

Norton Lindsey Parish Council

Annual Parish Assembly held in the Church Room, Norton Lindsey at 7.00pm on Tuesday 16 April 2024

Present: Cllr J Stobart (Chairman); Cllr N Brown; Cllr K Elmhirst; Cllr J Gilmore; Cllr M Neale; Cllr R Pocknell
WCC / WDC Cllr J Matecki;
J Bendall (Clerk/RFO)
12 members of the public

2024NLPA/01 Record of those present

Noted.

2024NLPA/02 To receive apologies for absence

None.

2024NLPA/03 Minutes of the Parish Assembly held on 25 April 2023

The Minutes of the Parish Assembly held on 25 April 2023 were discussed, confirmed and signed.

2024NLPA/04 Matters arising

None.

2024NLPA/05 Chairman's report

The Chairman presented his report (see Appendix 1). There followed a discussion regarding the introduction of the 20mph speed limit on Main Street and reporting issues such as potholes, etc, to the relevant authorities. A parishioner also raised concerns with Parish Council communication with the elderly who don't have computers.

2024NLPA/06 Action Plan update

See Chairman's report.

2024NLPA/07 Treasurer's report

The Clerk/RFO presented the Treasurer's Report and Accounts for 2023/24 (see Appendix 2). The Clerk/RFO answered a question on what the depot fund is.

2024NLPA/08 Report from WCC Cllr J Matecki

WCC Cllr Jan Matecki presented the Warwickshire County Council report (see Appendix 3). Cllr Matecki answered a question concerning school bus transport. Cllr Matecki discussed the Chicken Farm planning application which has been granted planning permission at appeal. The Chair thanked Cllr Matecki for his support with this application.

2024NLPA/09 Report from WDC Cllrs J Matecki / P Phillips

WDC Cllr Matecki read out the District Council report prepared by Cllr Phillips (see Appendix 4).

2024NLPA/10 Community Shop

NLCP Ltd committee member Rob Brook addressed the meeting regarding the Community Shop. He started by giving some background to how the community shop came about, and how the initial financial support from NLPC helped with the landscaping and disabled access to the garden. The Shop opened in June in partnership with Snitterfield Stores, but when that partnership ended in December, the committee members made the decision to run the shop themselves, staffed entirely by 30 volunteers. NLPC, along with other organisations, stepped up with extra funding which allowed the committee to purchase the shelving, fridges, freezers, etc. Trading started on 6 January, with the focus being on basics and artisan goods supplied by local suppliers, and things have got off to an incredible start with forecast profits running ahead of budget. The emphasis now is to try to draw in cyclists and walkers, providing them with essentials and treats, and also to continue supporting the community and local businesses. Thanks were given to NLPC, for the two grants it has made, along with the other funders: without this support, the project would not have got off the ground.

2024NLPA/11 Open Discussion

- It was felt that Norton Lindsey is being let down by some of the road signs which are covered with mould and with peeling paint. Two in particular are very bad: the one on Wolverton Road by Red Horse Corner and one on Millennium Green. Maintenance of the signs is to be considered under asset renewal.
- Concerns were raised with maintaining the unique “polo mint” signpost at the top of New Road, which is considered to be of historic interest and which needs to be preserved. It was agreed that this sign would be included with “protecting heritage assets” on the NLPC action plan.
- Safety at the bottom of New Road was raised, with residents concerned with poor visibility and speeding traffic when pulling out on to Warwick Road. It was confirmed that it was not possible to move the 30mph speed limit or the wooden Norton Lindsey sign to the Warwick side of the crossroads, and that it was the responsibility of landowners to ensure hedges don’t block sightlines. NLPC to check the current state of the hedges and to monitor the situation going forward.
- Residents of Lower Norton have written to NLPC with concerns about the state of Norton Curliou Lane. Cllr Matecki advised that this is on his radar, and that WCC officers are to repaint white lines and provide quotes for repairing road edges. Cllr Matecki will be meeting with the area surveyor to discuss this further.
- There are concerns with builders’ cars and vans being parked at the end of Canada Lane and on Snitterfield Lane. It was agreed that all NLPC can do is to keep asking that they don’t park there and to get in touch with the residents concerned to ask their builders to be more considerate.

