

## **Minutes of the Yardley Hastings Parish Council**

*Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021, at 7.30pm, by "Zoom Video"*

*(On 4<sup>th</sup> April 2020 Parliament passed "The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020" authorising local councils to hold their meetings by means of video-conferencing, allowing remote access and participation by Council members and members of the public.).*

Participating: Mr H. Cave, (*Chairman*), Ms D. Smith, and Messrs J. Quilter, A. Rowton, C. Pickering, R. Houghton, M. Cooke, J. Keggin and D. Winter.

Clerk: Ms D. Smith (*acting*)                      Public: None

Councillors: Michael Clarke (*left 8.10pm*) and Steven Hollowell

### **173./20 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Carole Clarke.

### **174./20 District and County Councillors' Reports – (circulated in advance of the meeting)**

Councillor Michael Clarke reported that the following day would see the final full meeting of the NCC, once more on "Zoom", the last meeting in the Council Chamber having happened over a year previously. The financial performance of the Council over the last three years had been much stronger than in previous years, and it would be handing over reserves of £60m to the two successor unitary authorities. The NCC would end the current financial year with a probable surplus of around £16m. This was a significant achievement in the light of recent history. The Children's Services had been taken over by a new Children's Trust which was serving the whole county and would in due course be reporting to both the new unitary authorities. The general view seemed to be that the District Councils and the County Council had worked well together in their response to the current Covid emergency, in looking after the most vulnerable people in the community. The rate of new infections in the county was gradually decreasing (apart from in Corby), and the two major hospitals in the county, Northampton and Kettering, despite being under significant pressure, had handled the emergency well and had not had to turn any Covid patients away. Inevitably, however, there was now a significant backlog in the schedule for elective procedures. The emergency funding which the county had received from central government to enable it to respond to the pandemic had been extraordinarily generous. Vaccinations locally were on target, with the 65-70 age group now receiving their first shots. From May 2021 the Hackleton and Grange Park electoral division would be represented by three Councillors in the new West Northamptonshire Council. He himself would not be standing for re-election, having served twelve years in his current role. It was important that younger people should take up the baton. He had enjoyed his time as a County Councillor, and had mixed feelings about standing down, but there were now other things he wanted to do.

Councillor Steven Hollowell referred to his continuing difficulties in his attempts to speak with the officers of the SNC via telephone (as mentioned in his written report, previously circulated). On a more positive note he wished to make a couple of observations in relation to planning matters which he hoped would be of assistance to the Parish Council in determining its attitude to future planning proposals. The first concerned the "West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan". Strategic planning policies were usually framed to cover a period of fifteen years, but they were required to

be reviewed every five years, and in his experience such policies were in practice usually superseded within ten years of them having been first adopted. The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy had been adopted in December 2014 and had subsequently been reviewed in December 2019, at which time the Planning Inspector had determined that it was still fit for purpose. However there were now moves afoot to draft and adopt a new strategic plan for the area to be covered by the new West Northamptonshire Unitary Authority, to take over from the 2014 Core Strategy. This was being called the “West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan”. There was every indication that the new West Northamptonshire Council would be keen to promote economic growth in its area, and that it would view inclusion within the Government’s “Oxford-Cambridge Arc” as being a key part of such policy. His advice to the Parish Council was that after the elections in May it should take a close interest in the new draft plan to establish how the policies included in it could potentially affect the village. The Council should then put in its responses accordingly. If the village wished to have any input to big infrastructure projects, such as this one, such input needed to be made at an early stage. His second observation related to possible future planning applications which would have the effect of increasing the amount of traffic in Chase Park Road. The National Planning Policy Framework gave considerable weight to issues of highway safety. Chase Park Road was quite narrow, without any pedestrian walkways, and this fact could be used to advantage by the Parish Council and local residents when objecting to such planning applications.

**175./20 Members’ Declarations of Interest for items on the Agenda**

None.

**176./20 Approval of Minutes of last Parish Council meeting held 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2021**

The Minutes were approved on the proposal of Mr M. Cooke, seconded by Mr J. Keggin, and signed by the Chairman.

**177./20 Matters arising from Minutes**

None.

