

The Minutes of Fenny Compton Annual Parish Meeting – 18th April 2016

The Minutes of the Fenny Compton Annual Parish Meeting held at the Village Hall, Fenny Compton on 18th April 2016 commencing at 7:45pm

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

1. **To Accept Apologies for Absence:** Ian Hartwell arrived at 8pm.
2. **Minutes of the Previous Year's Meeting:** The minutes to the last meeting were agreed at the Parish Council Meeting on the 18th May 2015. Copies were available for anyone who wished to see them.

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

DL

The Chair reported that in the past year the Parish Council was due for an election. The uncontested Parish Council election results were as follows: The five nominees were duly elected on the 7th May 2015. The five nominees were Michael Davies, Jon Dutton, Michael Guest, Ian Hartwell and Deborah Lea. Keith Bloodworth & Nigel Leck did not stand for election, leaving two places free on the Council. In September, after advertising the vacancies the Parish Council were pleased to receive applications from Samantha Parkes and Derek Carless who joined the Council in October

The year had been fairly routine with planning issues being the largest area for concern once again and also one of the most time consuming. However the threat from development is still ongoing until the Stratford District Council's Core Strategy is finalised.

The Council has had more statutory regulations to comply with, including updating the standing orders, a transparency code, a risk assessment, financial regulations and a list of documents that must now legally appear on the Parish Council website. Needless to say all these take up a huge amount of time.

As you will see from the Council Tax bills the parish share of the council tax has risen slightly by 0.4%. The Parish Council continue to manage the budget prudently, to ensure best value. The insurance provider has been reviewed, three quotes had been obtained and the Council agreed to change the provider. The prices of the Unmetered Streetlight Electricity Supply had also been compared and changed to a cheaper provider.

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

Highways. This 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 unsafe footways

Work has been completed on the trees by the small school gate and concerns were raised by the residents of Squire Place over the safety of the trees in the wildlife area. The trees were inspected and the tree surgeon reported that in his opinion there was no cause for concern as the damage was mainly due to squirrels, but a few trees were covered with ivy and which hinders viewing any possible hazards. He was instructed to clear the ivy and report back to the Parish Council.

Land Registry: Parish Council has enough documentation to register the Bowling Club, War Memorial and the Avon Dasset Green with the Land Registry.

The Empty Homes Officer attended a meeting whereby two properties were highlighted as a

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concern. Following her letters to the owners and the assurances that repairs will be completed the Council is still waiting to hear that they have been done.

Neighbourhood Plan: Matthew Neale attended the Parish Council meeting in November. His presentation was very informative, but quite complex. He left a folder of information which at present is being circulated and read by the Councillors

Defibrillator: A resident had visited the Clerk asking for details on the availability of a defibrillator to residents. The Parish Council were unsuccessful in their first grant application but are continuing to research and apply for funding where possible.

Parish Councillors have attended meetings outside the parish and undertaken training and lots of work that goes unseen, but is necessary for the proper working of a Parish Council.

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 to Councillor Williams for his continued support and efforts in finding funding for projects which benefit the parish. Thanks to Catherine our Clerk who as always is efficient and hard working.

Aqueous: Michael Guest gave the following report: The village survived the deluge in March, although there was extensive flooding of roads and gardens, the water came over the top of the attenuation facility in Hall's Yard.

MG

The fact that there wasn't more damage is due to the existence of the attenuation scheme; the hard work done by Brian Peers and his working parties; and the contribution of local farmers and riparian owners in keeping the ditches and water courses clear. Thanks go to Brian and everyone who contributed. Thanks also go to Warwickshire County Council for the £500 grant, which is mostly spent on insurance for the working parties.

Unfortunately however, there has been little progress in getting additional flood protection in the village. Whilst a consultants' report has clearly identified that Fenny Compton is at high risk of flooding, and Aqueous has obtained the landowner's provisional agreement to construct a second attenuation facility, this has not been translated into an action plan.

Sports Field: Mike Davies gave the following report: The only regular organised activity at the Sports Field is still its use by the various Colts teams. The plumbing repairs to problems reported last year were completed, but there have been further problems with the plumbing, and the Council are waiting for these further repairs to be effected.

MD

Playground Equipment: Mike Davies gave the following report: Unfortunately, the Parish Council has been unable to identify any funder who might be able to fund the entirety of the monies needed to complete the scheme. It would appear that the Council shall have to consider a number of applications for smaller amounts, and complete the scheme on a piecemeal basis.

MD

Emergency plan: Michael Guest reported that this has been completed.

MG

Allotment Group: Jon Dutton reported that preliminary contacts had been made with other groups and at present the Council is awaiting the land being developed.

JD

Planning: Mike Davies reported that from the beginning of 2013 to date, Stratford District Council has granted planning permission (either full or outline) for 97 new houses in the parish – of these only 2 so far have been built.

MD

The Council are all aware that Bloor Homes and others have applied for detailed planning permission for 119 houses on the Compton Buildings site compared with the outline permission for 70 – following objections from the Parish Council and many residents of the parish, the Council were told that revised plans were expected at the end of February, but the Planning Officer confirmed that these have not yet been received.

This week, the Council has been informed of a new application for 25 houses on the north side of Station Road, next to Thompson's Field. If both of these were permitted, Fenny Compton would be facing 171 new houses – almost a 50% increase on the current housing stock of about 360 houses, and more than twice as many as Fenny Compton was supposed to accept in the period

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2011-2031 in the latest version of the Core Strategy.

Superfast Broadband: Report by Mike Davies: The Council are delighted to say that work is currently proceeding and they are awaiting news of when the first premises will be able to access the superfast network. There does appear to be some question regarding the ability to access the superfast network for the Compton Buildings site and for premises to the northeast of the railway bridge, clarification of this is awaited.

