue to be reasonable well. The buildings are generally in good order, however a number of roof tiles had to be replaced and some spare tiles have now been sourced. Some expenditure has been approved for some difficulties with the drains. There have also been some minor repairs to gutters and downpipes. The heating system is in need of a revamp with various options being considered, with the trustees agreeing LPG gas with an underground tank. The finances are in good order, however a weekly maintenance contributions review resulted in an increase of £5. The Clerk received a letter from a North Wootton Councillor to join the trustees, however there are no vacancies at the present time.

The meeting closed at 7.25pm

Signed Chairman Date