

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

*Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 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: Mr G. Gill                      Public: One

Councillors: Michael Clarke, Carole Clarke (*both left 8.00pm*) and Steven Hollowell

### **192./20 Apologies**

None

### **193./20 District and County Councillors' Reports**

Councillor Michael Clarke reported that the work which had been going on behind the scenes towards transferring the responsibilities of the NCC to the two new unitary authorities was coming to an end and was nearly complete. The financial position of the NCC had improved since his report to the previous meeting and he was now able to report that the NCC would be handing over reserves to the value of £95m to its two successor authorities. Looking ahead what now needed to be done was the communication of all-important contact data from the new West Northamptonshire Council to the various Parish Councils in its area, i.e.: the names, email addresses and telephone numbers of the officers in its key departments. Hopefully the transition would proceed smoothly and uneventfully.

Councillors noted the contents of Councillor Steven Hollowell's written report circulated in advance of the meeting. The SNC, along with all of the other councils in Northamptonshire, would cease to exist on 31st March. On the 1st April, all local government duties and powers currently being provided by them would be vested in the two new district councils with county council powers – North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council. This was the first major local government re-organisation in the county since 1974 and heralded the fourth generation of district councils since their inception in 1894. From Day 1 of the new councils existing front-line staff would initially continue as before in their present posts with senior staff already having been appointed. Contact numbers would remain the same for the time being. Following the elections on the 6th May the new councils would develop their own, longer term, strategic plans including establishments (offices and depots). There would be 3 new councillors serving the new Hackleton and Grange Park ward which included Yardley Hastings.

Most of the current SNC senior staff including Richard Ellis, the CEO, would complete their service on 31st March and head out for pastures new. A few had been appointed to senior posts in the new West Northamptonshire Council and they would help to carry the SNC ethos forward into the new organisation. The term of office of all the current SNC Councillors would come to an end at the same time. It had however become apparent that some planning applications usually determined in Committee could not wait and would need to be determined before the new WNC area planning committees were due to meet after the elections on 6th May. It was being suggested that to overcome this issue the existing SNC Planning Committee might be re-badged

as the WNC South Northamptonshire Area Planning Committee for one meeting only in April. Delegated planning decisions were unaffected. In essence, though, all matters concerning Part III planning applications (including house-holder applications) – where already submitted or currently in the process - would continue as normal with former SNC staff based at The Forum dealing with them. This was likely to continue for some time.

Councillor Hollowell said he had been assured that copies of the latest (“Farewell”) edition of the SNC review should have been delivered to every property in Yardley Hastings by Friday 19<sup>th</sup> March. However he was aware that in reality delivery had been very patchy and he was pursuing the matter with the relevant officers of the SNC.

For him personally the 31st March would bring to an end 16 years as district councillor, 14 of them representing Yardley Hastings. Throughout this time, he had enjoyed attending the parish council meetings and had always been particularly grateful to the Chairmen, councillors and clerks over that time for the warm welcome that he had received. His main regret at the present time was that the new development in Northampton Road adjacent to The Leys was still a work in progress. However he believed that Francis Jackson Homes would soon be resuming work on site, following the completion of their current projects in Olney and Corby. The first sign of this would be their application to the new West Northamptonshire Council for an agreement under S. 278 of the Highways Act 1980 relating to the construction of the new access way off the A428. They would also need to apply for the 30mph signs to be moved some distance to the west.

The Chairman invited Ms. Fiona Cole to address the meeting. Ms Cole said that she was one of the three Conservative Party candidates who were standing for election in the Hackleton and Grange Park ward of the new West Northamptonshire Council. Her reason for attending this meeting and the meetings of other Parish Councils in the ward was mainly to listen, and find out and hopefully gain some understanding of the issues currently being discussed at Parish level.

#### **194./20 Members’ Declarations of Interest for items on the Agenda**

None.

#### **195./20 Approval of Minutes of last Parish Council meeting held 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

The Minutes were approved on the proposal of Ms D. Smith, seconded by Mr C. Pickering, and signed by the Chairman.

#### **196./20 Matters arising from Minutes**

*(Item 190./20)* Mr R. Houghton reported that the new spillway on the Yardley Hastings (West) flood storage reservoir had now been completed. The temporary roadway was due to be lifted before the end of the week, and the contractors would hopefully be doing some reinstatement works to the road surface in South Vale.

