

# Wootton Rivers Parish Council

## Minutes of The Parish Meeting & Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held on 14th May 2018

### THE PARISH MEETING

The Parish Meeting was Chaired by the outgoing Chair of the Parish Council, Cindy Creasy who welcomed everyone to the meeting and presented her report on the Parish Council's activities over the past year.

#### Roads and drainage

Overall the village drainage system appears to continue to be working reasonably well. Sudden heavy or prolonged downpours still result in some pooling of water in some places, but this seems to clear quite quickly.

The very wet and windy weather over the winter and into the Spring brought challenges with an excess of mud and leaves blocking some drains and grips and, where accumulated along the side of the road, problems for some road users. We thank those residents who have helped try to keep the drains and gullies clear of mud where possible. Once it looked like the worst was over, we requested Wiltshire Council to provide a road sweep to clear away the build up of mud and leaves. This did help, but unfortunately further spells of wet and windy weather brought more debris to the roads. We are still chasing WC for clearing of the gullies where they have been particularly silted up.

The Parish roads, like everywhere, have continued to suffer from some deterioration and some rather large pot holes! These were reported to WC using the MyWiltshire App. This does appear to eventually get some results although it is frustrating that the app does not show if the issue has been previously reported - resulting in a single issue being reported several times! However, we do urge residents to use the MyWiltshire app to report concerns on roads and highway maintenance.

We have done a lot more work with the Parish Steward this year. At each visit we give him a list of tasks such as minor pot holes, vegetation cut back etc on which he reports progress. However, disappointingly, he is often pulled away to other tasks and so has missed some visits. However we will continue to work with him to get the best help we can from this scheme and urge residents to tell us of tasks he may be able to help with.

2. NDP – the NDP went to referendum in January 2018 achieving a strong turnout and a majority of residents supporting the plan. It went onto be made by Wiltshire Council and will now be used as part of considering planning and other matters concerning the Parish. Our thanks go again to Tony McGarry and his team for their hard work and perseverance in achieving this.

3. Traffic and speeding – There continues to be concerns around road safety, with the NDP recommending that the speed limit be reviewed. To this end a request has been made to WC for a metrocount. Following on from this we hope to establish a dialogue with WC and residents, as to the options/solutions for some of the pinch-points or concerns raised. E.g near misses up near Bank Cottage, speed of traffic through the main village road, visibility over the railway bridge etc.

4. Neighbourhood watch – Our thanks go to Nick Mitchell-Briggs for his continued hard work in keeping us all informed of potential risks and how to stay safer.

Although there has been some low level crime, crime levels in the Parish continue to be low. Although attendance by our community police team has not been possible of late we appreciate their reports and knowing that they are available to assist us with local issues should we need them.

5. Planning – Responding to planning applications on behalf of the Parish remain the main area of work for the PC. We have sought to keep updated with progress on when the Church Farm development might commence and will continue to keep residents informed about this significant development.

6. Recreation Ground – continues to be well used and well looked after under the watchful eye of Tony Mc Garry. There has been an upgrading of some facilities, a mole challenge and a new grounds maintenance contract.

7. Finances – A review of expenditure, including those of maintaining the recreation ground and ensuring we can pay the going rate for the Parish Clerk services, prompted a small rise in the PC precept. This helps ensure, together with the very welcome BEAM contribution, and a successful Fun Run and Food Festival, that our budget and reserves continue to be appropriate.

Some thank yous....

8. The Village Hall – continues to be well used and well looked after by the sterling efforts of the village hall committee, chaired by Linda Hopkins. Again their hard work, and the new support from Lucy and her team, mean that we all continue to enjoy the benefits of having a village hall at the heart of our community. Linda will next be providing a summary of their activity and achievements on the PC's behalf.

9. The Allotments – to the south of the village at Cuckoos Knob, continue to be enjoyed by a number of tenants – although there is plenty of room for more to come and try their hand! Our thanks must go to Roger Dickens who, over many years, stewarded the allotments and kept a watchful eye, and wise advice, on successful allotmenting! As he has stepped down we thank Dave Wardlaw for taking on this role. We may hear later in the year of proposals to help further develop the allotment as a community asset.

10. Contact and Community messaging – although nothing to do with the PC I would like to say thank you to Linda Hopkins for the regular issues of Contact and to Nick Mitchell-Briggs for providing a community email messaging service for those that want it. We are lucky indeed to have, through the efforts and time given by so many residents, such a vibrant and well involved community.

Finally I would like to thank all the Councillors for the time and effort they make on behalf of the Parish and last, but by no means least, to Neil Worthington, our clerk, for his hard work and continued sensible guidance over the last year.

NOW OPEN TO QUESTIONS....

Linda Hopkins (Chair of the Village Hall Management Committee) reported on another successful year for the village hall. A number of events had been held including one organised by a younger group in the village. Further improvements had been carried out throughout the year including the upgrade to a 3 phase electrical supply, a new range cooker, curtains at the rear of the stage and another storage shed. A grant had been obtained from the Area Board for the electrical work. A complete Health and Safety survey had been carried out and this was now in the process of being implemented. Hire charges had had been increased for the first

time in 4 years. Thanks were due to all those who were on the grass cutting rota, ran the 100 club and to Pauline Dickins who the kept the hall in good condition.

Nick Mitchell-Briggs informed the meeting that he was in the process of setting up a closed group Facebook page for Wootton Rivers residents which could be used for buying and selling, publicising events etc. Nick would administer the group and would set up clear rules to avoid the problems some other nearby groups experienced. There would also need to be a minimum age for joining, probably 16.

Rob Mitchenall queried if the new GDPR regulations would have any effect on the informal email messaging service that Nick also ran. Neil Worthington had some information via the Information Commissioners Office which suggested that the group would be classified as domestic and therefore would not come within the rules. This would be forwarded to Nick who would take the appropriate action including possibly asking members to positively consent to their email addresses being used by him.

Rob Mitchenall also asked for a update on Church Farm. No further communication had been received since the end of February when the executor stated that the family is making arrangements internally to fund and carry forward the development and that we would be informed when he had an indication of when the work may start.

There being no further comments the Parish Meeting was closed.

# Wootton Rivers Parish Council

## ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

**Present:** Cindy Creasy Parish Council Chair  
David Butler Parish Council Vice-Chair  
Dean Cowley Councillor  
Nick Jones Councillor  
Steve Rawlings Councillor  
Neil Worthington Clerk

Jerry Kunkler Wiltshire Councillor

**Apologies:** Glenn Leech Councillor  
Anne Swift Councillor  
PCSO Jonathon Mills Wiltshire Police

### 1. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

Cindy Creasy was proposed as Chair for the next year by Steve Rawlings, seconded by Dean Cowley and as the only valid nomination was duly elected.

David Butler was proposed as Vice-Chair for the next year by Steve Rawlings, seconded by Dean Cowley and as the only valid nomination was duly elected.

### 2. Declarations of Interest and the granting of dispensations.

Councillors were reminded of the Code for Conduct and the need to declare any interest relating to the items on the Agenda. None were declared and no dispensations were requested or granted.

### 3. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising.

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meetings held on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2018 and 4<sup>th</sup> May 2018 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

Matters arising :-

Cutting back trees above car park bays – No plan to deal with these trees had been received despite it now being many months since the PC had been informed that a tree report was being carried out on behalf of the owner. Following discussion, it was agreed to send details of the matter to Jerry Kunkler who would ask Wiltshire Council to inspect and see if there was a safety issue. *Action – Clerk/Jerry Kunkler*

Community Infrastructure Levy – further guidance had been received which had confirmed that for parishes with a NDP the percentage of the CIL would be 25%. On the Church Farm project this would be approximately £20,000 (unless the large house was classed as a self-build and therefore exempt, when it would be approximately £12,000). The CIL had to be spent addressing the demands that the development placed on the local area and had to be spent within 5 years. It was unclear at what stage of the development the CIL was paid and Jerry Kunkler agreed to find out and report back. *Action: Jerry Kunkler*

Signboard at East Wick - Wiltshire Highways had been asked to contribute towards repairing the sign but had advised that as the sign was discretionary this was not possible. Jerry confirmed that this was the case throughout the County as a result of cost saving measures but offered to see if money could be made available through

CATG. Councillors considered that the sign helped indicate the junction to drivers and its loss was a safety issue. The post was in sound condition but the finger posts needed replacing – cost may be £200-300 and if CATG were unable to help the only option would be for the PC to finance the repair. *Action: Jerry Kunkler*

Field entrance at bottom of Primrose Hill – Cindy reported that the Council had liaised with Wiltshire Rights of Way team who had advised that the landowner had a right of vehicular access and was entitled to keep it clear of vegetation. Cindy had met with Roger Geen who had raised the query and his main concern was that this access would now be used for large vehicles. David Butler had confirmed to the PC that the track would only be used on an ad-hoc basis as larger vehicles are limited by the steepness and height restrictions caused by overhanging trees. In view of this Cindy recommended no action should be taken.

