

AMPNEY CRUCIS PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 12 MAY 2014
AT 7.30PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL, AMPNEY CRUCIS.

Present: 19 electors and District Councillor Sir Edward Horsfall
Presiding: Councillor Barry Dent
Clerk: Jayne Webster

1. Minutes of the last Parish Meeting held on 13 May 2013

The minutes were agreed and signed as a true record.

2. Annual Report of Ampney Crucis Parish Council

The Chairman gave the following report:

As ever, the Parish Council has had a busy year.

During the last year the Parish Council has seen a few changes. In July 2013, Peter Kelly stood down after 14 years as Chairman and member of the Parish Council. We would all like to thank him for his invaluable contribution over the years. The Parish Council now comprises of me, our vice Chairman, David Vessey, Alan Lewis, Gerald Gaden, Adrian Grazebrook, Simon Holt and Rosanna Armitage, who joined us in November.

Each Councillor has had their own area of responsibility within the Council over the past year, in an attempt to ensure that one person does not undertake all the work. Consequently, as Chairman, I oversee financial details, David and Simon have taken on the responsibility for planning and related matters, Adrian looks after the footpaths, Gerald the burial ground and other council assets and Simon also keeps an eye of the playground. Simon is continuing to liaise with District Councillor Sir Edward Horsfall on how best to spend the Youth Fund which CDC has allocated for youth projects. Alan took over the responsibility for the annual Spring Clean and oversees maintenance of the War Memorial. Rosanna has been involved in setting up the Community Fund.

The Council has been very ably represented at District level by Sir Edward Horsfall and at County level by Mr Shaun Parsons. We always welcome their contribution in response to queries from the Council. Two villagers who provide a regular service to the Council are Janet Campbell, our Tree Warden and Neil Holt, our Internal Auditor.

We have held eight meetings this year covering a wide variety of topic.

Planning

The Parish Council received 44 planning applications this year, including 13 tree work applications. Should there be an objection; copies of all letters of objection written by the Council are posted on the notice boards.

Two applications of particular note were the application for a Solar Farm on the outskirts of the village. Whilst the Council had no objections to the proposal, a letter was sent to CDC outlining the Council's concerns regarding screening, with particular regard to Wayside.

In December 2013, an application to build 8 houses in School Lane was submitted to CDC. At the January Parish Council meeting the Council decided by a majority of 6 to 1 to oppose the development on the grounds that the village is not sustainable (in planning terms), there is currently no need for open market or affordable housing, the central landscape is protected and the village has no need for the development to guarantee it's future viability. The CDC Planning Officer recommended refusal of the application but CDC decided the application should go before the Planning Committee. Representatives from the Parish Council and the village were invited to speak against the development. A total of 54 letters were received by CDC, from residents opposing the development plus a petition signed by 22 School Lane residents. There was one letter from a village resident in favour of the development. A site visit was recommended as a result of the meeting. This never took place and the application was withdrawn by the developer. The Parish Council understands that the parcel of land has since changed ownership.

The new Local Plan (formerly called the Local Development Framework) has yet to be formalised and will eventually take the place of the 2001-2011 Cotswold Local Plan - the Parish Council will ensure that they continue to respond on behalf of the residents of the village. All planning applications can be viewed online at www.cotswold.gov.uk .

Sunhill

The Sunhill Action Group continues to represent the Parish Council in discussions relating to the composting plant.

Finance

The precept for the year ending 31 March 2014, was £6888 slightly down on the previous financial year (£6904).

The accounts for the year have been audited by our Internal Auditor, Neil Holt and externally by Grant Thornton.

Once again the Council made a small donation to the Cotswold Tree Warden Group whose funding has been withdrawn by CDC.

The Parish Council continues to jump through many of the same hoops required by much larger Councils, with incomes of up to £1million. Although, now more familiar with the scheme, the audit processes are time consuming and inappropriate for small councils such as ours.

Burial Ground

The Council has very kindly been donated a piece of land in order to extend the Burial Ground. Negotiations are ongoing with the planning department at CDC and the Environment Agency.

The grass cutting contract for the coming year has been awarded again to local contractor, Tony Williams. Tony's company, Cottage Garden Services, have been cutting the grass in the village for 11 years now, and his work is appreciated. The Burial Ground conditions and fees, which have remained unchanged for the last 3 years, were reviewed on November 2013 and applicable from 1 April 2014. A copy of the fees and conditions is available on the village website or can be obtained from

the Clerk.

On 19 October 2013 there was a very successful clear up of the Burial Ground and the Council would like to thank everyone who gave up a few hours of their time to help out.

Mr Harold Stevens, has very kindly made a new pair of oak gates for the Burial ground, and the Council would like to thank him for his time and workmanship.

Praying Cross Wall

There has been no need for further maintenance this year.

War Memorial

The Council again allocated £100 from the precept to add to the maintenance fund, to cover future repairs to the War Memorial. Maintenance of the garden around the Memorial continues to come under the grass cutting contract and is working well. In addition, Tony Williams very kindly supplied and installed replacement wooden posts and chains around the roadside edge of the Memorial. The Council would like to thank him for his very generous gesture.

