

ABBOTS MORTON PARISH.

Draft minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held Abbots Morton Village Hall, Wednesday 2nd May 2012 at 7.05 p.m.

Present: Mr. D. Ernest (Chairman), Mrs. N. Holland, Clerk to the Parish Council, County Cllr. Mr. Holt, District Cllr. Mrs. Steel, Cherrie Mansfield, Strategy and Performance Manager, Wychavon District Council, and 17 parishioners.

Welcome: – the Chairman of the Parish Council, Mr. Ernest, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies: Dist. Cllr. Mr. Lee, PC Tony Carter, PCSO Jenny Hawkins, Geoff Barker, Jill Barker, and Cyril Burton.

Green Deal: Cherrie Mansfield, Strategy and Performance Manager, Wychavon District Council, was invited to give a presentation on 'The Green Deal' and how the District Council is implementing the issues concerned.

The Green Deal is the Government's new flagship energy efficiency programme. It will provide householders and businesses with the upfront capital to carry out energy efficiency improvements to their properties (e.g. cavity, loft and external wall insulation, energy efficient boilers).

The cost of installing the measures will be re-paid over time through a charge on the property's electricity bill. For the work to be undertaken, the 'golden rule' must be met which states that the charge is no higher than the expected savings. The charge will be made for the property rather than an individual.

A new Energy Company Obligation will work alongside the Green Deal to provide additional support to householders who cannot achieve significant energy savings without an additional or different measure of support. The focus will be on vulnerable and low-income households and those living in harder to treat properties, such as those with solid walls.

District and County Cllrs. will be promoting the scheme which is hoped to be up and running by the autumn. In place at present is free loft and cavity insulation to all Wychavon residents.

New Homes Bonus Scheme: Cherrie explained that the scheme funded by Government is for new homes built in the Parish and for unoccupied homes brought back into use. 40% of the funding received by Wychavon District Council is passed on to the local community. Parish Councils are being invited to put forward proposals. The funding is available for 6 years.

Minutes: The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 29th March 2011 were agreed to be an accurate record, signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising: Nil.

Chairman of the Parish Council: Cllr. Mr. Ernest gave the following report:

Tonight will be operated slightly differently from previous years in that it should allow greater time for your questions and informal discussions with the Parish bodies represented today. I believe that these have all supplied written summaries of their activities during the year.

I do hope that you find the evening informative, and I would like to thank our guests and members of the various parish bodies for their attendance. After my report and the questions and answers we will be serving refreshments which hopefully will provide you with an opportunity to chat and discuss any issues with either the Parish Council or the various Parish bodies.

Elections and Parish Council membership.

This is a slightly misleading title as you may be forgiven that you have missed a set of elections. As there were six applications in May last year for 7 places on the Parish Council then a poll was not required. We were very lucky in having new councillors Colin Pemberton, David Smith joining the Parish Council and later on in the year Nick Humphries was co opted to the Parish Council to bring it to full strength. Recently Colin Pemberton rejoined the council after a short absence.

I am very pleased that we have new councillors bringing new ideas and perspectives.

However, I would like to record our thanks and appreciation for the hard work and contribution of Margaret Brewster, Don Humphries and Angela Eason who retired from their posts last May.

I would like to express my appreciation and thanks to all my fellow councillors during the past year. Nick Humphries, Pat Ansell, Clive Holt, Will Clapton, David Smith and Colin Pemberton for their support and work during the year. The Parish Council's ability to deal with issues during the last year, and provide a high level of continuity, is attributable to the hard work of the council members and their collective and individual experience.

I am also very appreciative of Will Clapton's continued assistance and support as the Vice Chair of Abbots Morton

Parish council.

Nicky Holland continues to provide outstanding support to the council as Clerk and without her experience and efficiency I feel that we would struggle to meet our commitments.

Footpaths, their access and maintenance are very important amenity to both parishioners and visitors. I would like to thank David Smith as footpaths officer for the Parish. David has very effectively and enthusiastically to make great inroads to the conditions of the footpaths and by ways. He worked to keep paths clear and has recommended additional work to be done, and his effort is much appreciated.

Colin Pemberton has taken on the newly created role as Tree Officer and is currently looking at providing a survey and overall report on the trees in the parish.

Parish Council meetings.

I am pleased to report that the Parish Council has had a positive and productive 12 months. Surprisingly we met formally 12 times last year, including 5 planning meetings, one extra meeting was called and 6 Full PC meetings. In addition there have been several off site consultation meetings with various authorities regarding drainage, road safety, maintenance and matters relating to finance.

In addition, several members attended training provided by Wychavon District Council, Worcestershire County Council and CALC on matters such as code of conduct, new councillor training and planning the prospective Localism Bill, Planning, New Homes Bonus Scheme, Broadband, Traffic control.

Planning issues.

Planning applications and issues continue to take up a significant proportion of the Parish Council activity. The PC has commented on 5 planning applications, some of these related to significant structural changes.

As many of you are aware, The Parish Council has a statutory duty to examine and where appropriate comment on these. The Parish Council is also duty bound to investigate potential issues re possible planning enforcement and we are working with the planners at Wychavon District Council regarding the monitoring of several sites that have caused concern.

We understand that in at least one site is currently subject to several appeals to the Secretary of State's Office with a hearing possibly arranged for later this year

In addition to the planning issues, Councillors have discussed and pursued a number of local issues including:-

Flooding and Road issues.

As you are aware the Parish Council uses a Lengthsman on a contract for services. (Compared with a previous arrangement to sub contract his work from another Parish Council). This work is funded by the County Council, and the Lengthsman role is to carry out routine maintenance to the verges and ditches around the Parish. Working with the Lengthsman, Highways and other bodies the Parish Council ensure that the drainage improvements made during the past couple of years are kept effective and the village hopefully flood free.

During the past year we have seen the benefits of the ongoing improvement plan for ditches, and hedgerows...I would also like to thank the local landowners for their ongoing cooperation with ensuring that hedges are cut back to make exiting from junctions easier, and also keeping their verges and ditched maintained.

I inspected the drainage through the village during recent days and am pleased to report that as a result of the above works the overall improvement continues with a little additional work scheduled to address the last area of weakness.

Please advise the council of any areas of concerns re ditches, drains and hedgerows so that we can monitor any issues.

As you are aware Worcestershire County Council have resurfaced parts of the roads around the Parish, and we are in regular contact with Worcestershire Highways Authority to ensure that potholes are repaired. Again please notify us of any areas of concern.

Village Hall

I would like to thank the Village Hall Committee for its hard work in both holding events that bring the village together and for their hard work in raising funding for its ongoing maintenance. This is important for the Parish Council as major part of the precept goes towards paying off the mortgage on the Village Hall. I am pleased to say that as part of its discretionary community assistance programme the Parish Council made a donation to the Village Hall Committee for maintenance and also to St Peters Church for towards maintenance of the Churchyard.

Traffic and speeding problems Morton Spiert C2010.

As I believe everyone is aware, this has been the subject of many years of attention by the Parish Council. During that time we have worked with Worcestershire and Warwickshire County Councils to improve signage, road markings and bollards to be placed at the verge. As I mentioned in last year's report, various changes to signage and road markings have been agreed and Warwickshire County Council has confirmed that it will repaint missing white lines on the road.

Unfortunately, our efforts to press for a reduced speed limit (it is currently 60mph) on that road through Morton Spiert and up to Gooms Hill continues to be met with some resistance by the relevant bodies. We understand that they are currently reviewing speed limits for a and b category roads, but we are hopeful that they will address this C category road in the near. That said we are keeping up pressure for change. Unfortunately a traffic survey report from Worcestershire County Council concluded that heavy vehicle traffic was normal for this type of road and a recent speeding survey (both commissioned by the Parish Council) indicated that most traffic stayed within the speed limit. This as I mentioned last year however is complicated because of the 60 mph limit on that part of the road.

During the year the Parish Council was made aware of two separate periods when aggregate lorry drivers using the road over Morton Spiert and onto Radford for transporting to and from the quarries at Dunhampstead. This was contrary to a voluntary agreement between the quarry operators and Warwickshire County Council and has been raised formally with the quarry operators who have each time quickly acted to resolve this and too an extent that any drivers found breaking this agreement will be formally disciplined. I would ask you to report any sightings of such lorries on this road to Nicky Holland with registrations numbers.

We are also aware of the speeding issue through Gooms Hill and are looking various options regarding the enforcement of the 40 mph limit and are in discussions with neighbouring Parish Councils about the viability of jointly purchasing and maintaining a Vehicle activated Signage system.

Finance

For the fifth year in a row the Parish Council has kept the total annual precept for the Parish at the same level as the previous year.

Please be assured that we are very conscious of providing value to the community and are carefully balancing the need for cost containment against investing for the future, As I mentioned earlier I am pleased to say that the Parish Council was able to make two contributions to the Parish Communities (St Peter's Church for the upkeep of the grounds) and the Village Hall for ongoing maintenance. We hope that such actions can be repeated in future years, I would ask any community body interested in registering their interest for a grant this financial year to contact Nicky Holland or any member of the council.

Finally the Parish Council has been granted a windfall of £307 pa for the last year and the next five years as part of the allocation of New Homes Bonus Scheme run by Wychavon District Council relating to new homes occupied and empty homes brought back to use in the Parish. The funding is for community and infrastructure improvement and the Parish Council is looking at suitable uses of the money. I would welcome comments and suggestions.

During the next 12 months the Parish Council will be looking at Neighbourhood Plans.

Finally a rather troubling development. I recently attended a meeting at Wychavon District Council that looked at the proposed Localism Bill that is currently going through Parliament. What troubles me that whilst on the surface it provides an excellent opportunity to empower local communities it seems that several aspects of this are troubling particularly in that it may substantially increase costs and bureaucracy to local bodies such as Wychavon District Council and may cause them to have to spin off services to private companies. It may also affect the way that The Parish Council is run.

However, I think the actual detail of this Bill is somewhat hazy at present but would ask you to monitor this legislation which to be fair does appear not been subject to any material consultation with the general public

Website

I would draw your attention to the Parish Website which is managed by Worcestershire County Council. The website address is www.worcestershire.gov.uk/MyParish

Before we break I will ask Colin Pemberton to say a few words as to the arrangements in the Parish on the Jubilee celebrations that are due to take place in the next few weeks.

Mr. Pemberton said that preparations were well in hand. Across the country 4,000 beacons will be lit, locations can

be seen on the Diamond Jubilee website. They beacons be lit between 10pm and 10.30pm, Abbots Morton has been allocated to be lit at 10.26pm.

Matters raised by parishioners:

Q. Morton Spirt – What else can be done to slow traffic down?

A. The Council will continue to monitor, signage has been put in place and white lines on the Warwickshire side of the road are due to be painted on soon. The County Council is carrying out a speed review on all the roads in the County. They have not yet started looking at the 'C' roads.

Q. Chancel Repair Liability.

A. Worcester Diocese has published a legal letter in the Arch Messenger. Reverend Richard Thorniley is due to hold a meeting to discuss residents concerns in May.

June 21st - a top dressing on the road in the village is due to be carried out.

Mr. Brewster thanked all the members of the Council for their hard work during the past year.

All organisations in the Parish submitted a report, copies available from the Clerk.

Meeting closed at 8.15 pm.

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