

PARISH OF RADNAGE

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 17th MAY 2017 IN RADNAGE VILLAGE HALL AT 8 PM

Present: Chairman: Mr Robert Nikiel, Vice-Chairman Mrs Alex Ryan, Councillors: Ms Tamsin Addison, Mr Everton Merchant, Mr Peter Turner, Mr Graham Wass and 14 members of the public were in attendance and the minutes were taken by the Parish Clerk: Mrs Linda Freeth.

Apologies had been received from County Councillor Mr Carl Etholen, District Councillors Shade Adoh and Saeed Saddique and Parish Councillor Mrs Sue Jones.

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 new Parish Council Chairman opened the formal part of the meeting by welcoming everyone present and introducing members of the council. He thanked Cllr Sue Jones, who has now stepped down as Chairman, for her hard work over the past year and explained that he had volunteered, at the May meeting, to take over the role as Chairman for a six month period until a new Chairman can be agreed upon. Cllr Alex Ryan has taken on the role of Vice-Chair, also for a six month period. Special mention was made of our school, our Church and all the various groups, clubs and associations that all contribute so much to our village. Thank you.

It was explained to all present that the Parish Council is the first tier of Government, here to represent Radnage, and apolitical, and that being a Parish Councillor is a voluntary and unpaid position that can be very rewarding in trying to make a difference to our community.

Councillor Nikiel went on to say:

"We have had a very busy year of change with four new councillors and a new parish clerk. It should be noted that over the past few years we have sometimes struggled to find enough council members to keep us going. If this happens, the Parish Council could be wound up and placed under the District Council - this would be unlikely to represent our community as well as a Parish Council can.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank Gill Mackenzie for her eight years of service as our parish clerk, and appreciate her careful handover to our new clerk, Lin Freeth and warmly welcome Lin. Our thanks also go to Lew Perring, Elizabeth Fynn, Helen Orchard and Frank Coggrave who have resigned as councillors during this year. Their contributions have been much appreciated.

Elizabeth, supported by Phil, has offered to keep the bus shelters and notice boards in good condition and to continue the unenviable job of emptying the dog poo bins amongst many other contributions of their time and labour. We thank them sincerely as well as all other members of the community who help to keep the village clean and in good repair – your efforts are appreciated!

A big thank you to Carol Eden for running the bookings and ensuring the hall is in a welcoming condition for each hirer. She also does the weekly fire alarm checks and controls the waste bins collections to ensure maximum value.

Cllr Nikiel then introduced our present councillors and asked them to give a brief description of their roles and achievements over the past year:

Cllr Tamsin Addison – has taken the role of overseeing landscaping around the hall and on Radnage Common following the demolition of the Black Barn. Cllr Addison explained that attention has also been turned to the outdoor space around the hall and the village.

“With an impossibly small budget we have focused on the things that we believe will make the most improvements. One of the most important considerations has been to ensure that we extend the patio area to allow disabled access and make it easier for those with mobility issues. The hall is blessed with several sets of doors that can be opened to extend the entertaining area. While the patio had a single paving stone at a raised level we felt this was not sufficient for ease of access so we have installed a wider raised area with a ramp at one end and fitted a rail to the ramp.

Other additions designed to improve the patio area have been to scrape out loose pointing and refresh with new, we have replaced broken flags caused by vehicles driving across the patio. A 'tall boy' has been placed in the entrance to the playing fields and posts installed along the side of the patio. We have also replaced old, and sometimes illegible signs.

However there is still work to do. We need to extend the bank which is adjacent to the tall boy to protect the playing field and we need to revisit the planter by the front door, making it level, and reducing the height.

On the village green, we have planted a silver birch to mark the spot where the black barn once stood. It's been watered regularly during the very dry spring we have had and is now bursting with new leaves. We are grateful to Peter Seabrook for installing posts around the old site of the barn, and plan to add a few additional posts and tidy up the remaining wood from the barn shortly. In keeping the green spaces accessible and attractive I believe we are helping to retain the character of our rural village and hopefully making it easy for all residents to enjoy the benefits.”

Cllr Peter Turner – has assumed responsibility for the maintenance of the Village Hall.

Cllr Turner spoke of the village hall being a key asset to our village that brings our community together by providing a venue for dog training, lunch group, toddler group, karate, pilates, circuits, yoga, ad hoc parties, fund raising events and wakes.

“We have established a defined maintenance program. A schedule with over 40 maintenance activities on it, defined frequencies according to risk, and proformas to record checks. We deal with mundane items such as tightening loo seats and fixing leaking gutters; we deal with routine requirements such as boiler servicing and fire alarm servicing; we deal with improvements such as new soap and towel dispensers; and we also have had to deal with emergencies such as the lifting floor and electrical faults. We do all of this to ensure the village hall remains a safe, functioning and desirable place to meet, celebrate and have fun. So please do continue to make use of or think of ways you can utilise this lovely place.”

Cllr Alex Ryan – has agreed to act as vice chairman and is responsible for the open space / playground area and RoSPA safety reports, dealing with all matters between our school and the Parish Council and acting as the School & Parish Interface.

Just some of the actions and tasks completed and planned are:

- Monthly inspections carried out to ensure safety of equipment for all children and public liability insurance validity.
- Improving signage and compliance with all areas of RoSPA.
- Replacing and installing new toddler swing seats.
- Looking at improving the play area with new equipment and making the best use of the limited funds available.
- Creating a funding application and business plan to look for additional funding via the National Lottery initiative and WDC. This would be to purchase new equipment, especially targeting some teenage focused activities.

Cllr Graham Wass – has taken on some of the open spaces issues including the car park area, ownership of land and is working on communicating with our residents using our web presence.

“The village hall car park has developed numerous potholes - we have purchased repair materials and you may have seen a mention in the last contact magazine asking for volunteers to help fill in some of the holes. Myself and other councillors will be working on this on 28th May and we hope we will be joined by other volunteers.

I have had cause to investigate the various permissions required for residents to access the registered village green in common road. Whilst the Parish Council support the granting of formal deeds of easement to enable residents to access their properties, the council reminds everyone that the Parish Council is the owner of the land and there are No parking privileges granted. Any parking that does take place is currently with the goodwill of the council and should not be taken for granted.

I have lobbied the highways dept at BCC to have the "sink hole" repaired in Green End Road and also to have the white lines painted on the road at the end of green lane opposite the school as an aid to school safety.

My main task for this year is to coordinate the establishment of an improved internet presence for the Parish Council and village hall.”

Cllr Everton Merchant – has been overseeing our tree maintenance programme and repair to one bus shelter.

“The Parish Council is also responsible for the Trees around the Village Hall grounds and Radnage Common. Three Lime trees, Silver Birch and the Walnut tree were identified as needing crown reduction, dead wood removed and cutting back. Several quotes were obtained and the successful tree surgeons were given the job which has now been completed.

The Parish Council has responsibility for the Bus shelters around the village. The Bus Shelter in Green End Road has a rotten lintel making the structure unsafe and has been decommissioned. A local builder has been given the job to carry out the necessary works, which we hope will be completed in the coming weeks.”

Cllr Robert Nikiel – has been looking after our Green Spaces, Common Land and Allotments.

“Radnage has a number of areas of common land and green spaces which need to be kept tidy, which includes the Playing fields surrounding the Village Hall and the Children's Playground. The Parish Council is responsible for the upkeep of these areas and we have a contract with a local supplier for regular grass cutting and hedge trimming. Periodically, larger maintenance works are needed and these are dealt with as individual jobs as required - examples would be tree maintenance or pond clearance. Additionally, Southern Electric will do clearance around the main power lines coming into the village, in order to prevent outages through growth interfering with the cables. We co-ordinate this work with them and are expecting some clearance on both Parish land and Charity land in the next few months.

