

ABBOTS MORTON PARISH.

Draft minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in Abbots Morton Village Hall, Tuesday 18th May 2010 at 7.35 p.m.

Present: Mr. D. Ernest (Chairman), Mrs. N. Holland, Clerk to the Parish Council, County Cllr. Mr. Holt, Dist. Cllrs. Mrs. Steel and Mr. Lee and 7 parishioners.

1. Welcome – the Chairman of the Parish Council, Mr. Ernest, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies: Mr. D. Humphries, Mr and Mrs Brewster, Mr. D. Smith and Mr. G. Barker.

3. Minutes: The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 7th May 2009 were proposed, seconded and agreed to be an accurate record, signed by the Chairman.

4. Matters Arising: Nil.

5. Chairman of the Parish Council: Cllr. Mr. Ernest gave the following report:

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, thank you for attending the Annual Parish Meeting.

I believe that you all have a copy of tonight's agenda. I hope that you find the evening informative, and I would like to thank our guests and members of the various parish bodies for their attendance.

Firstly, I would like to express my appreciation and thanks to my fellow councillors and clerk for their support and work during the year. The Parish Council's ability to deal with a series of issues during the last year and provide a high level of continuity is attributable to all of the council members and their collective and individual experience. I am very pleased that Angela Eason has continued to support us the Vice Chair of Abbots Morton Parish Council, and am very appreciative of her continued support. Nicky Holland continues to provide outstanding support to the council and without her experience and efficiency I feel that we would struggle to meet our commitments.

During the past year we welcomed Will Clapton as a new member to the council after the departure of Derek Spooner from the village.

In addition, during the past year we were very fortunate to gain the assistance of David Smith as footpaths officer for the Parish. David has been striding the footpaths and by ways keeping paths clear and recommending additional work to be done, and his effort is much appreciated and I am pleased to report that Pat Ansell continues to provide valuable assistance with her years of experience in this role.

I am pleased to report that the Parish Council has had a positive and productive 12 months. Surprisingly we met formally 12 times last year (3 special planning meetings, 2 meetings of the Staffing Committee and 6 Full PC, as well as several off site consultation meetings with various authorities regarding drainage, road safety and maintenance.

I would like to summarise the Parish Council's activities during the past year.

Firstly Planning

Again much of the work done is to review planning applications. The PC reviewed 6 planning applications; some of these were like for like replacements i.e. windows on listed properties and some related to significant structural changes. As many of you are aware, The Parish Council has a statutory duty to review these, and we have commented on most of these applications.

In addition to the planning issues, Councillors have discussed and pursued a number of local issues including:-

FLOODING AND ROAD AND DITCH MAINTENANCE.

As you are aware the Parish Council employs a Lengthsman. (Compared with a previous arrangement to sub contract his work from another Parish Council). This work is funded by the County Council, and the Lengthsman role is to carry out routine repairs to the banks and ditches around the Parish. He has continued to maintain the drainage off the road into ditches and general maintenance of banks and ditches etc. During the Autumn months the council commissioned additional work from him to ensure that leaves etc were kept under control and not block drainage.

During the past 12 months we worked with the County Highways engineer, landowners and bodies such as Severn Trent to continue the momentum of improvement in drainage within the village. As a result much repair and recommissioning work has been done. We will continue to ensure that standards are improved subject to local authority cuts etc. Additional work is scheduled for repair of a culvert and railings further down in the village approaching Morton Spirt. The drainage system is now regularly jetted and over the past six months several additional blockages have been identified and cleared.

Please advise any members of the council of the Clerk of any issues that you notice regarding drainage or maintenance so that we can ensure that we keep on top of the situation.

TRAFFIC AND SPEEDING PROBLEMS AT MORTON SPIRT.

As you are aware this issue has been going on for a number of years. During the past twelve months we have worked with the representatives of Worcestershire County Council for the introduction of improved signage, extension of solid white lines and bollards to be placed at the verge. Hopefully these will have a positive effect. In addition we have encouraged Ragley estate to keep the trees and bushes well trimmed and back from the verge. Unfortunately, our efforts to press for a reduced speed limit have met with some resistance by the relevant bodies, who are currently reviewing speed limits for a and b category roads, but we are hopeful that they will address this road in the near.

HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY

In conjunction with the aspirations of the Parish Plan, we will be looking at this subject again in the context of PARISH need for Affordable housing

REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY AND JOINT CORE STRATEGY (Wychavon, Worcester City and Malvern Hills)

This continues to be monitored closely, with Government decisions re target numbers of housing for the area yet to be determined. Currently the need for 24,500 new homes across South Worcestershire has been identified. Whilst we are not aware of any direct impact on the parish of this plan, Inkberrow has been indicated as a possible site for a small number of houses. I will leave this to comment on by the representatives of the County and District councils in their reports. The Parish Council has attended a number of meetings on this subject and I hope that the entire issue will be clearer in the near future.

