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2014 – 1

The Annual Open Meeting of the Wistow parish Council took place on Tuesday, 29th April 2014 at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall with Mr Carter in the Chair.

Mr Carter opened the meeting and asked that we remember Councillor John Pethard who had sadly passed away, he welcomed eight members of the public and two representatives from Balfour Beatty.

1. Apologies for Absence: Mr Bucknell

1.1 Present: Mr Carter, Mrs Coles(Clerk), Dr Farrar, Mr Hodson, Mr Leigh, Mr McInnes, Mr Tew, Miss Robinson, Mrs Bance, Mr Dransfield, Mr Wingad, Dr Mainwaring, Mr Turner, Mr Hurcombe, Mr Wadsworth, Ms Russell and Ms King-Parcell.

2. To approve and sign the minutes of the Annual Open Meeting held on 30th April, 2013

2.1 The Minutes had been circulated around the Councillors and members of the public who had attended the meeting. Mr MacInnes proposed and Dr Farrar seconded approval of the minutes, they were unanimously agreed.

3. Presentation on Streetlighting Proposals from Balfour Beatty

Mr Carter then introduced Keeley Russell and Peta King-Parcell from Balfour Beatty who were to give a brief presentation on the plans to upgrade the County owned streetlights. The plan was to renew and regenerate 55,000 street lights across the County as part of a PFI signed by Cambs County Council. The target was to remove 10% of lights across the county and effect cost savings in energy and maintenance. Balfour Beatty's aim was to deliver the project smoothly and they acknowledged that there had been some teething problems. They are due to start in Wistow on 6th June and expect to be on site for 6 weeks. Unavoidably there will be some disruption. There has been more consultation in Cambridgeshire than with any other County and it has been stepped up to ensure that there is a meeting in the village before the work commences. The columns are being changed if they are expected to have less than 25 years' life. New columns will be dimmable and provide better quality of light. Questions were invited from the floor and any concerns could be taken back to County and legitimate requests could be considered. Mr Carter in summing up stated that there is obviously concern and that we live in a rural community and do not want light pollution. It was decided to hold an evening surgery where residents would have the chance to look at the plans and voice their concerns. Mr Carter thanked Ms Russell and Ms King-Parcell for coming and looked forward to seeing them again once the surgery was arranged, they left the meeting at 8.05.

4. Financial Statement

4.1 A copy of Wistow Parish Council's Annual Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2014 were available for inspection.

Last year the Precept was held at £10,000. This, combined with other sources of income including allotment rents, VAT Recovery, recycling and maintenance contributions from District and County brought total income to £13,821.

Total expenditure for the year was £14,841 against a forecast of £12,000. The additional cost, met from the reserve fund, was primarily due to repairs needed for the Bus Shelter following damage received during the period of extreme weather.

For the forthcoming year, the precept will increase by 5% and, with other sources; the total income will be £14,628. While the annual routine costs of running the village are forecast to remain at around £12,000, provision must always be made for additional costs, typically streetlamp maintenance/replacement and delivery of new projects identified in the Parish Plan.

5. Chairman's Report

2013/14 has been a challenging year with a number of changes in both Parish and County Council members. The new team has settled down extremely well, with some members getting to grips with new roles and responsibilities. A great deal of work has been undertaken to forge closer ties with the Village Hall Committee and much progress has been made to drive forward better understanding and clarity for options affecting the future of the Hall.

Registration of the Playing Field as a Queen Elizabeth II Field is now complete and the official tripartite deed of dedication has been signed by Wistow Parish Council, HDC and the National Playing Fields Association. Signs identifying this status will soon be in place, signifying that this space is now protected from development.

6. Playground Report

The playground has now been officially recognised as a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Park in commemoration of the Diamond Jubilee with all of the appropriate paperwork now being signed off by the relevant parties, protecting the park as a play area for the next 100 years.

Each month Parish Councillors carry out inspections and complete a report in-line with our Insurance Policy requirements to ensure compliance and to assist with the ongoing maintenance and safety of the park. As part of this process, last year we removed the old tree stump in the middle of the park as it was rotting quite badly. The removal of the tree stump has also resulted in a larger, unobstructed play area. Repairs to the path were also completed as it had become quite rutted in one or places. This year we are looking at preserving the new wooden play area to mitigate future issues.

7. Allotment Report

Both the upper and lower hedges on the Raveley Road boundary with the allotments have now been heavily trimmed and the ditches cleared of years' worth of detritus. Having completed this work, future maintenance of the hedges should be minimal, with only a light trim being required once or twice per season.

The first allotment plot to be cultivated as originally intended (for domestic horticultural purposes) continues to be a success despite recent drainage difficulties; however these should now be alleviated following the recent ditch clearances.

Later this year the parish council plans to in-fill the gaps in the lower section of the hedge to reinstate a continuous hedge along the entire border with the Raveley Road.

Dr Mainwaring said the clearing of the ditches had helped drainage and asked that hedges be allowed to fill out.

8. Highway Warden's Report

Note on Pot Holes – Where possible Pot Holes are reported via the Cambridge County Council Website and are filled when there is a crew in the area – The situation is significantly better than last year – The Parish Council encourage any Parishioner who notices, or is concerned about, specific pot holes to go to the website directly themselves to report it.

MVAS Speed Signs: The Parish Council are currently in the latter stages of purchasing and deploying speed warning signs for the village. Currently awaiting a Gas Pipeline location report prior to siting the units. The council feel this will go some way to address the concerns of Parishioners on speeding in the village.

Bridge exiting the bottom of the village. The defunct solar/wind powered warning sign will be removed and an additional warning sign moved further up the hill.

Significant undergrowth was noted at the top of the toll obscuring vision and affecting the area. This has now been cleared.

There has been a drainage issue on the bridleway to Broughton exiting the village leading to water cascading onto the main road. A drainage ditch has now been dug solving the problem.

There have been a number of vehicle crashes at the main road between Warboys and Ramsey at Wistow Toll resulting in a concern regarding the state of the road and the debris/oil that accumulates there. A speed limit has been implemented and there are plans to resurface the road with non-slip material.

Similar accidents and concerns have been noted at the Wistow/Broughton/Upwood/Kings Ripton cross road. Wistow PC have contacted Broughton PC offering support should Broughton PC wish to attempt to implement any necessary safety measures.

It was pointed out that drainage is still an issue at the end of footpath 1 onto the highway. When there is heavy rain an inspection needs to happen to assess how to improve drainage.

9. Speedwatch Report

The Wistow Speed Watch Volunteer group started up in November 2013 and conduct at least 2 sessions a month at various points around the village. The presence is having a measurable effect as now after 6 months we are seeing less speeders, a slower range of speed from those being caught, down from the high 40's to mid/high 30's, though there is still the odd (53), but overall speeders caught is going down. The most pleasing statistic thus far is the amount of residents being caught is significantly down (the humiliation must be getting too much to bear). The group will continue as long as the volunteers wish to partake and are always looking for new volunteers. The imminent arrival of fixed speed watch community signs, same as those in King's Ripton will help raise awareness, this is not a village to speed through.

10. Countryside Report

It has been a quiet year. Public bridle paths are all in fairly good order, a few signs need cleaning, which I will do at the weekend, I would like to see an approach made to the local land owners to make the three most popular walks, Broughton, Bury and the Upwood paths more accessible to disabled users. The Parish Council can discuss this at a later meeting.

Dog mess is still an issue, not only on paths and bridle paths but throughout the village and more needs to be done I am afraid .

Roadside hedges running along Harris Lane after the houses need cutting also.

Mr Dransfield asked whether a circular route could be added but the brook provides a problem. It has been looked at before and is ongoing. We will also look at putting a map of village footpaths into the bus shelter.

11. Village Hall Report

Internal redecoration has been carried out, and the hall is looking much better. Fundraising for upkeep continues in various well supported guises, ie poker night, craft fair, fun day and music night. A great deal of time has gone into the issue of extend/upgrade the existing venue or look at a new build, John Wadsworth as VH Chair has been in contact with all parish landowners over viable sites, where most came forward with offers HDC have been involved to assess their preferred choice, now the VH (management) and PC (trustees) have formed a building group, who are working closely together to determine the best long-term and sustainable strategy for the village needs going forward with respect to cost long-term of old over new. Due diligence is needed for a project of this magnitude, when the group have conducted this in-depth costing exercise, they will be going forward to the village as a whole to seek their views, this is also viewed as part of the PC on-going Parish Plan.

12. Litter Report

This year has been better than previous with only one call to HDC to request a collection of fly tipping from the Raveley Road. General litter around the village again better, apart from on recycling collection days, but in fairness residents are picking up outside their properties within 48 hrs. Both the Toll and Mill Road entry exit points still suffer their fair share of blatant, "time to clear my car out" abuse, nothing we can do unless it is seen.

New bins are being located within the playing field, over all the levels of litter being found around the park have been better than in previous years, even though on occasion we are getting big groups coming over from other villages to use the facilities, which is very nice to see.

13. Parish Plan Report

A proposal document identifying priorities for inclusion in the new Wistow Parish Plan was circulated. All feedback received is being considered by the Planning Sub-Committee and when this is complete, the new Plan will be issued.

It is likely that the updated Parish Plan will address Fast Broadband, support for affordable housing as part of any significant development proposals within the Parish, support for High Tech and Light Business Units, Village Hall improvement/replacement, renewable energy considerations, further traffic calming measures and consideration of options to address future challenges affecting the continued support by the Parish Council for the graveyard.

14. Any Other Business from the Parish

Mr Turner reported that there have been ongoing problems with the clock. He has tried eliminating problems and has been in touch with the restorers who will be out to look at it as soon as possible.

Dr Mainwaring asked whether we could either move the bin or the notice board due to the smell from the bin when reading the notices. Mr Leigh explained that we planned to move the notice boards but were waiting for quotes. Dr Mainwaring kindly offered to move the boards for us and fit the plaque on the playground gate.

Mr Turner asked for the link to the streetlight maps.

15. Close of Meeting

Mr Carter thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.50 pm.