MD

4. **Annual Accounts of Fenny Compton Parish Council for 2015/2016:**

The Clerk is at present calculating the Annual Accounts, which will be presented to the internal auditor for her approval next week.

CL

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

Village Hall: Mike Davies reported that it has been a moderately successful year. Two users of the Hall have now left, however level of usage has rebounded remarkably well.

Footpath Group: Brian Peers reported that the Footpath Group was formed in 1997 to maintain and promote footpaths and bridleways in conjunction with Warwickshire County Council and the Parish Council and they continue to enjoy their support.

Their work is ongoing, they have grown to 10 regular volunteers and meet once every month to work in Fenny Compton and the surrounding parishes.

The local footpaths and bridleways are in generally good order and they have a generally good relationship with the landowners.

We will comment on Rights of Way diversion applications.

Paul Grant has launched and maintains the Group's Facebook page which gets many views.

The Group's bank balance is £62.91 and they have no requirement for funding for capital expenditure, Warwickshire County Council provides materials and reimburse expenses.

Projects for this year, in addition to routine maintenance, are to help relaunch the Shotteswell Group and to expand the area we operate in. The Parish Council gave thanks to Brian for all his hard work.

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

Peter Hughes reported that the Fenny Compton Relief in Need Charity had a total fund as at 15 March 2016 of £463.19. The interest earned since that last Annual Parish Meeting was £31.76.

PH

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

Councillor Williams gave the following report.

The District Council - There has been little legislation that would have a direct impact upon the parish of Fenny Compton. The District Council has ceased its co-operation with Cherwell District Council and South Northamptonshire since both these authorities are moving in the direction which would not prove advantageous to Stratford-on-Avon District Council.

Cllr CW

Their annual budget was set in March included a provision that Council Tax will rise by some £5 per year for a Band D property. In normal circumstances, Local Authorities are prohibited from increasing their precept above 2% without holding a referendum. However, this year the government has allowed Stratford District Council dispensation to raise its Council tax on the basis that they have not increased Council tax for the last five years. This dispensation is for this year only but still means that Stratford District Council's taxation is the lowest taxed authority in Warwickshire.

The never ending story of the Core Strategy now looks likely to have reached a conclusion in that the Government Inspector has supported the clarifications he requested when the Public Examination was made last year. The new figure for the housing allocation for South Warwickshire is 15,500 houses to be built in the next 15 years. He is quite content that the development at Gaydon/Lighthorne Heath should proceed and also that a new settlement will be allowed at Long Marston. The Inspector rejected any proposals that Wellesbourne Airfield should be developed for housing but he increased the amount of potential new housing to be allowed in

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Southam. This could mean an additional 1,500 will be built over the next 15 years. He supported the District Council's proposal that they should allocate 2,000 houses to be built within the Local Centre settlement criteria.

At the end of March the Management Structure within Stratford District Council was reorganised with the position of Chief Executive being made redundant and his position being filled by two existing Officers. This reorganisation is scheduled to save SDC some £100,000 per annum and these proposals were incorporated in the budget calculations.

The County Council - During the past year the County Council has continued with its policy of implementing a savings regime which will produce a final figure of some £92 million of direct savings by the year 2017. The largest single expenditure for the County Council is Adult Social Care followed by Children's Social Services. These two services account for nearly a £200 million spend out of a budget of £400 million.

The relatively mild winter has dropped the demand for road gritting and as a consequence it has been possible for the Road Gritting Teams to be transferred to Road Maintenance with particular attention to attending to potholes.

Warwickshire now has a very successful Flood Prevention Team based in Shire Hall and the Team is currently taking steps to ensure that the flooding experienced in Cumbria and Somerset does not occur in Warwickshire. Money has been allocated to ensure that the next stage of the flood prevention scheme for Fenny Compton is in the process of being finalised and will be completed within this financial year.

Last December the County Council started preparing the budget for this year. As in previous years certain assumptions were made as to how much Grant Support they would be receiving from Central Government. When the figures were revealed they were significantly lower than had been anticipated. This made setting the budget extremely difficult. However, there were some concessions. They appealed to Central Government to reconsider their Grant Support and fortunately the Government agreed to increase their allocation by some £6 million over the next two years. They also allowed the Council to increase the amount the Council Tax was raised by ensuring that the rise was ring fenced. This year the Council Tax increase is 3.99% of which 2% is ring fenced to cover Adult Social Care whilst the remainder covers the increased cost of administering the Council. For example, increased cost of insurance, staff salaries etc. Central Government has indicated that over the next five years the amount of Grant Support will be reduced and local authorities will have to raise the funds from other sources, such as Business Rates that are currently given to the government. Whilst this sounds attractive Warwickshire, being a mainly rural area, does not attract the same amount of Business Rates as other authorities.

Two other issues that have occupied the County over the past year are the proposals for a Combined Authority with the West Midlands and giving consideration as to whether or not they should form a Unitary Authority. The Combined Authority was a suggestion that they should form an alliance within the West Midlands combining with Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell and Solihull together with other authorities in the Midlands. Currently, Warwickshire has declined the approaches made by these authorities since they know that they have a significantly lower level of unemployment and there is a different culture as Warwickshire is primarily a rural area. As far as Unitary Authorities are concerned, this could be an interesting proposal especially since it is believed that the savings could amount annually to at least £20 million. Unfortunately, there is opposition to this proposal, a preference being to create two Unitary Authorities for Warwickshire, one in the north and one in the south. Government guidance does not support this proposal since the population for each area proposed would be significantly lower than the half-million required.

Councillor Williams took the opportunity to thank Deborah Lea, as Chair, and the rest of the Parish Council for the diligent way in which they handle their responsibilities.

8. **Other Matters Raised by an Elector of the Parish:**
 - a) None.

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