

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF
NORTON-JUXTA-KEMPSEY PARISH
HELD AT NORTON PARISH HALL, LITTLEWORTH ON
WEDNESDAY 6TH MAY 2020

In view of the Covid-19 pandemic and Government instructions, this meeting was held remotely via video/telephone conference call.

1. Apologies for Absence: Cllr. Lucas.

Attending:

Cllr. Fincher (Parish Council Chairman), Cllr. Arrow, Cllr. Dawson, Cllr. Kelly, Cllr. Pollard, Cllr. Richmond, Cllr. Turvey, Cllr. Waizeneker, Cllr. Adams (District and County Councillor), Mrs Greenway (Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer) and one member of the public/press.

2. Welcome and Report from Cllr. Fincher, Parish Council Chairman

Cllr. Fincher welcomed attendees and referred to the Chairman's Report published in support of the agenda (attached as Appendix 1). See item 7 for questions.

3. Covid-19 Community Response

As detailed in the Chairman's Report published in support of the agenda (attached as Appendix 1).

4. Community Legacy Grant Update

As detailed in the Community Legacy Grant Update Report published in support of the agenda (attached as Appendix 2).

5. Active Travel Corridor (ATC)/Parkway Station Update

As detailed in the Chairman's Report and the Worcestershire County Council (WCC) Update on Projects, both documents published in support of the agenda (attached as Appendix 1 and Appendix 3 respectively). The Parish Council reiterated that it does not support use of the section of the ATC between The Retreat and the Parkway Station due to safety concerns, which it continues to raise with WCC. Cllr Adams advised that road markings/lines painted along the ATC route are due to be refreshed by WCC where these are deteriorating.

6. Minutes of the 2019 Annual Parish Meeting 1st May 2019

Accepted as a true record, as proposed by Cllr Waizeneker, seconded by Cllr Dawson and agreed by all. The minutes will be signed by the Chairman as soon as Covid-19 restrictions allow.

7. Residents Questions

Concerns were expressed regarding the overgrown state of the hedge along the Church Lane pavement (between the motorway bridge and up towards St James Church), which is resulting in pedestrians walking in the road in places. Further enquiries will be made regarding ownership of the hedge and a quote for maintenance work will be obtained to assess the cost/nature of the work (taking into consideration requirements relating to the bird nesting season). Cllr Adams will seek assistance from WCC Highways as this pavement forms part of the ATC.

8. Close of Meeting

The Chairman thanked all those attending, closing the meeting at 8pm.

Parish Council (PC) - Chairman's 2020 Annual Parish Meeting Report

Some of you may be wondering where the physical version of the Spring Parish Magazine is and have probably already guessed that it's something to do with the current situation. We believe we have approximately 1000 copies of the magazine at the printers but having been unable to contact them since the lock-down started, we have resigned ourselves to not distributing it. In many ways this is no bad thing since it was compiled before the lock-down and the information within it, though relevant in the normal course of events, has become less significant in the current circumstance. However, given that you are reading this, I would commend to you the electronic version of the Spring Parish Magazine and if you are able, you might wish to highlight this to those in the community that you know normally read it, but may not be aware that it is available online. Equally, if you know someone who is not able to get online and is a regular reader, you might wish to print it off for them.

So, what is your Parish Council doing during the lock-down? In answer, largely a co-ordination role, ensuring that the various types of support on offer is co-ordinated and the right people are in contact. Mark Badger, the vicar of St James Church in Norton (and the churches in Severn Stoke and Kempsey) rallied resources to create Severnside COVID19 Support (SCS) <https://nortonjuxtakempseyparishcouncil.org/2187-2/> – many of you will have had an information card through your door. The idea is to offer welfare phone calls, help with essential practical tasks, help with urgent supplies and help with prescription collection. The Parish Council has been involved in extending this support to include our Parish and wholeheartedly supports what it is doing. We have also promoted the Worcestershire County Council Here2Help service www.worcestershire.gov.uk/here2help via our website and FB page, with this offering support to those in need and an opportunity for volunteers to help. Quite separately, some of the 750,000 that have volunteered to assist the NHS are located in the Parish, my son being one of them. As an NHS Volunteer Responder¹, James, and others like him, receive a text from the NHS asking them to offer assistance to people in their locality, his most recent call out being to conduct shopping for a vulnerable couple located in the Parish. Another layer of assistance are the volunteers co-ordinating with the Pershore based medical practices to ensure delivery of prescriptions within the Parish. There are nominated volunteers covering each area of the Parish in order to deliver prescriptions as requested by the pharmacies attached to the medical practices. Still further is the very local support provided by neighbours and friends within the same street, road, avenue, etc...., doing shopping, collecting prescriptions, walking dogs etc.... Given these various layers of support, there is no reason why anyone should not feel supported during this situation, but I would ask you all to consider whether those in your vicinity are aware of the assistance available and know how to access it as appropriate – we all have a part to play.

