

PARISH OF RADNAGE

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 18TH MAY 2016 IN RADNAGE VILLAGE HALL AT 8 PM

Present: Chairman: Ms Elizabeth Fynn, Councillors: Chairman Mrs Sue Jones, Vice-Chairman Mr Robert Nikiel, Ms Tamsin Addison, Mr Lew Perring plus District Councillor Shade Adoh and 19 members of the public were in attendance and the minutes were taken by the Parish Clerk: Mrs Gill MacKenzie.

Apologies had been received from County Councillor Mr Carl Etholen, District Councillor Mr Saeed Saddique and Parish Councillor Mr Frank Coggrave.

The meeting began informally with refreshments being available, giving residents the opportunity to meet members of their council.

1. Welcome and Chairman's report.

The Chairman opened the formal part of the meeting by welcoming everyone present and introduced members of the council. She explained that she had retired from the council but had been asked to stand as Chairman of this meeting as she had very recently stood down as Parish Council Chairman and had been involved with the council for more than 7 years. She also advised that Cllr Orchard had also left the council during the last month. As Chairman of this meeting, Ms Fynn thanked the Radnage Parish Council team – Tamsin Addison, Frank Coggrave, Sue Jones, Robert Nikiel, Helen Orchard, and Lew Perring – for their support over the past year.

This was followed by the Chairman's report giving a brief overview of the work the council had undertaken during the previous year:

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a) Open Spaces and Playgrounds

For the past year Robert Nikiel and Lew Perring were responsible for the council's open spaces in Radnage, including Common Land. Cllr Nikiel carried out monthly checks to make sure the playground equipment was safe to use while Cllr Perring maintained the notice boards, kept the bus shelters clean and tidy, and did minor repairs around the village hall. Their practical skills and willingness to take on various tasks have saved the council and therefore the village considerable time and expense.

The dog waste bins around the playing field are emptied by volunteers, and Radnage Common is also mowed by volunteers, again saving the village many hundreds of pounds each year.

I would like to thank all the 'litter fairies' who help to Keep Radnage Tidy. I know of several who pick up rubbish on their walks around the village, including Green Lane, the City and down Hatch Lane, one who picks up along Bottom Road and one who does a regular clear up of the Gravel Pit in Bowers Lane.

Where there has been fly tipping, Bucks County Council is quick to respond once they have been alerted. If you see rubbish that has been fly tipped ring them up or tell them online – the system works, use it! The same goes for potholes around the village.

With her usual efficiency, the parish clerk has carried out the administration associated with grass and hedge cutting, allotment and grazing tenancies and maintaining the Common Land in Radnage. Our clerk is also responsible for the work associated with the burial ground.

Over a year ago, together with the Chiltern Society and Bucks Archaeological Society, a feasibility study was carried out on the near-derelict Black Barn in Common Road. Sadly the decision has been taken to dismantle it and make good the site. This is scheduled for June 2016.

b) Planning Matters

Your parish council has the responsibility to comment on planning applications in Radnage and Wycombe District Council has a duty to consider these comments prior to making their decision. Currently the planning team comprises all members of the council. During the year April 2015 to March 2016 twenty-six planning applications were looked at by the parish council. To meet key dates, many applications needed to be considered outside the monthly council meeting. Feedback was submitted, via the clerk, to Wycombe's planning department in a timely manner.

c) Village hall

The village hall is our most valuable asset. It takes a large proportion of council budget and, of course, councillors' time and energy as they improve the facilities in line with available funds from the parish precept and income from hiring. I would like to thank Sue Jones and the village hall team who have worked so hard to make the hall attractive and safe for hirers. “

The Chairman then handed over to hear a report on Village Hall matters from Cllr Sue Jones:

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This past year has been a busy and exciting one as we have seen the completion of some significant and long awaited improvements to our village hall.

Acoustic Panels installed to improve sound in the hall. Robin Fawell devoted a lot of time on research, Tony Eden followed up on this and found eight possible providers, three councillors visited several village halls where these panels had been in use before making our decision on choice.

Toilet refurbishment. After a lengthy period of trying to get realistic quotes, we finally decided to have a complete job done as we were having an increasing number of plumbing issues and the lighting was not up to current standards. The old plumbing which had been causing problems has been removed and we now do not have tanks in the loft. Again your councillors researched this long and hard visiting installations to see the products in use.

The new layout gives full sized cubicles, new plumbing throughout providing an on demand automatic shut-off hot water system (which also runs to bar area), new automatic lighting so the lights do not get left on, extended heating to ladies and gents and new easy clean flooring.

The emergency lighting system has been updated to comply with fire safety regulations and insurance

Key security has been rationalised: regular inspections of fire prevention and safety equipment are made: a major boiler repair was needed: the inventory has been updated: the village hall is now on a "Halls for Hire" free website: the village hall manual has been updated and general repairs and maintenance are ongoing.

We are awaiting the acquisition of some second hand padded chairs that hopefully may be available this summer, to improve the comfort for all.

This year has seen an increase of over 50% in our bookings income whilst our annual expenses have been contained.

