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2011-1

The Annual Open meeting of the Wistow parish Council took place on Tuesday, 26th April 2011 at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall with Dr Farrar in the Chair.

Dr Farrar opened the meeting and welcomed two members of the public.

1. Apologies for Absence: None

1.1 Present: Mrs Booth, Mr Bucknell, Mr Carter, Mrs Coles, Dr Farrar, Mr Leigh, Mr Lucas, Ms Robinson, Mr Ward, Mr Williams, and two members of the public.

2. To sign and approve the minutes of the Annual Open Meeting held on 27th April, 2010.

2.1 The minutes, had been circulated around the Councillors prior to this meeting and were available at the meeting, Ms Robinson proposed and Mr Leigh seconded approval of the minutes and this was unanimously agreed.

3. Financial Statement

3.1 A copy of Wistow Parish Council's Annual Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2011 were available for inspection. Dr Farrar invited comments on the Financial Statement.

The past financial year started with a brought forward sum in excess of £31,000, but with outstanding invoices for the play equipment of £23,000 and a £6,000 VAT refund, in real terms the final closing balance was down in the order of £3,000, reducing our capital reserves as agreed upon the previous year.

This coming year grass cutting costs will increase by £1,000 as our previous grass cutting contractor became increasingly unreliable and alternative contractors had to be sought. Unfortunately our glass recycling facility is being removed from the village by the district council, depleting the village of one useful revenue source. The county council is also reducing its grant towards our grass cutting, reducing our yearly income even more. In light of our increased costs and reduced income sources together with the uncertain financial future for local councils with the recent government cutbacks, we have decided to raise the precept for 2011/12 to £10,000 in order to ensure we can meet our commitments going forward.

3.2 It was asked whether there would be any further spending on the playground and it was confirmed that the project was complete.

4. Chairman's Report

4.1 Last year the Precept had been set at £6,500 in order to use up funds being held, but the decision has been taken this year to increase the precept to £10,000 to ensure the village has enough funds to cover its future outgoings, in the event of the precept being capped. The present annual cost of running the village is approximately £10-11,000.

It is intended to review the Parish Plan during this year, but keeping costs to a minimum by taking on the work ourselves and presenting ideas and seeking input at village events.

The Bridge project is now in its final stages of completion with two issues outstanding: the give way sign is to be moved back by 5m and the standing water has yet to be resolved. Cambridgeshire County Council paid for the green between Manor Street and the Bridge to be reinstated following initial substandard landscaping.

The Playground project is now completely finished.

We have replaced a broken street light at the bottom of Oaklands Avenue in the past year and now due to recent council operational changes have to sign up to a new maintenance contract for our lights.

We have a new grass cutting contract with a local company following a raft of problems with our previous contractor, which has unfortunately led to an associated increase in our grass cutting costs.

4.2 Explanation of the situation with recycling was requested and Mr Bucknell explained that the glass bins would be removed and there was an opportunity to have an income from textile recycling. It was not the choice of the Parish Council but was policy district-wide.

4.3 With regard to the new grass cutting contractors, there were issues with the Graveyard where it was considered that they were not doing such a good job. The Clerk would liaise with them.

5. Playground Report

5.1 The playground project is now complete and has proved to be very successful. Along with the Playfunding grant of £30,000 for the installation of the equipment, other grants were secured to help with the cost of the improvements made to the entrance and pathway. The Parish Council had earmarked £5000 and were pleased to report that costs had been kept to £31,44.46 (Project final cost £35,755.46 less grant funding £32,611.00). The new equipment had been checked over by Leisure Logs, who installed it, and any teething problems ironed out. Routine maintenance is all that is now required. Wistow is fortunate to have such a good facility for its children.

5.2 A question was asked regarding maintenance of the new equipment and Mr Bucknell explained that the wood is expected to require treatment in 15 years but that to keep it in good order he would envisage some work in 10.

5.3 In response to a question regarding footballers as the bus stop, it was confirmed that the Parish Council were aware of the problem and had asked PCSO Jill Tiernan to speak with the boys. Mr Williams would be putting an article in the Warbler, making parents aware of the problems and the next step would be for PCSO Jill to take the boys home and speak with parents. The boys had been asked to come to a meeting to discuss what could be done to improve the playground but they had not so far, been to a meeting.

6. Allotment Report

6.1 Last year the hedge on the Raveley Road boundary with the allotments was substantially cut back as it had become very overgrown and had encroached the ditch and highway verge making maintenance difficult and restricting drainage. During this process the ditch was also cleared to allow free flowing drainage. While this operation cost more than a normal hedge cut, it was felt that the maintenance was essential and would help reduce future hedge maintenance costs as access would be much improved and only light trims should be required to maintain the hedge.

For the first time in many years, one allotment plot is actually being used as originally intended; being cultivated for domestic use as a vegetable plot by a villager.

Regarding the on-going discussions over the past years into the issue of contracts for the tenancy of the allotment plots, it has now been decided by this Parish Council to accept the status quo as any legal advice or action would undoubtedly prove to be extremely costly, with little obvious benefit to the village.

7. Traffic and Road Issues Report

7.1 Resolution has finally been reached regarding The Raveley road. After considerable consideration, discussion and consultation between Contractors, Cambridgeshire County Council and Parish Council it was acknowledged that the roads surface was unsatisfactory. The surface contained too much bitumen making it too slippery. The surface was stripped, recycled and re-laid. The final road surface while not ideal is within specification for a minor road. It is felt that the surface is now better quality and safer for users. No further work will be carried out on this section of road as no further funds are available.

