

AMPNEY CRUCIS PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 8 MAY 2017 AT 7.00PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL, AMPNEY CRUCIS.

Present: 6 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 16 May 2016

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:

As usual it has been a busy and interesting year for the Parish Council.

At the May 2016 meeting I was re-elected as Chairman and Doug Crook was re-elected as Vice Chairman. Other members of the Council were Rosanna Armitage, Tony Williams, David Hardy, Simon Holt and Andrew Raphael.

I am however sad to announce that, for family reasons, Simon Holt has advised me that he wishes to stand down as a Parish Councillor with effect from this meeting. This creates a Casual Vacancy. CDC has been advised the vacancy will be advertised in due course.

Throughout the year, the Parish Council has been represented at District level by David Fowles and Shaun Parsons at County level and I am sure all members of the Parish Council have welcomed and appreciated their assistance and also their contributions to our meetings.

I would also like to congratulate Cllr Parsons on his re-election in the County Council elections held on 4th May and look forward to working with him to drive forward the various challenges we continue to face and in particular regarding the condition of local roads and reduction of speeding traffic along the A417.

Three villagers who have continued to provide a regular service to the Council and the Village are: Janet Campbell, our Tree Warden; Paul Brice, who manages the village website; and Frank Skinner, who coordinates the Village Network. Their input and assistance is much appreciated.

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

Planning

The Parish Council received 39 planning applications this year, including 10 tree work applications.

The new Local Plan (formerly called the Local Development Framework) has yet to be agreed – but 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. Villagers considering submitting a planning application are invited to contact the Parish Council to discuss their intentions.

Finance

The precept for the year ending 31 March 2017, was £11,642, including a Council Tax Support Grant of £190.00.

Looking towards the new financial year, we have made provision in the budget for future repairs and maintenance of the Lych Gate, the Preaching Cross and the War Memorial.

In addition, we have allowed for continuing work on the extension to the Burial Ground, as well as part funding of maintenance works along the Village Street and renovation or replacement of noticeboards, Councillor training and funding the hosting cost of the village website. We have also set aside funds towards the replacement of the village defibrillators

The accounts for the year have been audited by our Internal Auditor, Mrs Judy Smith and following this meeting will receive an external audit by Grant Thornton.

Burial Ground

The extension to the Burial Ground is nearly complete. The cut through connecting the existing burial ground and the extension has been completed and seeded and the dry stone walls on either side have been reinstated. The perimeter of the extension has been fenced and the hedging planted.

We expect to complete works on the extension within the next 12-18 months and to pay for those works, the Parish Council has built up a reserve fund, which includes money from burial fees as well as an allocation from the precept.

In addition, one of the trees in the main Burial Ground was felled during the year to allow more light into an adjacent property and GCC has also resurfaced the entrance.

The annual Burial Ground clear up took place on 13th November 2017 and I would like to thank everyone for their hard work.

The Burial Ground Conditions and Fees have remained unchanged this year but are currently being reviewed. A copy of the fees and conditions is available on the village website or can be obtained from the Clerk.

Lych Gate

The timber frame and exterior walls of the Lych Gate are in need of repair and refurbishment. The Parish Council has sought advice as to works required to be essential: old coatings to the timbers will be removed, damaged timbers repaired and treated with a preservative, and where necessary, external render will be repaired.

Councillor Williams has agreed to organise a working party in the summer to remove the old coatings. If anyone is interested in helping, please contact the clerk.

Preaching Cross

The Council has secured CDC permission to carry out tree works around the Cross in order to let more light into the area and the path to the church. The Council will be organising a working party to clear the debris and once again, if anyone is interested in helping, please contact the clerk.

War Memorial

The War Memorial remains 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. The new village entrance signs have been installed using artwork designed by pupils at the village school and GCC have also partially reinstated existing footpaths along the A417 from the main entrance of Ampney Park as far as School Lane. The footpaths remain work in progress.

Nevertheless, we anticipate that both of these features will make drivers more aware that they are driving through a settlement and will moderate their driving behaviour accordingly.

In addition, the Council has secured funding from the Police Crime and Commissioner's Fund for Safe and Social Driving for three mobile vehicle activated signs. The Council is still in discussions with GCC regarding the positioning and practical operation of the signs.

The Council is also liaising with GCC regarding works that could be done to address the erosion of grass verges along the Village Street, most of which has been caused by inappropriate parking of cars. The Council has been working with the Head Teacher at the Village School regarding parking on verges close to the School at drop off and pick up times and we have suggested that greater use could be made of the CDC car park adjacent to Durncourt Cottages.

GCC Highways have suggested the installation of stone setts along the affected verges and reinstatement of the eroded highway. We understand that there is a possibility that such works could be match funded by GCC under the Community Offer Scheme, if the Parish Council can fund 50% of the costs. If the Community Offer Scheme is not continued into this financial year, we shall have to revisit the matter.

The number of new potholes, and the deterioration of previously repaired potholes on the village street and surrounding lanes continues to be a major concern, and the Parish Council continues to work with GCC to address particular problem areas. Nevertheless, I would encourage any villager identifying a pothole or other road damage to report it directly GCC via their online portal at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk.

