

## AMPNEY CRUCIS PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 14 MAY 2018 AT 7.00PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL, AMPNEY CRUCIS.

Present: 16 electors, County Councillor Shaun Parsons and District Councillor David Fowles  
Presiding: Councillor Neil Holt  
Clerk: Jayne Webster

### **1. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 8 May 2017**

The minutes were agreed and signed as a true record.

### **2. Annual Report for Ampney Crucis Parish Council**

The Chairman, Neil Holt, gave the following report:

It has been an interesting and busy year for the Parish Council.

At the May 2017 meeting I was re-elected as Chairman and Doug Crook was re-elected as Vice Chairman. Other members of the Council are Rosanna Armitage, Tony Williams, David Hardy, and Andrew Raphael.

Simon Holt's resignation last year created a Casual Vacancy following which we received expressions of interest from three village residents. After following due process, we are very pleased to welcome Tracy Oosthuizen, who was co-opted onto the Parish Council last November.

Throughout the year, the Parish Council has been represented at District level by David Fowles and by Shaun Parsons at County level. Both have been diligent in attending Parish Council meetings whenever possible, notwithstanding their responsibilities to other parishes.

I am sure all members of the Parish Council have welcomed and appreciated their proactive engagement and contributions to our meetings.

Four villagers or local residents 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; Frank Skinner, who coordinates and manages the Village Network; and Gordon Ford who repeatedly cleared our village street and lanes during the heavy snow earlier this year.

I would like to thank them all and commend their commitment and timely engagement.

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

#### **Planning**

The Parish Council received 30 planning applications this year, including 12 tree work applications.

The new Local Plan is still not agreed, but I am told that it is in the closing stages of receiving approval from central government. 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](http://www.cotswold.gov.uk). Village residents who have any concerns about specific applications that are still at the consultation stage are invited to contact a member of the Parish Council or our Clerk.

Similarly, any villagers considering submitting planning applications are invited to contact the Parish Council to discuss their intentions.

## **Finance**

The precept for the year ending 31 March 2018, was £15,525, plus a Council Tax Support Grant of £127.00.

The Parish Council has purchased a computer and software using grant funding from the Gloucestershire Association of Parish & Town Councils specifically to assist councils in fulfilling their obligations under recently introduced transparency regulations.

Looking towards the new financial year, we have made provision in the budget for future repairs and maintenance work on 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 towards further reinstatement works along the Village Street. In response to requests from villagers, we have also budgeted for renovation or replacement of noticeboards, as well as the provision of at least one new grit bin.

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 externally by Grant Thornton. The relevant pages and other Parish Council documents are accessible through the village website as well as being posted on various noticeboards around the village.

## **Burial Ground**

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

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

Routine mowing of the Burial Ground is done under our village grounds maintenance contract. However, with the expansion of the Burial Ground the amount of occasional maintenance such as clearing brambles, ivy etc has also increased and so, we hope will the number of volunteers prepared to spend a Sunday morning in late autumn.

During the winter, tree works were completed to make safe or remove branches damaged by the snow.

In addition, the flower beds on either side of the entrance gates have been cleared and are being replanted. The Parish Council would like to thank Mel Tanner and Heather Jefferies for their time in designing a planting scheme. Provision has been made in the 2018 -19 budget to cover the cost of the plants and the planting works are expected to be completed before the end of May.

Thanks also to Harold Stevens for making and installing a new noticeboard at the boundary wall of the Burial Ground that will be dedicated to the memory of Gerald Gaden, a Parish Councillor for many years before his death in February 2017.

The Burial Ground Conditions and Fees were reviewed in September 2017 and a copy of the fees and conditions is available on the village website or can be obtained from the Clerk.

## **Lych Gate (formerly the village mortuary)**

The timber frame and exterior walls of the Lych Gate are in need of repair and more general refurbishment. We have sought advice as to the extent of essential work. Old coatings applied to the timbers some years ago need to be removed, damaged timbers repaired and treated with a preservative, and where necessary, external render will also need to be repaired.

The Parish Council has considered doing some of the work ourselves, if we can get enough support from villagers willing to help out. I am nevertheless seeking quotes for the works, including one from the builder who carried out restoration work at the church.

If anyone is interested in helping, please contact the clerk.

### **Preaching Cross**

After securing permission from CDC, a Parish Council working party carried out tree works in January 2018 in order to let more light into the area around the Cross and the path to the church.

The condition of the footpath itself has deteriorated over recent years and while it is passable, work needs to be done to restore the drainage along the path. Completion of those works will rely upon the cooperation of the various owners of the land through which the footpath runs.

### **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 work with County Highways regarding any highways related in the parish. In that regard, we very much appreciate the cooperation of the Local Highways Manager, Richard Gray.

Specific areas covered during the year include:

#### **A417 – introduction of additional traffic calming measures:**

To help raise driver awareness that they are approaching a community, village entry and exit signs were introduced in 2016/17 at the western and eastern ends of the A417 as it runs through Ampney Crucis.

In the last 12 months, the Parish Council has also taken on the costs of regular mowing of the grass verges along the northern edge of the A417, between Ampney Park and Mill Cottages.

County Councillor Parsons also provided funding under the Lengthsman Scheme to spray and clear the footpath along the A417 from Ampney Park to School Lane of vegetation.

