

BUBBENHALL PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Bubbenhall Annual Parish Assembly held on Tuesday 20 October 2020 via Zoom

Present:

Cllr Jan Lucas	Chair of the Parish Council
Cllr Sam Baker	Vice Chair of the Parish Council
Cllr Bob Powell	
Cllr Joanne Shattock	
Cllr Jim Roberts	

In attendance:

Cllr Pam Redford	Warwickshire District Council
Cllr Wallace Redford	Warwickshire County Council
PCSO Sharron Underwood	
PCSO Rachel Clayton	
Mr Doug Evans	Parish Clerk

Five members of the public present.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Trevor Wright (WDC).

2. REPORT BY THE CHAIR OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Cllr Lucas reported the following:

Foreword

This year everything has been overshadowed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and I'd like to record a special thank you to the emergency committee, ably chaired by Cllr Powell, which has handled the situation extremely well under difficult circumstances.

Planning

Gateway has now started: the decontamination of the site has started and will continue for another year; the construction of the link road and bunds has also started and is ongoing. There have been issues regarding lighting, noise and traffic, and these are still being monitored. On other planning applications, thanks as always to those councillors who have taken the time to examine some of these applications in depth.

Liaison Committee, Landfill Site, Weston Lane

The Liaison Committee met in September 2019 but the March and September 2020 meetings were cancelled due to COVID-19. One thing to note, John Green recently retired as site manager Smiths concrete, and I would like to thank him for working closely with us over the years to and wish him all the best in his retirement. His position has now been taken by Stuart Parker.

Village Green

The Spout supply leak was fixed during lockdown thanks to a group of local volunteers – Tony Sproul, John Green, Duncan Sibley and Tom Stobart.

The project to refresh the area around the spout is progressing slowly. The decision was taken to leave

the oak (after advice from the county arboriculturist), but we are in the process of replacing the trough with a decent stone one, funded by the family of Geoff Glover who sadly died in November. The pump on the green has been out of action due to contamination for most of this year, but we are close to placing an order to get it cleaned, and we will ensure to keep the pump maintained in future so that the problem does not arise again.

I would like to thank Tony Sproul for his involvement in all of the above, and his work in managing the maintenance of the village green on behalf of the Parish Council.

Wildflower Meadow

The meadow is starting to look good. WWT are still keeping an eye on it and letting us know when anything (other than cutting) needs to be done.

Litter Pick

We have had one litter pick last year in October (which wasn't as well attended, but we still managed to pick a heap of litter). Unfortunately this year's litter picks (April and October) had to be cancelled due to COVID, but during lockdown, a few individuals in the village still went out and picked in their neighbourhood.

Finance

Doug will give the financial report shortly, but I will mention here that in April we increased the precept to £17,000.

Personnel

At the election we found ourselves two councillors short. We co-opted James Macalister in July, but he has recently decided to stand down due to work and family commitments. Jim Roberts joined us in September, and so we are still one member short.

Our clerk, Doug Evans, has now been with us over two years and I'd like to thank him for his support over the last year.

Other Matters

I will leave Road Safety and the recreation ground to the reports of Cllrs Powell and Baker respectively, but would like to take this opportunity to thank both of them for the time and effort they put in to these responsibilities.

Community Safety

Happily, there have not been any incidents of anti-social behaviour this year, and I'd like to thank our community officers Sharron Underwood and Ed King for their welcome support.

Emergency Plan

The emergency plan for the parish has been reviewed and updated as required, especially with regard to the pandemic, and the emergency committee has been heavily involved in things recently. Thanks to Cllr Powell for very capably chairing the committee.

Conclusion

I have mentioned some individual Parish Councillors already, but I would like to take this opportunity to thank **all** of the Parish Councillors who voluntarily give up their time to work on behalf of the Parish. I would also like to thank our County Councillor, Wallace Redford, and our District Councillors, Pam Redford and Trevor Wright for the support they have given us over the last year.

