

The Minutes of Fenny Compton Annual Parish Meeting – 24th April 2017

The Minutes of the Fenny Compton Annual Parish Meeting held at the Village Hall, Fenny Compton on 24th April 2017 commencing at 7:45pm

Present: Miss Deborah Lea in the Chair, Jon Dutton, Ian Hartwell, Derek Carless, Sam Parkes, Neil Andrew, District & County Councillor Christopher Williams & Parish Clerk Catherine Lambert.

1. **To Accept Apologies for Absence:** Michael Guest.
2. **Minutes of the Previous Year's Meeting:** The minutes to the last meeting were agreed at the Parish Council Meeting on the 16th May 2016. Copies were available for anyone who wished to see them.

3. **Parish Council Chairman's Report:**

DL

Following Mike Davies' resignation in May, the Parish Council were pleased to co-opt Neil Andrew to fill the vacancy. The Chair recorded her thanks to Mike for all the hard work he did during his time as a Councillor.

The year has been rather fraught by planning applications for large housing developments in the village. This being the largest area for concern once again and also one of the most time consuming. However the threat from development has been slightly lessened by the adoption of Stratford District Council's Core Strategy. The two proposed applications for development, one on the Avon Dasset Road and the other by Thompson's Field have not been granted.

The Parish Council's share of the Council Tax has risen by 2%, this has been kept as low as possible to provide the same level of services within the parish. The Council will continue to manage the budget prudently and strive for best value.

The Parish Council continues to support local community groups financially including the Village Hall, Bowling Club, Over 60's, the mowing of the churchyard and maintaining all other amenities in the Parish such as landscape maintenance, tree works and hedge cutting, sports field and pavilion maintenance, street-lighting etc.

The street-lighting has been somewhat problematic throughout the year, there have been numerous repairs of street lanterns required. The lifespan of some of the lights is coming to the end and replacing them completely is likely to be the only option and this is expected to be very expensive. A public meeting was held in November in the Village Hall to discuss the prospect of conducting a Neighbourhood Plan. Matthew Neale attended to talk about what a Neighbourhood Plan is and what they can do. Two Parish Councillors are on the Steering Group who will talk later on their progress. Highways is one of the most time consuming issues for the Clerk, which involves road signs, over grown hedges, blocked gullies and drains, replacing broken posts, pot holes and un-safe footways. However the road surfaces in Warwickshire are in a far better condition than the adjacent counties. The problem of vehicles going the wrong way down Brook Street appear to have stopped as no incidents have been reported recently.

Work to the trees by Squire Place have been completed and issues relating to trees adjacent to houses on the playing field are ongoing.

The Council have been disappointed that they have not had any follow up from the Empty Homes Officer about the two properties that were highlighted as a concern. Following her letters to the owners and assurances that repairs will be completed the Council are still waiting to hear that they have been done.

Sam Parkes has obtained funding for a new defibrillator which will be installed outside the Village Hall.

Jon Dutton has set up a face book page for the Parish Council. He will continue to update the page with current issues.

The Bear & Ragged Staff sign on the Avon Dasset Road was blown down in the high winds and will be reinstated in due course, the Parish Council are fortunate that Michael Bosman has kindly offered to undertake this work at his own expense.

The Chair acknowledged that some residents think the Parish Council doesn't do anything, this is far from the truth and a lot of hard work and effort is given by Councillors as volunteers to do their best for the local community. It isn't always possible to do all that everyone requests but once again thanks are due to all the Parish Councillors for their hard work during the past year and for giving so much of their time. Also many thanks go to Councillor Williams for his continued support and efforts in finding funding for projects which benefit the Parish.

Lastly thanks go to Catherine our Clerk who as always is efficient and hardworking, this will be her

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last Annual Parish meeting as she has decided to leave us in September after 18 years which was a huge shock and she will be a hard act to follow for her successor. It is also my last Annual Meeting as Chair and on a personal note I would like to thank her for all she has done for the Parish Council and for me over the past years, which in many instances has been over and above her duties as Clerk and it has been a pleasure to work with her.

Defibrillator: Sam Parkes reported that a location for the defibrillator has been found to the front of the Village Hall, the cabinet and defibrillator now needs to be installed. Training on the new equipment will be available to residents.