The Parish Council has also secured funding from the Police Crime & Commissioner's Fund for Safe and Social Driving for the purchase of mobile vehicle activated signs. Two "Slow Down" signs have been purchased and are in position, one on each of the eastbound and westbound carriageways of the A417.

A condition of the County's permission is that the signs must be removed or moved between different locations on a regular basis.

The Parish Council will be collecting and analysing the data gathered by the signs at each location with a view to determining whether or not there is a case to press for a speed limit reduction.

#### **Roadside verges:**

The Parish Council has been increasingly concerned and has also received complaints from residents, about the erosion of roadside verges around the village.

In particular, the verges along the north side of the Village Street between School Lane and Allotment Lane have become badly eroded, partly by heavy vehicles turning into and out of Allotment Lane, but mainly by cars parked by parents or other visitors to the school. This has been particularly noticeable at

school starting and finishing times. Requests passed through the school asking drivers to park more sensitively had very limited impact.

The Parish Council therefore secured matched funding under the County's Community Offer Scheme for the reinstatement of the verges and the installation of stone setts to protect the verges from renewed and repeated damage. Those works were completed in the Easter school holidays.

#### **Potholes and general condition of village highways:**

The number of new potholes, and the regular and rapid deterioration of previously repaired potholes on the village street and its surrounding lanes continues to be a major concern.

I would encourage any villager identifying a pothole or other road damage to report it directly to County Highways via their online portal at [www.gloucestershire.gov.uk](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk).

#### **Road drainage works:**

Remedial works carried out over the last year by County Highways to the drains and gullies along Butchers Arms Lane, Ridings Lane and at the junction of the A417 and Ridings Lane appear to have resolved the issues.

Following work carried out by Gigaclear's contractors along Ridings Lane, some drainage issues did re-appear and the matter was subsequently rectified by GCC. The Parish Council continues to monitor the situation carefully.

#### **Footpaths**

The Council has continued to maintain good relations with landowners and farmers 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, including damaged or impassable stiles.

#### **Spring Clean**

A very successful spring clean took place on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2018 and I would like to thank everyone who volunteered. We collected 16 bags of rubbish and also highlighted areas of fly tipping for CDC to follow up.

As a result of villagers' efforts in the 2017 litter pick, CDC awarded £100 to the Parish Council, which has part funded a new litter bin installed close to the bus stop at the entrance to The Pleydells.

I do 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 and around the village and on the Burial Ground and War Memorial under a three-year contract awarded in 2016.

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.

### **Village defibrillators:**

As part of our leasing contract with the South Western Ambulance Service, we receive at least one training session per year in the use of defibrillators and more generally in CPR techniques and I would like to thank the volunteers who gave up their time to attend the session last September.

In addition, the Council continues to make provision in the annual budget towards replacement of the two defibrillators at the end of the current contract.

### **Other facilities:**

Notwithstanding provision of four dog waste bins and other general waste bins across the village that may be used to deposit bagged dog waste, it is very disappointing to report again that some villagers or other dog walkers still do not pick, bag and bin their dog waste.

It is all the more disappointing that some individuals apparently derive amusement from picking and bagging dog waste, and then throwing the bags into the verges and hedgerows.

All of this behaviour is deeply anti-social, and 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. I would encourage you to please spread the word and report any observed bad behaviour.

### **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. Its production and timely distribution is a true team effort and the whole production team deserve our thanks.

The newsletter continues to be funded from advertising revenue, underwritten by Ampney Crucis Parish Council.

Many residents have also opted to receive their copy electronically, distributed by Frank Skinner alongside the 'Village Network', which now links approximately 140 households through periodic and timely 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 saw the death of several longstanding village residents, including Wing Commander John Beresford.

John was both a Parish Councillor and Chairman of the Parish Council for many years and died last year at the age of 101. He was very well respected in the village and 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.

### **3. Parish Council accounts for the year ending 31 March 2018**

These were circulated and noted.

### **4. Reports from the Village Hall Charity, the Robert Pleydell Educational Charity and the Community Trust**

Reports were given and noted.

### **5. Reports from County Councillor Parsons and District Councillor Fowles**

District Councillor Fowles's report was given at the Annual Meeting of the Council.

### **6. Questions from the floor**

A villager enquired about the locations of the vehicle activated signs along the A417. The Chairman explained that the criteria used for deciding the location of the two signs was set and agreed by County Highways. They require that the volunteers involved in maintaining and moving the signs can do so safely and the verge must therefore be wide enough to allow that. The villager also asked why CDC are always seen to carry out their Spring Clean just after the village clear up. The Chairman explained that each year he asked CDC to clear the rubbish along the A417 for safety reasons.

Another villager raised the issue of fly tipping, a discussion followed and District Councillor Fowles agreed to check whether it was against Data Protection Regulations to pursue the perpetrators via the serial numbers on dumped machinery and equipment.

A lengthy discussion followed regarding potholes and the poor condition of roads in Gloucestershire. County Councillor Parsons agreed that it was a huge problem and there were currently 30 gangs throughout the County repairing potholes. He also confirmed that large patching was being carried out throughout the County. He explained that extra funding had been allocated to large patching projects and new potholing/patching techniques were being explored.

Mr John Franklin thanked the Parish Council for their work during the year and particularly the installation of the vehicle activated signs along the A417.

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

Meeting closed at 7.40pm.