2024NLPA/12 Close of Meeting

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm.

APPENDIX 1

Chairman's Report

Most of the activities of the Parish Council are driven by local issues, but two major national events made their mark last year. We installed two new picnic tables on the village hall playing fields to mark the platinum jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II and coronation of King Charles III. And we also marked death of Queen Elizabeth by organising additional engraving on the jubilee signpost at Red Horse Corner – paid for by a very generous donation from a parishioner. In addition to this, we have made donations to a range of organisations and facilities within the parish, including Norton Lindsey Community Hub, the playground, and the cricket club. We've also helped with the cost of maintaining the churchyard and church clock, and the defibrillator, and again installed a Christmas tree and lights on the Millennium Green.

More mundane, but just as important, we continue to make every effort to ensure that potholes are filled, street lights are mended, and problems such as fly-tipping and the leak of sewage on Snitterfield Lane are reported and addressed. We are also keen to get parishioners to do their bit by keeping hedges next to pavements trimmed so that people can walk safely – a particular issue on Main Street.

There has been a total of twelve planning applications in the parish this year, most of them relating to small-scale schemes. Of these, five were granted, five related to agricultural buildings or merely gave notice of permitted development and so required no action, and two were withdrawn. Our comments, of course, feed into the decision-making process rather than determining the outcome. The planning application for new chicken sheds to be erected on Warwick Road – on the site where old sheds have stood derelict for nearly 20 years – has just received permission on appeal. We find it difficult to understand this decision which will, no doubt, cause considerable concern for some parishioners. The PC is still considering how best to respond.

A big concern for everyone in the village is flooding, which seems to have become an even bigger problem over the last 12 months. Thankfully, this has not affected people's homes, but it is very disruptive. Whilst there is little that NLPC can do directly, we continue to press both the District and County Council to take steps to mitigate the problem. One success was securing alterations to the drainage on Snitterfield Lane, but we are struggling to get WCC to clear blocked gullies.

Our own action plan focuses on things that we can try to achieve ourselves. It comprises four elements:

[1] roads and footpaths. We have been working with WCC to address the speed of traffic along Main Street. A new 20mph speed limit has been agreed in principle and will hopefully be in place later this year. We monitor the condition of footpaths, several of which are becoming increasingly difficult to use. Some of the worst are beyond the boundaries of the parish, but we are liaising with Wolverton PC to seek improvements.

[2] sustainability and quality of the environment. We continue efforts at rewilding small part of the verge within the village and are discussion with neighbouring parishes about trying to create a more joined up approach. One product of this was a meeting held in September which provided information about some practical steps that people can take to reduce their impact of the environment. This was co-hosted with Wolverton PC.

[3] improving communication with parishioners. A summary of our meetings is published each month in the Parish Magazine and all the minutes are available on the NLPC website and on the PC noticeboards. We have started using Facebook more, but realise that this does not reach everyone in the parish. As ever, anyone is welcome to attend our monthly meetings, either to raise particular issues or simply to observe proceedings.

[4] managing heritage assets. Main Street and some surrounding areas are covered by a conservation area, but the PC is working to identify the best way to assure long-term maintenance of particular structures. These include the Stanks horse trough and Victoria signpost.

More details of the activities undertaken by NLPC in the last two years can be found in the 2024 Parish Update, a copy of which has been distributed to houses throughout the parish.

And finally, if anyone would like to become more involved in the work of the PC, we currently have a vacancy. For more details, please speak to the Clerk or Chair.

APPENDIX 2

Treasurer's Report

The Receipts and Payments on display are self-explanatory, but I will go through a few items of note:

The bulk of the Depot Fund is still invested in our 95-day notice account which offers a better rate of interest than the accounts we hold with NatWest. During the last financial year, we made a £3,500 donation from the Depot Fund to the Community Shop for landscaping and disabled access to the garden, which leaves the balance of the Fund standing at £9,707.54.