Cllr Roberts asked if the quarry and landfill would be closing in 2021. The Chair felt that this was the case although Cllr Shattock added that an extension would likely be sought, as had been the case for many years. Only processing was taking place at the site at the moment, not quarrying.

3. REPORT ON THE RECREATION GROUND/YOUTH SPACE

Cllr Baker reported the following:

The Annual RoSPA inspection was carried out in September. It declared that the playground equipment was in a good state of repair and safety. The following recommendations were made:

RoSPA findings – Chris Goddard or professional contractors to undertake

- Multiplay unit – Replace button seat and tighten climbing steps
- Rocker – replace tyre

- Trim trail – some logs are showing signs of decay – look to replace. Currently obtaining quotes. Possible survey
- Tennis/multiplay court – wire needs tensioning

Maintenance undertaken April 2019-October 2020

- Multiplay Unit – roof sanded back and painted as per RoSPA report
- Trim trail repairs carried out as per RoSPA report
- Ongoing mole control
- Weekly checks by Chris Goddard
- New toddler swing seat put in place.
- New football goal provided
- New tennis net box installed and new net provided.
- Playground closure March – August incl. due to Covid-19

Other Matters

- The regular delivery of playbark will suspended due to playground closure
- Damage to tennis net box/small fire in teen shelter
- Decision as to when playground needs to be closed again. Safety vs. child wellbeing
- A survey to be carried out to obtain views on new playground equipment

Cllr Powell add that the on-going cost of repairs would need to be balanced against the cost of new equipment. Canvassing the village would be a sensible idea and would help to find ways of bringing the playground up to date. This subject would be discussed at future meetings of the Parish Council.

4. REPORT ON HIGHWAYS AND ROAD SAFETY

Cllr Powell reported the following:

Traffic

There was a noticeable decrease in the amount of traffic in all categories - apart from bicycles, of course - during the pandemic lockdown. What a joy it was to be able to walk more safely on our country roads and lanes! However, since the gradual easing of restrictions the number of large vehicles entering and passing through the village seems to have increased significantly. The HGV survey, which has provided such strong evidence in the past, was reintroduced in the second part of 2019 and we continue to encourage villagers to log any occurrence of HGVs coming into the village. A note of the name of company, registration number, time and direction, would help the Parish Council continue its close monitoring of HGVs using the village as a short cut. Such evidence should be sent directly to admin@bubbenhall.info We have asked the developers of the Gateway South site to install more signs advising contract drivers to avoid Bubbenhall and to respect the 'no HGV' signs.

Road repairs

The Parish Council regularly informs the County about damage to roads or kerbs in the village, e.g. the top of Lower End. We are pleased that work has now been completed on the dropped kerbs so that accessibility is improved for wheel-chair users and pram-pushers.

Speeding

All Community Speed watch events have been cancelled this year but we do ask villagers to respect the 30mph speed limit along the Stoneleigh Road where there is the dangerous cross-roads at the Watery Lane/Bubbenhall Road junction. The same applies to Spring Hill and the entrance to Pit Hill from the A445. We were pleased to get approval for the white-painted 30mph 'roundels' along Stoneleigh Road. However, the job was not done well enough by the contractors and the work to re-set them on the road surface will be done in due course.

There have been at least two road accidents on the A445 within the village boundary, where cars have ended up in the hedgerows. Fortunately, no serious injuries were incurred but speeding is likely to have been the cause of the accidents.

Parking

During the height of the pandemic, the village car park was closed in accordance with Government Guidelines. Unfortunately, there was an inevitable rise in the number of cars parked on our residential

streets. Similarly, during the closure of Ryton Pools car park earlier this year and then continuing when only a limited number of vehicles were allowed into the country park, people sought other places to leave their vehicles. We called in the Police to control illegal and obstructive parking. Cones were placed along the verges of the A445 and the park management also put up advisory notices. Despite these interventions, drivers were still using the roadside verges irresponsibly and there was at least one collision as a result of this reckless action. There were similar incidents of inconsiderate parking along Pagets Lane and towards Shrubs Lodge. We continue to monitor the situation, reporting illegal actions to the Police.

