

Weston under Wetherley Parish Council

Annual Parish Meeting

Draft minutes

Wednesday 29th April 2015

Weston under Wetherley Village Hall 7 pm

Present: Cllr Miss B Roberts(Chairman)

Cllr Mr P Haine

Cllr Mrs S Chambers

Cllr Mr R Atkinson

Cllr Mr S Richards

Mrs M Norman (Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer)

Also present: Cllr Norman Pratt, Cllr John Hammon, Cllr Wallace Redford and 42 members of the public

1	Welcome from the Chairman
	The Chairman of Weston Parish Council, Cllr Beth Roberts, welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2	Apologies
	There were no apologies for absence.
3	Approval of the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting 28th May 2014
	The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting were unanimously agreed as an accurate record of the proceedings and were signed by the Chairman.
4	Chairman's summary of the year.
	“We were informed on the 9 th April of an uncontested election for the six vacant Parish Council seats. I am delighted to welcome Rachel Tighe who becomes a Councillor for the first time and Cllrs Atkinson and Richards, both of whom were co-opted in December of last year and have been great assets to the Council during their short time with us. The other three Councillors are Sue Chambers, Peter Haine and me.
	I would like to thank our ward District and County Councillors who attend many of our meetings and are a key support to us. We are very sad to say goodbye to Cllr John Hammon and Cllr Norman Pratt after many years of service to the county. We would like to thank you both for the vital support and advice you have given to this Parish Council. We have always

been able to rely on you and the advice you have given us has been invaluable. You have devoted huge amounts of your own time to help us in our endeavours and we will miss you both very much. We look forward to continue working with Wallace Redford and our new ward councillors.

Bren Boardman was also a councillor for a short period during last year and although we were sorry to see her go, we understand that she no longer had the time to continue her commitments to the Parish Council given her many other contributions to village life.

Members of the Parish Plan Steering Committee will be informing you of the outcome of some of their projects, but I should like to mention one of the first products of the Parish Plan, namely the website. This is a great asset to the village and is well used. We are all grateful to Peter Haine and the rest of the web team for keeping it up to date and continuing to add new content.

The Wildlife Conservation group has created a beautiful display of wild flowers on the bank beside the church and we are all grateful to the team, led by Sarah Haine, for all their hard work. Last year's Village Fete was a huge success, raising almost £3000, and we look forward to a similar success for this year's fete in June.

A huge amount of hard work and a strong team effort have been the driving force behind fighting HS2 and preparing for our appearance before the Select Committee. Peter Haine has worked extremely hard with Cubbington and the Joint Parish Council to represent Weston's interests. As a result of their persuasive speeches the Select Committee has requested HS2 Ltd to revisit their plans for the height of the line through our area, something we can regard as a partial victory.

The Council has also been pleased to donate the sum of £400 towards the cost of a defibrillator to be located outside the Village Hall. The Village Hall Committee, led by Sue Keffler has, with the aid of the British Heart Foundation, managed to raise the necessary funds for this project. For the first time, the Council has also established a grant fund in its 2015/2016 budget to provide grants to groups working on projects which will ultimately benefit the parish. The sum of £1200 has been allocated for this year and details on how to apply for a grant can be obtained from the Clerk.

The Council has also been considering various ways to persuade drivers along the Rugby Road to moderate their speed. We are investigating the possibility of asking the police to carry out speed checks as well as carrying out our own community speed watch programme. We also hope that the new Welcome gates to be installed at the entrances to the village will alleviate the problem.

The owners of the former Bull Inn have just had planning permission granted to change the use from a public house to a single residential property. The Council regrets losing the village pub but accepts that the business was not supported sufficiently to make it a viable concern. We are now in discussion with the owners and their architect regarding the best possible development of the site. To help us in this, please provide us with your opinions.

We have lots to look forward to in the coming year with Open Gardens, the Fete, potential film showings, continuing to improve the natural habitat and the possibility of creating a sports facility. We shall continue to work to improve the safety of our roads and footpaths.

Finances: The precept levied from Warwick District Council has remained stable over the last three years, and has decreased slightly for the financial year 2015/2016. Our expenses for 2015 have increased by 8% from the previous year, mainly due to an increase in the grants given, notably the defibrillator costs and an increased grant to the Church. A sizeable proportion has also been spent on contributions to the HS2 campaign. Although our basic running costs such as subscriptions and meeting room hire are substantially the same as in previous years, 67% of our expenditure has been incurred through our support of community led projects. We hope that with our grant fund we can continue to support local groups and their initiatives.”

5 **Report from the District Council**

Cllr Norman Pratt

Cllr Pratt reported that the District Council finances were in good shape, mainly due to prudent management. In spite of cutbacks there had been very few redundancies amongst Council staff. He congratulated the Council on their continued opposition to HS2, an inordinately expensive project which would bring no benefit whatsoever to the residents of Warwickshire. After twelve years as Ward Councillor for Weston, Cllr Pratt had seen many changes in the Parish Council. He congratulated the Chairman and Clerk for their handling of some difficult issues over the past few years and wished all Councillors every success for the future.

Cllr John Hammon

Cllr Hammon also commented on the detrimental effect the HS2 line would have on the local area. He reminded the meeting that Warwick District Council had committed large sums of money in opposition to the project. He congratulated the petitioners before the Select Committee for their excellent speeches which had clearly been carefully considered by the Committee. Cllr Hammon also expressed his concern at the extent of the new housing developments outside Leamington and Warwick, which were already placing a great strain on the infrastructure. The Local Plan had enabled the District Council to curtail wider housing development in the area but much work remained to be done. The Gateway project had been supported by the District Council, to Cllr Hammon’s regret, but the impact of this development had yet to be faced. Cllr Hammon paid particular tribute to Cllr Haine for his work on the environmental issues within the parish and expressed his good wishes to the Council.

Report from the County Council

Cllr Wallace Redford

Cllr Redford informed the meeting that the County Council budget is negotiated by consensus, as no political party has a majority. The County Council has, like the District Council, always been opposed to HS2 and has provided financial support in fighting the project. The County Council receives a Government grant to assist in road repairs; this year nearly all roads in the county have been repaired and potholes attended to. Cllr Redford also informed the meeting of the County Council’s policy of replacing street lights with LED lights, capable of being dimmed and controlled individually. He reminded the meeting of the grants available through the Warwickshire Rural East Community Forum and urged interested parties to apply for funding for future projects.

6 **Parish Plan update:**

Mr Stephen Evans reported on the outcome of the second public consultation which had taken place in December. There was a clear demand for a footpath/cycleway to Cubbington; an expensive project, but one which he hoped would be realised. The intention is to approach HS2 Ltd for a contribution to the project in mitigation of the damage caused to the area through the high speed railway line. Another village project is the local cinema showing, which is due to start in November.

Mrs Bren Boardman spoke of the success of last year's Fete which had raised £2000 for church repairs. £800 of the total proceeds had been held in reserve for this year's fete. Key events are the dog show, children and adult sports, a Home and Garden competition and a barbecue. She also informed the meeting of the lending library, recently opened in St. Michael's Church. It is hoped to start an internet cafe in the church, providing IT classes for anyone interested.

Cllr Sue Chambers reported that the Parish Plan results revealed that nearly a quarter of residents strongly agreed that some areas in the village should be managed for wildlife. The group that was subsequently formed had identified areas which would be suitable to improve habitats for native flowers, birds and insects and add interest to the village. These cover less than 5% of the public open spaces in the village, leaving plenty of "neat" areas for those who prefer to see a tidy landscape. Following the actions of the Forestry Department in felling and chipping 35 trees on the bank which the Wildlife Group had successfully planted with wildflowers, the County Council have agreed to allow the Wildlife Group to replant this area and be responsible for its management in future.

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust kindly donated 15 metres of hedgerow and some trees to replace those that were felled, as part of their plan to create a wildlife corridor from Princethorpe to Leamington. These have now been planted and the area is beginning to take shape nicely.

Other areas for planting agreed with the Council and Forestry Department were an area by the lay by opposite the Church, to create a small thicket of native trees, shrubs and wildflowers, and an area along the hedge line from the right of the bus stop to before the bend by Devon Cottage. Both areas are well back from the road and will not impinge on safety for motorists and pedestrians. The plan is to start the preparation of these areas in the autumn and to cultivate them next spring. The trees round the bench in the playground are all doing well and the fruit trees planted last year are beginning to blossom. They are all looking healthy and should produce some fruit this year. Volunteers to help in planting and maintenance are always most welcome.

Cllr Stephen Richards said that the Council was investigating the possibility of providing an all weather sports field in the village. This would be a very large scale project, and substantial research would need to be undertaken on cost, location and fund raising. Any grant funding available will require strong evidence of both community support and active use by the village. The Council was working on a feasibility study and residents would be canvassed for their opinions.

Cllr Peter Haine said that the website continued to develop and there were many new features available, one of which is information on guided walks, provided by the Footpath Group. The website team was also hoping to publish new information on community

	<p>activities and relevant local information. An electronic copy of the Parish Newsletter is now available on the website.</p> <p>Thanks to a grant obtained from the Warwickshire Rural East Community Forum, new Welcome gates should soon be installed at the entrances to the village, with planters underneath.</p> <p>The Footpath Group has carried out a lot of work in the area, and is most grateful for the support received from local landowners. Mr Simon Moreton and Cllr Hammon have provided a great deal of most welcome assistance and the Group is continuing to enhance the network of footpaths in the area.</p> <p>The Parish Plan Steering Committee is considering developing a Village Design Statement. The aim of the Statement is to enable residents to have a greater say in planning issues within the village. The preliminary intention is to set up small focus groups to discuss the issue; the final Design Statement to be drawn up by the Parish Plan Committee, for subsequent adoption, if appropriate, by the District and County Councils.</p> <p>The Open Gardens days this year are on the 6th and 7th June, with nine gardens in the village being open for charity. Charities to be supported this year are the Warwickshire Air Ambulance, St. Michael's Church and a community based project for young people in the village.</p> <p>St. Michael's Church: Last year £7,000 had been spent on stone work repairs and leading on the roof. The Church Council was, as always, grateful for the support received from the Parish Council and local events. Mr Evans hoped that people would support the library and the internet cafe, once established. Future plans include the installation of a compostable lavatory and work was underway in applying for the necessary permissions.</p> <p>Open Forum:</p> <p>Mrs Valerie Evans requested the support of the Parish Council in defraying some of the expenses of printing the Parish Newsletter, which costs £1,500 to publish. The Chairman advised of the Grant Award Scheme, details of which are available from the Clerk. A question was asked about the possibility of a subscription service to the website and Cllr Haine said that this would be forthcoming in the future. The Council was also asked for assistance in having the dead wood removed from trees in Hancox Close.</p> <p>The meeting ended at 8.45 pm</p>	
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