Our general reserves include sums retained for:

- Election costs, which now stands at £3,200 following last year's uncontested election charge of £300
- Asset Fund, which is for the inspection, repair, replacement and purchase of assets, currently stands at £5,494.83.

Receipts during the year included:

- the Precept which increased to £10,500,
- £525.42 in bank interest
- a donation of £650 for the engraving of the signpost.

Regarding expenditure, our running costs showed an increase on the previous year. Subscriptions and the ICO fee was up by £10, the cost of insurance increased by £36.00, and staffing costs and administration costs were higher than in 2022 / 2023. Staffing costs increased due to an NJC national salary award for 2023/24, which was back dated to 1 April 2023, and admin costs were higher due in part to training fees. Again, there was no audit fee to pay as we were able to declare ourselves exempt from sending the completed Annual Government and Accountability Return to the external auditor for a limited assurance review. Nearly £540 of expenditure is VAT which is due to be reclaimed.

Finally, as mentioned by the Chairman, we were in the position to award more grants in 2023/2024, details of which are listed on the next page.

NORTON LINDSEY PARISH COUNCIL PARISH ASSEMBLY 16 APRIL 2024 Receipts and Payments April 2023 to March 2024

BROUGHT FORWARD

Brought Forward: Current Account	£	16,673.47
Brought Forward: General Reserves and Depot Fund <i>(includes sums retained for possible electoral expenses and asset register renewal)</i>	£	24,242.95
TOTAL BROUGHT FORWARD	£	40,916.42

RECEIPTS

Precept	£	10,500.00
Bank Interest	£	525.42
Donation for signpost engraving	£	650.00
TOTAL RECEIPTS	£	11,675.42

EXPENDITURE

RUNNING COSTS

Subscriptions (WALC, ICO, SLCC)	£	285.00
Insurance	£	300.00
Clerk's salary	£	3,940.56
Administration costs	£	198.99
VAT (to be reclaimed)	£	538.47
Total NLPC Running Costs	£	5,263.02

DONATIONS / GRANTS *

Section 137 Payments	£	3,250.00
Grants under discretionary powers	£	7,450.45
Total NLPC Donations	£	10,700.45

SPECIAL ITEMS

Platinum Jubilee Memorial	£	2,340.50
Election costs	£	300.00
Total Special Items	£	2,640.50

TOTAL EXPENDITURE £ 18,603.97

CARRIED FORWARD at 31 March 2024

Current Account	£	8,019.50
General Reserves and Depot Fund <i>(includes sums retained for possible electoral expenses and asset register renewal)</i>	£	25,968.37

TOTAL CARRIED FORWARD

£ 33,987.87

* DONATIONS AND GRANTS

Section 137 payments

NL Public Access Defibrillator (Norton Lindsey Village Hall)	Defibrillator maintenance (cost of replacement pads and new battery)	£ 250.00	Local Government Act 1972, s.137
Norton Lindsey Community Pub Ltd	Donation towards the purchase of retailing fixtures, fittings and equipment to enable to Community Shop to remain open	£ 3,000.00	Open Spaces Act 1906, ss.9-10

Grant payments made under Discretionary Powers

Norton Lindsey Playground	Donation towards running costs of playground	£ 375.00	Local government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, s.19
PCC / NL Church Clock	Donation to cover the costs of servicing	£ 200.00	Parish Councils Act 1957, s.2
NL Church Room	Donation towards insurance and electricity costs	£ 250.00	Local Government Act 1972, S.133
PCC / NL Churchyard	Donation towards maintenance costs	£ 250.00	Local Government Act 1972, s.214(6)
Norton Lindsey Community Pub Ltd	Donation towards the cost of landscaping works around the new community shop and the provision of disabled access to the community garden	£ 3,500.00	Local Government Act 1972, s.137
Christmas Tree and decorations/sign	-	£ 225.45	Local Government Act 1972, s.144
Norton Lindsey Cricket Club	Donation towards cost of artificial pitch for junior players	£ 2,500.00	Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, s.19
Millenium Green Maintenance	Donation towards costs incurred while maintaining Millennium Green	£ 50.00	Open Spaces Act 1906, ss.9-10
Norton Lindsey Village Hall	Donation towards coronation celebrations	£ 100.00	Local Government Act 1972, s.137

APPENDIX 3

Warwickshire County Councillor's Annual Report - April 2024

The year was still dominated by the cost of living crisis. The County Council continued to providing advice to families, and supported residents with financial support through various grants and schemes, which were made available through the Household Support Fund. This scheme was going to close at the end of March 2024, but support has now been extended for a further 6 months.

