

Norton Lindsey Parish Council Annual Open Meeting held in the Church at 8.00pm on Wednesday 18 April 2018

Present: Cllr J Stobart (Chairman); Cllr Miss A Birch; Cllr R Mann; Cllr M Neale; Cllr Mrs A Mace-Leska; WCC Cllr L Caborn; WDC Cllr A Rhead; Mrs J Bendall (Clerk); and 23 members of the public

Apologies: Cllr K Sparkes; WDC Cllr P Phillips

1. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the Open Meeting held on 4 April 2017

The Minutes of the Open Meeting held on 4 April 2017 were discussed, confirmed and signed.

3. Matters Arising

Any matters arising from last year's meeting are covered elsewhere on the agenda.

4. Chairman's Report / Action Plan Update

The PC has dealt with a wide variety of issues in the last year, but many of them can be summarised under three main headings.

The first is the Parish Action Plan, which has three elements:

1. To improve the quality, robustness and use of the PC website, which has now been up and running for a couple of years. We have shifted onto a different server, shared with the Pub, and purchased a more useful domain name so that hopefully we can be found more easily. So, we're happy with the quality and the robust nature of the website – increasing visits is more of a challenge.
2. To implement ways of decreasing the incidence of speeding through the village. This has long been a concern to villagers, but we've had a disappointing response in terms of people coming forward to be trained to use the County's speed gun. Several people have now been trained, but we need a volunteer to manage the programme. Without one, the programme cannot proceed. So, if you'd like to volunteer, then please get in touch with Jenny or me.
3. To support the redevelopment of the village hall and the continued development of the Community Hub (at the pub). The Parish Council has pledged £35,000 to the village hall and is helping to liaise between the Village Hall Committee and the District Council. We made a small donation of £500 to the Salvation Squad in 2016 to support their fundraising activities – this was all that we were allowed to, given the limits placed on the total amount of money that we can disburse. The Parish Council supported the planning application for the shop. Further support will be non-financial

The second is the condition of the roads and footpaths in the village. We have highways as a standing item on our agenda and are always happy to receive information from parishioners about matters of concern in this area.

We have benefitted from the installation of new village signs and road markings, which we hoped would make drivers more aware that they are entering a village with a 30mph speed limit. The effect of these is difficult to determine, but probably not that significant.

Areas of particular and ongoing concern include the speed of traffic along Curlieu Lane and through Norton Curlieu. The latter has also suffered from flooding and a deteriorating road surface. These are in the process of being addressed by the County Council and Les Caborn is again helping us with funds for additional signs and traffic management measures in the hope that we can do something about the speed of traffic.

We have also had some problems with several of the street lights – they developed intermittent faults, but we think they are all working properly now. There was a request for additional lighting on New Road, but the PC does not have the funds to support this at present. What we are able to do is provide two additional grit bins – one in Norton Curlieu and one on Snitterfield Lane – which will be installed in the autumn.

A more general problem is that of dog fouling, which is a perennial and thorny issue not helped by problems with the contract to empty some of the dog bins. Dog owners are regularly encouraged to clean up after their pets via notices in the parish magazine, but please do politely challenge anyone you see failing to clear up after their dogs – whether on the pavement or the village green.

We've recently been made aware that some parishioners are disposing of garden waste in the hedgerow rather than in their green bin. This is clearly something that we'd like to discourage and we'll put a note in the parish magazine and on the website.

Finally, under this heading, please do use the facility on our website to report any issues you notice in respect of the roads – pots holes, etc. – the link goes directly through to the County Council.

The third issue is planning. We have had the usual range of planning applications to consider during the last year, mostly concerning extensions or other modifications to existing private houses. As I noted last year, we look to maintain the rural character of the village and ensure neighbourliness whilst allowing people to develop their houses in an appropriate manner.

Two rather more significant developments for which planning permission was sought were the house and barns at Cannings Farm, and the site of the former poultry sheds on Warwick Road. With the former, planning permission was granted, the house being redeveloped and the barns being converted into two houses. The latter was refused planning permission by the District Council, the key reason being that the site lies within the Green Belt. The PC recognises that the site remains an unresolved problem and we will seek the views of residents about what, if any, development might be supported on the site. Linked to this, the housing needs survey that we commissioned has shown a need for two small houses and a bungalow.

One final point: you'll have noticed that we recently lost our phone box – a much loved landmark, if a little used resource. This was removed by BT who tell us that a note was posted in the window of the phone box warning that it would be removed, though nobody that I've spoken to can recall seeing this. It seems that the DC was also informed in advance, but nothing came to us as a PC. It might be possible to purchase a replacement, but we would need to be mindful about issues such as insurance and public liability – something that we'll look into if there is a strong feeling on the issue.

5. Treasurer's Report

The bulk of the Capital Fund remains invested in a 95-day account which offers an interest rate of 1.49%: not brilliant but certainly better than the interest we receive on the bank savings accounts. This year the Parish Council made a £3,000 donation from the "depot" money to the Norton Lindsey and Wolverton Cricket Club towards the cost of the new training nets. In addition, £35,000 has been pledged to the Village Hall Management Committee for the rebuilding of the village hall.

For your information, the Capital Fund is made up of £45,953.75, which is the "depot" money, and £3,500 which is retained for contested elections.

The Precept was increased to £6,750 for 2017-2018, and the sum we received for Concurrent Services and the Council Tax Grant was £321, a £300 drop from last year because Warwick District Council is phasing this out over two years. This financial year we will only be receiving the Precept.

Other income that we received was £558.66 interest on the 95-day account, £1.61 interest on our bank savings accounts, and a PAYE refund from HMRC of £72.43.

Insurance costs were once again slightly higher than the previous year by £12, but our subscription to the Warwickshire Association of Local Councils remained the same.

Staffing costs increased as there was a nationally agreed Local Government Services pay rise, and administration costs were higher due to the purchase of a new four-drawer filing cabinet which was necessary to ensure that all Parish Council documentation and the laptop are stored securely, which is a requirement of the new data protection regulations which come into force next month.

The Parish Council was once again able to make donations towards maintenance of the Church Clock / Chimes, the defibrillator, Millennium Green and the Churchyard, and supported our local village clubs, details of which are on the bottom of the Accounts (Appendix 1).

6. Report from WCC Cllr L Caborn

Budget

For 2018-19 we set a budget rise of 4.99%, made up of 2.99% for general purposes and 2% ring fenced for adult social care. Our Conservative group budget affirmed at council in February included some new and innovative projects namely:

£150k for each of next 2 years to work with our borough and districts and health and primary care in partnership to reduce homelessness particularly relating to drugs, alcohol and mental health; £125k for a year of wellbeing jointly with Coventry to help people take more control of all aspects of health and wellbeing in their lives; £100k for 2 additional planners to work on major transport schemes. There is also additional funding for children with special educational needs.

Adult Social Care

We are continuing our transformation of adult services to make them simpler to access and allow users more control of their care.

Children's services

We continue to implement smart start which aims to give all children the best start in life from birth to starting school in partnership with health, education and all partners. We are experiencing a rise in children in care and foster homes and Warwickshire lead the West Midlands adoption agency. We are redesigning the transition years for children and families with special needs as they move to adulthood

Education

Our new Head of Education has embarked on a consultation aimed for parents to tell WCC what it expects from education for their children.

Highways

Throughout the weather this winter we fully gritted all routes on the list with numerous extra gritting to keep them clear. A number of major schemes are due to start including Stanks Island, Heathcote dual carriageway, and the A46 Stoneleigh Island.

Digital by default

Our service transformation to full digitised services and access to WCC is gathering pace with a full internal redesign being mapped and expert staff engaged to deliver it. The next phase is how we join up to all partners including parish councils.

Economy

Our economy continues to thrive, outperforming the West Midlands. Employment remains low and WCC is recognised for its skills and apprenticeship work.

Combined authority

Warwickshire continues to be a constituent member with the leader of the County Council having the finance portfolio. I also attend the health and mental health meetings. This remains the WCC position.

Old Shire Hall

This now operating as a stand-alone business unit and is available to hire for functions, weddings, etc.

7. Report from WDC Cllr A Rhead

Over the last year I have been a member of the Executive and held the portfolio for Development. My main responsibility lies in scrutinising the implementation of the approved Local Plan. Peter Phillips has also continued as a member of the Executive responsible for Housing;

In the last financial year the District Council has achieved the following:-

- Continued the substantial upgrade of the leisure centres at both St Nicholas Park and Newbold Comyn; St Nicholas Park has now been opened and it has been extremely well received with significantly increased membership; Newbold Comyn will be fully re-opened to the public over the summer; the take-up from residents has increased by 44% and is now forecast to be over 1 million in a full year.
- Reduced the rents for all of its Council House tenants for the third year in a row;
- Spent £2.5 million on reinforcing the safety of our 9 high rise blocks in the District following the Grenfell Tower disaster
- Through the planning system it has achieved over 37% of all housing development to be affordable housing (Coventry is only 10%)
- Despite substantial reduction in central government funding, offset by a modest rise in Council Tax, there have been no reductions in services;
- Following the approval of the Local Plan for the next 15 years, all development is now controlled within a specified plan;
- As a result of this controlled development the landscape of the approach to the south of our towns of Warwick and Leamington Spa is changing as highway upgrades are started, to accommodate the planned new housing;
- The design process has started for a sizeable Country Park which will be created to both act as a buffer between the south of Warwick housing development and the rural settlement of Bishops Tachbrook;
- We will be providing a new football stadium for Leamington FC in the south of the town.
- A start has been made in planning for a creative quarter in the south of Leamington Spa, which will regenerate the south of the town;
- Plans for the development of St Mary's land in Warwick to include cycle ways and improved open space have been approved;
- Protected all the open lands owned by the District so as to prevent unauthorised Gypsy & Traveller encampments;
- Proposed a positive solution to regenerate the Leper Hospital and bring it back into use. This has been ongoing now for over 30 years.

- As a result of continuing good financial management the District has been able to continue to invest in building the capacity of the voluntary and community sectors with nearly £1million of expenditure over the next three years, unlike other local councils who have ceased to make a similar commitment for a number of years.
- Similarly the Council continues to have a sizeable fund for rural initiative grants to aid worthwhile rural community schemes, none of which would be possible if good financial management had not been the cornerstone of the District's management. The contribution previously made to the New Inn Hub and the consideration of assistance for a new village hall here in Norton Lindsey are good examples of the contributions this and other grant facilities has provided to this community both in the past and currently.
- As the District's Procurement Champion I have asked Procurement to investigate how future tender enquiries should include conditions as to how the elimination of plastics will be phased out over a period of any intended contract.

Finally I would like to rectify fake news and misinformation on two important topics;

1. **The Riverside House and Covent Garden Car Park redevelopment;** the Covent Garden car park has "concrete cancer", has already a reduced parking capacity and, in time, will have to be completely rebuilt; at the same time the District Council's offices are neither fit for modern purpose nor economic to run; consequently, and after a District-wide search for alternative office accommodation none of which was either practical or possible, the Council approved unanimously a plan to combine the redevelopment of the Car Park with new modern state of the art Council Offices, and housing; these approved plans will now provide a car park with increased spaces, some apartments and the new smaller fit-for-purpose Council offices. In the possible future event of a unitary authority, these offices would then be easily marketed for use by others. Importantly this move, which includes the selling off of the Riverside House for housing, will save the tax payer £3million over the next ten years.
2. **Newbold Comyn Golf Course.** The contractor has pulled out of the contract for running this golf course and the Council is looking at options on how to best use and enhance this area. However it is grossly misleading by some to assert that the Council was about to set this area aside for housing. It is categorically not the case and never has been. Not only is this untrue, it would be impossible since it is Green Belt and the Council is currently consulting on the best continuing use of this important open space facility.

8. Village Organisation Reports

Village organisations and clubs were invited to attend the Parish Assembly and give brief reports on their activities.

Reports were submitted from the Playground Committee, the Cricket Club, Stilton Sniffers, Norton Lindsey Community Pub and the Village Hall Committee, and these reports are attached to these Minutes in Appendix 2.

9. Any Other Matters / Open Discussion

Q. On the issue of dog fouling, the playing field is the responsibility of the Village Hall Committee who are thinking about putting up notices which explain that it isn't a council run facility, that it is a trust run by volunteers, and that there is nobody to clean up, in an effort to try to shame people into picking up after their dogs. The dog warden has been involved in the past and threatened to take action, which seems to have worked. Would the Parish Council support this action – physically or financially?

A. This would have to be agreed at a meeting, but the Parish Council is broadly in support as dog fouling is a problem that just doesn't seem to go away.

Q. Should dogs be banned from playing field on health and safety grounds?

A. Dog walking is quite a social activity, which is a good thing. With the public footpath running around the playing field, banning dogs actually might not be legal. Keeping dogs on leads is as difficult to enforce as getting people to pick up. Also, dog fouling is not just an issue on the playing field. It is also a problem on footpaths, etc. Is CCTV an option with the redevelopment of the village hall? It should be noted that dog fouling is a civil offence so people need to be challenged and reported by anyone who witnesses it.

Q. There is also a problem on the Blacon Farm track near the school. Is it people from outside the village?

A. -

Q. On the Parish Council website the link to WDC planning is not working.

A. Clerk to look into this.

Q. Is there a plan for gypsy and traveller sites?

A. WDC Cllr Rhead advised that this is a delicate matter, but that WDC is in early talks with a landowner for a transit site.

Q. Why has the Parish Council not pledged the full balance of the depot fund to the Village Hall?

A. The Parish Council decided to retain some of the depot fund for possible future eventualities. Once it's all gone, it's all gone. If we pledge all of the money now, we cannot help if the Village Hall needs a little more in the future post

construction. If we retain a little, we've got flexibility. Obviously, that policy will change if the Village Hall needs more to proceed. It is not fixed in stone.

Q. Garden waste has been dumped down New Road.

A. Disposing of garden waste on the road side is considered to be an offence, but evidence is needed in order to prosecute.

Q. The chicken houses are in a very poor condition, and there are health and safety risks with asbestos, etc. Can the owner of the buildings be made to clear the site as he was supposed to?

A. WDC Cllr Rhead will look into the matter.

Q. Putting houses on the site would solve the issue.

A. Planning applications for housing on this site have been turned down due to green belt regulations, which are hard to overcome.

Q. It's an eyesore which is already developed. Can common sense be applied?

A. It is an agricultural site, not a residential one. If planning permission for houses is granted it will be the beginning of linear development in the village which will set a precedent.

There followed more general discussion regarding what can be done with the site.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Meeting closed at 21.30 hrs.

APPENDIX 1

NORTON LINDSEY PARISH COUNCIL	
PARISH ASSEMBLY 18 APRIL 2018	
Receipts and Payments April 2017 to March 2018	
BROUGHT FORWARD	
Brought Forward: Current Account + savings	£ 11,948.70
Brought Forward: Capital Fund (depot money and sum retained for possible electoral expenses)	£ 51,894.72
TOTAL BROUGHT FORWARD	£ 63,843.42
RECEIPTS	
Precept	£ 6,750.00
WDC Concurrent Services / Council Tax Grant	£ 321.00
Bank Interest	£ 560.27
HMRC PAYE Refund	£ 72.43
TOTAL RECEIPTS	£ 7,703.70
EXPENDITURE	
<u>RUNNING COSTS</u>	
WALC Subscription	£ 121.38
Insurance	£ 303.64
Clerk's salary	£ 2,930.28
PAYE	£ 72.20
Administration costs	£ 574.30
Total NLPC Running Costs	£ 4,001.80
<u>DONATIONS / GRANTS</u>	
Village Grants *	£ 1,070.00
Defibrillator Maintenance	£ 30.00
Millennium Green Maintenance	£ 50.00
Churchyard Maintenance	£ 300.00
Church Clock Maintenance	£ 174.00
Total NLPC Donations	£ 1,624.00
<u>SPECIAL ITEMS</u>	
WDC: annual contribution towards cost of rural footpath lighting refurbishment (to be paid over 5 years)	£ 176.22
Norton Lindsey & Wolverton Cricket Club: donation towards cost of training nets	£ 3,000.00
Total Special Items	£ 3,176.22
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£ 8,802.02
Carried Forward: Current Account + savings	£ 13,290.11
Carried Forward: Capital Fund (Depot money, and sums retained for possible electoral expenses and asset register renewal)	£ 48,894.72
TOTAL CARRIED FORWARD	£ 62,745.10

*** VILLAGE GRANTS**

Norton Lindsey & Wolverton Cricket Club	£ 60.00
Norton Lindsey Village Hall	£ 500.00
Mothers & Toddlers	£ 60.00
Norton Lindsey Playground	£ 350.00
Church Room Grant	£ 100.00

APPENDIX 2

Reports from Village Organisations.

Norton Lindsey Playground

The Playground continues to be well used by children and grandchildren within our village life, and we are grateful to the support from Norton Lindsey Parish Council which helps contribute toward the insurance costs.

The Playground is completely self-financing through Friends of the Playground, donations and fundraising activities, along with annual grants from both Norton Lindsey and Wolverton Parish Councils.

We value the ongoing support from our safety inspectors who undertake a weekly inspection, and the grass cutting crew who keep the playground looking great and tidy.

Last year, for the first time in 9 years, we sadly experienced vandalism on a piece of equipment which had to be removed and will be replaced.

We need, and would like to welcome, new members to join the safety inspection and grass cutting crews - the more the merrier, it all helps to lighten the load.

We are also seeking fresh blood, ideally who enjoy the benefits of the playground, to take over the Safety Co-ordination and Chair role. Please do contact Jane Cryer for more details.

Cricket Club

2017 has been a significant year for Norton Lindsey & Wolverton Cricket Club. In the previous year the Club made the decision to set up a third team playing in the Cotswold Hills League on Saturdays. This was to provide a stepping stone into adult cricket for the growing number of Junior players and to allow some of the more senior players to continue to play competitive cricket at a standard that suited their age. With the kind permission of Snitterfield Cricket Club we secured the use of an extra ground to host the extra fixtures and completed the season without the need to field less than a full team.

The other significant milestone was the installation of the new outdoor all-weather practice nets. We were originally daunted by the estimated £33,000 cost, but with the help of a £17,000 grant from Warwick District Council's Rural Initiative Fund, £3,000 from the Parish Council Depot Fund and £2000 from the Heart of England Community Fund we achieved our target with £11000 of the Club's own savings. This was only possible with the profit we made on the bar while the New Inn was closed. As they say, it's an ill wind

The downside of this expenditure is that the barrel is now empty! It costs between £8-10,000 a year to run the Club and only half of this is covered by members playing subscriptions – the rest has to be raised from any other resources we can think of.

Our Junior section continues to flourish with some 60 participants in 2017. This puts a strain on our own coaching resources, so we have decided to employ professional Level 2 England and Wales Cricket Board coaches in 2018 alongside our own members to ensure we give the best possible help to aspiring cricketers. We have also recognized the need to provide more competitive cricket to the older Juniors and so we have entered an under 13s team in the Cotswold Hills Junior Leagues. They will play home and away on Sunday mornings – so bang goes another lie in for Junior parents!

On the playing front the 1st XI came very near to winning the Cotswold Hills League Premier division – finishing a very credible equal runners-up. Meanwhile, the 2nd XI, although finishing third in the third division, have been promoted to the second division as a result of a re-shuffle of the league divisions.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to mention on behalf of our volunteer, unpaid, ground staff the continuing issue of dog fouling on the Playing Field. We now seem to attract every dog walker within a wide radius of the village and as soon as there is

no-one on-site, the dog mess reappears, especially in winter when the grass is longer and the days are darker and people think they can get away with it!

Norton Lindsey Stilton Sniffers

Somehow, I seem to have grown too many hats and I now find myself as Chairman of the Stilton Sniffers. What have I done to deserve all this?

My predecessor, Colin Wilcox is a difficult act to follow! Debonair, charming, witty, handsome and very popular – what chance have I got!

But during his two-year tenure, the Sniffers raised some £13,000 for local charities. Principal beneficiaries were the Stratford Hospice and the Welcombe Hills School, but we also donated amongst others to the Village Hall Rebuilding fund, Warwickshire Young Carers and ILEAP. The funds were raised from the Golf Day at Stratford Golf Club, a Sixties Night and Blues Brothers supper dances in the village hall, the Carol Night in the pub and perhaps the highlight, which was the Barn Dance at Littleworth Farm. Our thanks to the Mann Brothers for the loan of their facilities. We should never take for granted or forget the amount of voluntary contribution the Mann brothers make to the village with their labour, machinery and goodwill.

The Sniffers are now 22 villagers, whose ethos is to 'have a bit of fun, while doing a bit of good'. It is not an exclusive club – we meet on the last Sunday morning on 10 months of the year to plan our events and have a light-hearted chat over a few glasses of port. We invite men (sorry ladies – although we do rely on you and love you lots!) to join if they are regular users of the New Inn and are available to help put on events and sell tickets for them. We have no rules and no constitution and at times may be politically incorrect, but then that is not difficult these days.

Our next event is this Saturday when we have two female vocalists performing with a fish and chip supper and cheesecake dessert between sessions. This is in aid of a local prostate cancer charity. We could squeeze in any last minute takers and a coach leaves the Village Hall and the New Inn to ensure the bar profits are acceptable. Of course, like other village organisations and clubs we have had to decamp to an alternative venue – in this case Snitterfield Village Hall – and are considering whether we should incorporate Nomads into our name!

It is a difficult time to be at the head of the Sniffers. There is a clear reluctance to attend events not held in our own village hall and for that reason I would urge you all to support the fund raising and get this new hall built!

Finally, a vote of thanks to all the villagers who have supported our events in the past and who hopefully will in the future. We are confident we put on good quality food and entertainment in a local venue at a bargain price.

Norton Lindsey Community Pub

After the excitement of acquisition and refurbishment, the New Inn re-opened a year ago. The easy part was buying it; running the pub is proving more difficult. Over the past year there have been highs and lows, and it has been a year of learning for the committee.

There have been disappointments, which include: the appointment of the initial manager who didn't meet expectations and which lead to difficult start; the café hasn't worked and has been postponed; and there have been delays with the WDC grant for the shop even though planning permission has been granted subject to an archeological survey, bat report, etc.

On the positive side, we now have a lovely, welcoming pub; a manager and chef both of whom are doing a good job; good staff; a rating of 5 for food hygiene; an excellent real ale offering and a substantial gin bar.

Events and activities at the New Inn include themed food nights, open mic nights, quizzes, and the very successful Beer Fest. Getting the pub back was the first job, now we have to develop it as a Community Hub. The Annual Members' meeting takes place next month, a bridge night has been organised, there is a Classic Car and Motorbike show on the May Day bank holiday weekend and a Nurturing Nature event for children on the same weekend, followed by a Dawn Chorus Walk on the bank holiday Monday.

The next big thing is the shop which we hope to have in place before end of the year. This will hopefully bring more people into pub, and vice versa.

It has been a massive learning experience, but we are pleased to have the Pub there doing well with a good start made to the Community Hub part. Please join us on the journey.

Village Hall

There have been ups and downs with the Village Hall over the past year. We had to close the Hall. Over the bad winter there have been leaks in kitchen and ladies toilet which demonstrates that the structure is well past its sell by date. The Committee is passionate but needs community support: we have words and encouragement, but realistically we need money.

Thanks must go to WDC Cllr Rhead. We have been awarded a conditional grant of £85k from WDC, which has a significant impact because it gets us beyond the 50% mark. External granters like to see evidence that we are supporting ourselves before they will consider issuing grants. We have now gone back to the external granters and are waiting to hear if we have been successful. We have applied for 10 grants in total and heard back from 4 of these – 3 have said “no”, and 1 has given a small grant. We are hopeful that some of others will come back favourably. We have village pledges of just over £80k, and are trying to reach £100k, if not exceed it. There is still a long way to go but the WDC grant is significant.

The Committee are reasonably confident that delivery of a new Hall will happen. There is a contractor in place, and work has started on installing an electrical cabinet at the Hall, which is an essential part of demolishing the old Hall in preparation for building the new one. In addition, WDC have offered help with applying for external grants.