

## Norton Lindsey Parish Council Annual Open Meeting held in the Church at 8.00pm on Tuesday 9 April 2019

**Present:** Cllr J Stobart (Chairman); Cllr Miss A Birch; Cllr K Sparkes; Cllr M Neale; Cllr Mrs A Mace-Leska; WCC Cllr L Caborn; WDC Cllr P Phillips; Mrs J Bendall (Clerk); and 20 members of the public

**Apologies:** Cllr R Mann;

**1. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.**

**2. Minutes of the Open Meeting held on 18 April 2018**

The Minutes of the Open Meeting held on 18 April 2018 were discussed, confirmed and signed.

**3. Matters Arising**

Any matters arising from last year's meeting are covered elsewhere on the agenda.

**4. Chairman's Report / Action Plan Update**

The PC has dealt with a wide variety of issues in the last year which I will summarise under three headings.

1. The first is the Parish Action Plan, which has three elements, rolled forward from last year:

- To improve the quality, robustness and use of the PC website, which has now been up and running for a couple of years. There is not much new to report here. The new server provides us with a robust and secure platform and we are gradually building the content, focusing on those elements which we are required to cover.
- To implement ways of decreasing the incidence of speeding through the village. We have managed to secure training for several volunteers, but have now hit the seemingly insuperable problem that nobody seems willing to volunteer to manage the programme. We have placed several calls in the parish magazine, but to no avail. As a result, we are dropping this from our action plan for 2019-20 as it seemingly is not a priority within the parish.
- To support the redevelopment of the Village Hall and the continued development of the Community Hub (at the pub). The Parish Council has recently paid the £35,000 pledged to the rebuilding of the village hall. Our congratulations go to the Village Hall Committee for successfully raising the money and our thanks to Warwickshire District Council, which has made a very generous donation so that the rebuild can go ahead. We look forward to seeing the new Village Hall complete sometime in the summer and will continue to support its construction and refurbishment as appropriate.

2. The second is the condition of the roads and footpaths in the village. We have highways as a standing item on our agenda and are always happy to receive information from parishioners about matters of concern in this area.

Issues of general concern include the regular appearance and sometimes reappearance of pot holes. These are reported to County Highways as they are noted. Please let the Clerk know if you spot one, or report direct to WCC (there's a link on the website). Some of the gulleys in the parish have been jetted, but others are still blocked. The clerk is compiling a list of those that need to be jetted. Various trees and hedges cut back where necessary. Could we ask all property owners to ensure their hedges and trees are kept trimmed where they adjoin pavements or the road. We've also installed a new grit bin in Lower Norton and replacement bins in New Road and Canada Lane – WDC would not agree to a new bin on Snitterfield Lane.

Dog fouling also continues to be a problem and we still don't have any resolution to the issue of WDC emptying the bins currently sealed up. It seems unlikely that this will be sorted and we will probably seek to have these bins removed. Our best approach is probably to politely challenge anyone we see failing to clear up after their dogs – whether on the pavement or the village green.

Three more localised issues are worthy of note. The first is the ongoing problem of heavy and speeding traffic through Lower Norton, compounded by the flooding that is often experienced on the road and in adjacent properties. The County Council is helping with this, but progress is proving to be rather slow and patchy. The second is the upgrading of the footpath along Wolverton Road, part of the safer routes to school scheme. This has given us a very fine and broad pavement, but there is an issue that some of the telegraph poles and their supporting wires are now in the

pathway itself causing a potential hazard to pedestrians. We've requested some marking on the pavement to highlight their presence, but have yet to see action. The third is the recent accident involving a delivery van running into the Millennium Green, destroying the bench. We are currently pursuing this with DPD insurance.

3. The third issue is planning. We have had the usual range of planning applications to consider during the last year, mostly concerning extensions or other modifications to existing private houses. Two more significant developments were the granting of permission for a new house alongside Sunnyside on New Road and the refusal of planning permission for the demolition of an existing house and erection of replacement at Clangers. This was refused at Planning Committee and also on appeal.

We don't have a big say in determining the outcome of planning applications, but try to make our voice heard with comments that seek to maintain the rural character of the village and ensure neighbourliness whilst allowing people to develop their houses in an appropriate manner.

One final point to note. We are going to be having our first election in the parish for at least twenty years. This is a very encouraging sign and indicates that there are lots of people who are willing to serve on the PC and help to make Norton Lindsey a pleasant and enjoyable place to live.

## **5. Treasurer's Report**

The Depot Fund remains invested in a 95-day notice account which offers an interest rate of 1.74%: not brilliant but certainly better than the interest we receive on our bank savings accounts. We continue to search for any accounts that are available to parish councils and which offer better interest rates than the bank savings accounts, but there is little available.

In the accounts you will see that at 31 March the £35,000 pledged last year to the Village Hall Management Committee for the rebuilding of the Village Hall had been transferred from the 95-day notice account to the current account. This payment has now been made, and so our Depot Fund now stands at £11,740.15.

Our general reserves includes £3,500 which is retained for contested elections, and an asset register renewal fund which at year end was £3,364.

The Precept was increased to £8,000 for 2018-2019, and we received a £21 Council Tax Grant. The Concurrent Services Grant received in previous years has now been completely phased out by Warwick District Council.

Other income received was £786.24 interest on the 95-day account, £11.51 interest on our bank savings accounts, and a VAT refund of £236.47.

Shopping around for insurance saved us just over £36 but this was offset by a rise of over £26 in the cost our subscriptions to the Warwickshire and West Midlands Association of Local Councils, the Society of Local Council Clerks and the Information Commissioners Office.

Staffing costs increased as there was a nationally agreed Local Government Services pay rise, but administration costs were over £186 less than the previous year, when we purchased a four-drawer filing cabinet which was necessary to ensure that all Parish Council documentation and the laptop are stored securely, which is a requirement of the new data protection regulations which come into force in May 2018, along with training on the new regulations. We didn't have much luck with grit bins last year, with two being run over and damaged. These were replaced, and we purchased a brand new grit bin for the bottom of Norton Curliou Lane.

The Parish Council was once again able to make donations towards maintenance of the Church Clock / Chimes, the defibrillator, Millennium Green and the Churchyard, and supported our local village clubs, details of which are on the bottom of the Accounts. We were also able to make a donation to the PCC to help with the cost of repairs to the church clock hammers, bells and bracket work.

## 6. Report from WCC Cllr L Caborn

### Budget

- WCC set a budget of 3% for general use plus 2% ring fenced for adult social care. This is the last year we can apply the social care premium as we await the social care green paper to determine the future for social care funding.
- 2019/20 is the last year of our current One Organisational Plan and cabinet and leadership team are already working on 2020-2025 corporate plan.
- Despite the challenges, these are the highlights of our budget:
  - £6.8 million in children's social care to meet costs of increasing numbers of looked after children, more support for moving from care to independent living, plus additional £2.8 million for children's transformation fund to reduce demand for children's social care.
  - £7.3 million for elderly citizens and vulnerable adults and support greater integration between health and social care.
  - £1.1 million for home to school transport to meet increased demand.
  - £400,000 for new compactors at our recycling sites to meet demand.
  - £300,000 to create capacity in digital and technology investment to ensure service redesign.
  - £2.0 million for a new Early Intervention, Prevention and Community's capacity fund.
  - £1.0 million revenue to generate additional capital for investment in infrastructure.
  - £2.0 million to maintain and enhance our work to ensure a vibrant Warwickshire economy including £1.0 million over 4 years to deliver City of Culture projects to maximise opportunities for Warwickshire.
  - £30,000 to continue supporting the Armed Services Covenant.
  - Additional £300,000 to extend our homelessness project to 4 years working without Borough and District partners.
  - £500,000 to support transport solutions for communities focused on rural isolation and supporting vulnerable groups.

### Economy and Skills

- CWLEP has the strongest growth of all the UK LEPs between 2009 and 2017.
- Productivity (gav) per job filled is also best for the UK.
- Largest exporting area outside London and ⅓ of West Midlands exports.
- 53 foreign direct investment projects in 2017/18 creating 3621 jobs.
- An independent assessment by BEIS for OECD case studies said.
- Dynamism of local economy a major strength.
- Improving productivity, falling unemployment, increased business start-ups, strong local entrepreneurship ecosystem - start-ups, scale-ups, innovation.
- Warwickshire has continued to promote apprenticeships, including role in WCC.

### Health

- In February I lead a public interest debate on the motion: the Council believes that an integrated care system focussed on communities is the right way forward for the Health and Well-being of citizens in Warwickshire. This was approved and confirms our direction of travel working with all health partners from GPs to Acute hospitals.
- It is also the Coventry and Warwickshire year of Well-being, promoting that we are all responsible for our own well-being.
- We are also delighted to welcome Sir Chris Ham, former chief executive of the Kings Fund, as the independent chair of our Coventry and Warwickshire STP.
- Over the past few months we have been working with the voluntary sector, community and health to develop a framework for Social Prescribing in Warwickshire with common parlance and map the good work already happening so we have the same offer for all our citizens.

### Fire and Rescue

- Our chief fire officer retired on 1 April and we have appointed the deputy chief fire officer from West Sussex as our new chief. During the year Warwickshire was in the first tranche of fire and rescue service national inspections under the new police and fire inspection regime. We received a rating of good.

- We also signed an MOU with West Midlands Fire and Rescue for co-operation, including training and cross boundary working.
- Our Fire and Rescue commenced a Hospital to Home transport taking elderly people home from hospital or to a care home when no other help is available and to prevent longer stays. They are settled in and a return visit is made to carry out a safe and well check of the house.

#### Highways

- Warwickshire has been awarded joint top place in the Ipsos Mori national survey of road conditions and repairs: 3300 people in Warwickshire were interviewed within a national total of 100,000.
- We are recruiting additional highway engineers to help deal with the pressure of housing development.
- We have maintained our winter gritting, buying a new to us fleet of updated gritters.

#### Transformation

- The new operating model is now operational.
- Monica Fogarty is appointed Chief Executive with 3 directors for people group, community group and resources beneath. Service delivery and commissioning of services is delivered by 13 assistant directors which include the Director of Public Health and the Chief Fire Officer.
- Our new website is operational and will be further enhanced, including a remodelled call centre operating as the front door to services at WCC. We are working on more service transformation using digital access and models of support.

County Highways is finishing with alterations/improvements on Norton Curlieu Lane.

### **7. Report from WDC Cllr P Phillips**

I am one of your two District Councillors and I can report on the District's achievements over the last period and my own involvement.

- I am currently on the Executive and hold the Portfolio for Housing and Property Services; in that role I have placed emphasis on the following:-
  1. Plans are now well advanced for a new community stadium and athletics track at Europa Way. This development will also include c.200 affordable homes, 50 of which will be provided by the Council and the balance by Waterloo. In addition, there will be a hotel, pub and community centre based around the stadium, which may include a health clinic of some form.
  2. One of the biggest challenges we face as a society is providing enough homes at affordable prices for our children and grandchildren. Every council has a role to play here. For example, over 1,000 affordable homes have been built since 2015 representing more than 40% of all major developments, which is the target set down in the Local Plan.
  3. We have opened a 24/7 hostel in Leamington for rough sleepers and homeless and in the six months it has been operating nearly 100 people have come through its doors, many of whom have now been helped back into the community or reconnected with their families. Overall the Council is putting £3 million over three years into this initiative along with the County Council, driven by Les Caborn.
- Alan Rhead and I have been pushing through the Executive and the Council important measures in respect of new technologies for new house building in the District. Alan has persuaded one developer to construct 8 houses with complete renewables and water saving technologies; In February and now with officers, I have instigated new measures so that we incorporate ideas from the Sustainable Development Foundation into building for new Council Houses.
- Plans are well advanced to acquire sites for up to 500 new council houses in the District in the next four years.
- Importantly for existing council housing, I took through Council measures to ensure that all our council houses will have an Energy Performance Certificate of at least D with a longer term aim to take this to C.
- We are more than half-way through a program to upgrade our tower blocks following the Grenfell fire in 2017. Rather than just doing the minimum safety upgrade we have also looked at the aesthetics of the tower block and how they are perceived by residents, and have invested in completely new interiors in the common areas more akin to what you find in private tower blocks plus revamping the outside of the blocks. Even our hard-bitten MP was highly complementary of the work the Housing team had done.
- Alan has also been closely involved in the comprehensive development of the major sites in East of Kenilworth, South of Coventry and South of Warwick/Leamington Spa. It is only by setting out design briefs in these major sites that well designed applications are comprehensive and in empathy with their surroundings.

- There are specific project boards for each of these major sites and Alan has been liaising with the County Council Highways and Education so that he has an opportunity to help steer on the phasing of new highways and schools which are so important to accommodate all of the new housing emanating from the approved Local Plan.
- This last 6 to 18 months, following WDC support to King George's Playing Fields in Barford, we have successfully sought from the District Council funding to help save Norton Lindsey's pub and build a new Norton Lindsey village hall; the Council has also provided important funding in support of the community centres at Bishops Tachbrook, Whitnash and Chase Meadow. These are all important projects to ensure that rural communities continue to be sustainable. Over 4 years we have spent £4 million of the new homes bonus on community projects, largely in the rural areas
- In support of the police in Leamington, your Council is upgrading the CCTV to help in the fight against crime and provide community protection.
- The Council provided a much-needed grant to the Playbox Theatre in Warwick so that an access could be constructed without which their car park could not be usefully used. This has resulted in the Theatre increasing their footfall and allowed them to return to being sustainable.
- The Council has set down plans to ensure that both St Mary's land in Warwick and Newbold Comyn in Leamington Spa can continue to be protected. I reiterate that there will never be any housebuilding on Newbold Comyn despite persistent rumours.
- Plans are also well advanced for a substantial country park running across the south of the towns between Warwick Castle, through to Bishop's Tachbrook and eventually onto Newbold Comyn. This will ensure that Bishop's Tachbrook will always maintain its identity as a separate community to Warwick and Leamington. We are also looking very closely at how to complete the riverside walk from Leamington to Warwick following the move in a few years of the athletics track.
- The Council is ensuring that there is a complete cycleway from the Woodloes through to Aylesford School.
- There are now two completely refurbished leisure centres at St Nicholas and Newbold Common parks. These refurbishments have been so successful that we have now exceeded one million visitors and they have yet to be opened for a complete year. Kenilworth is next to benefit.
- Alan as the District's 'Procurement Champion' has secured with the Procurement team that all District contracts insist on a plastics policy which demonstrates how the contractor will reduce and/or avoid plastic usage. This will form part of the award criteria.
- On air quality the District has imposed a planning policy that all new homes must include electric car charging points and are working with the County Council on how to improve air quality especially in the south of Leamington near the station, and also exploring opportunities for electric buses.

## 8. Village Organisation Reports

Village organisations and clubs were invited to attend the Parish Assembly and give brief reports on their activities. Reports were submitted from the Cricket Club, Stilton Sniffers, and the Village Hall Committee, and these reports are attached to these Minutes in Appendix 1.

## 9. Any Other Matters / Open Discussion

- Q. Lower Norton residents expressed thanks to the Parish Council for the new grit bin. There were concerns that the Parish Plan did not cover Lower Norton.
- A. The Parish Plan, organised by a group set up for the purpose, reflects the results of the questionnaire which was sent out to residents. We are now in a position where we should have a new parish plan.
- Q. What is Warwick District Council's policy on using brown field sites.?
- A. The policy is to prioritise brown field sites first, but there are very few brown field sites in the district. As a result of this, we are unfortunately having to develop on non-green belt green fields.
- Q. Regarding Wolverton School which is shared with Norton Lindsey. As the school is a small rural school, budgets are being eaked out by parents undertaking DIY jobs. How is WCC trying to support rural schools, and is the budget situation likely to change?
- A. WCC's main job is to make sure there are enough places in Warwickshire as a whole. Money has been put into education over and above requirements, but WCC has very little control over where it is spent but will support where we can. Education is subject to the same budget pressures as all other areas.
- Q. Regarding the plan to move WDC offices from Riverside House on to the Covent Garden car park site, does WDC Cllr Phillips support the move, and what about the parking issues in Leamington?
- A. WDC Cllr Phillips stated that he did support the redevelopment of the Covent Garden site. The Covent Garden car park has concrete cancer, and a few floors are already shut. The car park is inspected regularly, but if there was a

sudden worsening it could end up being permanently shut overnight. WDC has put together a strategy to redevelop the area which also frees up the Riverside House site for housing. Riverside House is twice the size of what is needed, and the planned new offices will be half the size. WDC will ensure there is sufficient displacement parking whilst works are being undertaken, with some parking in the south and some in east. Riverside House is actually designated as a potential carpark for weekend parking during the redevelopment (it is currently shut to the public during weekends). The car parking displacement strategy will be put in place before Covent Garden is shut to the public. The aim is to have no carpark on the Covent Garden site for one Christmas only. The last report from the inspectors was that Covent Garden was ok for now. It should be noted that a lot of what is being reported is not accurate. Leamington will end up with more spaces available during the displacement strategy period, and it should be noted that St Peters car park will be turned into a short term car park for the duration. The plans won't please everyone, but once the new car park is in place we should have 3-400 more places than we do today. Riverside house was deemed not fit for purpose 8 years ago, and previous suggested solutions have been vetoed. There are similar problems in Warwick, but Leamington is being done first.

- Q. There is no footpath from Arles Cottage on Snitterfield Lane to the Blacon Farm track. We appreciate that it is unfeasible to install a footpath, but recent issues on the A46 have meant Heath End and Snitterfield Lane are used as a rat run. There have been a couple of recent incidents with near-misses. Can warning signs be put up to advise that people walk on that stretch of road?
- A. WCC Cllr Caborn advised that he would look into this and would add this to the works on Norton Curliou Lane. It was noted that rat runs are an issue across the whole county.
- Q. Regarding the DPD accident, were the police involved?
- A. The police have not been involved. We are currently liaising with DPD to ascertain if the vehicle belonged to them or a sub-contractor, and once we have this information we will pursue an insurance claim for a replacement bench and the A board belonging to the New Inn, and repairs to the slabs and fence/hedge.

Questions relating to the Village Hall were answered under the Village Organisation reports.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting, and also expressed thanks to the PCC for allowing NLPC to use the Church for the Parish Assembly.

Meeting closed at 21.18 hrs.

## APPENDIX 1

Reports from Village Organisations.

### Village Hall Management Committee

Firstly, as a Committee we would like to formerly record thanks to everyone who has contributed towards the building of a new village hall, from events organised 5 years ago through to more recent pledges. We managed to raise almost 40% of the £500k total sum needed. This was the key to unlocking the possibility of getting money from outside organisations. We'd also like to give thanks to external donors, particularly WDC Cllrs Rhead and Phillips, plus other officers at WDC who have been supportive and helpful.

From seeking tenders to raising the money, it has taken about 15 months. This has had its disadvantages – the price has gone up a little, and we lost our place in the queue for the actual building works.

Our building will be delivered by four lorries – the first was due today but has been delayed on the other side of the Channel. The old hall has been knocked down and the ground works are progressing with the base slab being made ready for the arrival of the building. Once on site, the building should only take one week to get to a watertight stage. This should probably be towards the end of May, with completion expected to be on time at the end of July.

The fete is still being held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in July even though the building will not be complete.

All internal decoration was taken out of the contract to keep cost down which means that the Committee is looking to raise more funds to complete decoration. This will cost circa £10k and we would prefer a contractor to take on this work.

The website is now up and running and includes information about the hall, the business plan, photos, etc, and also has a button for making donation. We are taking bookings and will soon be open for business.

- Q. Is there a committee organising the internal fittings in the Village Hall?
- A. We have involved a number of committee members and WI members to start with to get ideas for what is wanted. Three commercial kitchen designers have submitted plans and we have chosen one, following discussions to formulate a view with WI members who are typical of the sort of people who will use the kitchen.
- Q. There are concerns with Health & Safety with contractors working on site and children playing near the fencing and kicking a football against the fence.
- A. There is nothing particularly dangerous happening on site at the moment. There will be no access to the car park when the building is being erected. Children should not have been playing football against the fence.

### Stilton Sniffers

All Stilton Sniffer reports are published in the Parish Magazine. The last event raising funds for the school was a great success. We held this event in Snitterfield Village Hall, but have a provisional booking in November in our own new Village Hall. We have an Opera event taking place in the Church in June where we are raising money for the costs incurred when the lead was stolen from the Church. Tickets for this event will be available soon.

### Cricket Club

2018 was another important milestone in the history of the Cricket Club.

On the playing side, our embryonic 3rd XI, which plays its Home games at Snitterfield CC, met the targets we set for it when it was formed two seasons ago. What were those targets?

Firstly, it was meant to offer a pathway for our Junior section to move into adult cricket at an appropriate level – for both male and female Junior players, reaching the age of 13+. At that age they can legally participate in a competitive adult team game and hence provide the Club with much needed young players for the future. Secondly, it was a target to provide senior players with a more relaxed game of cricket that required less physical commitment and yet provided an opportunity for them to pass on their skills to a younger generation. By skills, I mean skills in the wider sense of the word – technical playing skills, understanding of the laws of cricket, team skills, the spirit of cricket and respect for fellow players, both on and off the field.

The Club feels it has gone a long way to reaching those targets and, in doing so, the 3rd XI last year also managed to win the 7th Division of the Cotswold Hills League and gain promotion to the next level.

Meanwhile the Junior section also prospered in 2018. The Club employed some external paid coaches to supplement the members who volunteered their services on a Friday evening and we registered some 70 Juniors to participate. This allowed us to field our first ever Junior under 13s team in the Cotswold Hills League and on Sunday mornings it was very rewarding to see the talent and enthusiasm of these youngsters in a competitive game of cricket.

We should not forget that the core of the Club is the 1st and 2nd XIs. As a result of last season's results, the 2nd XI won the Second Division title and in gaining promotion to Division One it meant Norton Lindsey is the only Club to have two teams in the top two divisions of the League – quite an honour and an achievement!

But not everything in the garden is rosy! Like many amateur sports clubs we rely almost 100% on volunteer labour and it becomes increasingly difficult to persuade members to sacrifice their time and effort to either undertake work, help with coaching or support fund raising efforts. Last year it cost the Club over £14,000 to operate – most of which was raised from the bar. But even here the re-opening of the New Inn has had a huge effect on our income, and at the year-end we had a little over £3,000 in the bank. Not much of a reserve or any scope for much needed improvements to the toilets and shower area.

Nevertheless, the village should be proud it has such a facility on its doorstep and of the members who take such good care of the playing area and its surrounds on behalf of the Village Hall. Just think what our Playing Field would look like with no Cricket Club operating there!