For those that use the play area at the Parish Hall, its closure will be a loss, but this is in line with Government direction and it will remain closed until directed otherwise. The playing fields themselves remain open for exercise, but please maintain social distancing, do not gather socially, nor as the weather gets warmer, consider picnics or BBQ's. The Government has not yet directed to close parks or playing fields, but numerous local authorities have done so of their own accord. The Parish Council has no intention to do so at present, but will constantly review the situation

¹ NHS Volunteer Responders is a new group that will carry out simple, non-medical tasks to support people in England who have been asked to shield themselves from coronavirus because of underlying health conditions. They will be used by healthcare professionals to make sure people who are highly vulnerable to coronavirus (COVID-19) are able to stay safe and well at home. NHS Volunteer Responders is not intended to replace any local provision, but to provide a service where informal support is not available or easily linked to by health and social care professionals.

based on its continued responsible use. Again, this is our community and I would ask you all to act responsibly and encourage those around you to do the same.

You may or may not be aware that Parish Council meetings are open to the public and have numerous formal conditions it needs to adhere to. It has taken several changes in the law to allow meetings to be conducted online and the Parish Council's first virtual meeting took place on Thu 9 Apr. You may also be aware that each year we conduct an Annual Parish Meeting, at which the public receive a brief from Councillors regarding what is going on in their Parish. Normally conducted at the Parish Hall, this year it will be conducted online. An agenda and link will be promulgated in advance and the meeting itself will take place at 1930 on Wed 6 May. Prior to the pandemic, there was a lot going on in the Parish (Worcestershire Parkway, the Active Travel Corridor, the proposed new settlement around the Parkway Station, commencement of the South West Urban Extension, etc...), all of which has largely been placed on hold, hence the agenda will be tailored to the situation before us and a further Parish Briefing will be arranged later in the year to update the Parish on all the other matters once they start to progress.

Finally, some good news. I've previously mentioned the applications that the Parish Council made in autumn 2019 for Wychavon District Council Community Legacy Grants and New Homes Bonus funding, and I'm pleased to inform you that we have been granted £180,000; everything we asked for. The amount spans two projects; a village minibus ('The Norton Connector') to replace the bus services that we have lost (£30,000), and improvements to the Parish Hall, including a new roof with solar panels, a mezzanine floor in the main hall, a village shop and post office and electric car charging points (£150,000), all of which received community support via the recent questionnaire. The funding plans for these projects require a Parish Council contribution, namely £2,000 towards the mini-bus and £5,000 towards the Parish Hall developments, funded via the 2020/21 precept. Clearly there is little opportunity to progress either in the current situation, but the Parish Council and Parish Hall Trustees are keen to progress both once they are able.

All of the information referred to in this update can be found on the Parish Council website <https://nortonjuxtakempseyparishcouncil.org/> and on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/NJKParishCouncil/> though I would ask those of you familiar with both to consider neighbours that might not be, and where appropriate, highlight this information to them.

If you are in need of help, but have been unable to find support, the Parish Council can be contacted via the Clerk, Jane Greenway (Tel: 01905 763515 Email: NJKparishclerk@aol.com), or via any of the Councillors, and between us we will be able to direct you regarding how best to access the various layers of support available.

Unprecedented is an over-used, though quite appropriate word at present and we all need to consider ways of supporting the community we live in. No request for assistance should be dismissed and there is no such thing as a stupid idea, so if there is something that you consider the Parish Council should be addressing, please let us know. Stay safe and stay in touch with your community, we are all in this together.