The customary crossing at the top of Orchard Way

We continue to be concerned about the risks to pedestrians crossing the A445 at this point. In discussions with the County, we have recommended the following:

- Cutting back hedgerows and bushes to improve visibility for pedestrians and drivers
- Cleaning up both sides of the road and setting tarmac at the crossing points
- Erecting a protective metal barrier on the south side of the road similar to that on the Orchard Way side

Thanks were received from villagers for the resurfacing work in Cooper Walk and Waggoners Close but some issues were raised in relation to pavements requiring repairs. Cllr Wallace Redford agreed to take this up with David Elliston. Another issue that would be raised was the quality of some recent work on the dropped kerbs by the Spout.

In response to a question about BT erecting telegraph poles on the A445, it was suggested that this was part of the BT fibre rollout across the country.

5. REPORT BY THE VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE

Cllr Lucas reported the following:

Finances

Obviously, due to COVID-19, the village hall was closed from March until the end of August. It has been opened for regular users (such as Sarah Cooke, Brownies etc) since the beginning of September (with appropriate social distancing put in place), so takings have been drastically cut, but we did have a business support grant of £10,000 from WDC - the bank balance is £15,700 at the moment (about £2,000 down on last year).

Activities

All regular and planned activities have been cancelled this year.

Refurbishments and improvements

The new French doors have proved especially useful in providing a suitable exit for the one-way system to comply with COVID-19 restrictions.

We took delivery of 100 new chairs in January, but these have hardly been used yet (they are still locked in the kitchen as we are using the old plastic ones for the moment as they are easier to disinfect for COVID-19).

6. BUBBENHALL PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTS REPORT

The Clerk reported total expenditure of £15,073.50 in the 2019/20 financial year with total receipts of £18,110.00. The balance carried forward to the new financial year was £28,247.95

7. COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Cllr Wallace Redford reported the following:

A year of difficult times, who would have thought that we would have to self-isolate and virtual Parish Council meetings.

Throughout the emergency, Warwickshire County Council has responded quickly and efficiently, ensuring that protective clothing has been provided for our staff and Care Homes throughout the County. Hubs were quickly arranged for the distribution of food parcels for those unable to shop for themselves. All of this will continue whilst the emergency runs its course.

HS2 construction has been a continual issue in particular with road closures. These are going to continue and WCC will endeavour to mitigate disruption wherever it can but as we are all finding out HS2 and their sub-contractors are not the most community minded.

Locally, drop kerbs have been installed where needed and additional speed roundels installed on the Stoneleigh Road.

Currently I am endeavouring to improve the pedestrian crossing area on the A445 and suggestions had been submitted for costings. Posts had also been approved for the verges outside the Ryton Pools entrance.

Throughout the emergency I have continued to provide your Parish Council with updates as it affects communities and will continue to do so.

Residents may contact me with issues at any time which I will endeavour to address.

Cllr Powell questioned the type of posts that were to be installed outside Ryton Pools. Cllr Redford explained that he believed that they would be a plastic 'collapsible' type.

8. DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT

Cllr Pam Redford reported the following:

Presenting a report for WDC this year is of course overshadowed by COVID-19. During this unprecedented year WDC has worked alongside WCC in the response to the virus, delivering groceries and medication to those shielding, overseeing the distribution of Government Grants to local businesses and offering support in many other ways to WDC residents. Hundreds of volunteers have come forward during the past months to give their help wherever needed. Many of these volunteers have given valuable support to those in our communities who are living alone, by making regular phone contact and giving that much needed personal engagement, much needed at this difficult time. As we move into the Winter months WDC will continue to give this support.

Within WDC area over £24 million of Business Grant Support have been processed and allocated to local businesses. In addition to this, £2.5 million of Discretionary grants were also made to businesses suffering hardship during the crisis.