As I mentioned, at this time we do not anticipate any direct impact on the immediate vicinity of Abbots Morton, but we continue to monitor the situation...

Mineral Core Strategy

As some of you may be aware, Warwickshire County Council commissioned a study on the Minerals Core Strategy for Warwickshire. This has resulted in some concern regarding the future consideration of expansion of existing sites and the identification of new sites. On a local basis this identified the possibility of new and expanded workings around the Dunnington area, with options including the site around Hillers farm Shop and the other side of Dunnington village being identified for potential expansion.

Your Parish Council has responded to the survey regarding the Mineral Core strategy and has additionally and separately indicated its concern regarding these outline proposals, citing concern regarding traffic, noise and general disruption. It is emphasised that currently it is in proposal stage and no planning process has been started. The Parish Council has enquired into the feasibility of options regarding weight restriction on the road through Morton Spirt. Also we will pursue with the relevant local authorities options for movement restriction of quarry loads in the event that a planning application is made. Currently the existing load movement is subject to a voluntary agreement with the quarry operator, and we would aim to have that extended if appropriate. Likewise as a footnote, we are also monitoring the situation regarding proposals for a Wind farm near Church Lench.

The Village Green Bench

During the year the council commissioned a replacement bench on the village Green. I am pleased to say with villagers donations and a grant from Wychavon and Abbots Morton Parish Council and the Residents Association we comfortably funded the replacement cost and a great day marked the dedication ceremony

Parish Plan

It is the intention of the Parish Council to formerly review the Parish Plan in the twelve months. I am pleased to say one of the key concerns, which of speeding at Morton Spirt continues to be addressed. I believe that the provision of facilities for the residents (young and old) of Abbots Morton continues to improve, with the hard work of village hall committee. As I also indicated we are monitoring the need for housing.

Website

The Parish Council website has moved to a new home courtesy of Worcestershire County Council. It is now being managed by them and we hope in the future to benefit from updates and maintenance. The website address is www.worcestershire.gov.uk/MyParish

Finance

The Parish Council has striven to keep the annual precept at the same level as the previous year. Please be assured that we are very conscious of providing value to the community and are carefully balancing the need for cost containment against investing for the future, and for the last financial year we managed to increase the Parish

Council reserves for future contingency.
6. Summary of end of year accounts: Attached.
7. PC Tony Carter – not in attendance.
<p>8. County Cllr. report – Cllr. Mr. Holt reported the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the Parish Lengthsman was funded by the County Council, and will continue to be funded for the next financial year. • The County Council has set up the BOLD group, (Better Outcome Leaner Delivery), which is reviewing County Council spending. Funding from the Government is likely to be decreased. • Another group that has been set up is WHETT, Worcestershire Enhanced Two Tier. They are looking at combining departments to share the work load i.e. Trading Standards, Licensing and Environmental Health. • The bad winter weather has had a devastating effect on the roads. County Council is spending money from the reserves account to repair potholes.
<p>9. Dist. Cllrs. report:</p> <p><u>Dist. Cllr. Mrs. Steel reported the following:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Spatial Strategy is progressing. • Youth Bus – first visit is free. To arrange contact Rob Mace. • The new Chairman of the District Council is Linda Robinson. • Wind Turbine planning application – is waiting to be validated. <p>Q. What is a Youth Bus?</p> <p>A. Bus providing various games partly for pleasure and education purposes.</p> <p><u>Dist. Cllr. Mr. Lee reported the following:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wychavon Community Grant Scheme applications deadline is this week. • Litter Pick equipment can be hires free of charge form the District Council.
<p>10. Residents' Association – report was given by Mr. Burton, Chair of the Residents' Association.</p> <p>As I said in my report at the AMRA AGM, the past year has been a generally quiet one for us. There were a few planning applications and we commented where we thought it appropriate. In every case, we came to the same conclusion as the Parish Council – or they us – I'm not sure which! Either way, we had no quibble with any of the decisions which were of course made by the District Council. I feel that it is sometimes forgotten that neither AMRA nor the Parish Council make planning decisions. Our views and comments certainly have a bearing on their deliberations, but the decisions are made solely by Wychavon.</p> <p>One matter we continued to pursue was that of safety at Morton Spirt. In this, we joined with the Parish Council and were successful in getting the warning signs moved to a more prominent position and warning bollards placed in the bank at Tree Tops. Unfortunately, I don't think either have had much effect on the speed of many vehicles.</p> <p>What has concerned us most over the past year, however, has been the possibility of extensions to gravel extraction at Dunnington and perhaps at Berry Coppice behind Hillers. This is not a new situation. But one upon which I briefly reported last year. AMRA was invited to join the committee of the group set up to monitor developments and we readily accepted. Two members of the committee attended our AGM and reported on progress.</p> <p>The current situation is that the North if Broom Lane extension is coming up before the regulatory committee next Tuesday at the Shire Hall in Warwick. The Committee (Envirowatch) will be registering to speak and will oppose it. In the event that it is approved, they will ask for conditions to be imposed. Their other concern is that CEMEX is not meeting its obligations to restore the land at the Marsh Farm quarry now that extraction has finished.</p> <p>Because of the effect traffic from any new site would have on our local roads we re continuing to press for restrictions to be imposed on the C2010/C103 from Weethley Gate through to Radford. The present restriction relates only to the Marsh Farm quarry and is a voluntary one. We are seeking something more definite and legal as a voluntary agreement cannot be enforce and has been broken by drivers from time to time without penalty.</p> <p>(The person I have been dealing with over this matter is Roy Fullee, Worcestershire's County Highways Liaison Engineer. Since I prepared this report he has advised me that he has not so far had any feedback from his colleagues who are not aware of any conditions such as an S52 agreement. This does not surprise me because the previous agreement was a voluntary one between CEEMEX and Warwickshire C. C. Roy has already pursued another line of enquiry through their Traffic Management Team to see if they are aware of any previous agreements which might include weight limits. He goes on to say that, subject to approval from the local County Councillor, he is willing to</p>