Highway matters

The Parish Council continues to liaise with GCC regarding the traffic calming measures along the A417. Last Autumn GCC put forward a plan to install an addition sign warning drivers of the bends on the east bound carriageway by Ampney Park, renew the entry signs to the village, add 'slow' signs on the road and renew road markings at the crossroads by the Crown of Crucis. The new double bend sign has been installed. The school have very kindly agreed to design the emblem for the two entry signs and the lining is due to be completed this summer. In January a traffic survey was carried out, the cost was covered by County Councillor Parsons. The results showed that the majority of motorists did drive within the speed limit. GCC will only fund part of the cost of the improvements and the remainder will have to be funded from local sources.

During 2013, GCC reshaped and restored the grass verge on the junction of Ashbrook Lane and Riding Lane, the signpost was also replaced. The corner now looks much better and allows lorries to turn more easily.

Drainage

Drainage in certain areas of the village continues to be a problem. However, during the past year drainage has been improved along Riding Lane, in particular by Birt's Cottage. Residents worked with the Highways Department at GCC and the Parish Council gave £100 towards the work.

Last year, after a meeting with Crucis Park Farm it was agreed that regular maintenance of the ditch behind Durncourt Cottages would continue but they requested that residents did not use the field to dump rubbish. In addition, this year GCC jet washed the culvert, which runs from the ditch, under the Village Street and then alongside the Burial Ground. However, the Council continues to liaise with the Highways Department regarding drainage in the Burial Ground.

The ditch behind The Pleydells was also cleared, by the landowners, earlier this year

and GCC are also looking into the drainage from Butcher's Arms Lane down to The Pound.

Footpaths

The village footpaths are walked on a reasonably regular basis by members of the Parish Council but we do depend on members of the public to alert us to any problems with the footpath network. We maintain good relations with the local farmers who can generally be relied upon to mark clearly any footpaths which have been disturbed by ploughing.

Community Emergency Plan

This year the Council has worked on the preparation of an Emergency Plan. CDC is keen for Parish Councils to develop plans in the event of an emergency. The document will appear on the village website in due course.

Spring Clean

A very successful Annual Spring Clean took place on 8 March 2014 and the Council would like to thank everyone who volunteered.

Licensing applications at Ampney Downs farm

The 3 day music festival at Ampney Downs Farm passed last year, largely without incident, but with local residents being alert to the signs of any trouble.

Communications

The Ampney Times continues to be delivered to all households in the three villages, Ampney Crucis, Ampney St Mary and Ampney St Peter. Thanks must go the production team Jan Barker, Frank Skinner, John Franklin, Sharon Buckley and David Wells. Jan is standing down after a year as Community Editor and the Council would like to thank her for her work over the past year and Sharon Buckley has taken over as Editor.

The newsletter was produced using reserves and revenue from advertising, apart from the cost of postage, which was taken from the Council's General Contingency fund. Next year the cost of production will come from reserves and revenue but the cost of postage has been included in the precept. The Parish Council is currently liaising with the production team on how to resolve the issue of postage, as the cost of postage increases this is an ongoing concern.

There is also a village website which has been run by Frank Skinner for the last 14 years. There have been many thousands of hits since 2000 and the website consists of 470 pages, mainly functioning as reference pages. The Parish Council posts their notices and minutes on the site as an additional means of notification, and all minutes, from 2000 onwards are on the site. Whilst Frank is happy to continue running the site if anyone else in the village would like to take it over Frank would have no objection but he feels that whoever takes over should be able to commit for at least 3 or 4 years. The village database of emails affectionately known as 'Psst', which was re-launched a few years ago, is working well and helps aid communication.

The Playground

The day to day management of the playground now lies with the Friends of the

School and the Playground Committees, although the Parish Council meets the costs of insurance premiums. A new bench has been purchased and routine repairs and maintenance have continued throughout the year. Councillor Holt is in the process of purchasing goal posts with funds available from the Youth Fund held by District Councillor Horsfall.

The Council has built up a sinking fund if ever the playground has to be removed, which is approximately £6000. This means that there will be no need to add to this figure.

Queen's Diamond Jubilee Legacy

Councillor Vessey has worked extremely hard to put together a book which captures the village on the day of the Diamond Jubilee. Copies have been printed and purchased by many villagers. But if anyone missed out, first time round, there will be another opportunity to order a copy at the village fete in June.

Finally, the Parish Council would like to thank all those who have contributed in any way to the life of the village in the last year - without their help the village would not be such a pleasant place to live in. Thanks also go to those present for attending tonight's meeting.

Open Discussion

The bad state of Allotment Lane was raised. The Chairman advised that the Council would continue to liaise with GCC regarding Highways' issues. The Planning Application for a change of use was also raised and would be discussed in further detail during the Annual Council meeting. One villager raised concern over a fence that has recently been erected in the village. Lastly, there was a discussion regarding the new proposed entry signs to the village.

3. Parish Council accounts for the year ending 31 March 2014

These were circulated and noted.

4. Accounts of the Village Hall Charity and the Robert Pleydell Educational Charity

Reports were given and noted. The Chairman thanked Mrs Peggy Thompson on behalf of the Council and village for her many years of loyal service as Booking Secretary for the Village Hall.

5. Reports from other Village organisations.

None

The Chairman thanked those present for attending.
Meeting closed at 8.05pm.