**178./20 Recreation Ground**

(a) Progress Report from the working party

It was noted that inclement weather had so far prevented the proposed demolition of the skateboard quarter-pipes.

It was noted that the Clerk had submitted a claim to the SNC for reimbursement of 75% of the “First Deposit” (Net of VAT) now paid to Playdale. The SNC’s Grants Officer had acknowledged, indicating that he would now hold the claim until the Land Registry had completed the registration, and only then approve it for the SNC’s Finance Department to pay. Councillor Hollowell observed that this being the case there was a likelihood that the payment would not be made until after the SNC had ceased to exist, and that it would instead be made by the new West Northamptonshire Council. This might result in an even longer delay, because the WNC would be using a different accountancy system from that currently used by the SNC.

Ms D. Smith observed that one of the issues which had been raised in the responses to the recent consultation was the poor state of the existing goalpost and the absence of any net. She said she was proposing to obtain some quotes for the installation of a new goalpost (to include a net). This was agreed. It was noted that the surrounding ground would need to be levelled and that this could be achieved using material excavated from the junior play area. **Action: Ms D. Smith**

(b) New equipment to be installed in the tarmaced area

Mr J. Quilter reported that following the previous meeting he and a few other Councillors had met up at the Recreation ground to consider options for the future of the tarmac area. They had agreed to ask Playdale for a formal quote for some seating and a “hang-out area”, and this quote had subsequently been circulated by the Clerk in advance of the meeting. It was noted that if some or all of the equipment specified in this quote was ordered immediately it would be able to be installed at the same time as the equipment previously ordered, thereby avoiding the need for any associated additional installation costs. It was also noted that after the cost of this additional equipment was added to the cost of the equipment previously ordered, i.e.: £54,861.60 (Net of VAT), the total cost would still fall well short of the £66,771.48 (Net of VAT) on which the SNC were offering a 75% reimbursement. After a wide ranging discussion it was agreed on a show of hands that the Council should proceed with the purchase of the majority of the items specified in the quote, to include the “Encounter 6” seating installation, an “Encounter 3 Bar Seat”, a “Lakeland Table” and some black “Grasslok surfacing”, at a total cost of £6,501.60 (Net of VAT). These would be installed in the vicinity of the oak tree. It was agreed that the Council did not wish to purchase the Playdale “Kick-against Wall”. It was possible that a similar structure could be created by re-using the breeze blocks from the demolished quarter-pipes, at a significantly lower cost.

**Action: Mr J. Quilter, Clerk**

**179./20 Finance**

(a) Review of the Council’s Asset Register

Councillors noted the amended Asset Register circulated by the Clerk in advance of the meeting. It was noted that this had been updated to take account of the removal of the old play equipment and the skateboard quarter pipes. The revised register was approved on the proposal of Ms D. Smith seconded by Mr A. Rowton. (*Copy amended Asset Register attached*).

(b) Review of the Council’s Annual Timetable

Councillors noted the draft Annual Timetable for 2021-22 circulated by the Clerk in advance of the meeting - essentially unchanged from the timetable for 2019-20. This was agreed. (*Copy agreed Annual Timetable for 2021-22 attached*).

(c) Review of the Council’s Web Publication Policy

It was agreed that no changes to the Policy were necessary. Mr R. Houghton observed that following the recent resignation of Ms. L. Davis from the Council he was currently the sole member of the Web Publication Working Party.

(d) Review of the Council’s Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

Ms D. Smith observed that at the Council meeting in March 2020 she had formally proposed a number of amendments to the Council’s existing Financial Regulations to bring them into line with the latest updated version of the National Association’s Model Financial Regulations (published in August 2019). Her proposal had been seconded by the Chairman and then adjourned without further discussion until the following meeting of the Council, pursuant to Standing Order 32. However this had never been followed through. This was perhaps unfortunate in view of the fact that one of the proposed amendments was to give the Clerk authority to spend the Council’s money, up to a pre-determined limit, (albeit following consultation with the Chairman) “in cases of extreme risk to the delivery of council services”. The Clerk’s technically unauthorised purchase of a licence for “Zoom” in April 2021 had therefore had to be approved retrospectively. She now wished to formally repeat the proposal which she had made at the Council’s meeting in March 2020 (*Item 265./19(b)*). This was seconded by the Chairman and adjourned without further discussion until the next meeting of the Council, pursuant to Standing Order 32.

**Action: Clerk**

**180./20 Promotion of candidacy at the May 2021 election**

It was agreed that there was little more that could be done other than what had already been agreed at the Council's January meeting. It seemed that so far there had been few, if any expressions of interest. It was personal approaches which were most likely to generate greater interest, but the opportunity for these, given current circumstances, was somewhat limited. Nominations for the May elections would be closing at 4.00pm on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> April.

**181./20 Correspondence**

None.

**182./20 Emergency Plan – Report from the working party**

Ms D. Smith said she wished to thank everyone who had responded with their contributions to the marked-up map which she had now compiled, showing the various areas in the village which had problems with surface water, drainage, sewage outflow, flooding etc. She had returned this map to the NCC's Emergency Planning Team, who would now pass it on to the civil engineers appointed by them.

**183./20 Dog-fouling and other litter**

It was noted that there had been a significant amount of dog fouling in recent weeks. Ms D. Smith observed that one of the comments which had been made in the recent survey re: the Recreation Ground was that more dog-fouling signs could be put up around the play areas. She suggested that signs could be put on the Parish Council's litter bins (of which there were three in the Recreation Ground) making it clear that they could (legally) be used for disposing poo bags. Ms Smith observed that a litter pick recently carried out in the village by Mr D. Winter had encouraged a number of other village residents to do the same. Mr Winter then drew Councillors' attention to "Northants Litter Wombles", a website which had been set up to promote litter picking. He himself had joined it, and he observed that currently there seemed to be a big move in and around Northampton of residents being very annoyed about litter and deciding to do something about it. At least one local authority had responded by agreeing to supply refuse sacks and to collect them when filled. It was suggested that this current climate of opinion could be tapped into by including appropriate items in the village publications which would encourage local residents not only to take responsibility for their own actions, but also to challenge the anti-social behaviour of others, if actually witnessed. Ms Smith said she had been asked by one local resident why there were no litter bins in the lay-by on Northampton Road. Her understanding was that the NCC's current policy was that they wished to encourage people to take their litter home, and that experience had proved that the provision of litter bins had exactly the opposite effect. It was however noted that at the present time there was a very large quantity of litter lying on the ground in the vicinity of both the lay-by in Northampton Road and the informal lay-by at the junction of Olney Road and Bedford Road East. Mr Winter said that having signed up to "Northants Litter Wombles" he would continue to do some litter picking on an occasional basis, and he was hopeful that other individuals in the village would join him in this enterprise. It was however noted that the current restrictions on social gathering were still in force, and needed to be observed. Mr Winter observed that using a litter-picker/grab and a hoop designed to keep refuse sacks open had helped him significantly and improved his efficiency. However it was noted that although the local authority were happy to supply refuse sacks (*see above*) they were not prepared to supply any litter-picking equipment. It was agreed that residents' current enthusiasm

for litter picking should be actively encouraged, and it was therefore agreed that Mr Winter should be authorised to purchase a number of litter pickers (at a cost of around £12 each) and a number of hoops (at a cost of around £4 each), such expenditure not to exceed £100 and to be reimbursed to him at the next Council meeting. **Action: Mr D. Winter**

Ms Smith said she would include some appropriate information in the Yardley Helping Yardley newsletter, and Mr Winter said he would arrange for an appropriate post to be made on the “Love Yardley Hastings” Facebook account. **Action: Ms D. Smith and Mr D. Winter**

#### **184./20 Village Sewerage system**

Nothing to report.

#### **185./20 Highways**

##### **(a) Update on outstanding matters**

Mr R. Houghton observed that no progress seemed to have been made towards repairing the leaking storm drain in the highway verge adjacent to 56 Chase Park Road (*see items 162./20 and 167.2./20*). The main carriageway of Chase Park Road had been covered with a sheet of ice during the recent freezing conditions. The Clerk was asked to chase up the matter with NCC highways and the Compton Estate. **Action: Clerk**

The overflowing drains in Castle Ashby Road (by the Former Rectory) and in High Street (by No 95) had both been reported to “Fix My Street”.