Drainage Works

Last year remedial work was carried out by GCC and Amey to the drains and gullies along Butchers Arms Lane, Ridings Lane and at the junction of the A417 and Ridings Lane. Previous issues in those areas appear to have been resolved. However, after work was done by Gigaclear's contractors along Ridings Lane, drainage issues re-appeared. The matter was reported to GCC to ensure the situation is remedied.

Footpaths

The Council has continued to maintain good relations with landowners and farmers and over the past year. The majority of footpaths within the village are clearly marked and in good condition. However, we do rely upon members of the public to alert us to any problems with the footpath network.

Spring Clean

A very successful spring clean took place on Saturday 18th March 2017 and I would like to thank everyone who volunteered. We collected 16 bags of rubbish and also highlighted areas of fly tipping.

Nevertheless, we feel that there has been a significant reduction in litter around the village and that has been 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 would like to thank all of those villagers for their continuing efforts.

General Village Maintenance & Facilities

Grounds maintenance:

Cottage Garden Services continued to cut the grass on open spaces in the village and on the Burial Ground under a three year contract last awarded in 2013. I would like to record that the Parish Council has very much appreciated their work, and also their responsiveness to address specific problems, on a case by case basis.

Towards the end of 2016, we advertised a new 3 year contract to take effect on 1st April 2017. We received 4 tenders from companies based in Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and the West Midlands. After a comprehensive review process, the contract was re-awarded to Cottage Garden Services and the Parish Council looks forward to working with them for a further three years.

Village defibrillators:

Thanks to the generosity of four villagers, the Parish Council has secured two defibrillators, which are located in cabinets outside the Village Hall and the Village School. The defibrillators have been leased from the South Western Ambulance Service over a four year period. Provision has been made in the 2017 -18 budget for a 25% contribution towards their replacement at the end of the current 4 year lease. As part of the leasing package, South Western Ambulance Service provide at least one training session per year in the use of defibrillators and more generally in CPR techniques.

We expect to organise further training during the coming months for more volunteers and are very appreciative of villagers willing to give up their time to do this.

Other facilities:

During the past year the Parish Council purchased a new village marquee for local hire, using funds donated by the Community Council.

In addition, a further dog waste bin was purchased and installed at the top of Pig Lane, using funds raised by the Ciren Sisters. That brings the number of dog waste bins in the village to 4, and bagged dog waste may also be deposited in the CDC general waste bins sited throughout the village.

That makes it all the more surprising that some villagers or other dog walkers still do not pick, bag and bin their dog waste. Not only is such behaviour deeply anti-social, but it is also potentially very harmful to young children and other users of our lanes and footpaths, not least those who regularly mow or otherwise maintain our public footpaths.

Such behaviour is not acceptable, and is against the law. Please spread the word.

Community Emergency Plan

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

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 has previously been funded from revenue from advertising and contributions from Ampney Crucis Parish Council and the Parish Meetings in Ampney St Mary and Ampney St Peter.

For ease of administration, your Parish Council decided to absorb the small share of costs that would otherwise have been funded by Ampney St Mary and Ampney St Peter. Many residents have also opted to receive their copy electronically, distributed through "The Village Network".

The new village website was launched in September 2015 and has been managed very efficiently by Mr Paul Brice. The Parish Council would like to thank Paul for his commitment and expertise.

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

The Playground

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.

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

It would be remiss of me to close this report without saying that this past year has seen the death of several villagers, all of whom will be missed.

In particular:

Peter Kelly, who was a Parish Councillor and Chairman of the Parish Council for 14 years, died in December; Gerald Gaden, who was a Parish Councillor until 2015, died in February, closely followed later that month by Don Underwood who was a fixture in village life and in his own quiet way, served the wider community.

All were well respected and much loved in the village. They will be sorely missed.

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 your help the village would not be such a pleasant place to live in. Also thank you to everyone present for attending this evening's meeting.

3. Parish Council accounts for the year ended, 31 March 2017.

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 County Councillor Parsons and District Councillor Fowles.

District Councillor Fowles reiterated that his role continues to be one of liaison between CDC and Parish Councils, with particular emphasis on planning matters. He expressed the need for CDC Planning Department to improve their communication with Parish Councils and hoped that the new Local Plan would help to achieve this. The Local Plan will be submitted to the Government Inspectorate on 13 June 2017 and the proposed development at Chesterton will go before the Full Council at CDC in July 2017. He stressed that improving the infrastructure in Cirencester and the surrounding area was very important and clarified that the houses would not appear immediately but over a period of years.

County Councillor Parsons thanked everyone who had voted for him in the recent elections. He explained that Gloucestershire County Council has a budget of £407 million; of which 33% of the budget is spent on Adult Services and 22% on Children and Families. GCC is responsible for the disposal of waste and the new incinerator, near Junction 12 of the M5, is under construction and will be operational within 3 years at a cost of approximately £25m. There will be a 4% increase in Council Tax this year. With an extra £9m allocated to Highways, Councillor Parsons advised that GCC recognise that temporary pot hole mending is not the ideal solution but safety is the priority. Finally, he reported that work is due to start on the 'missing link' of the A417 at Nettleton Bottom in 2020 and GCC have contributed £1m to the productions of the plans.

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

Meeting closed at 7.50pm.