On-going general road repairs & maintenance have accrued around the village this year including the repair and reinstatement of the sunken section of pavement and curb on Bridge Street plus various pothole repairs. The 'white line' requested outside the entrance to the play ground is scheduled and will be painted as and when the 'paint' team are in the local area.

Winter gritting routes have been confirmed by Cambridgeshire County Council and the hill out of the village will be treated, budgets and salt supplies permitting. Routes are prioritised and every effort will be made to keep Wistow linked with the B1040 (Warboys to Bury). Salt supplies in Wistow will be monitored and maintained.

It has recently been high-lighted that there has been an increase in the number of HGV vehicles passing through the village. The Parish Council have been in-touch with Cambridgeshire County Council Traffic Management Team expressing the villagers concerns. Currently a HGV Strategy Consultation is being carried out collating information to improve the countywide traffic flow of HGV vehicles. The new strategy will be reliant on Parish Councils carrying out surveys of volumes of traffic they have concern over. The results of the consultation are yet to be published and dependant on the outcome further guidance will be provided to local communities and Parish Councils.

There has been an on-going issue with the drainage of surface water under driveways on Harris Lane, with the involvement and discussion between The Environment Agency, Luminus, District and Parish Council. The situation is on-going and once the outcome is finalised a meeting with residents will be called.

7.2 There followed some discussion regarding HGVs using the village as a shortcut. This will need to be monitored, registration details obtained and then the driver can be reported. Mr Lucas pointed out that County have a Warden Scheme and the Clerk will look into it.

8. Countryside Report

8.1 The following issues have affected the footpath network in and around Wistow over the past year.

1. Change to Wistow Public Footpath No.1

The Parish Council supported a Definitive Map Modification Order under s53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. This change joined the Footpath No.1 to the public highway at the intersection of Mill Road and Harris Lane. The Parish recommended the full existing width of the route between the boundaries of the adjacent properties.

2. Investigation of Potential Circular Route – Option 1

The Parish Council investigated the possibility of opening up a route east from point 1175 on the Definitive Map to cross the stream and join with an existing permissive path. However, the advice received from the Rights of Way and Access Team at Cambridgeshire County Council indicated that the route had not been designated for public access and under “Wistow Inclosure Award”. Describes as a “Private carriage Road and Drift Way” it was designated for use by nominated individuals specifically for gaining access to allotments. This does not rule it out as a possible route for public access but may make it more difficult to achieve. The parish intends to pursue this

issue in the forthcoming year by identifying if there are any unregistered public rights over this route.

3. Investigation of Potential Circular Route – Option 2

The Parish has begun to investigate the possibility of another circular route along the track running north from point 1175 to Bury. The proposed route would then follow the parish boundary to rejoin the existing footpath network at point 0896. The Rights of Way and Access Team have been consulted.

4. Parish Paths Partnership (P3)

The Parish Council is a member of P3. Membership has proved extremely valuable enabling access to advice and visibility of the kind of projects that we could run in the future. Unfortunately it was made clear at meetings this year that funding for projects at this time is extremely scarce.

8.2 Dog fouling is an ongoing issue but it was reported that it is especially bad on the area of green by the Bridge leading to the footpath. It was asked whether a bin could be put by the salt bin for the convenience of dog owners. The Clerk would contact HDC to find out if it was possible and the cost.

9. Village Hall Report

9.1 The Village Hall committee have had plans drawn up for hall improvements which they are currently working with the County Council to obtain planning permission for. Once this has been achieved they will embark on a series of fund raising ventures. They are also looking at any grants that are available.

The committee continue to work on village activities such as the Village Music Night, Sports Day and Cricket Day. The Toddler, Friends and Wistow WI groups amongst others continue to make active use of the hall.

10. Bridge Report

10.1 In the winter of 2008/2009 the bridge in Wistow was subject to a series of vehicle collisions resulting in substantial damage. This necessitated inspection by County Council agencies who prepared a detailed dossier of information to dictate any rework and repair to the bridge. During this process it was found that the bridge no longer conformed to modern legislation regarding the strength of the structure.

The work on the bridge to bring it up to modern legislation is now complete and has required a one way system. Solar panelled speed warning has also been installed with clear 30mph signs also erected. Gates also mark a clear demarcation between the derestricted road and the village boundary.

Work has also been completed and funded by the Council to level and seed the area immediately adjacent the bridge and manor street. The give way sign still needs to

be moved and we have alerted Stephen McGee from Cambs County council of a standing water issue.

11. Litter Report

11.1 Instances of fly-tipping in & around Wistow have reduced greatly - while not disappearing completely. As always the Parish Council are keen to eliminate all fly tipping and work with HDC who investigate all occurrences of fly tipping trying to establish and identify its origins so that prosecutions can be pursued.

Last year it was stated that a 'No Tipping' sign would be erected on The Raveley road – unfortunately, this did not happen as it was decided that the liability implication of the sign being erected would not be beneficial to the village.

As stated last year Wistow is a cared for and in the main a litter free village – for it to stay that way I would ask all to report any sightings or concerns they to the PC who will action on their behalf.

12. Any Other Business from the Parish

12.1 The telephone box in Church Street is falling more and more into disrepair, Dr Farrar and the Clerk explained the action taken so far but would contact BT again.

13. Close of Meeting

13.1 There being no further business Dr Farrar closed the meeting at 8.17pm and thanked everyone for attending.