SP

Aqueous: Michael Guest gave the following report: Fenny Compton has survived another year without serious flooding. Although some gardens and fields were flooded, no properties were damaged as far as Aqueous is aware. The existing attenuation pond in Hall's Yard continues to perform well. Progress to install further flood prevention measures continues to be painfully slow. Test bores have been carried out in a field to the west of Avon Dassett Road and in Hall's Yard. They are now waiting for the conclusions of these tests and a business proposition. In the meantime, thanks go to Brian Peers for organising the maintenance of the ditches and waterways in the village, supported by the local landowners and other volunteers. Additionally thanks go to Councillor Williams, who obtained a grant of £500, which is mainly spent on insurance and he has also provided invaluable support at County level in trying to progress the flood prevention project. Sadly we shall lose Councillor Williams's support at County level due to boundary changes.

MG

Sports Field and Play Equipment: Jon Dutton gave the following report: Compared to a few years ago the sports field and pavilion are not being used by many organisations. The senior football team and the cricket team have folded and the number of Colts teams has reduced. Although it reduces wear and tear on the infrastructure, it also means fewer people are taking care of the pavilion, in particular. This year we have taken money from the Parish Council reserves to replace the pavilion doors. The pavilion itself continues to deteriorate but the Council will continue to maintain it while it is being used. The Parish Council still has ambitions to improve the play equipment for older children, however, this would need substantial grants from external bodies and there is very little money available. In the meantime the Council is grateful for the efforts of Dave Miller who has renewed the tennis court again.

JD

Allotment Group: Jon Dutton reported that the Parish Council has a commitment from the developer of the houses behind Willowbrook to provide land for allotments as part of the new development. Now that work has started on the development the Council should soon be in a position to move this forward. There is a lot to do, including lease agreements, maintenance agreements, constitutions, getting planning permission and actually creating the physical allotments. However there are a number of volunteers from within the parish who are keen to help and so Jon would like to hope that this time next year he will be able to report significant progress towards the restoration of allotments to this parish.

JD

Neighbourhood Plan: Derek Carless reported that following a village meeting in November, it was considered that a Neighbourhood Plan was the right thing for the village to undertake and there was sufficient support to take the project forward. A steering group of 8 was set up. The group have carried out an initial survey. They will be taking the data from this to design the detailed survey which will go out in the summer. There were four particular key points; development, facilities, public transport and traffic. A lot of responders were positive about living in the Parish. Other surveys to be carried out include a traffic survey, housing needs survey, environment and habitat survey and updating the history and heritage assessment. There was a 28% response rate to the initial survey, hopefully better response will be received from the detailed survey.

DC

4. **Annual Accounts of Fenny Compton Parish Council for 2016/2017:**

The Clerk is at present calculating the Annual Accounts, which will be presented to the internal auditor in due course.

CL

5. **To receive Reports from Local Organisations:**

Village Hall: Mike Davies had sent a report. 2016-17 has proved to be a year of steady progress for the Village Hall. Due to the loss of three regular bookings during 2015-16, their booking income was down by some 10%, and, with no Open Gardens in 2016, their overall income was also down

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by about the same percentage. With much thanks to the Parish Council's grant, and thanks also to the residents who participate in the weekly lottery, as well as by careful control of costs, they have, however, again managed to make a small surplus. The loss of the regular bookings will also allow them to accept the additional demand for bookings from Fenny Compton Scout Group, who are now, far and away, their biggest regular users.

The Village Hall Committee do now have some idea of the potential costs of replacing the roof, and, although current advice is to do nothing until there is an actual problem, they are trying to ensure that they are in a position to meet these costs when this moment comes. They are also aware of the need to have sufficient funds to carry out other repairs and maintenance as the needs arise. They are also actively seeking to carry out work to improve the acoustics in the hall, and are investigating the possibilities of both solar panels, and installation of their own cinema projector.

Footpath Group: Brian Peers gave the following report. The Footpath Group has had another productive year and the local footpaths and bridleways are generally in good order. They continue to maintain good relationship with landowners. They get many favourable comments from Rights of Way users and especially dog walkers after having completed their project to create a dog-friendly route which features 6 dog stiles. The group is happy to comment on Rights of Way diversion applications and similar situations. Paul Grant has launched and maintains the Group's Facebook page which gets many views. The Group's bank balance is approximately £80 and they have no requirement for funding for capital expenditure, WCC provides materials and reimburse expenses. The Footpath Group thanked the Parish Council for their continuing support and additional funding.

Fenny Compton Water: Brian Peers, Roly Whear and Hilary Birkbeck have accepted to be on the board of the water company. When they are happy with their roles, Nigel Leck and Steve Smith will be stepping down, which will happen sometime this year. The point of contact in due course will be Brian Peers. The new water treatment plant is completed. It has been a successful project and the water has passed all the necessary tests. The infrastructure is better than it has been for a number of years.

6. **Report from Trustees of Charities:**

Peter Hughes reported that the Fenny Compton Relief in Need Charity had a total fund as at December 2016 of £488.25. Interest for the year is £30.29.

PH

7. **District and County Councillor Christopher Williams Invited to Speak:**

Cllr CW

Councillor Williams gave the following report. Jim Graham, the Chief Executive of Warwickshire County Council, has announced his retirement to take effect on 5th February 2017, three days after the Budget setting process. There will be no replacement until after the May 2017 elections for County Councillors and whichever party has the majority will select the new Chief Executive to the County Council.

As a result of the 2016 County Councillor's Grant Fund, Councillor Williams has been able to grant £500 to the Aqueous Group for flood risk reduction and a further £700 to the Dasset Violin School for the purchase of instruments. A further £500 has been awarded to the Abacus Preschool to pay for an outdoor area expansion.

Highways – The legal requirements introducing the reduced speed limit of 50 mph on the B4100 from leaving Gaydon to the Oxfordshire border has now been completed. They are waiting for the engineers to install repeater signs along its length as well as signage indicating speed regulations when turning off the road. This work should be completed by the end of April 2017.

Fenny Compton will be pleased to know that the improvements to the B4100 at junction 12 on M40 is improving traffic flows in Fenny Compton and the surrounding villages.

Finance – On the 2nd February 2017 the County Council held the Budget Debate and with no political group in overall control a joint budget was agreed between the Conservative and Labour parties. The outline of the budget was published last September where savings of some £67 million were established to absorb the reduction in government funding for the next three years. To achieve the budget the Council Tax this year will increase by the same amount as last year, i.e. 1.99% to cover general increases in costs with a further 2% ring fenced for Adult Social Care.

Thought was given to increasing this figure to 6% over the next three years. However, it was decided that this would be too great a burden for the tax payer. One of the bonuses from the national budget was that Councils were awarded a lump sum of money for this very purpose thus avoiding an extra burden to the council tax payers of Warwickshire.

The County Council will also build on the success of the Apprenticeship Hub that has already led to the County Council being listed within the top 100 employers offering apprenticeships. £1 million

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more will be invested to improve the safety of routes to schools. In addition, a further £1 million will be invested in LED lighting which will support the Council's ambition to bring our street lighting up to date.

Forty new staff will be employed to help as Social Workers to help with the growing problem of looking after the 750 children that are currently in care in Warwickshire. It is anticipated that these additional staff will help to reduce the number of children requiring the work of Social Services. This Annual Report will be Councillor William's last as Fenny Compton's County Councillor since boundary changes mean that Fenny Compton is now situated in the Feldon Division at WCC as from the County Council election on 4th May 2017. He will, of course, still be continuing as District Councillor for Napton & Fenny Compton Ward at Stratford District Council.

District Council Affairs

Earlier this year Paul Lankester, the CEO of Stratford District Council was made redundant and the Council is now run by two Officers, David Buckland formerly Chief Financial Officer, and Dave Webb formerly head of Housing. The Council itself consists now of 36 elected Members, a reduction from 62 members when he was originally elected in 1998.

The Core Strategy was finally approved in June 2016 and the implications of this policy are already having an effect on the quality of housing applications Stratford District Council is receiving. Last year, SDC had the second most planning applications of any District Council in England.

The District Council met on Monday 27th February 2017 to set the Budget for the next financial year. Council Tax will rise by 2% for the next year which equates approximately to 0.5p per week increase for a Band D property. It is interesting to note this year that the Police are not increasing their precept and that the County Council budget has been kept to a minimum of 3.9%. The District Council has been extremely prudent with expenditure during the past year and is no longer working with adjoining authorities in an attempt to reduce operating costs by sharing services. The trial did not reveal any worthwhile savings.

8. Other Matters Raised by an Elector of the Parish:

- a) Derek Carless wanted to record the Parish Council's thanks to Deborah Lea, as it is her last Annual Parish Meeting as Chair, for all her work on the Parish Council over the past 26 years.