

Newnham on Severn Parish Council

Notes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 19th APRIL 2016 at 7pm in the W.I. Hut, Newnham on Severn – Page 1

Notes from the Parish meeting of 16TH April 2015

The notes of the previous meeting were circulated.

To receive the report of the Chairman

Cllr Walker welcomed those present to the meeting. Considerable change have occurred since the last annual parish meeting.

2015 was an ordinary election year, however, as the only nominations received were for the incumbent 8 councillors they were re-elected unopposed. Since then Cllrs O'Leary and Weeden have joined as co-opted members. 2015/16 saw a high degree of investment in the village and the budget is set to continue this during the coming year.

At the green, completed tree works have opened up the area and associated views. Further tree works are planned. Discussions with the Environmental Trust were positive with respect to grant support for widening the pathways to allow disabled access, repairs to the bridge and the installation of story boards giving details of the ancient fort works that form the heart of the green. Even with their support an investment by the PC will be needed. Preliminary talks with English Heritage regarding permission for this work have also been conducted.

Station Road has seen a number of changes the biggest being the new access gate located where children used to climb the wall. This was installed to a high standard by Stonescapes. S106 funds from Sheens meadow was used for this project. Highways have complimented this work with safety works on the opposite side of the road at the entrance from Dark Orchard, planned to reduce the risk of injury to children exiting on to the roadway.

In the chains work to the resurface the war memorial has been completed and new Daffodil bulbs planted throughout the chains. Support from a willing band of volunteers to weed and feed them has resulted in a very pleasing display this spring.

The Cliff has also had a small makeover by the clearance of the undergrowth along the pathway from the fish Hut to the Silver Fox. Further works are planned in the coming months to replace/repair the bridges over the culverts along the river path.

Both the grass contract and trading rights (at the cliff) were up for re-negotiation for 2016 to 2019. Our previous contractor (Complete Gardeners) were unsuccessful and the new contractor (Centigen) a subsidiary of Two Rivers have been awarded the contract. Mr & Mrs Murrell having decided to retire and Mr Paul Reilly successfully bid for the trading rights. Council wish him and Centigen success in the coming years. Certainly the start made by Centigen on first cuts has been very encouraging.

In an effort to improve communications and openness by council 4 newsletters have been published this year, which along with a new web site, due to go live in the coming weeks will greatly improve the information available to the parishioners.

Highways issues have also been addressed and general feedback relating to the zebra crossing upgrades shows the work has been well received. The project was funded by equal contributions from Highways, Glos County and the PC. County Councillor Leppington was thanked for his considerable efforts in enabling this project to come to fruition. The Bus Stop has now been moved from just below the crossing to Unlawater Lane has been completed.

Anti social behavior remains somewhat of a problem due to dog fouling on the playing field. Signs have been erected in an attempt to change behavior. CCTV has been installed

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overlooking the playing park. Since installation the disturbance in east & West View has greatly reduced. Although on loan only it is hoped the camera can be retained in position for some time.

Further challenges for the coming year are related to the identification and acquisition of additional burial ground, parking improvements and general preventative maintenance activity.

To receive the Financial report of the Council for Year ending 31st March 2016.

- The Clerk circulated a financial report for the full year along with the Outlooks for 2016/17. The Council's finances are in good order with over £39K being available capital as of the 31st March 2016 although 1£12K of this is reserved for specific projects. The Outlook for 31st March 2017 is an available reserve of £20K after accounting for ring fenced monies for future elections/clock maintenance and the £10K set aside for the burial ground acquisition. Expenditure for the coming year is set to run approximately £5000 greater than income which will be absorbed from within reserves that remain in line with guidelines for a parish of this size.

To receive County Council and District Council reports.