attend the next Parish Council meeting to discuss the matter, by which time he hopes to have some information to hand. This is a matter for the Parish Council which I hope they will follow up.)

AMRA has now been in existence for over 22 years. During that time, we have faced various situations which have threatened our environment as you see it today. This has enabled us to gain considerable experience in dealing with such matters. As a result, we are from time to time approached by newly formed groups to give them the benefit of that experience.

I have already mentioned the Dunnington group. Previously, we have been involved with Feckenham and a Cookhill/Weethley group protesting over the Ragley Arena proposals. The latest situation occurred two months ago when residents' of Cookhill sought our advice over a planning proposal by a farmer who was applying to extend his industrial activities. Unfortunately, their objections failed to impress the planners because, I feel, they were too late on the case. They did, nevertheless, place on record the value of the assistance we had given. Needless to say, they are now in the process of forming an action group. I recount these facts, not just because I am here to report on our activities, but also to show that associations such as AMRA are increasingly recognised as groups which can help to preserve, enhance, and protect the environment in which we live. However, as I regularly repeat, such groups can only operate effectively if they have both a strong membership and a strong committee. We certainly have a strong membership and a strong committee. We certainly have a strong membership, a large part of whom pay their membership fees by bankers order and are clearly, therefore, with us for the long term; unfortunately, we lack a full committee. This is not a unique situation. When I talk to other organisations and social groups I find the same thing. It seems to be a present day way of life. It makes me wonder how successful our new government will be in persuading people to become active in running their communities.

I am delighted that Graham Hobbs joined the Committee during the year. I know that Graham will make, and is making, a real contribution. This still leaves us with two long term vacancies which will become three again when Paul Budd sells his house. As he is leaving the Parish Paul felt he should have left the Committee at our AGM in February, but I am pleased to say that I persuaded him that he should stay. He did, however, relinquish the position of Vice-Chairman which is still vacant. When Paul goes, the Committee will be back to four, two of whom are father and son. This can hardly be said to be truly representative. I have been Chairman of this Association now for a little over 9 years and in view of that and my advanced years, it is perhaps time for someone else to take over, someone who has more persuasive powers than I have and who is able to get the Committee restored to its full numbers. Given this situation, and in order to facilitate the way forward, I feel that it would perhaps be in the best interests of the Association if I were to step down at the next AGM, not only as Chairman, but perhaps also as a Committee member. This is a matter I intend to place before the membership at that time.

Despite the present tranquillity, we do not know what the future holds and it is all too easy to become complacent. You have probably read about the gipsy site being developed at Meriden and the way residents are organising themselves to get it stopped. Another such case was reported in Sunday's Telegraph where a farmer sold a field and the new owner started to set up a traveller's camp. It cost residents £225,000 to buy the field from the traveller. I am not saying that any of our farmers would intentionally create such a situation here, but if the land is put up for sale it is not always possible to establish who the end buyer will be so don't think it can happen here. I ask you all, members or not, to think carefully about whether or not you need AMRA. If the answer is that you do, then ask yourself if you should volunteer to serve on the Committee. It would be ironic if, for want of a committee, the Association folded when both local and communities across the country are moving in the opposite direction.

Q. Will the weight restriction affect an agricultural vehicle?

A. No, looking at options to restrict HGV lorries carrying gravel.

11. Public Paths Warden: report attached.

12. Church Council: Mr. Brewster gave a report. (Attached).

13. Neighbourhood Watch: Written report received. (Attached).

14. Village Hall: report given by Angela Eason. (Attached).

15. Matters raised by parishioners: Questions raised after each presentation.

Meeting closed at 8.45 pm.