We also have 4 allotment sites dotted around the village, these being at Spriggs Alley, Bennett End, Chapel (Common Road) and City (Green Lane). Over the past few years there has not been a councillor allocated specific responsibility for allotments and we have had low priority over maintenance of the sites, in particular the City site. Plans are being made to improve the sites and we are hoping to get volunteer working parties to help with clearance. I have taken over responsibility from late last year and wish to thank all the allotment holders for the hard work they put in, not only in maintaining their own plots, but also in ensuring surrounding areas are mowed and borders trimmed. We have had more empty plots untenanted than we would like but have recently had 2 new tenants take on some of the spare - my thanks to both for the hard work they are putting in to restoring the plots taken. We still have some spare allotments and if anyone is interested in taking up a plot, or even a half or quarter plot, please contact me.

We also have a number of areas rented out for grazing purposes, in particular fields behind our allotment sites at Chapel and City. It is the responsibility of the renters to keep these in good repair and I am happy to report that our tenants are keeping these fields in excellent condition.”

Cllr Robert Nikiel continues:

“Besides the activities already mentioned, an important element of the Parish Council is to review and comment on planning applications in the Parish. Although we are not directly responsible for areas such as roads, we are able to lobby the responsible authorities and as a result we have been able to get road markings at the Green Lane / City Road junction and large potholes on Green End Road filled.

It will take a while for all to settle into our new roles and we would like to encourage anyone who feels they are able to offer us their practical help to come forward and talk to us. We currently are looking for volunteers to join us on filling the pot holes in the car park!

You will have noticed that some changes have taken place:

- we now have comfortable padded chairs
- the hall floor has been fully refurbished
- disabled access onto the patio area
- the Black Barn has been demolished, a tree planted to mark the site and grass sown to ensure the common land is protected and not used for parking
- tree surgery has been carried out to protect power lines

Meanwhile other areas under our care:

- War Memorial – this has been deemed by Historic England to be worthy of listed building status
- Parish Burial Ground – the newly updated guidelines from the Oxford diocese for memorials has been adopted by our Parish Council to be in line with the churchyard
- Beacons of the Past – this is a four year programme of research, education and conservation on hillforts and prehistoric heritage across the Chilterns. We have opted to support this project.

We should like to thank our District Councillors Shade and Saeed for their helpful support during the year and to congratulate our County Councillor, Carl Etholen on his success at the last election.”

2. Financial Report

The Chairman asked the Clerk to give a financial report:

The new Clerk thanked the council for making the transition into the role so pleasurable and for their ongoing support and encouragement. Thanks also to Gill MacKenzie for her time, support and assistance in facilitating a smooth handover.

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

For the last financial year Radnage Parish Council had a budgeted income of approximately £41K - a little higher than the previous year due to a small increase in Precept (5%)

The actual income amounted to £49k – this was due to additional Village Hall hire, donations (playground) / grants and unbudgeted income from burial ground fees.

The accounts have undergone the annual Internal Audit and the paperwork is currently being prepared for the External Audit.

All of the accounts documentation will be available via Radnage.net once approved.

Expenditure was just over the budgeted target of £37,580 at £39,430.

- Finalising the refurbishment project
- Repairs to the village hall boiler

- Repairs to the wooden flooring costing £5k
- The village hall chairs were replaced £2,000
- Demolition of The Black Barn on the Common using a specialist firm (the site was made good by local residents and councillors).

At year end the bank balances held were:

Treasurers Account	£11,610.07
Business Account	£31,041.88 representing £12.53 paid in interest

Account budgeting needs to reflect the future devolving of power from central government and the increase in financial burden that it will place upon us.

The Plan is to devolve Council assets and services (powers and spending) to town and parish councils where it makes sense to do so. The full implications of this is not yet known but we must be prepared for whatever is coming.

