

AMPNEY CRUCIS PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 16 MAY 2016 AT 7.00PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL, AMPNEY CRUCIS.

Present: 19 electors, County Councillor Shaun Parsons and District Councillor David Fowles
Presiding: Councillor Neil Holt
Clerk: Jayne Webster

1. Minutes of the last Parish Meeting held on 11 May 2015

The minutes were agreed and signed as a true record.

2. Annual Report of Ampney Crucis Parish Council

The Chairman, Neil Holt, gave the following report:

The Parish Council has had a busy and interesting year.

This year saw a significant change in membership of the Parish Council.

Eleanor Toby, Tony Williams, David Hardy and I joined existing Councillors Rosanna Armitage, Doug Crook and Simon Holt, and I was elected as Chairman at the May 2015 meeting. In January Eleanor decided to stand down and I would like to thank her for her commitment to the Council. Andrew Raphael was co-opted onto the Council in March.

The Parish Council has been represented at District level by David Fowles and Shaun Parsons continues to represent us at County level. We always welcome their contribution in response to queries from the Council.

Three villagers who provide a regular service to the Council are Janet Campbell, our Tree Warden, Bill Young, our Internal Auditor and Paul Brice, who manages the village website.

We have held seven meetings this year covering a wide variety of topics.

Planning

The Parish Council received 52 planning applications this year, including 12 tree work applications.

The new Local Plan (formerly called the Local Development Framework) has yet to be formalised but should be in place by the end of the year – the Parish Council will ensure that the village continues to be represented in relevant consultations.

All planning applications can be viewed online at www.cotswold.gov.uk .

Finance

The precept for the year ending 31 March 2016, was £7884, including a Council Tax Support Grant of £315.00.

Looking towards the new financial year, provision in the budget includes future maintenance and repairs to the War Memorial, Lych Gate and Preaching Cross, initial preparations for the extension of the Burial Ground, road signage on the A417, dog bins, renovation of noticeboards, Councillor training and funding the hosting cost of the village website.

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

Burial Ground

Preparations are under way for consolidation of the donated land into the Burial Ground and while it will be some time before that consolidation is complete, we have made provision in the 2016 -17 budget for initial works.

The Burial Ground Conditions and Fees remain unchanged and will be reviewed during the next financial year. A copy of the fees and conditions is available on the village website or can be obtained from the Clerk.

In October 2015 there was a very successful clear up in the Burial Ground and the Council would like to thank everyone who gave up a few hours of their time to help. We also have planning permission to remove one of the trees in the Burial Ground, which we plan to have felled in the next few weeks. The Parish Council would also like to thank Harold Stevens for repairing one the benches from The Pleydells, which has now been resited in the Burial Ground.

Preaching Cross

There has been no need for further maintenance this year. However, we plan to undertake some general ground clearance around the cross, to make it more visible and also some tree works to let more light into the area and the path to the church.

War Memorial

After last year's repairs and clean, the War Memorial is in good condition. Maintenance of the garden around the memorial continues to come under the grass cutting contract and is working well.

Highway matters

The Parish Council continues to liaise with GCC and Amey (GCC's contractor) regarding traffic calming measures along the A417. New warning signage has been erected along the A417 and new village entry signs featuring a design created by pupils at our village school are planned for installation within the coming months. The Council is also working with GCC to achieve reinstatement of existing footpaths along the A417 from The Crown of Crucis to School Lane and westbound to the main entrance of Ampney Park. The intended impact of the new signage and more visible footpaths is that drivers will be more aware that they are driving through a settlement and will moderate their driving behaviour accordingly.

The number and reoccurrence of potholes on the village street and surrounding lanes continue to be a concern, and the Council continues to work with GCC to identify areas of concern. Nevertheless, any villager identifying a pothole or other road damage is able to report the matter directly to GCC using the telephone hotline 08000 514 514 or online at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/reportit

Drainage Works

GCC and Amey have carried out remedial work to the drains and gullies along Butchers Arms Lane and the junction of the A417 and Ridings Lane to alleviate drainage problems, these appear to be working well but both areas continue to be closely monitored by the Council.

Footpaths

The Council continues to have good relations with landowners and farmers and over the past year we have liaised closely with landowners and the majority of footpaths within the village are clearly marked and in good condition. However, we do depend on members of the public to alert us to any problems with the footpath network.

Spring Clean

The planned spring clean did not go ahead as planned because CDC were unable to provide the necessary equipment. However, the Council has decided that, as there had been a marked reduction in litter around the village and the main area of concern is along the A417, it was not absolutely essential to organise a village clear

up this year. The reduction in litter is undoubtedly due, at least in part, to the regular actions of villagers who have been picking and disposing of litter as and when they see it. On behalf of the Parish Council I want to thank all involved for their continuing efforts.

General Maintenance

Cottage Garden Services continue to cut the grass on open spaces in the village and on the Burial Ground under a three year contract last awarded in 2013. Their work is much appreciated.