We do hope our villagers and hall users appreciate the new works which will hopefully enhance our hall for many years to come, making it a great place to attend classes, hold family get-togethers etc.

We cannot rest on our laurels though, as there is plenty of work left to do.

We need to ensure the wooden floor has an overhaul this summer, the patio area is in need of attention, the bar area needs to be updated, the area surrounding the entrance and the car park needs to be improved.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank Carol Eden (ably supported by Tony) for all the hard work she does to keep the bookings rolling in and our hirers happy. This is no mean feat – one recent booking ran to an exchange of 26 emails!

Our thanks too to our cleaner, Debbie, who manages to keep up with our needs and present the hall in such good order. “

The Chairman then offered comment on two things: the first one was to ask residents not to take their parish councillors for granted. She reminded those present that the councillors attend monthly council meetings and work as teams on various projects; they contributed to risk assessment, action plan and precept meetings throughout the year, and represented the parish in relevant meetings outside the village. She stated that this was a voluntary role and that these people did it “this just for the love of Radnage”. The second comment was that she wished to pass on the heartfelt thanks of all councillors, past and present, for the help given to them all by the Clerk who provided financial data efficiently and gave guidance on council matters, even the most obscure.

2. Financial Report

The Chairman asked the Clerk to give a financial report:

As the Responsible Financial Officer the Clerk gave a financial overview from the previous year. “

Radnage Parish Council had a budgeted income of approximately £34,766, which was a little higher than the previous year, and under the terms of The Account and Audit Regulations prepare their accounts in the Receipts and Payments format.

The Clerk/RFO produces a monthly summary of receipts including interest, precept, burial ground fees, wayleaves, allotment rental and village hall bookings. All payments are detailed against the budget set by the Parish Council in December the previous year at a meeting to decide the annual precept requirement. The summary is copied to all councillors on a monthly basis, with a full breakdown available on request.

All payments are detailed in the minutes of the Parish Council meetings and cheques are signed by 2 councillors who are provided with invoices for all payments to support each of the cheques they are being asked to sign. A small number of payments are now made by BACS (bank transfers) to regular suppliers. All payments are made with the full knowledge of all councillors and payments for work/services (with the exception of the occasional emergency repairs e.g. leaking or burst pipes are authorised in advance); subject to a financial limit set out within the financial standing orders. With the full documented approval of the council, standing orders have been set up to satisfy ongoing regular payments. Direct Debits are carefully monitored. The council’s current annual independent internal auditor is particularly thorough and reconciles all payments and expenditure and supporting paperwork line by line.

In accordance with slightly revised format in the paperwork, the accounts have been submitted to the external auditor and once approved will be available for public display. In brief, the income received was slightly higher than expected, at a total of £44,578.78. This was primarily due to the increase in hall hiring’s however, other small increases were seen in the burial ground and donations.

Expenditure in some areas was higher than anticipated. Despite this major expenditure on the toilet refurbishment was able to go ahead due to careful management of costs over the previous couple of

years, resulting in the increase in capital funds. In addition, previous fundraising and donations had been used as part of the funding. Double the anticipated budget was used on advertising the village hall, and it is awaited to see if this is solely or partially responsible for the increase in hire. Capital funds remain healthy which will allow for the demolition of the Black Barn despite this being more than anticipated.

At year end the balances held were: Treasurers Account £14,019.78 and the Business Account £21,029.35

- There were election expenses during this financial year when a General Election, District and Parish Elections all took place at the same time. This meant that costs were split between the organising bodies and based on number of residents which resulted in our cost being just £104.07 – a lot less than originally anticipated.
- Subscriptions to organisations continue with the introduction of the annual fee to the Chilterns Conservation Board who has provided the council with free advice over the past couple of years.
- Grounds maintenance to areas of common land managed by the council continues to be a high expenditure for the Open Spaces budget. A landscaping initiative in the car park area of the village hall is being considered and ideas sought on what could be achieved.
- Home maintenance on a variety of things has been financially worthwhile with thanks to the volunteer labour and enthusiasm of one of the councillors – Cllr Lew Perring – who can put together a new burial plot marker with ease!
- We can also thank the volunteer efforts of all councillors for without their active commitment to minor maintenance and general clearing and cleaning around the village, including the emptying of dog waste bins.
- Close management of village hall maintenance has continued and regular servicing and maintenance of boiler, flooring and fire systems should help to reduce major expenditure in the future.
- Waste management continues to prove to be very cost effective, thanks to the efforts of the village hall team and the Village Hall bookings clerk.
- The cost of utilities has continued to take a large percentage of the village hall budget, however, maintaining a landline telephone was considered essential (for safety reasons) whereas a small decrease in the Direct Debit for electricity has been achieved. “

3. Open Forum and Questions.

The Chairman advised that there were items on display for this meeting including maps showing the Common Land in Radnage which has been registered in the name of Radnage Parish Council for the general benefit of all parishioners. The project to register the land was carried out by Ian Blaylock. She also advised that there was a hand drawn village map in the entrance hall containing information dating back to 1603 and including many of the old field names. The map was made by Alan Ashby following research by Ian Blaylock and Bill Pilbeam and had been presented to the hall. There are also photographs of Radnage past which may be of interest.

The Chairman then opened the meeting to all present, inviting comments and discussion.

a. Village Hall.

Margaret Blaylock said that she was pleased to see the old photographs being made available for viewing at this meeting and asked that the photos be displayed on the walls of the Village Hall. Cllr Jones responded saying that the current intention was to keep the hall with neutral decoration to suit all hirer's needs and asked the clerk to make ensure that this question was revisited at a future meeting of the Parish Council.

b. Road Conditions.

The matter of HGVs using both Bottom Road and Hatch Lane was raised by Hilary James and supported by many. These vehicles were damaging the road, its verges and the trees and many

drivers were blaming Satellite Navigation for using these unsuitable roads. It was suggested that in addition to signs saying 'No HGV' these roads should have weight limits and width restrictions placed on them. Also, the council would consider that when responding to a planning application, they could include a comment about the unsuitability of using these roads by delivery vehicles. Mr Blaylock agreed to forward any photos he may still have of 'offending vehicles' using Hatch Lane, to Cllr Adoh who agreed to take these issues forward on behalf of the residents.

c. Dog Waste

It was suggested by Mr Channer that more dog waste bins might be placed around the village. The Chairman reminded those present that dog waste could be bagged as usual and placed in general waste bins.

d. Notice Boards

Alex Ryan asked if permission to use the notice boards was required – the school fete advertising being an example. The Clerk advised that the notice boards were for use by the community but priority on usage and space would be given to the Parish Council as they were not large boards. She explained that old or outdated, illegible and inappropriate notices were removed periodically when she attended the boards during each month and when the need to post council information arose, these took precedence.

e. Finance

Ian Blaylock asked why the Precept had been raised when the accounts were so healthy. The Clerk advised that the annual Precept planning meeting had been held in December the previous year as usual, and forecast income and expenditure predicted against the Action Plan (strategic plan for works for the next financial year) were discussed.

No significant fundraising had taken place over the past couple of years and all of these monies had been used up to complete the toilet refurbishment and foyer redecoration project. Existing capital would hopefully be sufficient to meet further planned improvements throughout the Village Hall and recreation areas to meet customers' expectations and up to date legislation. There was also some concern that more devolved or required services would have to be met at local level with the reduction in Government funding to District Council of 48%. Forecasts showed that the anticipated income and expenditure would balance only if the Precept were to be raised by a small percentage. It was therefore council's belief that having kept Precept constant for four years, it was now necessary to add a small increase to the next Precept to allow them to continue to provide services to the village.

f. Planning Concerns – Mudds Bank

Cllr Adoh asked if there were any concerns raised by residents regarding the use of the fields alongside Mudds Bank. Cllr Addison advised that the planning applications and actions regarding this site had caused some discussions between residents and councillors alike and that it was generally thought that planning applications submitted didn't echo what was actually going on on the site. The phrase 'development by stealth' was mentioned several times. It was also thought that the area was unsightly and access into the fields was currently causing traffic difficulties to the major route into Radnage; as large vehicles delivering hardcore tried to turn into a track – which in turn was causing the road to become mud covered and potentially dangerous in wet weather. Cllr Adoh thanked everyone for their input and advised that she had met with the Cabinet Member responsible with a request for an immediate stop to what was going on but the outcome of this request was unknown.

g. Vehicles on Village Green

Tony Eden asked if any policy had been agreed on permitted access onto the recreation ground. The Chairman reminded all that the 'green' was Common Land and therefore subject to specific

allowances and advised that this had been fully discussed in a council meeting and the Clerk was asked to provide him with a copy of the relevant minutes for information.

h. Fundraising

Hilary James asked if the council had any future fundraising initiatives in mind. The Chairman responded that the council would welcome anyone coming forward offering to organise fundraising events to boost funds.

It was suggested that more contact with the French village of Radenac should be made. It was recognised that there is no official twinning between our 2 villages but that more effort should be made by local residents to keep in touch. Ian Blaylock advised that he was in regular contact with the elderly Mayor of Radenac and it was suggested by Margaret Blaylock, that the village school might wish to consider taking this forward.

i. Twinning Considerations

Following comments made at the last Annual Parish Meeting, Ian Blaylock echoed councils' understanding that there was no formal twinning arrangement with the village of Radenac in France. He advised that when Charles Jackson was researching his book about Radnage, he discovered that the churches in both villages were built in similar style and as a result he created the original link with the then Mayor of Radenac. The Mayor attended the opening of the new Village Hall back in the 1960's. Cllr Addison reported that a recent meeting with the Headteacher at Radnage Primary School had resulted in a suggestion that the school might engage in a 'pen pal' arrangement with the school in Radenac – it was hoped that this might be initiated by the French teacher at the school. Ian Blaylock offered to provide Cllr Addison any contact details he might have that could prove useful to the school.

A vote of thanks was proposed by Margaret Blaylock and echoed by those present for the work of the Chairman and members of the Parish Council during the past year.

Minutes of this meeting will be considered for approval at the next meeting of the Parish Council.

The meeting concluded at 21:10 hours and was followed by more informal discussions while refreshments continued to be offered.

Chairman's Signature:

Date: