

Nash Annual Parish Meeting Date: 16th May 2019
Annual Report of the Chair of the Parish Council

Report

1.0 Key Events

April 2018:	All four members of the previous Nash Parish Council resign.
June 2108	Shropshire Council orders re-establishment of Nash Parish Council
July 2018:	First Meeting of Interim Parish Council; interim Chair appointed.
August 2018:	Parish Council request for volunteers.
September 2018:	Parish Council co-opts three local Councillors; one interim Councillor steps down.
December 2018:	Further local co-option and Council sets precept for 2019/20.
January 2019:	Parish Council invited to respond to Shropshire Place Plan review.
March 2019:	Further co-option; interim Chair steps down; new Chair and new Clerk appointed.
April 2019:	Special Meeting to discuss the Shropshire Place Plan review.
May 2019:	Nash PC representatives attend Cleobury Area Place Plan Consultation.
May 2019:	Annual Parish Meeting & AGM of Nash parish Council

2.0 An Unusual Year in Retrospect

2.1 The re-establishment of a Parish Council by an upper tier of local government is an exceptional event requiring an order to be made under section 91 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972. In the case of Nash, this occurred on 28th June 2018 as a consequence of the resignation of all previous Nash Parish Councillors in April 2018 together with their failure to call an election thereby rendering the Council inquorate.

2.2 The subsequently re-established Interim Council comprised Shropshire Councillors Madge Shingleton, Richard Huffer and Gwilym Butler who was elected Interim Chair. They appointed Clive Leworthy, Clerk to Bromfield Parish Council to serve as interim Clerk until April 2018 and he pulled together the previous Parish Council's accounts, internal audit and statutory returns under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. Clive also set up the Nash website using the Hugo Fox facility, liaised with former members of the Parish Council and more generally ensured that the Parish Council was brought up to compliance with the 2009 Governance Toolkit and the 2018 Model Standing Orders of the National Association of Local Councils.

2.3 The first meeting of the new Council proper, in addition to approving the audited accounts and other regulatory and administrative functions, considered a request from Nash Parish Hall for consideration of outstanding grant applications to the Council for use of the Hall in 2016/17 and 2017/18 in the sum of £600.00. (Following submission of a further grant application and Accounts the grant was approved in full at the 25th September 2018 Parish Council meeting.)

The members of the Council also considered reviewing the current Parish Meetings in the area including Greete, Hope Bagot and Whitton but decided to proceed by first co-opting Councillors to Nash Parish Council, which they subsequently progressed in August 2018..

2.4 The 25th September 2018 Parish Council meeting approved the co-option of three new Councillors: Clare Morris, Louise Roberts and Peter Stubbs. This enlarged group then formally approved the appointment of the clerk and dealt with a number of routine financial matters

including regularising payment for the use of the hall. The discussion moved inevitably onto potholes and the state of the roads generally and Louise Roberts informally took on the role of “Pothole Tsar” and together with Richard Huffer arranged to organise a site visit with Phil James from Shropshire Highways.

2.5 The 13th December 2018 meeting received a report from Louise Roberts and Richard Huffer on their site meeting with Phil James when a number of key concerns had been identified and it was agreed that the clerk would chase Phil James for a progress report on Nash highway’s issues. Gwilym Butler informed the Council that Shropshire had received an extra £7.3m for urgent highways repairs but this had to be spent before April 2019 which was putting extraordinary pressure on available contracting resources.

The Council co-opted a further Councillor (myself) and received feedback from co-optees on the training course for new councillors they had attended. The Chair advised that the achievement of a quorum of new Councillors had enabled Madge Shingleton to stand down as an interim Parish Councillor.

We were further advised by the Chair that Shropshire’s Local Plan review was underway and that we needed to look at the implications for Nash and more particularly the implications of the Place Plan Review for the Cleobury Mortimer area in which are included. Neighbouring Parish Councils had established Parish Plans and detailed their requirements for investment from Shropshire’s Community Infrastructure Levy and Nash had a lot of catching up to do.

The main item of business was consideration of the financial forecast and setting of the precept for the coming year which the Council discussed at length deciding that it wished to consider support for local groups such as the village hall and others and to generally become a more proactive Council, like our neighbouring Councils in Coreley, Caynham and Bitterley especially as the Shropshire Local Plan review was underway. To this end we unanimously agreed to increase the precept from £1,400.00 to £3,015.00 for the 2019/20 financial year.

2.6 On 14th January 2019 I attended the Ludlow Place plan review meeting chaired by Richard Huffer where I was surprised to find that whilst Nash was considered to be part of the Cleobury Mortimer Place Plan area, Burford and Clee Hill Village were consulted as part of the Ludlow Place Plan area. Given our proximity to Clee Hill Village and Tenbury Wells/Burford it seemed irrational that we did not have a formal right to be consulted about our relationship to these settlements but did have a locus in connection with Cleobury Mortimer proposals. However we were subsequently informed by Gwilym Butler that Shropshire Council would be rethinking the Place Planning arrangements as part of the current review.

2.7 Our 24th January 2019 meeting noted the negative response from Shropshire Highways to our list of work required and instructed the clerk to press the responsible Council officers for action, subsequent to which a gang with a white pickup made a desultory expedition into Nash to deposit token dollops of tarmac into a few potholes – a sobering experience for your new Councillors! We also received the Clerk’s notice and agreed to put in hand the recruitment of a permanent Clerk and considered a planning application for the construction of stables adjacent to Roundabout Cottage which we supported following feedback from Councillors Butler, Roberts and Stubbs who had conducted a site visit.