The new all through school in Bishop's Tachbrook, Oakley School, is still on target to open in September 2024. The year 7 intake that started in September 2023 have spent their first year in Myton School's new 6th form centre, and will move to the new school building this September 2024, along with a new year 7 reception class intake.

A 'Task and Finish' group set up to look into the inequalities of education throughout the county, continued to look at what drives these inequalities. It visited schools within Warwickshire and neighbouring counties that had achieved better than expected results, to further understand how the results were achieved. The group, which I am part of, continues to meet and will hopefully put out a report in the very near future.

The County Council secured over £7.5m of BSIP Plus (Bus Service Improvement Plan Plus), funding from the DfT. The BSIP Plus will support, protect and enhance bus services and support new initiatives. The funding will help ensure Warwickshire can take forward some of its BSIP priorities and, coupled with the extension of the government's £2 bus fare cap, will help encourage patronage growth across the bus network.

WCC was also successful in securing £3.3m for Warwickshire through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund, to provide hundreds more charging points across the county. This will help to facilitate the switch to low and zero emission vehicles. Potential sites, especially in rural areas and areas with little or no EV infrastructure, were sought from the public and community groups. These sites are now being evaluated.

For 2023/24, WCC's budget for pothole repairs is £1.970m. In addition, WCC will spend approximately £1.75m of capital on small patching works. So far this financial year, 7,890 potholes have been repaired across the county's road network. Warwickshire has a strong reputation for making repairs and are ranked 4th out of 30 peer authorities in the National Highways and Transportation Survey for overall highways maintenance, condition of highway and how quickly we deal with potholes and damaged roads.

WCC Highways have also completed 63 schemes that delivered 21 miles of resurfacing works, a further 64 schemes that delivered 44 miles of surface dressing and 53 schemes that have delivered 10 km of footway reconstruction schemes.

Budgets for all Councils remain a challenge. This year's County budget which includes, 2% for the adult social care levy, has been driven by the rising costs of adult social care which has seen an investment of £28m, children's social care services which has seen an investment of £8m, supporting children and young adults with special educational needs and disabilities, and home to school transport which has just under £9m of investment to ensure the County can continue to deliver high quality transport for over 10,000 children each day.

Locally, I was pleased to have the IndieGo Plus 'on demand' bus service extended to Norton Lindsey, which has not had a regular local bus service for many years. This trial bus service, which replaced the old No.16 bus service and covers villages west of Warwick, was a finalist in 2 categories at the national Citti Awards held in London. It took first prize in the best 'Public Transport Award' category. It is also attracting interest worldwide, with a national Academy in the United States, looking at demand responsive transport, contacting me for information on our service. It continues to increase patronage, and this year has exceeded the number of passengers that travelled on the old No 16 service in the last year of its operation.

It has been agreed that a speed limit of 20mph could be implemented on Main Street, which will make it safer for pedestrians, especially children walking to and from school, to walk along this stretch of road. I am using funding from my delegated budget to progress this scheme, and it should go out to consultation in the very near future. I continue looking at ways to improve road safety in all our villages.

The planning application for a quarry at Wasperton has now had all comments summarised and sent to the applicant for review. The applicant now has an opportunity to submit proposals to mitigate any concerns raised. These proposals can be inspected and commented on in a similar way to the original proposal. It is unlikely that the application will be in front of the Regulatory Committee before the summer. I continue to support the local community in fighting against this proposal, and will speak against the proposal at the committee hearing.

Cllr Jan Matecki

April 2024

APPENDIX 4

Warwick District Councillors' Annual Report - April 2024

It's a pleasure for Jan and me to be here again, and especially for me after a four-year gap. I should start by thanking my predecessor Councillor Alan Rhead for his 16 years of service.