#### **186./20 Police and Neighbourhood Watch**

Mr R. Houghton reported that he had registered himself as the Parish Council’s Police Liaison Representative. He would be attending the Police and Crime Commissioner’s briefing meeting for Parish Councillors on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the new policing format for West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire, which would split the County into two “Divisions”, eight “Sectors”, and thirty-six “local policing beats”. The number of “local neighbourhood police officers” across the county was being increased from around fifty to nearer one hundred.

#### **187./20 Pocket Park and Millennium Triangle**

The Chairman observed that the wooden bench in the Pocket Park had rotted away. It was agreed that it would be good if it could be replaced. This was possibly a job for the village handyman.

#### **188./20 Street Lighting**

Nothing to report.

#### **189./20 Planning Applications**

##### **a) S/2021/0276/FUL Replacement of former fire damaged building for previous use as light industrial (B1c/E) (part retrospective) - Pastures Farm Olney Road**

It was agreed that the Council had no objection to the proposed development. **Action: Clerk**

#### **190./20 Councillors’ Reports and Concerns**

Mr M. Cooke observed that the highway verge outside 27 High Street, at the bottom of Church Lane, was being churned up by parked vehicles. It was noted that the same problem was occurring in other parts of the village, particularly in the area of the Millennium Triangle and in Chase Park Road. Mr J. Quilter observed that the Council had previously enquired about the

possibility of installing dragon's teeth as a preventative measure, but had been told that this was not possible because of the obstruction they would cause to the mowers operated by the County Council's mowing contractors. It seemed that there was little that could be done about the issue. Mr J. Quilter asked what progress was being made concerning the proposal to plant some trees alongside the permissive path at the top end of Church Lane. The Chairman advised that the Council had been too late to obtain any saplings from the Woodland Trust in the current season. It would be necessary to put in an application at the start of the next season.

In answer to a query from Mr A. Rowton the Chairman stated that Francis Jackson Homes were intending to resume their construction works on the site adjacent to The Leys as soon as they had finished their current housing development project opposite Sainsburys in Olney. This would hopefully be shortly after Easter.

Mr R. Houghton reported he had received a request from the proprietor of Araminta's Indian Takeaway, in Bedford Road East, that the Parish Council should consider installing some additional street lighting in the vicinity of the premises. This was on the grounds that the area outside premises had a high footfall, for which the current lighting was inadequate. The Chairman observed that the standard of lighting which might be considered appropriate for an urban environment was not necessarily appropriate for a village environment.

Mr R. Houghton said he was concerned about the Parish Council's current inaction in relation to the Environment Agency's proposed works on the Yardley Hastings (West) flood storage reservoir. In his opinion the Parish Council were failing in its duty to the local residents by on the one hand not engaging sufficiently with the Environment Agency's contractors and on the other hand not making local residents aware of the potential dangers to pedestrians and residents' vehicles arising from the movement of the contractor's heavy vehicles along Chase Park Road and South Vale. The Chairman said he would make enquiries of Mark Henderson in the morning to find out more precisely the full extent of the contractors' schedule of works. **Action: Mr H. Cave**

Mr D. Winter said that he had been studying the design of the lower storage reservoir ("Yardley Hastings North") and that in his opinion its depth, together with the steep gradient of its sides, presented a significant safety hazard. He believed that the imminent presence of contractors on site was presenting an opportunity for this issue to be addressed. What was required was the installation of some railings and some warning notices. He would like to make contact with the Environment Agency about this on the Council's behalf. This was agreed. **Action: Mr D. Winter**

Mr D. Winter also mentioned that he had noticed that contractors carrying out work on the highway were in the habit of failing to remove their sandbags at the same time as they took away their temporary signs following completion of their works. There were currently a number of examples, in particular in Bedford Road West. He was encouraged to report these to "Fix My Street". **Action: Mr D. Winter**

#### **191./20 Future Meeting Dates**

Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> March.