

MINUTES OF CHARLTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
Held on Saturday 6 April 2024 at 11am in Charlton Village Hall

Present: Cllr Tom Blanden (Chairman), M Bromley Gardner (Clerk); Wilts Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall; and 25 members of the public.

1. Apologies. Parish Cllrs Philip Thompson and Hannah Piet.
2. Existence Music Festival. In Charlton Park 14-17 Jun 24. Representatives of the festival spoke about it and answered questions. Key points:
 - A 12k music system (compared with WOMAD's 40k system).
 - 1400 people, max 2500 people in the future (WOMAD had 40,000).
 - Stages point north.
 - Sound monitors surrounding site about one km/2 kms out.
 - A 24-hour phone line for any problems.
 - Business model is to run year-on-year.
 - A resident pointed out that satnavs tend to send people down Park St – security on Park St gate would be needed. Acknowledged.
3. Minutes of Last Annual Parish Meeting. The Minutes of the 2023 Annual Parish Meeting had been available at the back of the Village Hall for members of the public to read before the meeting started; they were proposed, seconded and signed.
4. Chairman's Report. Cllr Tom Blanden reported on behalf of the Parish Council.
 - PC met 6 times in past year, every other month as usual.
 - We lost one Cllr due to pressure of work and swiftly replaced him with a co-opted volunteer – David Rawlings, in July – and have been at full strength since then.
 - 12 planning applications in 2023. These have included:
 - 2 applications that we objected to – for wooden fences (in one of those cases, with high gates and gate pillars) over one metre in height. The PC objected because these high wooden fences were untypical of and damaging to the Conservation Area. Both were then refused by Wilts Council on the strong advice of the Wilts Council Conservation Officer.
 - Also in 2023 the 5 Lanes Solar Park was approved by Wilts Council. We were able to negotiate a £48,000 Community Benefit payment from the developers. (Payable once the electricity starts to flow.)
 - The late 2022 application by National Grid to expand the sub-station itself to cope with new building and also with the applications for battery storage sites has not yet been decided by Wilts Council.
 - Wilts Council has recently refused 2 applications for battery storage sites, one in Charlton parish (the other in Minety parish). Sadly I suspect appeals against refusal will follow – we will watch with interest.
 - One battery site (this is on Pond Lane) has recently been permitted on appeal after Wilts Council hadn't decided it within the statutory timescale.
 - There are therefore currently 7 battery sites either already operational, being built or permitted but not yet built feeding into the Upper Stonehill sub-station, with 2 more yet to be decided and 2 refused that may appeal. We also believe that at least one more is in the pipeline.

Chairman – signature and date

- Precept for 2024/25 – the PC set the precept for this coming year at £10,000. Planned expenditure would have needed a 15% increase in the precept but the PC accepted some risk on expenditure and a slightly reduced level of reserve and limited the increase to 5½ % - but note – this is still only £2.13 in the year for a Band D property.
- Now to more immediately local PC activity in the past year:
 - Book Exchange – brief update.
 - The Footpaths Group – Roy Evans will speak soon. This year we will cut the grass on the south side of the B4040 between the village and the Noahs Ark junction to encourage people to walk that way.
 - In the Best Kept Village competition we came equal 2nd in North Wilts Small Villages (with Hankerton). We are entering again – Clean Up Day on Sat 27 Apr, meet at Pikefield Crescent 10am, 11am refreshments at Horse and Groom, then back for last hour.
 - The CSW team continue to do an excellent job – our thanks to all members and to Anne Hodgkins who coordinates the team – Anne will be speaking soon.
 - And the SID ... low winter light problem, and data is fed to Wilts Police.
 - The Community Hub Facebook page has completed its 2nd year.
- Flooding – in this past winter there was some flooding on Bullocks Horn Lane causing some access problems for residents there (access only, not house flooding). It has been an exceptionally wet winter but we are considering whether there's anything that can be done to ease the problem in future years.
- An important piece of work in the past year was to reduce the dangers at the junction B4040/Tetbury Lane/Park Street. New signage was installed a couple of months ago and the new road painting arrived 2 weeks ago. We are buying a 2nd SID to operate west of that junction, principally to reduce speeds coming in from Malmesbury – now just waiting for the socket and pole from Wilts Council. And we have requested 'white gates' on the western entry to the village – again awaiting Wilts Highways action through the Local Highways and Footpaths Improvement Group, an off-shoot of the Area Board.
- The defibrillator – still operational – never yet used, very glad to say.
- The PC has very recently funded (at £1200 plus VAT – the VAT will be reclaimed) the installation of a hearing loop into the Village Hall – maybe some people making use of it right now!
- The lower bus shelter has still not yet been repaired although we have engaged Dan Bailey Builders to do the necessary work, and a landscaping firm to clear the growth behind the shelter, hopefully to prevent the problem re-occurring.
- Daffodils – later this year we will re-plant bulbs in the areas that are now empty of bulbs, after Wessex Water sewer repairs and the recent Gigaclear work.

5. Additional Reports. Additional reports were given as follows:

- Finances. Cllr Marion Adkins, the RFO, handed out and explained details on a detailed summary of the 2023/24 accounts. She forecast an end-of-year balance of £15,500 of which £800 was in the Community Fund.
- Short Report from Wiltshire Council. Wilts Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall.
- Footpaths and Rights of Way. Report by Roy Evans on the work of the Charlton Footpaths Group.
- Community Speed Watch. Report by Anne Hodgkins who runs the Group.

Chairman – signature and date

- Recreation Centre Report. Dorian James, Chairman of the Recreation Centre Committee, reported.
- Church. Marion Adkins reported.

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