

Acton Bridge Parish Council Meeting minutes Annual General Meeting

Date & time	6 th July at 19:30	Location	Video conference
Attendees	R Holt (Chairman), T Brocklebank, C Ballantyne-Roberts, H Bayley, R Forbes, D Hall, D Edwards Cllr C Fifiel CW&C, Cllr G Edwards CW&C, Mrs C Robinson (Clerk to the Parish Council)		
Apologies	Cllr P Williams CW&C		
Absent			
Minutes written by	Mrs C Robinson (Clerk)		

Note – This meeting has been held using Zoom conferencing facilities. The structure of this meeting has been agreed by all Parish Council Members. The Agenda for the meeting has been circulated to all Members and has been published on the Parish Council web site, members of the public were invited to join by contacting the Clerk for meeting invite details.

Agenda Item	Notes & Actions
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| 1. Apologies | Apologies for Absence – as noted above |
| 2. Minutes of AGM held on 29th April 2019 | The minutes of the AGM held on the 29 th April were accepted as a true and correct record and will be signed by the Chairman and returned to the Clerk at the earliest opportunity. |
| 3. Matters arising from 2019 AGM | No matters from the last AGM needed attention. |
| 4. Chairmans report 2019-20 | <p>The Chairman gave his report of the last year:</p> <p>Ladies and Gentlemen, 2019 2020 has been a different year for the Parish Council by any stretch of the imagination. The year commenced with the election of the new Council in May. An unopposed election in which seven candidates, of a possible eight, were appointed leaving a vacancy for one more Member. After due notification of the vacancy, Mr David Edwards was co-opted and welcomed to the Council.</p> <p>A little later in the year we had to accept the resignation of our Clerk, Margaret Holt, after giving over 20 years service. We then had to recruit our new Clerk, Carole Robinson, and deal with the transition that the change entailed. Hardly had we reviewed the precept for 2020 to 2021 when the Covid 19 lockdown was introduced and with it the considerable restrictions that were imposed for meetings and management of the Council.</p> <p>It is a credit to the Parish Council that while some Councils have virtually ‘shut-down’ Acton Bridge has maintained an active profile in looking after all issues for the Village.</p> <p>Mixed in with all the above was the retirement of Councillor Steve Pardoe. This was a loss of not only an experienced, hardworking Member but also required that the communication of Parish Council business via a new web site had to be addressed. This was worked on by a volunteer and a new web site for Acton Bridge Parish Council was developed such that mandatory requirements were able to be satisfied.</p> <p>The following report gives brief overviews of the main topics that the Parish Council were involved in or actioned in the period May 2019 to June 2020.</p> |

The Parish Council works with the main organisations in the Village but 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 for the Council on a 'pepper-corn' lease arrangement. ABCA is a registered charity and has its own constitution. ABCA organises its own fund raising so that by and large the Rooms and facilities are provided without direct cost to the Parish.

This year under the guidance of Trevor Brocklebank (vice chairman of the PC) and Selina Rooney (Chair of ABCA) the exceptional circumstances of the virus pandemic meant that many residents could have been in need of support for many reasons. The combined efforts of Trevor and Selina brought together a group of volunteers willing to assist and provide a safety net for the Village. A terrific effort and grateful thanks are offered to all.

We are sincerely grateful to Selina and her team, principally Gill Spanton as secretary to ABCA also as bookings secretary together with Peter Hurst treasurer in control the not insignificant ABCA finances. A special mention also to Bob Heaton for the management of the maintenance work for the Parish Rooms and keeping tabs on the various contractors employed to do the work. Added to this task is the actual hands-on work that Bob does in the many and varied jobs in keeping the Parish Rooms in top condition. We recognise that we are greatly in his debt and give our grateful thanks to him.

There are two sub-sections of ABCA that each manage, under the umbrella of ABCA, the tennis and the bowls which 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 and will give many years of enjoyment to the bowls and tennis members. Bowls section have just purchased and installed a replacement storage building and, via ABCA, have obtained a grant to feed a power supply to the 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 Parish Rooms, the social events that they hold and for the very high quality Newsletter – thank you very much.

Inter-active Speed Indicating Devices (ISID)

Last year saw the culmination of years of effort and many meetings with representatives of CW&C (Highways), the selection of suitable sites and quotations from a number of manufacturers for the interactive signs. Four sites (Acton Lane, Hill Top Road, Milton Rough and Station Road) were agreed and the necessary permissions for work to be done on the highway to install the mounting posts for the signs at the agreed sites was completed.

The selected four sites were prepared by the installation of mounting posts and the fitting of solar panels to power the equipment. Two signs with data recording facilities were purchased and are located in Station Road and Milton Rough. A third sign was purchased and installed this year at Hill Top Road and plans are in hand (when lockdown permits) for the fourth sign to be bought for Acton Lane. The Parish Council believe that the signs are having an impact on drivers and hopefully will curb some speeds. The data downloaded from the Signs is forwarded to the Police and to Highways.

Planning Matters

The Parish Council has to consider many applications, some significant in terms of proposed new building work and large extensions. Particularly the new build planning applications have required special consideration this year with regards to the Green Belt criteria, infill development and affordable housing.

In this respect, the Parish Council invited Mr John Haselwood (Cheshire Community Action) to talk about the need and, if necessary, the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. Reference to the CW&C Local Plans shows that Acton Bridge is not classed as a 'local service centre' and therefore building in the Village is restricted to 'limited infill' again as defined by CW&C Local Plans.

Of particular relevance to this principle is the outcome of the appeal that had been made by Punch Partners against refusal by CW&C Planning for the proposed development of the Maypole Inn and associated car park. After a long period of time, when the appeal was with the Inspectorate at Bristol, a decision was finally given refusing the appeal. This decision is particularly significant as during the period when the appeal was pending, the Maypole Inn and carpark had been sold and new applications received. One application was to alter and extend the Maypole while the second was to build one large detached property on the car park site. Because of the status of Acton Bridge as not being a local service centre and the findings of the appeal Inspector, the application for the house on the car park has now been refused by CW&C Planning.

This decision clearly has significant implications for any future applications for 'infill' in the Village.

A major planning application received in October 2019 was for nine park homes to be installed on the site of the former nursery on Station Road. An open meeting for all residents was held in the Parish Rooms where there was total opposition to the proposal. The Parish Council forwarded objections, as did many residents, and the decision on the application is awaited.

The Parish Council, as Consultees, receives many applications each year, mostly for extensions to property. The Council has to consider every application in the light of National Planning Policy Framework and CW&C Local Plans. It must consider all applications on their content, without fear or favour and judge against the guidelines, being consistent in its comments and observations on all applications.

The Parish Council is very grateful to the support given by residents both at meetings and in sending comments into 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.

Security, Police Work & Road Safety

Our PCSO is Nicola Devey. We have established good relations with her and she visits the Parish Room each month for a surgery where people can come along and raise issues of concern. Consideration is being given to the day and times of the surgeries. While it may be good that few people come into the surgeries it is felt that evening sessions might be more convenient for residents than the Saturday afternoons.

PCSO Devey and colleagues regularly carry out speeding checks in the Village. The data obtained from the speed signs is invaluable in identifying 'hot spots' and so making the best use of Police time.

Our sincere thanks to the volunteer 'downloaders' for preparing the monthly reports and issuing them to the Parish Council

Financial Matters

Because the Parish Council expenditure is under £25000 the accounts are not subject to external auditing and the new arrangement allows the Parish Council to apply for an Exemption Certificate. However, the regulations stipulate that the accounts must

be published on the web site and still be checked by an Internal Auditor. Residents also have access to view the accounts, by arrangement with the Clerk, if they wish.

Following to movement of Mr Peter Young from the Village, the internal audit this year has been carried out by Mr David Frith, who also carries out a similar audit for the Joint Cemetery Committee. The Parish Council are very grateful to Mr Frith for taking this on and thank him for his work.

Village Matters - General

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

Superfast Broadband

Openreach and Connecting Cheshire have done considerable work in the Village to connect services. Residents using Hill Top Road and Cliff Road will be aware of the amount work that extension of superfast service has entailed. It is to be hoped that as many residents as want to will take up the service.

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.

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 are 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 has been installed, at the Parish Rooms car park, showing a route for one 'petal walk'

It was necessary to complain to Network Rail recently about an overgrown section of the footpath (FP5) that is from the bridge over the railway at Old Lane and, for a distance, runs parallel with the railway. Network Rail denied that they were responsible but CW&C records were able to verify that they are and the maintenance work has subsequently been done.

Remembrance Plaques

Following the closure of the Methodist Chapel (in Chapel Lane), the Parish Council liaised with the Rev T Simms to retain for the Village two memorial plaques, mounted in the Chapel, that recorded the names of men from the Chapel who were killed in the first World War. The plaques were demounted for the Council by a resident. The larger of the two plaques needed refurbishing and was taken to Whitbys Memorials for renovation. A first class job was done at no cost to the Parish Council. The plaques have been remounted in the entrance to the Parish Rooms. The Rev Simms has offered to rededicate the plaques when lockdown restrictions permit.

The remounting required special machining of quality wood to retain the plaques. The material and machining was given free of charge to the Parish Council by Yoxall Joinery Ltd.

It is poignant to think that men who witnessed the opening of the Parish Room in 1909 now have their names recorded there.

Hazel Pear Wood - Woodland Trust

Woodland Trust and groups of volunteers have worked on the maintenance of the woods and there is a link in with the volunteers to arrange more working parties. The hedge bordering on to Station is cut on a 3-yearly basis for top and sides. The side bordering the pavement will be cut each year.

Town Farm Quarry

Town Farm Quarry has for many years been a thorn in the flesh of residents, especially along Station Road and Milton Rough by the volume and speed of vehicles to and from the Quarry. Clr Fifield, the Parish Council and associated Parish Councils with the Action Group have strived to regulate and bring to a conclusion the workings at the Quarry. It is pleasing to report that works are now complete and restoration of the site is ongoing. A huge thank you to Clr Fifield and all concerned with the Action Group.

Warrington Road

Residents on Warrington Road have had all kinds of problems with so called 'illegal' parking near their own properties. There has been parking problems for some time and CW&C had proposed a system of enforcement that would have impacted on residents. Clrs Gillian Edwards and Paul Williams are discussing with CW&C a suitable resolution.

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 for their work on our behalf.

Weaverham and Acton Bridge Trust

The Trust is 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 David Hall and Rob Forbes 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 many subjects as required.

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

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.

Friends of Acton Bridge Station

'Friends of Acton Bridge Station' are a diligent group of volunteers that look after the Station and the car park. The Group liaises with representatives of the recently appointed operators London Northwestern Railway (LNR). Artwork produced by the Crowton Primary School and the Acton Bridge Preschool was converted by LNR into wall plaques and mounted in the entrance to the Station. The efforts won a 'Little Gem' certificate at a recent prize giving.

Thank you

The unsung hero of all Parish Councils is of course the Clerk and this year we have Margaret and Carole to thank. I know that Margaret was always the first to minimise her input but I saw the work that she put in. Carole has joined at a very difficult time but has already shown her metal in dealing with the unusual circumstances thrown at the Council by the pandemic. A sincere thank you goes to you both.

To our vice chairman, Trevor Brocklebank, I offer my sincere thanks and appreciation of his support and help in many matters. To have just joined the Parish Council and then to take up the post of vice chairman straight away shows the measure of his character. Thank you very much Trevor.

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

5. Village Matters and topics

No residents were present and none were raised.

There were no other matters and the AGM was closed.

Signed (Chairman)

Date.....