*(Item 190./20)* Ms D. Smith observed that the Woodland Trust’s website indicated that they would be accepting orders for saplings from “late spring”. Mr J. Quilter said that he believed that Oakfield had a number of saplings in pots which could possibly be made available to the Council. He would bring further details to the next Council meeting. **Action: Mr J. Quilter**

#### **197./20 Finance**

##### **(a) Review of the system of internal control and the effectiveness of the internal audit**

Councillors noted the contents of a draft memorandum circulated by the Clerk in advance of the meeting setting out the details of the Council’s Internal Audit Process and the Council’s Audit Plan for 2021/22. Councillors’ attention was drawn to their legal obligation to carry out an annual

review of the effectiveness of the Council’s system of internal control. It was agreed that the Internal Audit Process had worked satisfactorily during the previous twelve months, and on the proposal of the Chairman the memorandum was agreed. (*Copy agreed memorandum attached*). It was noted that following the resignation of Ms L. Davis there was currently no Councillor responsible for reviewing the Council’s end of year accounts in advance of them being presented to the Internal Auditor. Ms D. Smith agreed to fulfil this responsibility on a “one-off” basis, it being understood that in due course a permanent appointment to this role would need to be made at the Council’s Annual Meeting. **Action: Ms D. Smith**

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

Councillors noted the formal proposal which had been made by Ms D. Smith at the previous meeting (*Item 179./20(d)*) for some amendments to the Council’s Financial Regulations. The proposal had been adjourned without discussion to the present meeting pursuant to Standing Order 32. There being no objections to the proposed amendments the proposal was seconded by the Chairman and agreed – the “predetermined limit” on the Clerk’s spending being set at £250.

(c) Payment of accounts received

Terry Watton	Handyman 01/02/21 – 28/02/21		<b>267.00</b>
Terry Watton	Handyman 01/03/21 – 31/03/21		<b>267.00*</b>
G. Gill	Clerk’s remuneration - February		<b>300.00</b>
Brown & Barden	Grass Cutting – 2 cuts in March	NET: £170.00 VAT: £34.00	<b>204.00*</b>
Northamptonshire ACRE	Annual Subscription		<b>35.00</b>
Playdale Playgrounds Ltd	Deposit – Second Order (50% of total cost)	NET: £3,250.80 VAT: £650.16	<b>3,900.96</b>
SSE	Street Lighting - February	NET: £95.09 VAT: £4.74	<b>99.83</b>
D. Winter	Reimbursement for litter pickers and bag hoops (S. 137 L.G.A. 1972)	NET: £70.61 VAT: £14.11	<b>84.72</b>
J. Garrard & Allen	Legal Fees (Registration of Lease of Recreation Ground)	NET: £575.00 VAT: £107.00	<b>682.00*</b>

\*Not to be paid until receipt of invoice

The Clerk reported that the figure quoted for J. Garrard & Allen’s fees was only a statement of what they were intending to charge, and that they had not yet issued their formal invoice. They had succeeded in completing the registration of the Parish Council as the registered proprietor of a new leasehold title, but had unfortunately so far failed to complete the registration of the required “Restriction” in favour of the SNC, despite the fact that they had had every opportunity to do this simultaneously with their application for first registration. Having been reminded of this they had now submitted a further application to the Land Registry, which was currently still pending. The Chairman observed that he was minded to ask J. Garrard & Allen to justify the size of their proposed fees, but that he would refrain from doing so until such time as the registration of the SNC’s Restriction had actually been completed. The Clerk confirmed that the VAT refund of £5,519.47 (*see item 169./20(a)*) had now been received in the Council’s bank account, and that it did therefore have sufficient funds to meet the above payments. Subject to the above proviso in relation to J. Garrard & Allen’s proposed fees it was agreed that the above accounts be paid. The Chairman then signed the cheques to give effect to the above payments (not including any cheque in favour of J. Garrard & Allen), having confirmed that these cheques had already been written and signed by the Clerk. It was agreed that the cheques could be signed subsequently by one of the other Councillors mandated to sign the Council’s cheques, notwithstanding the provisions of Section F6 of the Council’s Financial Regulations. **Action: Clerk**

## **198./20 Recreation Ground**

### **(a) Progress Report from the working party**

It was noted that all the skateboard ramps had now been demolished, with the rubble and broken timber having been removed off site. Thanks were expressed to the Councillors who had achieved this over the course of two Saturdays.

It was noted that Mark Henderson had given his formal consent to the installation of the two sets of equipment now ordered from Playdale, as required by the terms of the Council's Lease.

Mr J. Quilter reported that he and Ms D. Smith had had a further meeting with Will Desborough of Playdale to discuss the siting of the extra equipment which had been ordered following the previous meeting. This would need to be sited well away from the mature oak tree, which was the subject of a tree preservation order. The best place for the "Encounter 6" and the "Encounter 3-bar seat" would be at a little distance away to the North, with the equipment in "Area 2" being sited a bit closer to the existing mound. The Lakeland Table would be sited adjacent to the tarmac area, approximately half way along its northern edge. He was hoping to receive a revised plan for approval before the end of the week. Subject to weather the proposed start date was now Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> April, to allow time for the extra equipment to be manufactured, and he was having an ongoing conversation with Playdale with a view to ensuring that all the necessary preparatory arrangements were put in place to enable the installation to start on time. It was agreed that Playdale could have keys to both the vehicle security barrier and the padlock on permanent loan during the installation period. They would probably need to place a secure container on site during the installation period. It was unclear exactly how long this period would be.

Mr D. Winter said that if necessary he would obtain some additional keys. **Action: Mr D. Winter**  
The Clerk said he would have a conversation with Brown & Barden with a view to agreeing what mowing might be able to be done immediately before, during, and after the installation period. He would also formally notify the Council's insurers of the proposed works. **Action: Clerk**

Ms D. Smith reported that the goalpost had been rotated through 90 degrees and asked if it could be reinstated to its former position. She had researched the cost of purchasing a new goal post, and had established that goalposts could only be purchased in pairs. Prices for different sizes (to include nets) ranged between £531 and £704. It would be good if a decision on this issue could be made at the next meeting. Mr D. Winter said he would have a look at the existing goalpost to see if its refurbishment might be the most appropriate course of action. **Action: Mr D. Winter**

### **(b) Signage and new equipment to be installed in the tarmaced area**

Ms D. Smith observed that the Council had not yet addressed the issue of new signage, which would be needed as an integral part of the completed project. In her opinion what was required was some comprehensive signage at each of the three entrances to the Recreation Ground, containing all the appropriate safety instructions, and warnings about litter and dog poo etc. Mr J. Quilter observed that Oakfield were currently in the process of installing a quantity of new signage. He would do some investigations. **Action: Mr J. Quilter**

It was agreed that the issues of new signage and possible additional equipment to be installed in the tarmac area would need to be discussed in detail at the next meeting. **Action: Clerk**

It was noted that Terry Watton's latest inspection report was clear.

## **199./20 Promotion of candidacy at the May 2021 election**

It was noted that the "We Need You" advertisement published on the back page of the Winter 2020 edition of the Village Newsletter had again been published on the back page of the Spring 2021 edition, copies of which had been delivered to every house in the village within the last ten days. A few names were mentioned of persons who had been personally approached. The Clerk

reminded Councillors that nominations would close at 4.00pm on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> April, and Ms D. Smith observed that it was a requirement (originating from the Electoral Commission) that completed nomination papers should be hand delivered to the SNC's offices in Towcester either by the candidate, their agent or another trusted person. Blank nomination forms could be downloaded from the Electoral Commission's website. The Clerk confirmed that he had in his possession a fully updated copy of the village's Electoral Register, and was therefore in a position to supply the various "Electors' Numbers" required to be quoted on the nomination forms.

#### **200./20 Drafting and distribution of the Council's Annual Report**

Councillors noted the content of the draft Report which the Chairman had circulated earlier in the day. Ms D. Smith observed that in her opinion there were a few areas in which the wording of the Report could be improved. It was agreed that the delivery of the Report to properties in the village should take place at the end of April. This timing would allow the wording of the Report to be agreed and finalised at the Council's April meeting.

#### **201./20 Correspondence**

None.

#### **202./20 Emergency Plan – Report from the working party**

Ms D. Smith reported that the working party had not had any further communication with the NCC's Emergency Planning Team since the previous meeting. The Team were no doubt pre-occupied with arrangements for the imminent handover to the West Northamptonshire Council. Councillors noted the contents of an email received earlier in the day from the "Flood Resilience Team (Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire Area)" of the Environment Agency. The email was seeking the Council's support in raising awareness about flood risk in the village and also about the Agency's free "Flood Warning Service". The Agency's records showed that of the twenty-seven properties in the village which the Agency considered to be at risk of flooding only eighteen were currently signed up to the Flood Warning Service, which meant that the Service was currently unable to reach the remaining nine properties with a warning. The Agency had also created a survey which they were intending to circulate in the community. Their purpose in doing so was to seek to better understand the potential impacts of flooding in the village and to see if anything could be done to improve the way flood risk was managed.

The Clerk observed that the writer of this email appeared to be unaware of the current conversations taking place between the Parish Council and the NCC's "Flood Resilience Pathfinder Scheme". The email clearly required a swift response, and it would probably be best if this came from the members of the working party, rather than himself. Ms D. Smith agreed that she would take the matter forward with the Environment Agency with a view to ensuring that the respective initiatives on the part of the NCC/West Northamptonshire Council and the Environment Agency were co-ordinated, avoiding any unnecessary duplication.

**Action: Ms D. Smith**

#### **203./20 Dog-fouling and other litter**

The Chairman and other Councillors observed that the current enthusiasm for litter picking was having an observable effect, and that the verges of the roads leading into the village were looking a lot clearer than they had been a few weeks previously. Mr D. Winter confirmed that the litter-pickers and bag hoops purchased by the Council had already been borrowed and used by local residents on a number of occasions. He was endeavouring to obtain a supply of the pink bags which were now appearing (filled with litter) on the verges of the roads in neighbouring parishes.

He expressed the hope that following the end of lockdown it might be possible to continue the current activity on a rather more organised basis. Areas of particular concern were the informal lay-by on Olney Road and the lay-by on Northampton Road opposite Avenue Villa. Councillors noted the contents of a supportive circular email sent to parishes in the SNC district on behalf of the local MP, Mrs Andrea Leadsom. The Clerk referred to the draft reply which he had circulated in advance of the meeting, and it was agreed that he could send this to Mrs Leadsom on the Council's headed notepaper. The reply pointed out that much of the litter being collected consisted of plastic packaging, and requested the government to bring forward proposals which would have the effect of reducing at source the amount of plastic waste which local authorities had a statutory duty to collect and dispose of.

**Action: Clerk**

#### **204./20 Village Sewerage system**

Nothing to report.

#### **205./20 Highways**

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

Mr R. Houghton reported that a number of potholes had recently been filled in on Chase Park Road, and the Chairman observed that a number of potholes along Castle Ashby Road had recently been ringed with white paint.

#### **206./20 Police and Neighbourhood Watch**

Mr R. Houghton reported that the next meeting of Parish Liaison Representatives would be taking place in the third week of April. It was at this meeting that the Police were planning to launch their new strategy for the West Northamptonshire District. He believed that this new strategy would include a commitment to having named officers and PCSOs being allocated to specific areas in the District, as named "points of contact". It seemed that there was currently a real push to develop neighbourhood policing, with the number of "neighbourhood-allocated officers" being doubled. A quantity of plant and equipment had been stolen from the Environment Agency's compound at Waterfall Farm in broad daylight, whilst the EA's workmen had been on site at the spillway. The whole operation had only taken ten minutes. A CCTV camera in South Vale had caught the thieves' vehicle on camera, but not its numberplate.

#### **207./20 Pocket Park and Millennium Triangle**

Mr D. Winter said that he believed he had some wood with which he could effect a repair to the wooden bench in the Pocket Park.

**Action: Mr D. Winter**

It was agreed that the Council could spend up to £50 on some planting for the redundant flushing tank in the High Street, as had been done the previous year.

#### **208./20 Street Lighting**

Nothing to report.

#### **209./20 Planning Applications**

##### **a) S/2021/0386/TCA T1 - Apple Tree. Remove one branch overhanging neighbour's property - 7 The Square (FOR INFORMATION ONLY)**

It was agreed that the Council had no objection.

##### **b) S/2021/0397/FUL - Installation of a freestanding greenhouse - Old Rectory, Rectory Lane**

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

## **210./20 Councillors' Reports and Concerns**

It was noted that the SNC had recently collected a quantity of fly-tipped tyres from the highway verge at two different locations in the parish. With this in mind the Clerk observed that there was a historic pile of old tyres on the private land opposite the end of Park Hill Road. He wondered if in the current climate of enthusiasm the Estate might now be persuaded to remove them. Mr R. Houghton and Mr D. Winter both observed that although there was some additional cost involved there were well-established uses for recycled tyre rubber. There was no need for it to go to landfill.

The Clerk reported that he had not as yet received any reply to the email he had recently sent to Gigaclear's Community Engagement Manager, enquiring as to their proposed timetable for completing their installation works in the village. He said he would chase it up. **Action: Clerk**

Mr A. Rowton enquired whether it might be possible for the Council to purchase an ex-BT red telephone kiosk, since it appeared to him that BT were currently offering them for adoption at a nominal cost of £1. However on further research by other Councillors it immediately became apparent that BT's "adoption" offer related to redundant kiosks which would remain "in situ", and that the current cost of purchasing and relocating a red kiosk was probably in excess of £1k. It was noted that BT currently showed no sign of offering up for adoption the phone box in Castle Ashby Road opposite the School. Indeed they had recently promised to paint it at their own cost.

Mr R. Houghton asked if the Clerk could find out what progress was being made towards the repair of the leaking drain in the highway verge adjacent to 56 Chase Park Road. **Action: Clerk**

Mr J. Quilter asked if the Clerk could report the deformation of the pavement outside 14 Northampton Road, opposite the entrance to the Memorial Hall. **Action: Clerk**

In reply to a concern raised by Mr J. Quilter Ms D. Smith gave an assurance that so far as she was aware the "Nextdoor" app was not a scam, and was legitimate and safe to use. Its function was to connect individuals in any given locality to their immediate neighbours, and she was aware that some local residents were currently using it.

## **211./20 Future Meeting Dates**

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> April