

Minutes of the Yardley Hastings Annual Parish Meeting

Tuesday May 14th 2019, 7.00 pm, The Memorial Hall

Present: Mr H. Cave (Chairman), Ms L Davis, and Messrs C. Pickering, D. Winter, R. Houghton, J. Grant and J. Quilter.

Clerk: Mr G. Gill

Public: Three

Police: None

Councillors: Steven Hollowell, Michael Clarke and Carole Clarke

1. Apologies

The Chairman welcomed everybody to the meeting. Apologies were received from Mr J. Keggin, Mr A. Rowton and Ms D. Smith.

2. Minutes of last APM held 15th May 2018

The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting were read by all present. The minutes were approved on the proposal of Mr J. Grant, seconded by Mr R. Houghton, and signed by the Chairman.

3. Matters arising from Minutes

None.

4. Financial Report

The Clerk presented the end of year accounts to the meeting. With total income at £17,142.19 and total expenditure at £16,891.95 the end of year surplus amounted to £250.24. When the Council had set its Budget for the year in January 2018 it had agreed that it should start building up a special reserve towards the cost of some new play equipment in the Rec., and had included a notional figure of £1,000 for this. In effect the Council's general reserves as at March 2019 were £749.76 less than they were as at March 2018. During the year the Council had incurred substantial unbudgeted expenditure on items which were not foreseen in January 2018. Following the unauthorised encampment in the Recreation Ground in August the Council had made a successful insurance claim for the entire cost (less a £250.00 "excess") of replacing the wooden gates, which were damaged beyond repair. However the Council had decided that the new gates were an insufficient deterrent to further potential incursions, and had decided to install a metal vehicle security barrier at a cost of £1,672.22. This had been partly funded by a Capital Development Grant of £585.45 received from the SNC. The Council had been fortunate to find a contractor who was able to install the wooden gates and the new metal barrier as a single project. In September, following a suggestion from a local resident, the Council had decided to purchase a "There but not there" silhouette at a cost of £646.92. This was currently installed in the closed churchyard. The cost of the new litter bin for the bus shelter, £176.49, would be refunded by a 100% grant from the SNC's New Homes Bonus Fund. In January 2018 the Council had budgeted a sum of £500 for legal fees likely to be incurred in relation to Shop Lane (*see below*). This had been carried over to the budget set in January 2019. No questions were raised. The Accounts were approved on the proposal of Mr J. Grant seconded by Mr R. Houghton. The Chairman said he wished to express the Council's thanks to Ms Glenys Kennedy for carrying out the internal audit, which she did on an honorary basis.

5. Report of Parish Council Activities 2018/2019

The Chairman, Mr Herbert Cave, presented the Council's annual report (*attached*) which had previously been circulated to the whole village. He thanked everyone for their hard work over the year whatever activities they had been involved with. He referred to the section in the Report concerning the Recreation Ground and invited Mr John Quilter to give an update on the proceedings of the working party set up to oversee the

proposed replacement of the play equipment. Mr Quilter reported that the working party had already met with one supplier on site, and were shortly due to meet with two more. They had decided that the new equipment in the junior play area should include items suitable for children up to the age of eight. The Council would need to submit a Grant Application to the SNC's newly reconstituted "New Homes Bonus Fund" before the end of May. The Clerk reported that Aylesbury Mains had started work earlier in the day and that the new street light in the Recreation Ground should hopefully be installed by the end of the week. The cost of this new street light and the associated cable laying was being completely funded out of the Parish Council's ring-fenced allocation of New Homes Bonus money for the financial year 2018-19.

6. Community Policing & Neighbourhood Watch Report

Mr Richard Houghton reported that the village continued to be part of the South Northants Police division, overseen by a Sergeant based at Brackley. The levels of reported crime in South Northamptonshire were generally low: the global figure for Yardley Hastings was only thirty-five crimes in the last twelve months, and this figure included incidents in all categories. The staffing levels in the South Northamptonshire division had been further reduced, and an indication of the consequences of this was the fact that at the last meeting of the South Northants Area Support Team (SNAAT) no members of the Police had been available to attend. He and Joe Grant regularly attended these meetings and this remained the Council's only regular contact with 'the uniform'. The Police now had an ANPR camera permanently installed at the entrance to the village in Bedford Road East. The Council had been told that they regarded this as an important asset which helped them to protect the County border. However it was unclear how many investigations into incidents/crimes in the village might have had an ANPR input. The local Neighbourhood Watch group was currently trying to set up their own system to cascade information within the village, as a supplement/add-on to the Police's "Northamptonshire Alert" system. It was hoped to circulate a flyer very soon, inviting local residents to sign up. The Council were also in the process of drafting an Emergency Plan, and it was proposed that the new Neighbourhood Watch information system should be included as a feature of this Emergency Plan.

7. School Governors' Report

The Clerk reported that Mr Anthony Williamson, Chair of Governors, was unable to attend in person this year, and had instead sent the Meeting a written report:

Yardley Hastings and Denton Primary Schools had now formed an official Federation known as 'The Ashby Federation'. This had been effective from 1st September 2019. The schools were still operating as separate schools and under separate financial budgets. However they now benefitted from, amongst other things, an Executive Headteacher, closer staff relationships and a single Governing Body. The first six months of the Federation had been very busy but it was already proving very successful in numerous respects and the Governing Body were confident that both schools would grow positively under these new arrangements. Overall at Yardley school the numbers on roll remained strong; the staff teams were delivering quality teaching; and the friendly and positive ethos of the school remained a key feature.

8. Pocket Park Report

Mr Joe Grant reported that the Community Payback Team, under the supervision of Mr H. Cave (amongst others) had again been employed during the year in continuing maintenance operations in the Pocket Park.

9. Path Warden's Report

Mrs Sarah Wilkinson reported that she had been walking all the paths in the parish regularly throughout the year and that they were generally clear and in good order. Once again the paths had been particularly busy over the previous few weeks with a large number of Duke of Edinburgh Scheme groups passing through. And once again the bluebells had put on a great show alongside LE9 (Cold Oak). Tree branches had been

trimmed on LE1 (Brookside) where the growth, and one or two fallen boughs, had caused a bit of an obstruction. (She had done this herself). There had been no further news with regard to footpath LE4 (the right-hand dam walk off South Vale) (*see Item 9 of the 2018 Minutes*). As mentioned in the Chairman's report dog poo was a problem in that people were bagging it and then throwing it into hedges or fields and leaving it. This stopped it decomposing and it looked unsightly. If the poo was bagged it needed to be disposed of in a bin. All the stiles were in fairly good repair. In conclusion she requested that if anybody did experience any problems with the footpaths would they please keep her informed. The Chairman thanked Mrs Wilkinson for her report.

The Clerk reminded those present that immediately before the previous Annual Parish Meeting the Council had acquired a registered freehold title to the soil of Shop Lane, and that the NCC had agreed in principle that the best way of regularising the current anomaly and establishing Shop lane as a legal Public Footpath would be for the Parish Council to enter into a "Public Path Creation Agreement" with the NCC (pursuant to Section 25 of the Highways Act 1980) (*see Item 9 of the 2018 Minutes*). However the issue of responsibility for the future maintenance of the footbridge had continued to be a sticking point, and it was only after Councillor Michael Clarke had convened a meeting with senior officers in November 2018 that the matter was finally resolved in the Parish Council's favour. The NCC's solicitors had eventually sent the Council a draft S. 25 Agreement in March 2019, and it only remained for the wording of this document to be agreed between the parties before it was legally executed by the Parish Council. Shop Lane would then be shown on the Definitive Map kept by the Northamptonshire County Council as "Public Footpath LE29". The Parish Council had agreed that once this Public Footpath was legally established there would be no further justification for it to retain ownership of the soil of Shop Lane, since ownership in the longer term would require the Council to take responsibility for co-ordinating the maintenance of what was in effect a shared private driveway. At its April meeting the Council had therefore agreed to offer to return the ownership of Shop Lane to Lord Northampton (who had previously owned it prior to 1983), in exchange for Lord Northampton transferring to the Parish Council a small strip of land between the Registered Village Green and the Grendon Brook. Although this strip of land had been maintained by the Parish Council since at least 1984 and treated by everybody as if it were part of the village green, it was not currently included in the formal Registration. The Parish Council believed that it was in the public interest for this anomaly to be corrected, and the acquisition of the freehold title from Lord Northampton would be the first step on the way to achieving this.

10. Report from Yardley Arts

The Clerk observed that he had included this as an item on the Agenda in order to give Yardley Arts the opportunity of giving the Meeting an update on the reports which they had given to the two previous Meetings. In the event no one was available to come to this year's Meeting. However he had spoken with one of the Directors earlier in the day, who had advised him that Yardley Arts was thriving, with a full programme of activities being carried on at their premises in The Square. These were now being advertised on a new Notice Board which they had recently erected at the front of their premises.

11. Councillors' reports

Councillor Carole Clarke said she was pleased to report that earlier in the day the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government had announced that the Government were giving the go-ahead for the creation of two new unitary authorities in Northamptonshire. There would be elections in May 2020 for the Shadow Authorities, which would legally take over from the existing authorities on April 1st 2021. Unfortunately one consequence of the current upheavals was that the SNC were continuing to lose good officers who were seeking more secure employment elsewhere.

Councillor Michael Clarke observed that 2018-19 had been a much better year for the NCC than 2017-18. The new Chief Executive, together with the team of senior officers which she had brought with her, had made a big difference. The NCC's budget was now properly balanced, and the three Commissioners appointed by the Secretary of State to oversee the Council's affairs were still in place. There was a new culture, and the focus was now on making sure that the authority's core services, in particular the children's services and adult social care, were performing properly. The NCC's element of the Council tax had increased by 5% in the current year, and half of this increase was attributable to increased spending on adult social care. In his opinion the chosen way forward of creating a shadow authority, and delaying the demise of the existing authorities until 2021, was a good thing. It would give more time for the new arrangements to be set up on a proper footing.

Councillor Steven Hollowell lamented the fact that the imminent demise of the SNC was having the effect that staff were now only being employed on temporary contracts. Understandably this was working against staff loyalty.

12. Any Other Business

Mrs Sarah Wilkinson said that in the course of walking along the footpaths in the Parish and the neighbouring Parishes it had come to her attention that the incidence of fly-tipping had increased. She observed that for some years now the opening times of the recycling sites owned and operated by the Northamptonshire County Council had been somewhat curtailed. Also charges had been introduced for certain categories of waste. In her opinion there was almost certainly a connection between these changes and the increased amount of fly-tipping. However the restricted opening hours and the introduction of charges could be viewed as a false economy, since the cost of clearing up incidents of fly-tipping was clearly considerable. The difficulty was that it was the NCC who ran the recycling sites, whereas it was the District Authorities who had to bear the cost of clearing up fly-tipping. She expressed the hope that the creation of the new unitary authority, which would have to take responsibility for both operations, would lead to a more holistic approach to the issues of recycling and the proper disposal of waste. She invited the Parish Council to make representations to the NCC and the SNC along these lines.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked all attendees for their reports and their interest. The meeting closed at 7.40pm.