

MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting of GREAT PAXTON PARISH COUNCIL held on Monday 23rd May 2016 at Great Paxton School, Mount Pleasant, Great Paxton.

PRESENT: Parish Councillors W Bond (Chairman), Mrs J Addison, G R Addison, D Beattie, P Goodyer, S Peters, Mrs J Peters and R Widdowson.

IN ATTENDANCE: County Councillor J Wisson, District Councillors Mrs B E Boddington and R J West and four Members of the public.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on 11th May 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman of the Parish Council.

2. APOLOGY

PCSO Alan Newman apologised for his absence from the Parish Meeting but had indicated his intention to submit his report on police activities in the parish to the Clerk for publication later in the week.

3. REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Councillor Bond, Chairman reviewed the activities of the Parish Council during 2015/16. He referred to the success of the Council's application for funding from the County Council under the Local Highways Initiative Scheme and the opportunity this would present to introduce a 50mph speed limit (at least) and safety signs, on the approach to Paxton Hill and the railway bridge on the B1043. Councillor Bond also commended the excellent work being undertaken to establish both a village shop and achieve a cycle route into St Neots both projects in which Parish Councillors were involved. Under the Localism Act 2011, the Parish Council had also successfully applied and received approval from the District Council to register the recreation land west of the High Street as an asset of community value.

Councillor Bond expressed the Parish Council's desire to formalise both Neighbourhood and Speed watch Schemes in the village and whilst volunteers had come forward, Councillor Bond was hopeful that someone would step up to lead and co-ordinate both projects. Training and guidance was available to help get these schemes underway.

On behalf of the Parish Council, Councillor Bond thanked David Lloyd and Simon Black for all their hard work and efforts in maintaining and producing the Village Website and magazine and expressed his appreciation to the County, District and Parish Councillors who had contributed positively to meetings and the work of the Parish Council over the past year.

The Chairman invited those present to join him for a glass of wine at the end of the meeting.

4. COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

County Councillor Julie Wisson

Councillor Wisson described changes to the democratic processes at the County Council which had resulted in a move from a Cabinet to Committee system. This has increased her

involvement such that she had served as a member of five committees including Adult & Social Care, Children & Young People, Health, Environment, Growth, & Highways and Constitution & Ethics. Through her involvement with Children & Young People, Councillor Wisson had also contributed to the work of the Fostering Panel and, quite differently, the Pensions Panel.

Councillor Wisson reminded the meeting that the Cromwell Museum in Huntingdon had been transferred from the County Council to Huntingdon Town Council during the year with the Town Council taking responsibility for the premises and day to day operations being managed by a Charity which had been set up for the purpose. The museum collection remained in the ownership of the County Council but was loaned to the Town Council to display.

Lastly, Councillor Wisson indicated how pleased she was at the success of the Parish Council's application for LHI funding and offered her assistance to those who wished to introduce Speed watch as, in her experience, this would help to reduce speeding in the village.

District Councillor Mrs B E Boddington

Councillor Mrs Boddington thanked those who had supported her during her successful election campaign in 2015 when she had achieved a majority of just under 2000. Her work around the Ward continued to vary but she commented that she found the work with and help she gave to residents to be particularly rewarding. Major changes had continued to take place at the District Council. These had resulted in a number of early retirements and redundancies and the freeing up of surplus office space which had been rented to private companies as a source of income. The Call Centre would return to Pathfinder House in May. Councillor Mrs Boddington was pleased that the District Council had maintained all essential services without the need for any Council tax increase.

In terms of her Committee responsibilities, Councillor Mrs Boddington reported that she had served on Development Management, Overview & Scrutiny (Economy & Growth), Standards, Safety Advisory, Tree Preservation, Development Advisory and the Senior Appeals Group. As Chairman of the Development Management Committee, Councillor Mrs Boddington described the democratic and transparent process by which applications were submitted and explained that these were considered by the Committee because a conflict in the view of the District/Parish Councils on an application. Recommendations made by Officers on applications were guided by Government policy and final decisions rested with the Committee at their monthly meetings.

Operations at the District Council were continually under review and the opportunity to opt for a reduced size refuse bin would be made available. Existing bins could be replaced free of charge. It was envisaged that this change could assist elderly or single residents. Interested residents should ring the Call Centre on 01480 388640.

Councillor Mrs Boddington also described an ongoing review of Open Space Water Safety on District Council owned sites which would result in better signs, provision of rescue equipment, edge of waterways maintenance as well as protection for breeding and nesting wildlife. Works at Hinchingsbooke Country Park, Paxton Pits, the Marina and Weir at St Neots and 14 other river banks, 8 brooks, 3 ponds, 11 Balancing Ponds and 13 drainage ditches would be undertaken over the next 12 months.

Details of the Community Chest had recently been released with a closing date at the end of May. £60,000 would be available to organisations in Huntingdonshire with a maximum grant of £5000 per application.

Before closing, Councillor Mrs Boddington expressed her pleasure at the progress of the Village Shop project and her appreciation to the Parish Council and the Clerk for their hard work on behalf of residents in the village and offered her support and help should it be required.

Councillor R J West

Councillor West opened his report by referring to the role and responsibilities he held at the District Council during 2015/16. He stated that he had been a Member of the Corporate Governance Panel which considered audit, governance and finance issues including the Council's constitutional arrangements. He was also a Member of the Development Management Committee responsible for town and country planning and development management applications and the Employment Panel which maintained a strategic overview of people management and workforce decisions and issues within the Council. In addition, Councillor West served on the Licensing and Protection Panel/Licensing Committee which considered matters relating to licensing and registration, health and safety at work and the protection of the environment. The Committee acted as licensing authority under the Licensing Act 2003 and sets fees for licences, permits etc. under the Gambling Act 2005. He also performed a scrutiny role as a Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth) and enjoyed his position as Chairman of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group working with Cambridgeshire County Council to maintain the park for the enjoyment of District. As Vice Chairman of the Council, Councillor West supported the Chairman and enjoyed hosting events with the armed forces and volunteer organisations. He mentioned one in particular – the Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre and acknowledged the importance of volunteers in helping to maintain services and the feeling of well-being it gave to the volunteers themselves.

Councillor West praised the work of parish councils in the way they carry out their duties and serve their residents and recognised how important it was that the District Council should support them in their efforts. To this end he was hopeful that improvements in the website would enable the location of information required to carry out their duties and that changes, in the long term, to the way in which planning applications were considered between parish and district councils would work for the benefit of all. Enforcement remained an issue and he explained that District Councillors would be looking to find ways to improve the service to ensure transparency, clear direction and support for local residents and Parish Councils. In closing, Councillor West requested that more respect be shown to Parish Councils particularly when considering planning applications or change of land use and that dialogue be encouraged between Councillors and applicants to maintain and ensure continuation of the village way of life and protection of the historic heritage.

5. GREAT PAXTON ANNUAL CRIME REPORT

To be circulated separately – see Minute No 2 above.

6. PARISH COUNCIL'S ACCOUNTS 2015/16

The Parish Meeting received and noted the draft statement of accounts of the Parish Council for the financial year 2015/16, a copy of which had been circulated with the agenda.

7. PUBLIC FORUM

In response to questions from the floor, Councillor West undertook to forward voter turnout percentages to a member of the public who was present and to ask whether it would be possible for HDC's Elections Office to use an alternative venue in the village, other than the primary school, as a polling station in the future.

Given the report of the Chairman earlier in the meeting, a member of the public suggested that the Parish Council should make greater use of Facebook to generate interest in village projects, as for instance, the search for someone to lead the Speed watch scheme. Parish Councillors agreed that an item on this subject could be drafted by the Clerk and placed in the programme for the Village Show, on Facebook and the website as well.

8. DATE OF NEXT ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

It was noted that the next Annual Parish meeting would take place on 15th May 2017.

The meeting then closed at 8.07pm.

Chairman