So what do we do as District Councillors? Jan and I sit on various committees in the District council, and as well as sitting on the Full Council, I am a member of the Planning Committee, I chair the Asset Compliance Committee, and also sit on the Audit and Standards Committee and the Employment Committee. Jan will cover his more extensive roles at both County and District in a while. If you didn't know, all these meetings can be viewed on Warwick District Council's YouTube channel. I'm sure that you'll all rush home after this APM to subscribe and watch the historic meetings.

Seriously, this report is actually rather a low-key report this year as not a great deal of significance has happened at the District Council. As you may be aware we have a Labour/Green coalition running the Council. I think the year can be summed up by the Leader of the Council stating in full Council, "we were led by the officers."

We're not sure what the coalition's new major priorities are as they continue with the initiatives that were underway in the previous administration. We do know that council tax increased as much as possible, parking charges are up by 10% and taxi fares by 33%, with general inflation at just 3%. And that they have nearly doubled the budget on the Pump Room Gardens refurbishment and have presided over the costs of Kenilworth's Abbey Fields Swimming Pool going up by more than the entire annual council tax revenue from all residents.

Matters have not been helped by the Labour Group having a cabinet member resigning after just three months, then a change of leader and two councillors resigning from the Council. And the Green Party District Council Leader doesn't even live in the District, so is unaffected by his decisions.

So much for the wider picture. Coming back to Budbrooke Ward and Norton Lindsey in particular. We both continue to work to support residents in a large variety of ways from planning issues too numerous to mention, bin collections, footpath works, playgrounds, path clearance and fly-tipping. And we have obtained additional funds for the Norton Lindsey Community Shop.

Staying in Norton Lindsey, it was disappointing to learn a few days ago that the planning Inspector had allowed the appeal against the refusal by WDC to grant planning permission for a new poultry farm. We feel that there are many concerns about this judgement, in particular the submission of new information from the applicant after the committee decision, and the Inspector failed to consider properly relevant matters raised by objectors, and which planning conditions applied to mitigate concerns raised fail to achieve the necessary road safety measures they are intended to eliminate.

On a slightly cheerier note, one of the last actions that Alan Rhead took as your district councillor was to secure the District Council's funding for the Barford Youth and Community Centre's new building and it's good to see the progress being made on the build.

More of a challenge has been the two major solar farm developments in the Green Belt which came to Warwick District's Planning Committee in the 2nd half of 2023.

The mega schemes would cover the equivalent of 85 football pitches near Honiley and 65 football pitches near Sherbourne. Lib Dems proposed that the two schemes should be approved despite WDC's planning officers recommending to reject the Honiley scheme. Labour and Green also voted to approve. Only the Conservatives and Independents stood up for the green belt.

The danger we fear is that we are going to be salami slicing our way through the green belt. In the meantime, Jeremy Wright, MP has succeeded in getting the Honiley solar farm reviewed at national level. Though we have not Nothing has been heard from the Labour MP who currently covers Sherbourne.

Which leads on to a very important note. While we are here to help you there is one area where we need significant input from yourselves. That is the South Warwickshire Local Plan or SWLP for short, which is slowly winding its way through its multi-year process. The second call for sites has just been completed and while putting a site forward does not mean it will be approved for development the SWLP has the potential to significantly alter the size and characteristics of Barford. Please go online and look for SWLP interactive map. You will see if all the proposed sites were to be developed in Barford it would more than double the size of the village compared to 2012. Your views are welcome at any time, but I have secured in Full Council that there will be a full consultation with villages affected. But you need to start pulling together your thoughts on this now.

Finally, you may not be aware that every 10 or 15 years the Electoral Commission reviews the structure of all the UK constituencies for the Westminster Parliament. The latest such changes were approved by Parliament in Autumn 2023. The impact locally is that Budbrooke Ward, which used to be part of the Warwick & Leamington Constituency, has now changed to Kenilworth & Southam Constituency as of the next general election.

As always, I'm happy to take any questions.

Cllr Peter Phillips