The Parish Council has recently purchased two dog waste bins, using donated funds, one has been installed along Butchers Arms Lane and the other along Allotment Lane. Others are planned for locations elsewhere in the village.

The Parish Council has been liaising with South Western Ambulance Service regarding the provision and installation of one or two village defibrillators. I am pleased to be able to report that one villager has already offered to fund the first defibrillator, and we have received interest from another villager regarding funding a second. Provision has also been made in the 2016 -17 budget for their maintenance and upkeep. We are planning to install the first defibrillator at the Village Hall, with a second planned at the school, subject to funding being available. As part of the package, South Western Ambulance Service provide training and so far we have a number of villagers who have volunteered for training and I would like to thank our donor and also our volunteers for their kind offers.

Community Emergency Plan

The Emergency Plan is updated regularly and lodged with CDC, a copy appears on the village website.

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 problems.

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 to the production team Frank Skinner, John Franklin, Sharon Buckley, and David Wells.

The newsletter was produced using a combination of reserves, revenue from advertising and contributions from the three villages for 2015 – 16. Due to environmental and efficiency considerations the Parish Council no longer funds the postage costs and the Parish Council understands from the production team that quite a few residents have already elected to receive their copy electronically.

For several years now, our village website has been developed and managed by Frank Skinner. During the year, Frank advised that he wanted to step back and allow a fresh approach to be developed. I am pleased to report that Paul Brice took on this challenge and now manages the new website that was launched in September 2015.

The Parish Council wants to take this opportunity to thank Paul for this, but also to thank Frank for his hard work and commitment to developing and maintaining the website over several years.

Thanks also goes to Frank who continues to manage the 'Village Network', which now links 140 households through periodic e-mail alerts of events or other information relevant to villagers.

The Playground

The day to day management of the playground continues to be the joint responsibility of the Friends of the School and the Playground Committee, although the Parish Council meets the cost of insurance. Two new pieces

of equipment were installed in April 2015 utilising a grant obtained from Gloucestershire Active Together during the last financial year.

The Council maintains a reserved fund of approximately £6000 to provide for reinstatement of the land currently occupied by the playground in the event that it ever has to be removed.

Finally, on behalf of the Parish Council I 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.

3. Parish Council accounts for the year ended, 31 March 2016.

These were circulated and noted.

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

Reports were given and noted.

5. Reports from the Church, County Councillor Parsons and District Councillor Fowles.

Rev. Swanton reported that, together with a grant from the National Heritage Memorial Trust and local donations, £142,000 has been raised for roof repairs. While the church is closed, redecoration inside will take place. Rev. Swanton wished to thank everyone who has helped raise funds over the past 4 years.

District Councillor Fowles, who took from Sir Edward Horsfall last year, introduced himself and reported that CDC's restructuring over the past year is working well. He reported that the Local Plan, after 3 years of consultations and reviews, should be ready for adoption in Spring 2017.

A villager expressed concern over the current bus service from Ampney Crucis to Cirencester. Councillor Fowles agreed to talk through his grievances after the meeting. Another villager asked about the proposed development at Chesterton. Councillor Fowles advised that no decision would be made regarding the proposed 2,500 new houses at Chesterton until the new Local Plan has been adopted. Councillor Fowles mentioned the proposed traveller site at Poulton and thought that the owners were looking at different uses.

County Councillor Parsons explained that whereas CDC has a net expenditure of £11 million, GCC has a net expenditure of £420 million. The two major items are adult services (£143 million) and children and family services (£92 million). This year the government has allowed an additional 2% increase on the Council Tax and GCC has therefore increased the Council Tax by 3% for the first time in 5 years. Savings have been made and there has been a reduction in personnel, with no effect on the level of service. GCC is responsible for the disposal of waste and an incinerator will be built by the M5 near Junction 12 which will reduce the amount of land fill and subsequent tax which is levied upon land fill. With regard to local issues Councillor Parsons is aware of the safety concerns regarding the A417 and has promised to tidy up the footpath from Ampney Park to Mill Cottages under The Lengthman's Scheme.

Councillor Crook asked why smaller buses could not be used through the villages, Councillor Parsons advised that routes varied and for some of the duration of the route a larger bus was necessary. A villager asked why GCC had stopped cutting back the grass verges, Councillor Parsons agreed to look into this and report back to the Parish Council. Councillor Crook also asked what is meant by localisation. Councillor Parsons briefly explained that West Oxfordshire District Council were keen to join forces with CDC and this was being investigated. Both Councillor Parsons and Fowles felt this was not the best solution for the Cotswolds. Councillor Parsons also reported that there is evidence that Neighbourhood Plans are beginning to carry more weight in planning decisions.

Mr David Vessey put forward a proposal from Jenny Phelps of FWAG regarding the maintenance of water courses and ditches throughout the village. The Chairman asked Mr Vessey to submit the proposal to the Parish Council and it would be considered at the July meeting.

Rev. Swanton thanked the Parish Council for their hard work during the past year.

The Chairman closed the meeting by thanking those present for attending.

Meeting closed at 8.15pm.