

Rous Lench and Radford Parish.

Draft minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 19th May 2013 at 7.31 pm in Rous Lench Village Hall.

Present: Mr. C. Dudley (Chairman of the Parish Council), Mrs. N. Holland (Clerk to the Parish Council), County Cllr. Mr. Holt, and 6 parishioners.

1. Welcome – the Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting,

2. Apologies: Dist. Cllrs. Mrs. Steel and Mr. Lee, PC T. Carter, PCSO Kathryn Fellowes, Mrs. Wicks, Mrs. Fernihough, Mr. D. Ernest, Ann Freer, and Mrs. Davies.

3. Minutes: of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 20th May 2013 were signed as a true and accurate record.

4. Matters arising: Nil.

5. Parish Council:

The Chairman reported 6 scheduled meetings held this year and additional meetings when planning applications are submitted. During the year Nigel Morris resigned and we have now been fortunate to co-opt Mrs. Rowley onto the Council.

New Homes Bonus money was applied for to purchase Vehicle Activated Signage which is being shared with Church Lench. It appears at different locations around the Parish. Our local Police Officer continues to undertake random speed checks which I am sure is a deterrent. There is still some New Homes Bonus money available for community projects.

The village has continued to have concerns over flooding, Nicky Holland, Clerk, has been continually pursuing maintenance and improvements to the watercourses. Fortunately we had no properties flooded in Radford this year.

The village green is always kept mown and well cared for and I would like to thank David Knight for once again organising the mowing rota.

I would like to offer my thanks to the parish councillors for all the hard work that each of them put into the village. This is of course all done voluntarily and we are lucky to have a council who fell passionately about the village. Finally my thanks to Nicky our Clerk who is a real asset to the Council and even manages to keep me organised most of the time.

6. Police report: Email received – no incidents to report.

7. Superfast Broadband: Email report received:

Worcestershire County Council together with BT are using local and Government funding to roll out a new Broadband Fibre based network to Worcestershire. This should provide fast Broadband speeds for 90 to 95% of the population and businesses.

The basic information re Broadband super fast roll out is contained on the Super fast Broad Band web site hosted by the team at County. Please refer to the website <http://www.superfastworcestershire.com>

There are several major issues relating to this situation.

Whilst the map on the website showing the deployment of the new network is only for indicative purposes and is not particularly detailed, it is clear that there is a large area of the County that will not be covered by the new Fibre network. Basically the County Council has striven to meet its objective of 90-95% coverage by focussing on dense population clusters and thus rural areas have less priority. This has been confirmed in various conversations with County Council officers and BT. There is a large area stretching from (approximately) south of Cookhill in the north to the Lenches in the South and towards the M5 at Peopleton that will not be covered by the rollout e.g. they will not be upgraded. Within that area there are a few pockets that will be upgraded (e.g. some parts of Inkberrow, Bishampton). There are no current plans to reach the 5%-10% properties that are currently excluded from the rollout plan. My efforts to include these areas have been resisted. It seems that everyone is hoping that this gap will

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be plugged by future additional Government funding but there are no guarantees. This 5- 10% figure represents thousands of people and hundreds of businesses in Worcestershire. I have contacted Airband who provided a County funded project for satellite type broadband in the Feckenham/ Hanbury area. At this time they are not interested in a feasibility study in our area. In any case I personally believe that the solution may not be cost effective and is not necessarily appropriate for businesses and heavy users of broadband.

There are profound implications for properties that will not be upgraded, analysts have mentioned a devaluation in property values; also without any substantial upgrade to a house or business it is likely that the existing Broadband service will become increasingly unreliable, lower speeds and unusable over the next few years as websites are optimised for faster broadband. The government promises a minimum speed of 2 mbps (Abbots Morton is currently 1.5mps), however that will not support Internet and other streaming services such as i Player. I have deferred inviting the interested Parishes and residents to a central meeting until I had the meeting with the Government minister, (scheduled for June) so I could provide some update.

I suspect that there will an increasing number of disgruntled people and businesses within the next year as they find that they are excluded from the rollout plans. My concern is that there are no plans to assist the thousands of people and many businesses who will not be included in the plan and who is a couple of years will have an increasingly unusable internet service.

