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NRS&NMHPC

Newton Regis, Seckington and No Man's Heath Parish Council

Three villages, one community

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – No. 241b.

Tuesday 21st May 2019
Newton Regis Village Hall

Present: Cllr D Waithman (DW)(Chairman)
Cllr D Cox (DC)
Cllr S Wilson (SW)
Cllr R Thirlby (RT)
Cllr M Ruston (MR)
Cllr G Hunt (GH)
Borough Cllr. M Humphries (MH)
Mrs N Allton (Clerk)
1 x Parishioner

The meeting commenced at 7.19pm

1. Apologies for Absence

County Cllr. D Parsons, Borough Cllr. D Humphries, Police

2. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Assembly

Minutes of the last Annual Parish Assembly, held on 22nd May 2018 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. Chairman's Annual Report

The past year has managed to be on the whole successful with only minor failures. We have dealt with North Warwickshire Borough Council, Warwickshire County Council and the Warwickshire & West Midlands Association of Parish Councils as needed and generally been happy with the result.

Our biggest concern and one that, if it happens, will have the biggest impact on this Parish is the proposed warehousing development on land at Junction 11 of the M42. Should this go through the complex will stretch from the bottom of the hill outside No Man's Heath to Junction 11 with its main entrance just off the Junction. All the local Parishes, with the exception of Measham, Warwickshire County and Borough Councils are against this development whilst Derbyshire have decided that it will make no difference to their section of the A444 (I think they are totally wrong in this assumption) and Leicestershire County Council says that the development does not fit in with their County Plan. The site is in South West Leicestershire District Council's area, not ours, making it rather difficult for us to be kept up to date with proceedings but fortunately we have a No Man's Heath resident who was a traffic consultant handling our response and he, together with his helpers, are doing a great job. We used the services of the County Association of Parish Councils Planning Consultant who reviewed his work to see if anything could be done differently but the final result was that there was nothing that needed changing or adding. The developers say that there will be little or no traffic change on the B5493 as all their traffic will use the M42/A42 but as we all know any problems on the M42 causes absolute chaos along the B5493 as traffic tries to get round the obstruction. The other contentious part of their Planning Submission is that they say that 13% of those employed at the site will either cycle or walk to work. Walking will be difficult as there are no pavements and cycling around the junction will be highly dangerous but as none of the local villages has sufficient residents for it to happen anyway it is fairly pointless. Planning for this is still ongoing.

One of our failures is to involve the Police with the Parish. The only time we have had contact was after a direct complaint via our County Councillor to the Police & Crime Commissioner. At that Meeting we were assured of the support of one of the PCSO's but despite the Police being sent our Minutes and being invited to our next Meeting, no further contact has been made. We are fully aware that there is a shortage of Police Officers and that our part of the County is comparatively peaceful but in these days of the Internet where messages can be sent very quickly with very little effort it should not be beyond the capabilities of the Force not to keep in touch.

As a small Parish Council we no longer have to submit our accounts to a Government appointed External Auditor. This does not mean that we can do what we like, we still have to follow the regulations as before but we appoint our own Auditor who has given us a fully satisfactory report. Financially this Council is, for its size, healthy, this in no small means thanks to the financial management of our Clerk, Mrs. N. Allton, who gets us through our Annual Audit with no queries at all. In order to show our appreciation the Clerk's annual salary award which comes into effect at the start of the new Financial Year has been back dated to the 1st of January and increased by 1%. To maintain our income we

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have increased our Precept this year by £100 merely to keep pace with inflation. This year is looking as if we will have broken even over the year so we are not too far out in our budgeting.

With the rapid changes going on with Parish Rules, Regulations and Laws the County Association of Parish Councils runs regular training sessions on all aspects of being a Parish Councillor including what the new General Data Protection Regulations mean to us. Most Councillors have been to at least one of these training events and it is our intention to keep abreast of all changes that affect us.

Our old Insurance Company has ceased doing Parish Council work and the job has been taken over by BHIB Insurance which has meant that we actually got a small reduction in our annual charge. Our Insurance bill is quite high but this is mainly due to the amount of assets we have.

Unfortunately someone has discovered a law from 1894 forbidding Parish Councils from financially assisting churches. Apparently, when in 1894 Parish Councils took over many of the duties that previously had been covered by the Church, this law was brought in to stop the Church from asking for funding from the new Parish Councils for any of their remaining powers and has never been repealed. The Government has been approached and asked to repeal this ancient law but have declined. This is a shame as whilst we have never made large donations to the churches in our parish, we have always made a donations to help with the maintenance of the churchyards as to have them looking tidy right in the middle of our villages is to our benefit as well as the church's. With this in mind, whilst we have supported and kept insured the Goosewalk, we have removed ourselves from anything to do with any monies raised at this event so it leaves the St Mary's Building Fund as a possible recipient of them.

Whilst mentioning the church I must thank the Vicar, Rev. Stephen Banks, and the P.C.C. for allowing us to use one of the trees in the churchyard for our Christmas lights and also for allowing us to tap into the floodlights for power. We again held a lights switch on that included carol singing and the bells being rung followed by mince pies and mulled wine at the Queen's Head. Our thanks to Georgina the landlady.

On the subject of the Goosewalk we must thank everyone who helped in the organisation and running of it, especially all those who helped marshal the walk, Robert from the Post Office for supplying the soup, Georgina from the Queen's Head for cooking it and making her premises available for everyone involved, Arnold for organising and running the raffle, all those who served the soup, all those who so conscientiously collected the litter whilst on the walk and, finally, everyone who did the actual walking. I believe any monies raised were, as in the past, donated to St Mary's Building Fund for use in maintaining our church. Councillor Dilys Cox deserves the Parish's thanks for organising regular litter picks in and around Newton Regis. These are advertised on the Parish Council Website and on the Parish noticeboard, opposite the Duckpond when they are due and your help will be appreciated.

As always through the year we have been beset with dog mess, either not cleaned up by their walker or dogs allowed to run loose. We were planning on a major attack on this but recently I am informed that the situation has improved so there is not the same need for attention. The idea has been put on the back burner in case it comes back but in the meantime well done for the reduction. For reasons I do not understand the Borough Council has dropped the post of Dog Warden and put the work that the Warden did into the hands of Streetscape. The only contact we have made with Streetscape since they have taken over was to have the fouling stencils renewed, something they did promptly but they have other priorities than dogs so we won't get the personal contact and advice that the Warden always brought.

We have been very lucky in having a very efficient County Roads Engineer, Jane Pritchard, who has helped us for a long time. We did, of course, help her by passing on items that cropped up from potholes to missing drain covers and blocked drains. Unfortunately Jane has retired now and we are still waiting to speak with her replacement. We do hope he/she is as obliging as Jane and wish Jane a very happy retirement.

As in the past we have had Tamworth Third and Fourth teams playing cricket on alternate Saturdays through the summer and I'm happy to say that Austrey & Newton Regis Junior C.C. continues to play on the field as well. The roller that we purchased last year had a major problem after mis-use by someone unknown but happily Chris Wilson has repaired it. While it was stripped down we had the cone clutches relined. The remainder of our equipment is in good condition. We have been loaned another set of gangmowers by Tamworth C. C. that are wider and lighter than ours. Chris also repaired the spinner in the playground so we owe Chris a big vote of thanks. We were asked if we would fund the installation of a toddler swing in the playground but at £3,000 it was decided that it was too expensive for the use it was likely to get. The resident asking for this has generously said that she will raise the necessary funding for it and the Council has offered match funding up to £1500 towards the final cost. The Clerk has also assisted in applying for a funding grant for up to £10,000 towards even more money for playground equipment.

We also have had all the hedges cut well before any bird nesting happens. The field was been mown at the beginning of the year by Adie who did a magnificent job. You will remember the awful winter and early spring in 2018 that meant that instead of starting to cut the grass in early February we didn't manage the first cut until a week before the start of the cricket season. To make matters worse I was on holiday so he did a fantastic job all on his own. He then managed to do 95% of the mowing for the rest of the season and even did the rolling as well, all as a volunteer. Someone else we owe a great deal to.

Complaints about excessive speed on Hangman's Lane, Seckington were raised by several residents who were finding it difficult if not dangerous to exit Church Lane. These complaints were passed on to Warwickshire County Highways but,

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I'm sorry to say, failed to elicit anything positive in solving this problem. We did get a partial agreement that a Hidden Farm Exit sign be erected before the bend but even that hasn't happened. We will continue to watch this situation.

Also in Seckington a resident whose drive exits onto the B5493 reported that at night their drive could not be accessed due to lorries overnighing in the lay-by. Also Public Health concerns were raised as it was reported that some of the drivers were using the Lay-by as a toilet and the Borough Council had to come out more than once to remove human waste. We, together with the Borough Council and our M.P., asked for the lay-by to be closed and after much discussion the County agreed to this only for a further resident to oppose the closure and the County decided to drop the idea of closure. The situation does appear to have improved but we fear the worst if the development at Junction 11 goes through.

And still in Seckington, at some residents request, we have provided wooden flower planters, one to go on each entrance to the village and one on the triangle at the entrance to Old Hall Farm and the Farm Shop.

In Newton Regis we have had the bus shelter near Lime Grove repaired, a fairly expensive job as the state of the shelter wasn't appreciated until we had all the ivy removed from it.

We have a small problem at the Duckpond where two of the posts holding up the railings were damaged by vehicles exiting and entering Manor Farm. There has been a very poor response to getting these repaired and, as they are actually County Highways responsibility, we have informed the perpetrators that if they are not repaired to the County's standard we will ask the County to repair them properly and their names will be given to County Highways.

Whilst on the Duckpond it is still our wish to get it cleaned out as the silt is getting worse and if we don't get a grip on the situation the pond could be silted up completely. As always cost is the major factor, the last quote we had was for over £5,000 and that included us disposing of the silt removed. We are actively seeking a better quote.

We have also agreed a funding grant to No Man's Heath Village Hall for new carpet tiles.

We have had a reasonably busy year of Planning Applications and we do respond to every one whether it is to say "No Objections", make observations on an application that may affect this Parish or to Object. The revised development at Manor Farm is before the Planning Authorities, this Council fully supports this so it should go through soon. There are only two plans that we have objected to, the first is the Application to build one house on the field next to Lime Grove by the owner who has tried to get Planning Permission twice before with differing numbers of houses. Both of these Plans were rejected by North Warks Borough Council and both went to appeal, the appeals were both subsequently rejected by the Planning Inspectorate. We have objected to the building of the one house for exactly the same reasons that the previous two were rejected. The second is for a holiday chalet to be built on the small piece of land next to the Garden Store. This because we believe it is an attempt to get a building up that the owner can then possibly try to get Planning Permission for it to be turned into a full time residence, a backdoor attempt to get round the Planning Laws.

A little late information that is really too good to wait 12 months to publish. Through the efforts of our Clerk, Anne Porter and Cllr. Hunt we have obtained a grant of almost £10,000 towards extending the equipment in the playground. We have also met again with the Police and now have a firm contact and there is now a new Highways Engineer for this area, we wish him well.

Finally I must thank all my fellow Councillors for the diligence they apply to their duties and the help they give me. I also must give enormous thanks to our Clerk, Mrs. Nicola Allton, for the incredible way she approaches her duties as Clerk to this Council. We would be hard pressed if we didn't have her cheerfulness and skills in guiding us through the difficulties that are involved in being a Parish Council.

4. Audited Accounts 2017 / 2018

The Clerk reported that the external auditors, Grant Thornton, had successfully passed the annual accounts of the Parish Council for 2017/2018. These were available for viewing.

5. Any other Parish affairs

The Chairman closed this part of the meeting at 7:25 pm.

Chairman
Cllr D Waithman

Date