

Norton Lindsey Parish Council Annual Parish Assembly held on Zoom at 7.30pm on Thursday 29 April 2021

Present: Cllr J Stobart (Chairman); Cllr A Birch; Cllr N Brown; Cllr A Mace-Leska; WCC Cllr L Caborn; Mrs J Bendall (Clerk); and no members of the public

Apologies: Cllr K Elmhirst; Cllr R Mann; Cllr M Neale; WDC Cllr J Matecki

1. Record of members present

Noted.

2. Minutes of the Parish Assembly held on 9 April 2019

The Minutes of the Parish Assembly held on 9 April 2019 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 Chairman presented his report (see Appendix 1).

5. Treasurer's Report

The Clerk/RFO presented the Treasurer's Report and Accounts for 2020/21 (see Appendix 2).

6. Report from WCC Cllr L Caborn

WCC Cllr Les Caborn presented the Warwickshire County Council report (see Appendix 3).

7. Report from WDC Cllr J Matecki and Cllr A Rhead

WDC Cllrs Matecki and Rhead were unable to attend the meeting but submitted the Warwick District Council report (see Appendix 4).

8. Any Other Matters / Open Discussion

None.

Meeting closed at 7.40pm.

APPENDIX 1

Chairman's Report / Action Plan Update

It has been an unusual year for the Parish Council, as for everyone. Some of our activities have continued, largely unaffected; others have changed considerably.

The most obvious consequence of Covid-19 for the PC has been the necessity of moving all of our meetings online. This arrangement has worked well and all meetings have been well-attended, including members of the public when particular issues have encouraged this (e.g. planning applications). We have also placed greater emphasis on communicating via social media and our website, which the clerk has reviewed to ensure that it complies with accessibility requirements.

Another area of change has been with our procedure for disbursing grants to various village organisations. In place of what amounted to automatic grants, we are now asking organisations to complete a short application form outlining the purpose of the funding and the amount being sort. This ensures that we can respond better to new needs or initiatives that arise – e.g. the commemorative plaques for WWI soldiers and the purchase of Christmas decorations – and that our limited funds are spent to the best effect.

We have also seen a change in councillors during the year. Frances Nolan found it necessary to resign in September, leaving a vacancy which we were able to fill in February when we were pleased to welcome Roger Mann back onto the PC.

Two perennial issues for the PC are highways and planning. With the former, we dealt with the usual round of potholes and blocked drains, reporting issues to WCC. It is worth noting that parishioners can report issues directly via a link available on the NLPC website. We suffered particular problems with flooding last August and mobilised the distribution of sandbags to some of the worst-affected properties. In response to these problems, we have purchased a small number of flood warning signs to warn drivers of dangerous locations. On a more positive note – and with particular thanks to Les Caborn, our County Councillor – Lower Norton has benefitted from significant improvements to the drainage, surface and safety of the road, with several new passing places being constructed. Another enhancement, from which we hope to benefit in the coming years, is the rewilding of verges. The PC has made a small grant in support of this scheme, but we are still awaiting the go-ahead from WCC who are responsible for most of the verges in the parish.

Planning applications have included several small schemes at houses in the parish, but also three larger proposals that have caused considerable concern. The first of these is the proposal to build affordable housing on land behind Brick Kiln Close. Here we joined with Wolverton PC to object to the proposal, mostly on the grounds that this was not the right place to build in order to address Claverdon housing needs, but also because the site experiences significant flooding. The application was refused by Stratford DC's planning committee in March 2021. The second large planning application was for new chicken sheds to be erected on Warwick Road – at the site where old sheds have stood derelict for nearly 20 years. again, NLPC objected, principally on the grounds of potential air pollution, increased heavy traffic and problems of site access. A decision on this is still pending. Lastly, we objected to an application from Hatton Country World to develop a substantial caravan site. In this case, our concerns were centred on the potential for substantial numbers of large vehicles using Dark Lane or driving through lower Norton, neither of which are suitable for such traffic.

As ever, we are happy to hear from our parishioners and to welcome them to our meetings. We set aside 15 minutes at the start of each meeting to receive comments from member of the public.

APPENDIX 2

Treasurer's Report

The bulk of the Depot Fund remains invested in a 95-day notice account which offers an interest rate of 1.00% Gross/AER. The Depot Fund now stands at £12,562.52.

Our general reserves include a sum retained for contested elections (currently £666.46 following the payment made to WDC for the 2019 election) and the Asset Fund which is for the inspection, repair, replacement and purchase of assets and which currently stands at £4,693.64.

Our Precept for 2020 / 2021 was £10,000, and we received a total of £208.13 in interest, £204.16 of which was on the Depot Fund reserves.

Regarding expenditure, our subscriptions and insurance saw only small increases from the previous year, but staffing costs were higher due to a nationally agreed Local Government Services pay rise and the overtime required to deal with the excessive workload brought about primarily by Covid-19, the two major planning applications off Brick Kiln Close and the Poultry Farm and ensuring that the Parish Council had the required policies and documents in place. Administration costs were also higher during this period mostly due to the purchase of the latest edition of Local Council Administration, staff training and the printing costs of the Parish Report which we issued last October in place of the 2020 Parish Assembly. We also had to undergo a limited assurance audit last year because our expenditure went over the £25,000 threshold with the donation to the Village Hall during the previous financial year. Other costs were the contested election costs, and the purchase of flood warning signs following the awful flooding last August, and a new laptop.

The Parish Council implemented a new Grants Policy in 2020 and also undertook a review of donations for the maintenance of Church property. Under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 we were able to make donations to Wolverton School and the WI, purchase Christmas decorations and support the maintenance of the defibrillator. We also agreed to purchase blue plaques to mark the fallen WW1 soldiers who came from Norton Lindsey, and will contribute towards the cost of rewilding part of the verge along Wolverton Road, but these will be paid out of the current financial year. Using discretionary powers, we have been able to support the Norton Lindsey playground, Norton Lindsey & Wolverton Cricket Club, servicing of the Church clock, maintenance of the Churchyard and Church Room, and the Village Hall. An honorarium for the maintenance of Millennium Green will be paid during the current financial year.

**NORTON LINDSEY PARISH COUNCIL
PARISH ASSEMBLY 29 APRIL 2021
Receipts and Payments April 2020 to March 2021**

BROUGHT FORWARD

| | | |
|---|---|-----------|
| Brought Forward: Current Account | £ | 10,237.16 |
| Brought Forward: General Reserves and Depot Fund <i>(includes sums retained for possible electoral expenses and asset register renewal)</i> | £ | 22,949.93 |

TOTAL BROUGHT FORWARD £ 33,187.09

RECEIPTS

| | | |
|---------------|---|-----------|
| Precept | £ | 10,000.00 |
| Bank Interest | £ | 208.13 |

TOTAL RECEIPTS £ 10,208.13

EXPENDITURE

RUNNING COSTS

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---|----------|
| Subscriptions (WALC, ICO, SLCC) | £ | 259.00 |
| Insurance | £ | 274.32 |
| Clerk's salary | £ | 5,267.96 |
| Administration costs | £ | 572.19 |
| Audit fees | £ | 200.00 |
| VAT (to be reclaimed) | £ | 268.87 |

Total NLPC Running Costs £ 6,842.34

DONATIONS / GRANTS *

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|----------|
| Section 137 Payments | £ | 595.29 |
| Grants under discretionary powers | £ | 1,350.00 |

Total NLPC Donations £ 1,945.29

SPECIAL ITEMS

| | | |
|---------------------|---|----------|
| Election costs | £ | 2,833.54 |
| Laptop | £ | 583.33 |
| Flood warning signs | £ | 100.32 |

Total Special Items £ 3,517.19

TOTAL EXPENDITURE £ 12,304.82

CARRIED FORWARD at 31 March 2021

| | | |
|--|---|-----------|
| Current Account | £ | 9,565.88 |
| General Reserves and Depot Fund <i>(includes sums retained for possible electoral expenses and asset register renewal)</i> | £ | 21,524.52 |

TOTAL CARRIED FORWARD

£ 31,090.40

Donations / Grants

Section 137 payments:

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|--------|
| Wolverton School | £ | 250.00 |
| Defibrillator maintenance | £ | 30.00 |
| Norton Lindsey WI | £ | 200.00 |
| Christmas decorations | £ | 115.29 |

Grant payments made under Discretionary Powers:

| | | |
|---|---|--------|
| Norton Lindsey Playground | £ | 350.00 |
| Norton Lindsey and Wolverton Cricket Club | £ | 200.00 |
| Norton Lindsey Church Clock servicing | £ | 200.00 |
| Norton Lindsey Church Room | £ | 100.00 |
| Norton Lindsey Churchyard | £ | 250.00 |
| Norton Lindsey Village Hall | £ | 250.00 |

NB. The following payments were approved during 2020/21 financial year, but will be paid during 2021/22:

| | | |
|---|---|--------|
| Fallen WW1 Soldiers Memorial Signs (budgeted £475.00) (Section 137) | £ | 382.29 |
| Millennium Green maintenance (Discretionary Power) | £ | 50.00 |
| Seed for rewilding verge outside Waylands/Copper Crest | £ | 230.00 |

APPENDIX 3

Report from WCC Cllr L Caborn

This report is dominated by the year of Covid and its effect on the Council and the citizens we serve.

In October 2019 WCC embarked on replacing all IT with Microsoft Pro 365 computer systems for all staff and councillors as part of our transformation programme. This proved to be timely as when Covid struck we were immediately able to allow all staff to work from home. This meant as well as giving at times 24/7 support on Covid the day job was able to carry on. All staff not only worked on their usual role but on other roles to deliver our Covid response.

Public Health lead on our Covid response being granted Beacon Status and mentioned for our vaccine success on a ministerial broadcast. We established infection control teams for South Warwickshire, Rugby and North Warwickshire, these teams working with boroughs and districts. These teams offered advice to businesses, care homes and schools, etc.

Adult Social Care and commissioning has been commended by care homes for its excellent support including PPE from our own warehouse and prompt passporting of funds for care coming from central government. It also worked with all hospitals to minimise delays in hospital discharge for all needing support ensuring no one stayed in hospital longer than needed.

WCCs Test and Trace has helped keep positive rates down and our 6 testing sites and outbreak pop up sites have delivered 155,000 tests and continue to do so.

To plan and deliver our WCC future and Covid recovery, 3 documents have been produced and are publicly available:

1. the Council recovery plan
2. the Director of Public Health's annual report
3. the Warwickshire Health and Wellbeing Boards Strategy 2021 – 2026

These concentrate on recovery for business, mental health, and inequalities of race, finance, education and health across all our communities.

As part of this recovery, we have launched a Property Company to build property including housing and maximise our return for the taxpayer on property disposal. We have also established our Recovery Investment Company to support business recovery and business startups to preserve and create jobs. £2.4m has been invested in Mental Health with focus on young people and dementia.

As portfolio holder, Chair of HWBB, and chair of the Covid members engagement board, I have been involved on behalf of WCC with all Health partners and WDC to deliver our Covid response and the change in the Health system with the introduction of one Clinical Commissioning Group and the progress of the National Scheme to move to an Integrated Care System for Warwickshire which sets in statute that all responsible for delivering care and health at any point to you will work together.

I have worked with parishes to produce road Safety Schemes although some are yet to be delivered but all funds are secured.

Finally, this is my last report to you as County Councillor as I retire at the May 6th election. It has been a pleasure to serve as your County Councillor for the past 16 years and I wish you all well for the future.

Thanks you for your support and friendship.

Les
Councillor Les Caborn
Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health

APPENDIX 4

Report from WDC Cllr J Matecki and Cllr A Rhead

This report is from your two District Councillors, Councillor Alan Rhead and Councillor Jan Matecki. We can report on the District's achievements over the last period and our own involvement. One important matter is the closer joint working with Stratford District Council, where the intention is to consider a South Warwickshire 'Super' District Council, subject to a report from Officers confirming the perceived advantages to all of our residents.

A. Councillor Alan Rhead:

I am currently on the Executive and hold the two Portfolios of the Environment and Neighbourhood Services. In those roles I have placed emphasis on the following:-

1. The Climate Emergency is regarded by your Council as the biggest challenge facing not only the Council, but all of its residents. Despite the pandemic (which has had a large effect on the Council's budget) the Council's Officers have worked on several environmental fronts in support of its target for being a zero-carbon council by 2025. These include: -
 - a) Appointing a Climate Change Programme Director who is part of the Corporate Management Team (CMT).
 - b) The Council has agreed to place £0.5 million in its current budget to address climate change (this despite challenging times resulting from the loss of income as a result of the pandemic).
 - c) The Council held a Peoples' Inquiry into climate change, independently facilitated, and this Inquiry has provided a set of recommendations. The Council has committed to implement those recommendations or set out why it is unable so to do.
 - d) Engaging consultants to provide a feasibility report on the creation of both a hydrogen hub and a solar farm as an alternative or in addition to electric vehicles, particularly HGV's and buses.
 - e) The Council has secured external funding of £744,000 to address energy efficiency and carbon reduction in the Council's public buildings. Together with the Council's match funding of £150,000, 185 tonnes of CO2 per annum will be saved.
 - f) The Council is embarking on installing LED lighting in its external lighting infrastructure.
 - g) Submitted Expressions of Interest (EOI) to the LEP for a Bike Share Scheme estimated to cost £700,000 but with a potential income stream of c.£300,000 pa.
 - h) Working with WCC on a Park & Ride scheme at the ASPS development which will include electric buses.
 - i) Reviewing proposals for external operators for a Car Club using EV only.
 - j) Signed contracts with BP Chargemaster for 50 EV charging points in the Council's facilities.
 - k) The Council has a single use plastics policy which, together with the refill scheme, will reduce the amount of plastic used within the Council's departments.
 - l) As a precursor for a major tree planting project (over 160,000 trees), a mapping exercise has been commissioned as the first important step.

2. Under Neighbourhood Services there have been a number of important steps taken including: -
 - a) Going out to tender for a new waste contract which has taken advantage of the close joint working with Stratford District Council. The eventual contract will be for waste collection throughout both Warwick and Stratford Districts.
 - b) Developing the detail behind the proposed new Tachbrook Country Park which was a commitment within the current Local Plan. It is the intention to submit a planning application in the near future.
 - c) Following an extensive public consultation exercise on the future of Newbold Comyn, a planning application has been submitted for the first phase for a network of mountain bike trails. Other phases will be considered at a future date.
 - d) An extensive programme of thinning and replanting has been undertaken at Oakley Woods which is designed to promote wildlife and plant life.
 - e) New car parking charges have been set. While these changed charges are usually reviewed for January implementation, this year they have been delayed due to the pandemic. The Council took the decision to provide free car parking during the pandemic to assist in the help for local businesses in the town centres.
 - f) 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.

B. Councillor Jan Matecki

I am also currently on the Executive and hold two Portfolios, Housing and Property as well as Culture.

1. For Housing and Property we have achieved the following:
 - a) Increasing the Council's housing stock by purchasing Section 106 housing from developers, which includes 25 homes in Bremridge Close, Barford.
 - b) Embarked on a building program to increase the housing stock further, with 51 new energy efficient homes being built on Europa Way, with other sites identified for development.
 - c) Established a local housing company, Milverton Homes Limited, which is fully owned by WDC. It's aim is to provide homes for rent at market rent levels and to develop sites for both market sales and for the Council's housing stock, which in turn will provide a new and diverse income stream for the Council.
 - d) Secured £1.35m of grant funding for a project that will see 50 of the least energy rated Council homes undergo a whole house energy refit. This will not only improve their energy ratings but will reduce energy costs for the individuals and will also improve air quality.
 - e) Released a new Housing Allocations Policy which meets latest legislative requirements and allocates affordable housing in a fairer manner, ensuring those in the greatest and genuine need get the greatest priority. It also eliminates loop holes which allowed individuals to register for social housing when they were not in need of housing.
 - f) At the start of the pandemic the Council provided accommodation to all homeless and rough sleepers before the government announced their Everyone In policy. We have helped over 80 individuals to be kept secure, with the vast majority remaining to be housed and supported. Some have secured permanent tenancies.
 - g) Released a new Homelessness policy for consultation, which would see a new approach of housing the homeless in their own accommodation and the support services they need being brought to them.
 - h) Closed William Walsgrove House, the homelessness walk in hostel, so it can be converted from dormitory style accommodation into individual rooms. We found during the pandemic than individuals were far more likely to stay in accommodation where they had their own rooms, and with everyone taken off the street it was felt that the need for dormitories, which can accommodate far more individuals, were no longer needed
 - i) Switched electricity supply to 100% renewable and green electricity to all Council corporate buildings, reducing their carbon footprint.
 - j) Provided CCTV at Oakley Wood Crematorium to enable more people to attend services remotely during the current restrictions. These will continue in the future.

2. For Culture we have achieved the following:
 - a) Support for Everyone Active, who manage our leisure centres, during the pandemic to ensure that the facilities remain available for people to use once allowed.
 - b) Secured a £170k grant to support our cultural services during the pandemic, to ensure that places like the Spa Centre and Pump Rooms could open as soon as lockdown restrictions are lifted.
 - c) Have been awarded 2 events for the 2022 Commonwealth Games, Lawn Bowls to be held in Leamington and Road Cycling that will start and finish in Warwick.
 - d) Secured funding for the relaying of the lawn bowls greens in Victoria Park Leamington to an international standard. This will not only benefit the Commonwealth Games, but will leave a legacy for the staging of more international tournaments, which will attract more visitors and further benefit the area.
 - e) Improved Victoria Park with newly laid footpaths. Not only are they new but they are smoother and brighter, and overgrown foliage has also been trimmed back.
 - f) Commenced a project to provide a new Wayfinding scheme in time for the Commonwealth Games. This will help both competitors and spectators during the games, and will also be another lasting legacy which will benefit all tourists in the future.
 - g) Early last year, to further promote the creative sector in our District, we held our first SPARK conference for the coming together and sharing of ideas of that industry. This year the event was held remotely due to the current restrictions, but was still very well supported and productive.