The main business of the meeting was consideration of the Shropshire Place Planning review and the extent to which the outcome would protect our lovely environment whilst enabling the reasonable needs of Nash residents and businesses to be accommodated. The Council was aware of its

responsibility to defend our neighbourhood from the depredations of developers whilst recognising the ambitions of local people to protect their livelihoods and provide for their families and employees. We were advised that a number of Parish Council's had established "Community Clusters" within Shropshire's planning framework as a means of managing these pressures and I undertook to investigate their experiences and draft a paper for the Parish Council to consider at its next meeting. The Clerk was instructed to advise Shropshire Council that we planned to undertake community consultation in order to provide an informed response to the Place Plan process.

2.8 The public session of our 27th March 2019 meeting commenced with a passionate address by Mrs. Audrey Taylor, Chair of Knowle Sports, opposing Shropshire's decision to close the "Bring Bank" recycling facilities at Knowle. She argued that the scheme was very well used, raised money for the club and its withdrawal would be likely to bring about fly tipping. She questioned whether the same volume and variety of material would actually be picked up via kerb side collection and that use of the Craven Arms recycling facility involved a round trip of over 25 miles with the consequent environmental cost.

Audrey Taylor's catalogue of neglected Knowle needs included the inoperative speed sign and, of course, potholes and Councillor Butler suggested that Knowle Sports might consider a grant application to the Parish Council to support their activities and that recycling facilities may figure in any proposed Parish Plan.

Val Smith addressed the Council on behalf of the Nash Parish Hall Committee in support of their grant request to support the cost of providing a handrail to assist access to the hall. Whilst we approved a 50% grant of £280.00 we recognised that access for wheel chair users was very unsatisfactory and the Council looked forward to considering further requests for assistance from the Parish Hall Committee in due course.

My report on Place Planning and Community Clusters was received and the Council agreed to hold an extraordinary meeting to consider the report in detail. Meanwhile Peter Stubbs and I were nominated to attend the Cleobury Place Plan consultation meeting in May and Richard Huffer believed that cuts in bus services must be addressed and also that we should commence the Place Plan process with a local housing needs survey.

At this meeting Gwilym advised that he was legally required to stand down as Chair and in his stead I was elected Chair. We also approved the co-option of Charlie Pinckney as our sixth Parish Councillor and following the recommendation of the interview panel held on 21st March 2019, we formally approved the appointment of Sue Jones as our new Parish Council Clerk.

2.9 The Extraordinary meeting held on 25th April 2019 commenced with representations from the floor about the need for affordable housing for local people illustrated by reference to a locally supported application for a self build home in Knowle, apparently compliant with Shropshire policy which had nonetheless been turned down by the Council and subsequently dismissed on Appeal. This echoed the experience of neighbouring Parish Councils who had cases of planning applications for individual affordable homes rejected notwithstanding Parish Council support and the severe shortage of affordable homes in Shropshire.

Quirkily the recent approval of two new affordable homes at Roundabout Cottages on the Clee Hill Road illustrated how confusing planning policy outcomes have become. These experiences and other representations from local families concerning the need for affordable local housing for their adult children reinforced Councillor Huffer's proposal for a local housing needs survey.

After much discussion we resolved to pursue the development of a Parish Plan to take stock of local needs and concerns by way of programme of public consultation, commencing at the Annual Parish Meeting and proceeding by way of a questionnaire based survey followed by a day of “hands on” planning workshops and a subsequent report back session on the draft plan in order to gauge local support.

Whilst recognising the Parish Council’s role in promoting a Parish Plan we were keen to secure the widest possible involvement of local people in driving it forward from the outset. Feedback from neighbouring parish councils who had delivered local plans suggested that a committee or ginger group, separate from the parish council had been the key to securing local buy in and subsequent ownership.

This then is a key task that we have set ourselves for the coming year and our attendance at the Cleobury consultation meeting reinforced the importance of securing a comprehensive assessment of Nash needs in order for us to ensure that the interests of Nash residents and businesses are fully reflected in the future investment decisions of Shropshire Council, the utilities and the other agencies whose activities impact upon our neighbourhood.

3.0 Conclusion

3.1 I have attempted to give an account of the activities and concerns of the Parish Council over the past year, though as you might imagine, since my tenure on the Parish Council only commenced in December I have had to rely to some extent on documents and colleagues’ recollections .

3.2 We are clearly a start-up Council and are still finding our feet but have attempted to get up to speed as fast as possible and inasmuch as we have got our act together we owe a debt of gratitude to Gwilym Butler the interim Chair and to Clive Leworthy, the interim clerk for all their hard work, alongside Richard Huffer, in reviving Nash Parish Council.

Their gentle shepherding of us, your new Parish Councillors, through our baby steps has been much appreciated and it especially encouraging that Gwilym continues to take a particular interest in our development in his new role as Shropshire Council’s Portfolio Holder for Communities, Place Planning and Regulatory Services.

3.3 Nash Parish Council now comprises: Clerk: Sue Jones; Chair: Bob Young; Vice Chair: tbc; Councillors: Richard Huffer; Clare Morris; Charlie Pinckney; Louise Roberts; and Peter Stubbs. There is still a vacancy for a further councillor and applications are welcome. Parish Council meetings will take place approximately every two months and the schedule of forthcoming meetings can be found on the Parish Council website:

<https://www.hugofox.com/community/nash-parish-council-15024/home>

3.4 For the future we will do our best to be vigilant in protecting Nash’s beautiful environment and in acting as advocates in promoting the interests of our residents and businesses where they contribute to the common good, supporting and enhancing the very special quality of life that we the people of Nash enjoy.

Bob Young

Chair
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