As a Parish Councillor and resident I am lobbying the County Council and BT. In reality the only way forward for a resilient long term fix is for all households to be connected on a Fibre Optic cable. Oxfordshire County Council have recently announced a partnership with a company for such a cabling project to the 10% disenfranchised, I am currently urging County to talk to this company about a solution for Worcestershire.

8. Church Lench First School: email report received:

I have heard that it is likely that 4 village schools will be closing within Worcestershire but Church Lench is safe on two counts:

- a) Received an 'Outstanding' Ofsted report.
- b) No deficit budget.

We are just coming through a very 'lean' year but the budget is looking much better this year (2014-15) due to increase in pupil numbers and a teacher retiring.

8. County and Dist. Cllrs. reports:

County Cllr. Mr. Holt reported:

- a) Council tax increased by 1-9% which gives and added bonus of £4 million which will go into the safe guarding of children budget. Latest statistics show that 22% of children are in care.
- b) Unemployment claimant figures are at their lowest level since 2008.
- c) The Government has agreed to increase the funding for the schools in Worcestershire in 2015, an extra £5 million.
- d) Site visit took place with the Head of Highways regarding the appalling condition of the road to Ab Lench in Rous Lench.

Dist. Cllr. Mrs. Steel - report received by email:

The last year has seen some difficult decisions having to be made by Wychavon District Council particularly in terms of planning and services that the council has provided in the past. The funding which central government has provided has been cut drastically and so the Council has had to do the same. The numbers of staff has been reduced – much of which has been by natural wastage and retirements, what the future holds is not certain – some services are open to sharing with other authorities and the council has already made office space available to Civica for which the remunerations are welcome.

Planning has been even more difficult for several reasons. The District Council has no local plan in place and is short of a 5 year land supply. This has led to some very difficult decisions having to be made and which have caused much distress in the area, both towns and villages. Many of these decisions are due to central government telling planning authorities that more houses are needed especially affordable housing, so unless there are really strong planning reasons to refuse the Council is bound to approve. The other reason to refuse could mean that the developer would go to appeal which in some cases means that costs against the Council adds

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to the cost of running the Council.

9. Village Hall Committee report: Mrs. White, Chair of the Village Hall Committee gave the following report:

I'd like to thank the Parish Council for their support of our village hall over the past 12 months. Without the support of the community we would fail in our aim to provide a warm and comfortable meeting place within our village boundaries. Your letters of support really do help us to gain extra funding for our projects.

I'd like just to reflect on the past 12 months and the achievements of the committee.

A working party in May saw the painting completed along the passageway, the lobby and various points around the hall. Fran Herdman took charge of the redecoration of the bar area to reflect a new colour scheme, an anonymous donation enabled us to purchase new furniture to enhance this area. We will endeavour to make funds available to complete the transformation of this area. New lights were fitted throughout the hall to give a soothing lighting effect using more energy efficient lighting. Tiling was completed in the disabled toilet along with improved facilities for parents with babies.

A survey was undertaken to engage the inhabitants with our plans for the future, this has been used to reflect our planning for the future years and also as a base for securing funding from various agencies. Further bids will be made throughout this year in the hope of gaining additional funding for our projects.

We trialed online booking for events but with little success, however under Darin McLean's lead we now have 'mailchimp' sent out regularly to advertise all events. I would encourage you all to sign up for these alerts. We thank the Parish Council for the donation of a notice board, hopefully soon to be erected on the village green, and also the offer of a projector for our events.

We have had problems with the drains running alongside the building and the kitchen area is in need of major refurbishment. We are now looking into the possibility of building an extension on an area of virtual waste ground to the side of the hall with the prospect of a new purpose built kitchen area leaving us with storage facilities at the back of the hall in the old kitchen. Something which has long been a problem with the limited space we have available.

Events this year have included:

Through Shindig, the Live and Local group, the roving Crows and the return of Jinny Davis

Glads production of Jan Shuster

A very successful Treasure Hunt, soon to be repeated.

The Pig Roast with the appearance of the alpacas

The Harvest Supper, Quiz Nights, Skittles, Pumpkin Carving, Ceilidh and Haggis night,

The Christmas Party and Home for Christmas all of which were again well attended, and we must thank the dedicated group of volunteers who make all this happen

Private party bookings and weddings are on the increase and serve as a good revenue source and there has been a request for the craft evenings run last autumn to be repeated

The Pig Roast organisation for this year is already well underway with the BSA Front Wheel Drive Club attending as their National Rally venue for 2014, and we hope once again to welcome the alpacas.

