

# ECKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** held

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2019 at 6.30 pm at Eckington Village Hall.

**Present:** Cllrs G. Glaze (Chairman), D. Bainbridge (V/Chairman), G. Ransted, M. Wood, C. Cameron, N. Wilkes, C. Auty, C. Yarnold & M. Hughes.

**Also present:** 14 members of the Public.

**Apologies:** County Cllr A. Hardman & District Cllr Ron Davis.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting 2019.

**Minutes of APM held 17<sup>th</sup> April 2018** – The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held 17<sup>th</sup> April 2018 were agreed and signed as a true record. Proposed Cllr Ransted, seconded Cllr Wilkes. All agreed.

## **PRESENTATION:**

A presentation was given to the meeting by Spitfire Homes regarding the development at the north end of the village in conjunction with the merging Neighbourhood Development Plan. This was followed by a short Q&A session.

## **Parish Council Chairman's Report given by Cllr George Glaze –**

This has been a busy time for Eckington Parish Council.

During the last year your Council has welcomed two new Councillors, a new Lengthman, seen the emerging Neighbourhood Plan submitted for the regulation 16 consultation and consulted to improve community links. The reduction in both Central Government and County Council funding continues. Consequently the work load of the Parish Council continues to increase and become more onerous to meet community expectations.

When complete, Eckington Parish Council, the first level of elected representation consists of nine Councillors, all volunteers, a Parish Clerk and a Parish Lengthsman.

Their work falls into three main categories

- representing the local community
- delivering services to meet local needs
- striving to improve the quality of life in the local area

To meet these responsibilities the Council keeps contact with other village committees and regularly sends Councillors to relevant County and District meetings. The Council has recently conducted a survey to review community engagement but sadly the response was less than expected. Never the less the council will use the information available to seek ways to improve links with the community.

Some of the work done over the last year includes the following.

Your Council has continued to press WCC Highways both directly and via our County Councillor to address issues with roads and footways. Although WCC Highways remain under financial pressure it is pleasing to note several issues have been addressed promptly but the Parish Council will remain

vigilant and continue to seek improvements to maintain or improve safety, especially for pedestrians within the village under dark skies.

During this year as statutory consultee the Council has considered and commented on 37 planning applications. The work of Cllr Bainbridge in preparing briefs, often including photographs has been invaluable for this work. The Council supported the WDC application to have Drakesbridge House listed thus preventing demolition and overdevelopment of the site. Cllr Wilkes is now progressing a similar application for North House.

The Council is responsible for the upkeep of the Cemetery and Churchyard including regular grass cutting, an annual safety inspection and making good any damage.

Maintaining the War Memorial is also an important Council responsibility. We are indebted to Cllr Wilkes for his dedication in keeping the memorial garden to such a high standard throughout the year. The Council has been successful in having this important village tribute registered as a Grade II listed building of Special Architectural or Historic interest thus ensuring future protection.

The Council is intent on maintaining the attractiveness of the village, so thanks are due to the WI for their ongoing maintenance of the planters at the village entrances that provide such a cheerful welcome.

The allotments managed and maintained by the Parish Council, continue to be popular. All are currently occupied and there is a waiting list.

Footpaths are also an important leisure facility that the Parish Council knows the village values highly. Unfortunately, the flooding of the Hammock footpath persists, and your Council is pressing both WDC and WCC whose combined responsibility it is to explore possible solutions.

The Council continues to support the Recreation Centre with an annual grant to assist with the running costs of this valuable and widely used community asset.

A source of funding for community projects is New Homes Bonus. This is paid via Wychavon District Council and is allocated to projects that show wide community benefit. Changes to how the support is distributed has resulted in two funds; an "Eckington fund", currently £24633 ring fenced for use in the Parish and a Community Legacy Grant scheme accessible by application. WDC still apply a stringent protocol and while your Council is always pleased to receive applications for NHB funds any proposed scheme must demonstrate wide community benefit, provide a lasting legacy and be approved by WDC.

Speeding traffic remains a concern. After extensive discussions and meetings with WCC Highways the Parish Council is strengthening the gateway on the Tewkesbury Road approach to the village. This scheme which has been financially supported by County Cllr Hardman will include white gates, dragon's teeth road markings and a new VASS post near the village entrance. To address speeding issues along Nafford Road it has also been agreed to move the 30 mph sign further from the village boundary. Improvements to the Pershore Road village approach will be considered once the adjacent development is finalised

Community Speed Watch was established following widespread concern regarding speeding traffic and the scheme continues thanks to the efforts of Cllr Ransted. However more volunteers are always needed to make the scheme more effective.

Thankfully rural crime remains at a low level in Eckington. However, the community should not become complacent and with a view to increasing safety of people and property Cllr. Ransted has

revived the Neighbourhood Watch scheme. It is believed this action will help to ensure the village continues to remain as safe as possible from opportunist crime. Your Council is now investigating the use of Smartwater to further deter criminals but to be successful a high level of take up within the community is vital.

Mr Liam Ireland is the new Parish Games co-ordinator and we wish him every success in this role.

Mindful of the demographics of the village and the increasing need for social Mary Hughes is leading a project for Eckington to be recognised as a Dementia Friendly Community. A formal application has been submitted, please look out for updates in all the usual places.

The Eckington Neighbourhood Plan has continued to progress during the last year and is now undergoing Regulation 16 consultation that will end on 29/04/2019. This has been a time-consuming project and the Council would thank the Steering Group for their conscientious hard work.

The lack of Rural transport is a nationwide problem and Eckington is not immune to this trend. The enhanced 50's bus service introduced last October did not receive sufficient usage and has therefore been drastically reduced. Councillors have continued working with the Vale Public Transport Group to improve transport links for the village using a "Hopper" type service and establishing Pershore as a transport hub. However, any service that is introduced must be commercially viable otherwise it will be lost.

On another disappointing note the Parish Council has reluctantly had to accept that there will be no improvements to Eckington Bridge to prevent flooding. After extensive discussions with WCC it is now quite clear that under prevailing circumstances this is considered "low priority" and necessary work will not be undertaken

It is disappointing that it is again necessary to mention previous problems.

The Parish Council continues to receive reports of dog fouling within the village. To assist dog owners, bins have been purchased and strategically placed around the village. It is really hoped the facilities provided will be used to keep our surroundings clean and safe.

An increasing number of complaints regarding overgrown hedges obstructing footways are being made. It is the land owners responsibility to maintain hedges but if necessary, the Council Lengthsman could help.

The occurrence of inconsiderate parking, in particular vehicles parked near road junctions restricting vision or on footways forcing pedestrians to walk in the roadway continues. For obvious reasons parking within the village will always be a problem.

Your parish Council hopes that villagers will show community responsibility and take the appropriate steps to eliminate these trends thus keeping the village clean and safe.

As we approach the election, I would take this opportunity to thank all Councillors for their time and commitment in dealing with Council matters during the past year, especially those who have decided not to stand for re-election. Also, thanks to Michelle our clerk who has now "settled in" and is providing valuable information to guide the Council. Thanks to our new Lengthsman Jim Pitchforth, who after undergoing basic training can be seen around keeping the village spick, span and safe. Through the year the Council has also received valuable support and advice from District Councillor Ron Davis and County Councillor Adrian Hardman. This assistance is gratefully acknowledged.

Finally, a reminder that your Parish Council is always pleased to hear from villagers so attend a Council meeting or contact one of your Councillors to raise any pertinent matters and do keep a look out for more ways to contact your Councillors.

**County Councillor Report** – none made.

**District Councillor Report** – none made.

**Any other issues notified in advance of the meeting**– none.

**There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.10 pm**