The Community Economic Recovery Fund (CERF) was also launched giving Community Organisations grants of up to £3000 to organisations who are continuing to support the WDC Community through challenging times.

Within our Ward the following amounts have been approved and allocated:

Bubbenhall - £55K

Baginton - £320K

Stoneleigh and Ashow - £690k

Cubbington - £380k

Leek Wootton - £95k

The estimated total of grants to businesses in our area amounts to over £1.5million.

In the past 12 months we have worked hard for our communities across the board to improve facilities within our communities and by taking advantage of local grants from HS2.

The Community Forum has given grants for induction loops, AV equipment and furniture for village halls to name but a few.

WDC has remained focused on reducing the level of homelessness on our streets both before and during the Pandemic lockdown. In the past year we have increased the number of night beds available in the area for rough sleepers and introduced new policies to help and support this ongoing issue.

WDC has an objective to both increase and improve the levels of social housing. Twenty-five houses have been purchased in Barford, along with a further 17 planned in Cubbington. WDC continues to increase and improve their housing stock.

As you can imagine staff and Councillors have been heavily involved with everything around the pandemic issue for the months since the end of March. However, notwithstanding this, we are moving on with some of our Green Policies.

Targeting planting 160,000 trees in WDC area.

Revise building standards to incorporate Green Technologies.

Revision to recycling opportunities through waste, including the use of Biomass facilities.

Encourage the improvement of cycle lanes.

Reduce vehicle emissions in "Hot Spots" around Warwick and Leamington.

Facilitating decarbonisation within Warwick District by local businesses, and residents so that carbon emissions within WDC area are as close to zero as possible by 2030.

October 2020 will see the introduction of a local People's Forum which will provide both ideas and information on key areas WDC should focus on in the next 5 years, plus climate-based activities.

As your District Councillors we will continue to work on your behalf.

Cllr Shattock explained that she had taken part in a forum on the devolution proposals where it had been confirmed that they would not be affecting Warwickshire.

Cllrs Wallace and Pam Redford gave the following update:

- Only three counties would be part of the first phase and Warwickshire might not even be in the second phase
- A discussion group had been set up and WCC was part of this
- Ministers and the discussion group would be deciding on the format for any changes but they might not even happen
- Any changes would take two or three years
- Cost savings would not be as great if North and South authorities were formed and the best savings would be if Warwickshire joined the West Midlands Combined Authority
- A North and South arrangement would give more localism
- WDC was already working in partnership with SDC on some services to make savings
- There were many options that would need to be considered if ever Warwickshire was in line to be changed. Some of these would be clearer when the White Paper was published
- In relation to the budget deficit, it was fortunate that a 2% increase on the precept had been permitted for adult social care but that was due to end
- All finances for local authorities were very uncertain but there could be things that have changed during the pandemic that could bring savings in the future

The Chair apologised that the Police Report had been omitted from the agenda and invited PCSO Underwood to give an update. The following points were reported:

- The SNT had changed dramatically as part of the pandemic and many ways of working had been altered, especially with such things as supporting victims of crime as visits could not take place
- All community events had been cancelled and visits to schools were not taking place
- The crime rate had reduced between March and August but was now starting to creep up again

- Dealing with the Covid-19 regulations and fines was proving to be a challenge, especially since the pubs and restaurants reopened on 04 July
- With regards to recent crimes, there had been three fraud incidents with elderly people as victims. As a result of this, crime prevention advice on fraud was being circulated to all parishes
- Pit Hill was to be monitored for speeding motorists until February
- Baginton had received interest from sixteen volunteers in relations to setting up its Community Speed Watch scheme

In response to a question from Cllr Powell, PCSO Underwood confirmed that PCSO King would make contact when Speed Watch sessions could recommence in Bubbenhall.

9. OTHER MATTERS RAISED BY AN ELECTOR OF THE PARISH

There was nothing to report on this item.