County Councillor report – **Resources at County** level are still under severe pressure with less money coming from Central Government. By 2020 the central government allocation will have been phased out and the County will need to be self sufficient. County is still committed to maintaining services to Adult social care and vulnerable children. The increase in the elderly population although clearly pleasing to see also adds to the pressure. This inevitably leads to pressure in other areas where savings have to be made. **The lengthsman** scheme has been successful and will continue in the coming year this should help with minor projects required in Parishes. **The Zebra crossing** project as outlined by Cllr Walker is complete and successful.

Forest Road safety group – This group has been reformed and meet on a regular basis. The recent fatality at Mile End emphasises the need for continued efforts in this area. Efforts are being made to reduce the speed limit across the forest to 50 miles an hour. It appears illogical that major routes such as the A48 are subject to restrictions but the Forest roads, are not.

Cllr Leppington concluded that he was looking forward to working with the PC in the coming year and complimented them on being very proactive in their approach to the villages needs.

There were several questions. **Library funding** which expires in two years time is uncertain unless the County continue to do so. He committed to investigating this and reporting back to the PC. **Encouragement for new businesses** to move into the Forest were being addressed by efforts to improve the infrastructure such as mobile phone signal consistency. Tapered rates to assist start up may also be viable. Staff reductions at Shire Hall have already seen significant change with the headcount reducing from 5.5 k to just over 3K. This does not however mean that all staff left are productive. This is a difficult subject to deal with but further efforts will be made.

On conclusion of his report Cllr Walker thanked Cllr Leppington for his efforts during the previous year particularly relating to the crossing improvements.

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District Councillor report - Cllr Boyles advised that as at County, **District Council finances** are under pressure but medium terms targets were being met. The 2020 strategic partnership plans are going ahead. FoDDC need to save over £164 this year and £2.8M over the next 4 years, no small challenge. Outlooks for the central government support grant currently at £1.8M this year will reduce to no more than £30K by 2020, driving a need for self-sufficiency. **The cabinet is supporting local growth and jobs.** The Northern quarter being one such example. Progress has been delayed and the funding obtained by the college was lost due to it being time related. They are now waiting for the 2016/17 budgets to be issued so they can restate their case for financial support. The Cinderford industrial units are fully occupied and deliver over £240k in revenue per year. Further expansion is planned to make more units available. **Cardboard and plastic recycling** at the roadside is due to start up later this year. Further info will be available as we approach its introduction. The tour of Britain has been confirmed as coming through the forest this year. This is a good tourism enabler, tourism is a key area of growth for the local economy. **Cinderford swimming pool** negotiations to ensure the pool remains open until August to allow further negotiations to take place. Stroud College who own the facility are under financial pressure as are all areas and do not feel able to contribute the £87 pa they currently do. For the district council to take on the whole running costs would result in a substantial rate increase. **Free roaming sheep** are continuing to be a nuisance particularly in Bream where one specific badger causes most of the problems. Imposition of a "Public space protection order" is being planned using Bream as a test case. If successful it will be rolled out into other affected areas. **Syrian refugees** 10 families will be settled in the Forest of the next 5 years. They will be selected for those in camps rather than migrants. The financial responsibility will be met from central government funds. In conclusion he thanked the PC for their support during his first year in office.

Cllr Phelps offered his support to Cllr Boyles update which covered pretty much everything he would have spoken about. As chairman of the Environmental scrutiny sub committee he was active in plans to improve **wild life awareness** and a strategy on how animals are dealt with after accidents on the roads. The previously mentioned initiative for **speed restrictions** in the forest (already addressed) were a major objective for the coming year. Cllr Walker thanked both district councillors for the support during the year. Parishioner feedback felt that the PC meetings they had attended were much improved and the maintenance efforts in the village clear to see. **Clean up activities** the WI efforts to conduct clean up activities were recognised as being successful and Cllr Weeden asked for any ideas for further clean up projects to be passed to him. His early enquiries with people had led to minimal support. The wall area on the A48 next to the church was raised as in need of attention and it was confirmed as being covered by Highways when the road is closed.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.10