There is a small but committed group of people who make these events happen, we are always looking for recruits to lighten the load, but with an increased attendance at our AGM we are hopeful that 'new blood' into the village will provide the support that we need.

Our treasurer for the last 25 years has this year decided it is time for him to move on, I shall be taking over this role and Brian Herdman will once again take the position of Chair for the next 12 months.

10. Parish Paths Warden:

Mr. Knight gave the following report:

The year from May 2013 has been largely uneventful from a Wardens point of view. Paths in the parish continue to be well used despite an appallingly muddy winter. It has been encouraging to see improvements made to paths by several landowners, the most notable examples being on path 500 from The Thorn to Kington Brake, where a veritable jungle of brambles was cleared below the scrap yard and the path made good as far as the Kington boundary. On path 502 a hand gate has been installed at the top of the drive to Grove Farm and the missing finger post replaced. I have followed up by making some minor repairs to the footbridge and stile on this path

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and by replacing faded or missing waymark discs. Some very muddy sections have also been firmed up with hardcore on paths 505 (Gooms Hill to Mill Lane), on 521 (the bridleway between Radford Road and Gooms Hill) and on 523 (the bridleway section of the Wychavon Way between Rous Lench and Abberton). The County Council Access team has replaced the finger post at the Abberton end of this path and has had a new gate installed at the Radford end of the path 509 (from Inkberrow).

The roadside ditch close to the stile at the Bishampton Road end of the path, 532, continues to concern me as it is very deep and apt to become hidden by summer weed growth. Requests for a plank bridge have yet to result in any action but neither has there been any direct complaint from users or any sign of anyone falling in.

The hand gate on path 527 is still insecure and really needs to be repaired and re-installed. I have talked to the Access team about this when I went to the PPW drop in day in April. This occasion also gave an opportunity to talk about the blocked/missing stile at the point where path 513 and 536 cross the Kington boundary.

Most of the work continues to be clearance of summer growth and the routine replacement of waymarks both tasks which give one a good excuse for a pleasant walk in our lovely parish.

11. Parochial Church Council: Mrs Wild gave a report on behalf of the Parochial Church Council:

The church continues to be an important part of our village with three regular services a month plus occasional services held for all four villages in our Benefice, as well as weddings, christenings and funerals of course. We are constantly finding ways of raising money to pay for our "Parish Share" to the diocese which is thousands of pounds every year. A letter was sent to parishioners last year asking for financial help, which resulted in our being able to pay our 2012 Share.

Last year we had to compile a new Electoral Roll which is done every 6 years. We currently have 32 church attendees on roll.

We received a generous grant of £200 from the Parish Council this year, which was spent on clearing the churchyard after the pruning of trees and shrubs and having the cut branches shredded. We hope to keep a well-maintained compost heap that can be used on village gardens. The Pig Roast and teas brought in a much-valued £2000 and the Rector did a sponsored "Hipton Hill Challenge" which resulted in £250 which was spent on a heater to heat the Vestry which has been used for certain services during the cold weather.

Some of you will have seen these notelets drawn and donated by Tim Nutter from Glebe House.

Unfortunately we have decided to discontinue the monthly coffee mornings in the Village Hall. When it was first started over ten years ago, it seemed to meet a need – a place where people at home during the day could meet and chat. However, over the years, numbers have dwindled, and instead of paying to heat the hall, we now meet in our own homes.

Our Family Services have continued to be quite well attended, even though some families with children are enticed away on Sunday mornings by various activities. Our Christingle Service resulted in £170 being raised for the Church of England Children's Society and our donation box for "Caring Hands" for the homeless in Evesham is very well supported. Local residents have been very generous.

12. Tree Warden: Mr. Whitfield reported:

Is in the process of carrying out a survey of trees planted in the Parish. Some require attention over the next 2-3 months. No evidence of 'Ash Die Back' disease has been found.

He would like to remind residents' that work on trees within the Conservation Area cannot be carried out without permission from Wychavon District Council.

Requested that the Council inform him of any proposed work including notification of Tree Preservation Order within the Parish.

13. Matters raised by Parishioners: Nil.

The Chairman thanked all the speakers and parishioners' for attending.

Meeting declared closed at 8.10 pm.