

ACTON BRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

Annual General Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on Monday 29th April 2019 at 7.30pm in the Parish Rooms

1

Present:

R Holt, Chairman
S Pardoe
C Ballantyne-Roberts
H Bayley
C Fifield
R Forbes

Apologies were received from Cllr D Hall and CW&C Cllrs H Tonge and P Williams

No members of the public were present.

2

Approval of Minutes of 2017 – 18 AGM

The Minutes of the AGM held on 1st May 2018 were approved and were signed by the Chairman.

3

Matters arising from AGM 2018.

There were no actions arising from the AGM.

4

Chairman's Report 2018/19

The Chairman gave his report of the work over the last year. He commenced by stating that normally the largest amount of work for the Parish Council (PC) is the consideration of the varied planning applications for building work in the Village but this year the progress made to purchase and install the Speed indicating signs has been the major part. The Chairman reported as follows;

Inter-active Speed Indicating Devices (ISID)

With the support of grants from the Police and Crime Commissioner and the CW&C Councillors together with the increased precept levied last year and this year, the Parish Council decided to purchase interactive signs for the Village. This is the culmination of years of effort and many meetings with representatives of CW&C (Highways) that finally resulted in the selection of suitable sites (Acton Lane, Hill Top Road, Milton Rough and Station Road) and the granting of the necessary permissions for work to be done on the highway, i.e. to install the mounting posts for the signs at the agreed sites.

The selected four sites were prepared by the installation of mounting posts and the fitting of solar panels to power the equipment. After obtaining quotations from a number of manufacturers for the interactive signs, two signs were purchased and initially located in Station Road and Hill Top Road. Data was obtained of traffic speeds and the signs relocated at the other two sites. After a couple of months operation, the signs were relocated to the other two sites and data obtained before again being relocated. After assessment of the impact on speeding of the signs, it was decided that a third sign could be purchased and this has been completed. Combined with the enforcement by the Police it can be confirmed that there has been some reduction in speed of traffic and the efforts and expense have been justified.

Security, Police Work & Road Safety

The Village has a PCSO, Nichola Devey, assigned to our area. Nichola holds regular surgeries where residents can raise issues.

As mentioned with the speeding signs, efforts have been applied this year to speeding matters and road safety. Data collected by CW&C some time ago showed the excessive speeding on Station Road and as a result the speed camera signs were installed. Police enforcement is regularly applied. Data from our signs is passed to the Police and to CW&C Highways.

Following repeated requests by the Parish Council, the road markings at the bend near the Station Bridge and Hazel Pear were renewed.

Planning Matters

The Parish Council has to consider many applications of all kinds, some significant in terms of proposed new building work and large extensions. The NPPF Green Belt regulations and CW&C Local Plans serve as our guide when considering all applications. All applications are considered on their content, without fear or favour and judged for compliance with the guidelines. There has been a large measure of agreement recently by the Planning Officers on the points put forward by the Parish Council in the applications reviewed. It is encouraging that in those that have gone to appeal the appeals have been refused. The Parish Council can only promise to do its best to reflect the wishes of the Community to preserve the Green Belt. The Parish Council is very grateful to the support given by residents, both at meetings and in sending in their comments to CW&C. It makes a tremendous difference to the Parish Council to know that it is working with the almost total support of the Village residents

The Chairman thanked the Ward Councillors, namely Charles Fifield, Harry Tonge and Paul Williams for their very valued support throughout the year and said that the interface with Planning Officers has been particularly noticeable and helpful to the Parish Council. One facet of the planning application process is the ability of CW&C Councillors to call-in applications if thought necessary. This procedure takes particular applications out of the hands of an individual planning officer and puts the decision with the full Planning Committee. The recent proposals for development of the Maypole Inn is a case in point, however, in the end the Planning Officer's decision was also against development and so the call-in was not necessary. As part of the supporting evidence, the Parish Council applied to have the Maypole registered as 'An Asset of Community Value'. This application was successful and lends weight to the need to retain the pub in the Village. The application is now at appeal and the result is awaited.

Financial matters

Normally our expenses do not amount to great sums of money, approximately £2500 per year and are relatively straight forward. Our annual precept covers basic matters such as insurance, membership of Council related bodies and associations together with the Clerks salary. We also plan for and anticipate Parish Council commitments to ABCA for external decoration of the Parish Rooms.

Our precept for the following year is based on the records of expenditure over several years and the forecasts of anticipated for the next three years. The figures take account of the loss of the New Homes Bonus Community Fund, also the fact that we now have to pay for elections. The Parish Council discussed at length the forecast expenditure plus the desire to act positively to curb speeding. A big start to the purchase of the interactive signs was made last year and this was further increased this year to where we were able to sanction the project. Without repeating the information given earlier, the purchase and installation cost of the first two signs was in the order of £7000. There will be costs for moving the signs and their maintenance. Also as mentioned earlier we did proceed with the purchase of the third sign.

The auditing of the accounts now takes place on a different format than previously. Because the Parish Council expenditure is under £25000 the accounts will not be subject to external auditing. The new arrangement allows the Parish Council to apply for an Exemption Certificate but stipulates that the accounts must be published on the web site and still be checked by an Internal Auditor.

I wish to thank Peter Young for acting as our independent internal auditor. Peter reviews the accounts prepared for the Council by the Clerk and, with the Clerk, completes the associated paperwork before the accounts are published. Sincere thanks to Peter and Margaret.

Regulations and Data Protection

A new procedure has recently been introduced called 'Transparency Code for Smaller Councils' which requires various documents and information to be published on-line. The Parish Council have complied with the Code and did already publish copies of meeting minutes

on the Village web site. Expenditure is always covered in the minutes and copies of the accounts are also published. Special thanks go to Cllr Pardoe for processing the necessary documents to comply with the Code and publishing them on the Village web site for the Parish Council.

Additional legislation arising from the Data Protection Act and a new issue called GDPR has been actioned and complied with. The Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils prepared guidelines and Cllr Pardoe again picked up the baton for this and prepared a review for examination leading to adoption of GDPR by the Parish Council.

VILLAGE MATTERS - GENERAL

The Parish Council respond to many ad-hoc topics raised by councillors and residents affecting the Village. Typical topics are;

Superfast Broadband

Following discussions with residents, Openreach and Connecting Cheshire considerable work has been done in the Village to connect services and, in Cliff Road, to install the cabinet in an agreed position. Residents using Hill Top Road and Cliff Road will be aware of the amount of work that the extension of superfast service has entailed. It is to be hoped that many residents will take up the service and find it beneficial.

Footpaths and PRW

Part of the Parish Council duties involves protection of Public Footpaths and PRoW. We have been notified of changes made to footpath signage by persons unknown at some locations in the Village. These have been followed up by the Parish Council with CW&C. We also interface and exchange information with the Crowton area footpath warden.

Our thanks are due to Cllr Steve Pardoe who last year conducted an extensive survey of all the PRoW in the Village and submitted a report to CW&C of work to be done to keep them open and usable. Although partly under the work covered by planning applications, we liaised with CW&C to secure the retention of the existing route of the PRoW that runs from Hill Top Road to Strawberry Lane

Also, in relation to the PRoW subject, the Parish Council were pleased to support a new initiative in the area for Local history and footpath walks, called 'petal walks' by the Saltscape organisation. A map and information of a route for one 'petal walk' has been installed, at the Parish Rooms,

Hazel Pear Wood - WOODLAND TRUST

Woodland Trust and groups of volunteers have worked on the maintenance of the woods. The volunteers periodically arrange working parties and all are welcome to join. After requests, the hedge bordering on to Station Road was cut and will be attended to on a 3-yearly basis for top and sides. The side bordering the pavement will be cut each year. We are grateful that Woodland Trust are active and support the maintenance of the Woods.

Seat at Cliff Road.

The seat at the junction of Cliff Road with Hill Top Road was in need of replacement. Arrangements were made between ABCA, the WI and the Parish Council to cover the costs. The work has been completed and has produced a very pleasing result.

'Best Kept Village'

The 'Best Kept Village' competition has been reinstated after a period of suspension. We know we can depend on the litter pickers to do their work but we urge all residents to do their bit and help to get good scores from the judges. Last year, because of the increase in population of the Village we were moved into a larger size category. Competing against larger Villages is very hard but we were placed second in the group, a great achievement.

We were very pleased that a volunteer came forward to tend the flower beds at the front of the Parish Rooms. We sincerely thank Mrs Woodward for taking on the task and for her efforts.

OTHER COMMITTEES & ORGANISATIONS

The Parish Council has representation on a number of committees and associations that serve the Village.

The Joint Cemetery Committee

We have Parish Council members on the Weaverham, Cuddington and Acton Bridge Joint Cemetery Committee. Most people will be aware that this committee manage the Cemetery Grounds at Gorstage. This local facility is a very valuable asset for our Village. We thank our members, Clrs Hazel Bayley, Clare Ballantyne-Roberts and John Oliver for their work on our behalf.

Weaverham and Acton Bridge Trust

The Trust is again a joint charitable organisation that functions under the Chairmanship of the vicar of Weaverham St Mary's church. It is now made up of what was once a number of separate charitable bodies in the locality, including what was once the Milner Trust in the Village. The Trust looks after deserving cases and applications for financial support. Clrs Steve Pardoe and David Hall are our representatives.

Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils

The Council are members of the Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils Association, including Cheshire Community Action. Both these organisations provide established forums to raise and discuss matters in association with other parishes. ChALC are additionally available for consultation on procedural matters and produce guidance on subjects as required, particularly new regulations.

Weaverham High School

Clr David Hall continues to serve as a Governor of Weaverham High School. This no easy task he has undertaken, school finances are a hot topic we thank David for his services and his many hours of effort in his role as our representative.

INTERFACE WITH VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS

The Parish Council works with the main organisations in the Village, particularly the **ACTON BRIDGE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION (ABCA)**. I cannot speak too highly of the value to the Village of the work done by ABCA in the upkeep, maintenance, organisation and control of the Parish Rooms and its facilities. Although the Council own all property and facilities on behalf of the Village, ABCA manage and operate them on behalf of the Council. ABCA is a registered charity, has its own constitution and leases the Rooms and facilities (at a pepper corn rent) from the Parish Council. ABCA organises its own fund raising so that by and large the Rooms and facilities are provided without direct cost to the Parish.

We are sincerely grateful to Salena Rooney, Chair of ABCA, and her team, principally Gill Spanton for bookings and secretary plus Peter Hurst treasurer who has very quickly stepped into Peter Young's shoes to control the finances. A special mention is due to Bob Heaton for the management of the maintenance work and keeping tabs on the various contractors employed to do the work. Add to this work load the actual hands-on work that Bob does in the many and varied tasks in keeping the Parish Rooms in top condition and we recognise that we are greatly in his debt and give our grateful thanks to him. A particularly out of the ordinary job this year was the removal of the large willow tree in the car park. A big job by any standards. A special thank you to Bob and the volunteers.

The two sub-sections of ABCA that manage the tennis and the bowls also deserve special mention. These sub-sections have been successful in securing large grants of many thousands of pounds for the renewal of the playing surfaces for their respective sports. The playing facilities are in great shape now and will give many years of enjoyment to the bowls and tennis members. Bowls section have drawn up plans and costs for replacement of the storage building. A full Planning Application was submitted by the Parish Council, as owners of the land, for the replacement building. This has been approved and work is ongoing to install the new building. Very well done and congratulations to all on your great efforts.

Once again I thank ABCA on behalf of the Parish Council and the Village for all that they do for the rooms, the events and including the very high quality Newsletter – thank you very much.

WOMENS INSTITUTE

The Acton Bridge WI, like WI groups across the Country, fills that vital role in rural villages of being the ready source of assistance in the many and varied activities in the village. The supporting work that goes on all the time is not mentioned so we would like to say thank you to the WI for all their efforts in the Village.

Thank you

I offer the sincere thanks of the Village to our three CW&C Councillors, Charles Fifield, Harry Tonge and Paul Williams. The Ward has already been changed in scope, even after such a short time in existence. You will know from the forthcoming Local Elections of re-organisation for Weaver & Cuddington Ward in which we would lose Dutton but gain Crowton and a part of Norley. The Parish Council extend the grateful thanks of the Village to the Councillors. We know from plans already made for the Local Elections, that Clr Tonge will not be a member for our Ward after the election. We acknowledge all he has done for the Village and wish him all the best for the future.

The unsung hero of all Parish Councils is of course the Clerk and in Margaret I know that we have a dedicated and industrious servant. Margaret is the first to minimise her input but I know the work she puts in. There is a never-ending list of extra work to comply with the latest regulations and just when it looks to be sorted there is something new. You do a great job Margaret and we thank you very much. After 20 years of service Margaret has decided to call it a day. It is proposed that after the new Parish Council is installed and the annual accounts procedure has been completed we will be recruiting a new Clerk.

I offer my sincere thanks to all the Council members for all that they do and the jobs and actions they take up on our behalf. I believe we have an exceptional team that can be relied upon to do their best for the Community.

This year John Oliver resigned from the Council and we also now know that we are to lose Steve Pardoe from the team. I offer my sincere personal thanks to Steve and my appreciation of his support and help in many matters. Steve has been vice-chairman for many years, and he has been a constant support through that time. In addition, Steve keeps the very informative Village web site up to date and interesting, in particular the Parish Council section. There seems to be no end to the regulations, notices and information that have to be published in order to comply with the 'Transparency' requirements. Additionally, Steve downloads and issues the data generated by the ISID which are reviewed by the Parish Council and distributed to the Police and CW&C. Thank you very much Steve you will be greatly missed.

5 Village Matters and Topics

- a) Clr Fifield expressed the thanks and appreciation of the three CW&C Ward Councillors for all the work of the Parish Council. He complimented the Parish Council for their efficiency and management of business.
- b) There were no other matters The AGM was closed.