Winter salt – Wiltshire Council no longer provided 1T bags of salt for PC use in winter which had been well used this year. Wiltshire now provide 25kg bags which had to be collected from Warminster on specific days in October. Nick Mitchell-Briggs offered to collect the salt and would liaise with Neil Worthington over arrangements. David Butler agreed to store the salt as before.

Defibrillator - the heater definitely seems to be inactive and would need an electrician to inspect and replace. *Action: Clerk*

Recreation Ground – it was understood that Tony McGarry would organise a working party shortly.

#### **4. Standing Orders**

New model standing orders for Councils had been received which were now much more comprehensive and detailed than previously. It was agreed that they should not be adopted wholesale as some sections were inappropriate for a small council. It was therefore agreed that Chair/Clerk/Dean Cowley would meet to go through them and bring forward a recommendation to the next meeting.

*Action: Chair/Clerk/Dean Cowley*

#### **5. Report from Wiltshire Councillor**

Jerry Kunkler reported on Wiltshire Council matters:

- Wiltshire had imposed a 3% increase on Council Tax for better adult care. 3% had also been raised last year but as there was a Government limit of 6% over a 3-year period there would be no levy next year. He noted that a third of Wiltshire residents were over 60.
- Wiltshire will have to save an additional £19m savings next year.
- The Parish Stewards had been diverted from local duties to deal with priority areas of flooding throughout the winter.
- Wiltshire had received an extra £1.8m for roads maintenance to deal with the effects of the harsh winter and more money for gully clearance.
- Work at Pewsey Leisure Centre is going well and the pool is undergoing its 1<sup>st</sup> test. It is currently on budget and on time and due to complete at the end of August for fitting out. Opening will be in the Autumn and should be a great asset for the community.
- Pewsey Area Board has more funding for grants available up to £1,000.
- The next AB meeting is at Burbage on 21<sup>st</sup> May and the proposed boundary changes are on the agenda.

## **6. Report from Community Police Officer.**

A police officer was unable to attend the meeting but the monthly report had been received. There were no issues affecting Wootton Rivers although thefts from cars at beauty spots, burglaries and tools stolen from work vans occurred in the surrounding area.

## **7. Road Maintenance Issues**

Wiltshire Highways had sent a road sweeper through the village but were also trying to provide a suitable machine to remove the mud and debris from road verges. This had not yet arrived and would continue to be chased.

Cleaning out the gullies in the village had also been promised by the end of April. It was unclear if this had happened and confirmation was being sought that this had been carried out.

There was a Highways meeting being held in Devizes on May 23rd when budgets, service levels and the parish steward scheme were being discussed.

Following the installation of 'No HGV' signs at each end of the Ram Alley to Easton Royal road it had been suggested that a similar sign should be requested to be installed at the Wootton Rivers end of the road to Easton Royal. Following discussion, it was considered that there was no need for such a sign because, other than vehicles coming through the Parish for business such as farm, railway or deliveries, there was not perceived to be a general problem of HGV's using the Parish as a cut through in the way that Ram Alley is.

The application for a Metrocount had been sent to CATG and was in the system.

Further discussion took place regarding the desirability of having a 20mph limit and it was clear that there were strongly held views on both sides. Getting information from the Metrocount is the first stage in the process of identifying risks and then finding suitable solutions.

Parish Steward visits had ceased since the end of last year as he had been diverted onto gritting and priority works including carrying out work to prevent the standing water at the Easton Royal/Wootton Rivers road junction. (Post meeting – it has been confirmed that no May visit will occur as Stewards are on weed spraying duties). The next confirmed visits are 20<sup>th</sup> June, 18<sup>th</sup> July and 12<sup>th</sup> September.

## **8. Update on General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)**

Information on how to comply with the new GDPR was constantly being received from numerous organisations. The only data being held by the PC were email addresses but an audit was still needed to show that the regulations were being correctly followed. It appeared that an amendment was going through Parliament to exempt Parish Councils from appointing a Data Protection Officer and the advice from WALC was to hold off from this until the situation became clear. It was likely that a privacy statement would be needed on the website and on emails sent from the PC.

It was agreed that the Chair and Clerk would liaise to carry out the audit and put forward recommendations, hopefully at the next meeting. *Action: Chair/Clerk*

## **9. Planning**

Advice had been received from WALC about the conducting of planning decisions.

They recognised that small councils, who meet less frequently, will sometimes have planning applications to consider, with a deadline ending before their next scheduled

meeting. This had occurred recently when an extra meeting had been needed on 4<sup>th</sup> May to decide on 2 applications.

WALC had advised that the power to make planning decisions could be delegated to a smaller committee but as their decision also had to be made at a public meeting this did not really resolve the situation.

WALC advised that the decision could also be delegated to an officer of the PC ie the Clerk, after taking advice from Councillors.

After discussion it was resolved to delegate minor applications for work to trees in the Conservation Area to the Clerk but with the proviso that he receives a minimum of three Councillor's responses, which he may consider.

All applications should continue to be distributed to Councillors as at present so that they can be assessed as to whether they can be classed as a minor application.

The following new application was considered :-

18/03938/TCA Greenaways – crown reduction to cherry tree. There were no objections to this application.

## **10. Neighbourhood Development Plan**

Wiltshire Council had 'made' the plan which was now published on Wiltshire's website.

## **11. Finances**

11.1 The WRPC financial year 2017/18 ended on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 and details of the audit had been circulated to all Councillors prior to the meeting.

11.2 Rob Mitchenall had undertaken the Internal Audit – there were no items of concern and he was therefore able to complete and sign off the internal audit section of the Annual Return.

11.3 It was confirmed that WRPC met the conditions of the Certificate of Exemption and would be able to self-certify as exempt from a limited assurance review as income and expenditure did not exceed £25,000 and the other circumstances did not apply. The Certificate was signed by Cindy Creasy (Chair) and Neil Worthington (Clerk).

11.4 Section 1 – The Annual Governance Statement 2017/18 was approved by the Council and signed by Cindy Creasy (Chair) and Neil Worthington (Clerk).

11.5 Section 2 – The Accounting Statements 2017/18 were approved by the Council and signed by Cindy Creasy (Chair) and Neil Worthington (Clerk)

11.6 The Certificate of Exemption form would be submitted to the external auditor and Sections 1 and 2 and the Internal Audit published on the PC website as required by the auditors. Also required to be published were various other documents including the Bank Reconciliation and the Explanation of Variances. Included in the last document is an explanation for what is now defined as 'high reserves' ie more than twice the precept. This excess of £1,014 was explained as £732 was ringfenced for the Recreation Ground and £348 as liability for grass cutting costs carried out in 2017/18 but which had not been invoiced until April 2018.

11.7 The following cheques which had been issued since the last meeting were authorised:

- DL Stevens – mole control - £60.00
- Last Landscaping – Grass cutting 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2017/18 - £348.50

11.8 The Precept of £2,752.12 had been received.

11.9 The insurance renewal quote from Came & Co had been received. There were no changes to the insured items and cover remained in place for the statutory Public and Employers Liability and Council legal liability insurance together with cover for the playground equipment, defibrillator and computer equipment. We had agreed last year to the long term agreement which expires in 2020 and the cover has increased by 4% for inflation. The premium has increased because of this to £415.61. Last year was £407.46 and this increase was within the budget. The renewal quote was approved.

11.10 Notice had been received regarding the Clerks salary scales for 2018/19. The hourly rate for the relevant grade increases from £8.87 to £9.34 per hour. It had previously been agreed to increase the Clerks paid time from 1.5 to 2 hours per week so the annual salary for the Clerk was now £971.36 p.a.

11.11 The following cheques were authorised and signed :-

- WALC subscription – £104.66
- WR Village Hall – VH hire - £108.00
- Came & Company – insurance - £415.61
- Rob Mitchenall – ex-gratia payment for carrying out the internal audit - £20.00

11.12 As confirmed at the last meeting an order had now been placed with Idverde for grass cutting at the Recreation Ground. A number of cuts had already taken place and the quality seems ok but will be monitored.

11.13 Lloyds Bank had confirmed that we can use online banking with 2 stage authorisation but the exact details are still unclear and only will become apparent once the online registration by a Councillor with full signatory powers is completed. It was agreed that 3 people should have log in authorisation. *Action: Chair/Clerk*

## **12. Correspondence received.**

Wiltshire Council Legal services has written to remind Councillors that the Register of Interests is an ongoing commitment and needs to be kept updated with any changes of interests.

The PC had been contacted with concerns that the swimming pool at Cuckoos Knob was being pumped out onto the road again. After investigation it was confirmed by the owner that the discharge was from rain water collecting on top of the pool cover. In future this would be directed via the drainage system.

## **13. Matters raised by the public / AOB**

An enquiry had been received about the area of the allotments which had been cleared. It was confirmed that David Wardlaw and David Butler had agreed to clear the area in the hope that further tenants would come forward to rent the allotment. If no one came forward a proposal will be made later in the year to use the area for the benefit of the community – maybe an orchard. It was confirmed that the allotment is now a protected green space under the NDP.

**Date of the next meeting – 16th July 2018 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.**