Kevin Fincher
Chairman, Norton-juxta-Kempsey Parish Council

April 2020

COMMUNITY LEGACY GRANT UPDATE FOR ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 6th May 2020

You will remember last year the Parish had the opportunity to apply for Community Legacy Grants (CLG) from Wychavon District Council to help fund major community projects in Norton-juxta-Kempsey Parish. Following consultation with our residents, who strongly supported our proposals, we applied for two such grants:

Project 1: The Parish Hall. Over the last few years there have been great developments in and around the Parish Hall with the coffee shop, the new car parking, the play area and most recently the refurbished toilets. We now see an opportunity to move on with a number of community focussed and environmentally sustainable additions. These could include:

- A community shop (with Post Office now St Peters PO is closed)
- Electric vehicle charging points
- Starter business offices/workshops/community workplaces
- A new roof with extensive solar panels

Estimated indicative total costs for this project are in the region of £180,000, with funding applications made for £100,000 Community Legacy Grant and £50,000 New Homes Bonus. The remaining cost is proposed to be funded by the Parish Council and the Parish Hall Trustees.

Project 2: Norton Connector Community Minibus. The Parish has excellent transport services nearby at Parkway station and at St Peters for the 32 bus service into Worcester, but none easily accessible from the population centres within the Parish. It is therefore proposed to establish a regular minibus service linking St Peters Tesco to Parkway station via Brockhill, Norton and Littleworth. With this we can provide connections to both Parkway station and the 32 bus service at St Peters as well as access to the supermarket and other facilities at St Peters. It will also aid movement round the Parish e.g. to the Parish Hall and its expanding community facilities and encourage the environmentally desirable reduction in car usage.

We have been working with Worcester County Council and Worcester Wheels who will potentially operate the pilot service for us.

A Community Legacy Grant application for £30,000 was made to underpin a 2 year pilot to prove the long term viability of the concept.

We are very pleased to be able to give you some good news at these very difficult times as both our applications were approved in full by Wychavon DC in March 2020. We have been offered £100,000 Community Legacy Grant and £50,000 New Homes Bonus for the parish hall and £30,000 to fund the minibus pilot.

Clearly at the present time we will not be rushing into action on either project, but it will be our intention to proceed with both as and when we are able to.

Norton-juxta-Kempsey Parish Council
April 2020

Update from Worcestershire County Council regarding Projects in
Norton-juxta-Kempsey Parish

COVID-19

As you would expect, COVID-19 has had a major impact on our work. This is for a number of reasons including contractors suspending work, problems with the supply chain, staff shortages and the challenges of complying with the relevant COVID-19 control measures. All proposals to carry out work including surveys, signing and lining, earth moving and construction work etc have to be carefully scrutinised before being given the go-ahead. It may be counter-intuitive but our in-house teams are working absolutely flat-out at present dealing with the direct and indirect consequences of COVID-19 and ensuring that as much work as possible e.g. design, financial planning, business case development, strategic planning, surveying etc continues ahead of site work recommencing in earnest.

Southern Link Road

Our principal contractor had suspended all work but is gradually remobilising in strict accordance with the relevant Operating Procedures. So far this has included earth moving within the SLR3 site, site inspections and some landscaping work. We expect a more general return to work over the next month provided government advice does not change, the contractor has sufficient personnel to operate in a safe and efficient manner and the supply chain holds-up. Some allowance had been made in the SLR4 programme for flood events but as you are aware the frequency and level of flooding this year has been significant. We are currently in the process of evaluating any impact on the overall programme caused by flooding and COVID-19. As previously advised the Crookbarrow Way Footbridge ramp cannot be opened until some safety-critical work has been completed and unfortunately the relevant sub-contractor is currently still locked-down.

Worcestershire Parkway Station

Our contractor has continued to complete snagging on site and will be making some changes to on-site signage over the next few weeks now that we have been able to observe how passengers navigate around the campus. As you would expect, passenger numbers have fallen dramatically in line with the national trend but the early signs before the pandemic took hold had been excellent. I would be grateful if you could re-emphasise that the station is now operated by GWR and any queries regarding car parking machines, car park charges, electric vehicle charging points, refreshments, seating, staffing etc should be directed to them. Queries regarding train services should be directed to the relevant Train Operating Company (GWR or CrossCountry).

Active Travel Corridor

Some work is currently taking place to improve signing and lining subject to the caveats listed above (and the weather). We will investigate the Parish Council's request regarding a dog waste bin in Brockhill Lane when Wychavon resume dealing with routine business.

Programme and Commissioning Manager
Directorate of Economy and Infrastructure
Worcestershire County Council

April 2020