3. Open Forum and Questions.

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

a. Traffic and Speeding in the Village.

The matter of speeding vehicles especially on City Road, outside the school, and Green End Road was raised by local resident/parent. The control of traffic is outside of the Parish Councils authority but the community could enter a voluntary monitoring scheme, Community Speedwatch, promoted by Thames Valley Police and Buckinghamshire County Council but managed and run by volunteers. The volunteers would be trained to use a detection device to monitor the speeds of vehicles travelling through the local area and recording the registration number of vehicles exceeding the speed limit.

Warning letters are then sent out by the Police to the registered keepers stating that their vehicle has been reported as speeding. Locations for monitoring speed are selected from sites suggested by the community, based on where there is most local concern about speeding traffic, or the impact of speed.

Letters are then sent to offenders by the Thames Valley Police. The first letter is a warning letter. The second is a stronger letter. Further detected speeding will result in enforcement by the Police.

The Parish Council have previously looked at electronic signs but these are extremely expensive although can be hired and used by the community.

This matter will be discussed at a future Regular Meeting of the Parish Council.

b. Broadband Speed.

A local resident raised the matter of broadband speed in the village. The rural broadband schemes are not run by Councils but by charities and other organisations, and having such a small population Radnage would be unlikely to be considered. The cost and regulations involved in digging within the AONB is prohibitive resulting in progress being slow.

c. Financial Support / Fundraising.

It was suggested by a resident of the village that financial support previously offered by our District and County Councillors could be pursued again and may be another source of funding. This is something that is discussed and in fact a contribution was made towards the costs of the village hall floor repairs. Could we increase the utilisation of the playing field and perhaps a conversation could be had with the contact at Bledlow Ridge to obtain information as to how they managed to achieve funding for their playground. Cllr Ryan explained that she is currently undergoing discussions with a company who assist Parish Councils in writing bidding plans for funding. The fundraising group in Radnage has now been disbanded and the final account balance of £474 was presented to the Parish Council in March of this year. This money has been used towards the replacement of the old and unserviceable seats on the playground swings and the court backboards.

d. Locally focused village plan.

The Council were asked about their plans for work on a Village Plan. Cllr Wass explained that Radnage Parish Council has no plans to repeat the completion of a full Village Plan, or the formation of a Neighbourhood Plan, as these are large and very expensive undertakings and would require, among other things, areas to be formally agreed and allocated for development (planning). It was resolved, at the May meeting of RPC, that to avoid any future confusion with matters of planning, local plan etc that this matter will be known as 'locally focused village projects' with the first of these being our 'website presence'. A list of projects and objectives are being formulated, the first being the website, to enable the Council to reach the community in a more efficient way.

e. Publication of Minutes.

The matter of how the Minutes of Radnage Parish Council meetings are published was raised by a resident. The Clerk explained that, in accordance with the regulations, the Minutes are approved at the next meeting of the Parish Council and then published onto the website, with paper copies displayed on all 6 village noticeboards. Draft Minutes are not able to be included on the website but have been previously displayed via the noticeboards. However, this is not always possible. If there are particular topics that are included on the Agendas that are of interest or concern then, to avoid the delay of published Minutes, please simply attend the meeting in person.

f. Planned works by SSE

An enquiry as to any update regarding the planned work of re-routing/burying the cables within the Village Hall grounds and Green Lane was made. Cllr Nikiel explained that SSE will extend the existing underground cable outside of the village hall to Green Lane with the pole mounted transformer at the rear of the hall remaining free standing in its current position. The legal aspect with RPC and SSE for these works has been completed and notification of a commencement date is expected. SSE are also undertaking 4m clearance of growth around all 11kv cables plus clearance around the transformer at Chapel allotments.

A vote of thanks was proposed from the public gallery and echoed by all those present, with a round of applause!, 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 21:20 hours and was followed by more informal discussions while refreshments continued to be offered.

Chairman's Signature:

Date: