

PARISH OF RADNAGE

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 21st MAY 2014 IN RADNAGE VILLAGE HALL AT 8 PM

Present: Councillors: Vice-Chairman Ms Elizabeth Fynn (in the Chair), Mrs Sue Jones, Mrs Helen Orchard, Mr Lew Perring, Mr Roy Pitcher and Parish Clerk: Mrs Gill MacKenzie.

Also present: Four members of the public were in attendance.

Apologies for non-attendance had been received from Chairman of the Council, Cllr Robin Fawell.

1. Welcome and Chairman's report.

The Chairman welcomed everyone present and introduced members of the council explaining the areas of work they were responsible for. The Chairman read a report on behalf of Cllr Fawell which gave a brief overview of works carried out during the year and thanking all councillors for their work including Cllr Fynn for deputising for him during periods of absence and commending Cllr Jones for spending a considerable amount of her time as Village Hall Manager and Gill MacKenzie for her work as Clerk. A full copy of Cllr Fawell's report will be attached to these minutes on file.

2. Financial Report

The Clerk gave a brief overview of the financial situation. A summary of the report is contained herein and a full copy can be obtained on request and filed with the minutes. She explained that all expenditure made as payments are detailed against the budget set by the Parish Council in December of the previous year at a meeting to decide the annual precept requirement. This summary is copied to all councillors on a monthly basis, with a full breakdown available on request. 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. Occasionally, online bank transfers are made to make payments but only once authorised by council at their monthly meetings and are fully documented for audit purposes.

- There have been no election expenses during this financial year.
- Subscriptions to organisations continue with the introduction of the annual fee to the Open Spaces Society
- Grounds maintenance to areas of common land managed by the council continues to be a high expenditure for the Open Spaces budget.
- By ceasing the agreement with a website and email provider and using commercial email and the village website we have proved to have saved money.
- We have proved that by locking in to an agreed insurance fee for a 3 year period we have saved money.
- Home maintenance on the village notice boards has been financially worthwhile with thanks to the volunteer labour and enthusiasm of one of the councillors.
- We can also thank the volunteer efforts of all councillors for without their active commitment to things like filling the car park holes with rubble, clearing tree branches, installing loft insulation, repairing playground equipment, and even emptying dog waste bins, as well as a host of other things has saved the electorate money.
- The Government initiative to double the usual level of small business relief has resulted in no council tax payable on the village hall until 31 March 2015.
- Close management of village hall maintenance has resulted in deals for things like boiler maintenance and fire equipment safety checks which has been beneficial.

- It is hoped that the improved insulation of the village hall will reduce heating costs.
- Waste management has been improved and is more cost effective, thanks to the efforts of the village hall manager and the lettings administrator.
- Fuel costs continue to increase however, the insulation and less use of electrical supplies as a result has reduced costs in these other areas. The standing order with the electric company has been reduced by 25%.
- The budget estimated for the village hall telephone was inadequate but the phone is considered an essential requirement for safety reasons and arrangements to use the worked well.
- Careful management of the village hall and other allocated budgets has resulted in the council being able to build a dedicated fund for capital expenditure on the hall in the forthcoming year – with a view to refurbishing the toilets.

3. Individual reports from Parish Councillors.

The Chairman invited councillors to provide a report on each of their areas of responsibility.

a. Village Hall.

Cllr Jones reported on the Village Hall, (this being a précis of her report – a full copy of which is available on request to the Parish Clerk).

The redecoration of the hall has been completed and additional roof insulation installed.

Several additions to the equipment have been made over the year including:

- Automated hand driers in Ladies & Gents
- Babychanger installed in Disabled Toilet
- Increased crockery & cutlery supply (in excess of 120 covers)
- Wall mounted First Aid boxes in Bar and Kitchen
- Fuel sensor installed to keep check on fuel oil level
- Deep freeze (donated) installed in kitchen
- PA system (donated by St. Mary's)

External storm damage during the winter had been repaired and various leaks identified and guttering replaced. The Parish map, prepared by Alan Ashby has been framed and is now on display in the entrance lobby. Plans to decorate the entrance hall and update the toilets are being made. Savings have been made with alterations to the waste collection contract.

Carol Eden has taken over as Bookings Clerk and our thanks to Michelle Skidmore for her services over the past year and a half. A dedicated email address and telephone number are now used for bookings. The Hall continues to provide a meeting place for the community as well as a venue for parties and family occasions.

Cllr Jones thanked the Village Hall Team, Elizabeth Fynn and Lew Perring for their continued support during this year and for giving their time and energies to ensure the hall and surroundings are safe and functioning well.

b. Open Spaces.

Cllr Pitcher reported that the grass cutting contractor was continuing to do a good job for the council. The village hall car park was being kept in reasonable repair with holes being filled on an as and when necessary basis. The 3 lime trees in the recreation ground had received attention to remove some dead branches and the large walnut tree on the common had been surveyed following a large bough falling and damaging a neighbours fence, and recommended by the survey would be crowned in the month of July.

Vacant allotment plots are available on both Chapel and City Allotments and it is anticipated that a tenant at Sprigs Holly Lane site will also not renew. The site at Bennett End continues

to be problematic as it is very overgrown. The existing tenant has all 3 plots and the paddock is kept mowed by another which is much appreciated by the council.

Advice on the management of Green End Pond was sought from the Chilterns Conservation Society and it was agreed that the pond should be kept as a natural habitat without major or intrusive works. Thanks go to the residents of Radnage House for their help in keeping the area surrounding the pond in a neat and tidy condition.

Wards pond has continued to be monitored over the past year and the recent heavy rains and flooding truly tested the efficiency of the pond despite it having an overgrowth of dock.

The War Memorial grass is maintained by volunteers Chris Lowe and John Ayres so thanks to them also for their contribution.

It was also noted to thank residents living adjacent to the common for continuing to keep the grass area of the common outside of their properties in a neat and tidy condition.

c. Playground.

Cllr Perring advised that he had recently handed over the responsibility for the playground management to Cllr Raven. The climbing post had been removed as it was unsafe and that the annual RoSPA inspection had confirmed that the rest of the equipment was in a safe and reasonable condition.

d. War Memorial.

Cllr Perring reported that the paving slabs in the centre of the memorial garden would need some attention and may need relaying sometime in the future.

e. Report from Cllr Orchard

Cllr Orchard explained that she had joined the council when a casual vacancy arose due to the resignation of Cllr Tordoff during the past year. She advised that she hoped that she could offer a fresh 'pair of eyes' and be of assistance to the Village Hall team with their ongoing efforts to continue to maintain the hall and to improve its condition. She thanked the existing councillors and the Clerk for making her welcome and part of the team.

4. Open Forum and Reports from other bodies.

a. Planning.

Resident Mr Ian Blaylock advised that he had observed that where planning permission had been granted with conditions attached, these were not always adhered to and gave an example of fencing replacing a hedge along Bennett End Road. He would like to ensure that these planning decisions were followed through and asked the council to monitor this in future. The Clerk agreed to ask WDC if it was their policy to follow up to ensure planning conditions are met and also advised that anyone can contact the planning department at WDC to seek their advice or to comment/complain about a planning issue. A form is available and can be completed online and the person completing the form is kept anonymous from the owner/resident of the property in question.

b. Village Hall Running Costs.

Mr Blaylock asked for detail on the costs of running the Village Hall. He stated that a subsidy of £2,208 had to be given in 2008 and he was interested to know what the current net costs were. Cllr Jones reported that with increased hire charges and grants to undertake major works, the hall was breaking even with takings against costs despite the bookings being down on expectation during the past year. She also stated that

minor repairs and a major redecoration of the hall had resulted in it looking at its best and that the next major expenditure was likely to be the refurbishment of the toilets.

Cllr Fynn advised that the marketing of the hall was to be investigated during this forthcoming year

c. Precept/Gross Income.

Mr Orchard asked for a comparison of the precept levy against total gross income which the Clerk was able to advise had been £26,011.70 (which included the Community Infrastructure Levy) and the total income for the year had been £41,918.02.

Mr Blaylock asked that a record of thanks be given to all the parish council members for all that they do on behalf of the village and commended them for keeping Wards Pond in good order as this had been a matter for concern in the past.

Minutes of this meeting will be considered for approval at the next meeting of the Parish Council. The meeting concluded at 20:50 hours.

Chairman's Signature:

Date: