
PUXTON CIVIL PARISH - 2017 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Hewish & Puxton Village Hall - Thursday 4th May 2017 At 8.00 pm

Chair of the Meeting: Sue Popperwell, Chair of Puxton Parish Council - **Minute Taker:** Don Hill
Attendees: 13 parishioners, plus NSC Ward Cllr Tom Leimdorfer and Village Agent Bill Wallace

MINUTES

73/17 Apologies

Cllrs Katy Wilson & Amanda Edwards. Christine Richardson, Village Hall Chair. Margaret Breese, WI President.

74/17 Matters arising from minutes of last year's meeting

These minutes were circulated to and approved by attendees of that meeting. Matters moved forward from the meeting - Hewish & Puxton Community Fund, SpeedWatch and Broadband - were taken up by the Parish Council and updated via their minutes and the Puxton & Hewish Community News.

75/17 Reports from Interest Groups

Reports were received from The Parish Council, North Somerset Council, Hewish & Puxton Village Hall Committee and the Village Agent and are attached to form a part of these minutes.

76/17 Open Discussion

Litter Picking: The idea of a repeat later pick was raised. Sue Popperwell reminded everyone that the successful litter pick involving McDonald's staff was not supported by residents - not even the organiser of the pick - and McDonald's were understandably not minded to become involved in another one on that basis. Don Hill noted that there was an NSC pack and equipment available to support volunteers through the process of organising litter picks but that the complexity of checks re CRB/HSE/Insurance etc etc tended to put many volunteers off. As Cllr Leimdorfer pointed out, however, if there is a local determination to proceed with a volunteer litter pick, it can happen. Cllr Popperwell noted that the litter problem should be mitigated to some degree by the work of Parish Maintenance carried out by Adrian Leonard and his team.

Dog Fouling: Concern was raised that a case of dog fouling and apparent ill-treatment had been reported to NSC and to the RSPCA with no result. Cllr Leimdorfer explained that the NSC Dog Warden scheme no longer operated, but that a new Dog Control Order will become effective from October 1st next and that this will give NSC officers significantly stronger powers to intervene in such cases.

Broadband: There remains some confusion as to which properties do or do not have access to fast broadband. The difference in cost between the existing - inadequate - service and fast broadband, for someone only wanting very simple access to the service was suggested as being rather prohibitive. Cllr Popperwell pointed out that we are still awaiting news of plans to provide the whole Parish with access to fast broadband.

A 370: As an A370 resident said 'it is what it is'. One keeps the pathways clear and a watchful eye on speeding enforcement. Central islands, or other crossing points are unlikely to be achieved. These points were registered, but discussion on this topic - which arises at virtually every Parish Council meeting for one reason or another - was not developed.

The Village Hall: The public fund raising meeting on May 9th will be critical in providing evidence of the local support that will prove essential approaching outside agencies for grants or loans. That support may be in the form of donations, loans or fund-raising activities. Cllr Peter Penfold hoped that the regular users of the Hall were prepared to become involved and was assured that they were. Whilst any funding - loan, share or grant - via the Hewish & Puxton Community Fund would be able to kick-start the fund raising process, there would still be a lot of money to be raised in a relatively short time. The Hall Committee are aware that this needs to be the work of a volunteer fund-raising committee with specific talents for this work.

77/17 No other topics were raised, and, after the Chair thanking everyone for their attendance, the meeting closed at 9.00pm.

Puxton Parish Council Chair's Report - Cllr Sue Popperwell

Good evening. It is my pleasure to give the Chair's Report for the year 2016-17. This year has seen the number of Councillors increase from 4 to 6, with the welcome addition of Cllrs Jim Sulley and Jim Corbett. Sadly, Cllr Sulley has had to resign his position as of the end of this meeting, as he is moving away from the Parish. As of today, however, we are happy to welcome Cllr Clayton Penfold to our team - which still means we have a vacancy for a 7th Councillor. This year has been one focused primarily on consolidating and maintaining the Parish.

The solar farm has been installed and the community fund monies received amount to a total of £41,172.25. Broadband speeds are a challenging and ongoing issue for the parish which will continue to be investigated over the coming year. We have employed the services of a Village Keeper, to date this has resulted in a new notice board erected on Puxton village green, the renovation of seats in the parish and the restoration of the finger signpost on the triangle in Puxton. Oldbridge River Bridge has been repaired by NSC after a considerable time. The village map has been returned to the parish and is currently awaiting repair. Parishioners have been involved in the upkeep and maintenance of the planters at either end of Hewish and we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks for their time and commitment. We learnt this year that the village hall, built by the community for the use of parishioners, groups and individuals willing to hire it, will face an uphill struggle for its survival. The village hall is currently held on a leasehold basis which is due to expire in two years' time. The landlord will be selling his freehold. In order to have a chance of securing the village hall for generations to come the village hall committee need to raise £100,000 for the freehold. As a parish council it is a matter of concern and one the parish council will actively give our support to. We would urge parishioners and users to attend the forthcoming meeting on 9 May to discuss the future of the village hall. We are delighted by the increasing attendance of parishioners at the parish council meeting where we hope you have been made welcome and your concerns addressed. The parish council would like to thank our clerk Don Hill for all the hard work he puts in on behalf of the council. The parish newsletter which has received praise and much attention is the product of many hours in front of the computer for Don, gathering information the parish council believe is of interest to parishioners. We would urge parishioners to contribute to the newsletter with items of interest to enable the newsletter to truly reflect all members of the community and flourish.

... Moving on to Finance...

The year 2016-17 proved less expensive than anticipated. This was due in part to the move from expensive temporary Clerks to the employment of a permanent Clerk and partly due to paying for the refurbishment of existing street furniture rather than replacing it with new. The Community received some £41,000 from the Wick Lane Solar Farm, which has been ring-fenced in an account separate from - although controlled by - the Parish Council. This sum has been deemed money for the Community and specific Community Projects, rather than being part of the general pot of Parish Council money. Because of changes that are emerging in the possible future responsibilities of Parish Councils and the way those responsibilities - the Village Maintenance budget, for example, will be funded, the Parish Council agreed - at its January budget meeting - that the accounts be re-cast to ensure that provisions have been made for election expenses and future capital expenses. This will give us a clearer picture of what funds are available to spend on the day-to-day expense commitments as set out in the budget each January and a better focus on what precept will be needed to cover that budget.

North Somerset Council Report - Ward Councillor Tom Leimdorfer

North Somerset Council has made a range of decisions with implications for years to come. Many of these were in response to government initiatives and/or financial pressures.

West of England Combined Authority (WECA) – North Somerset decided not to join and hence the devolved powers (transport, housing, training & skills) and the funding will not apply to North Somerset. However, North Somerset will be represented on a 'Joint Committee' with the WECA to progress matters relating to the Joint Spatial Plan, the City Region Deal and other 'legacy functions'.

Core Strategy, Development Management Policies, Site Allocation Plan – these key planning policies have been adopted in the course of the year and are subject to examination by government Inspector this month before they can have full force. Meanwhile, during the past year there have been several high profile planning appeal Public Inquiries relating to applications in Banwell, Backwell, Bleadon, Congresbury, Oldmixon/Hutton, Weston. Some appeals were dismissed, some allowed and a couple are still awaiting Inspector's judgement.

West of England Joint Spatial Plan (for the next 20 years) -- consultations have taken place on the initial plans which include the possibility of 5,400 'garden village' type settlement on the moors between Banwell, Sandford and Churchill/Langford with a by-pass and a new motorway junction (21A). The alternative of building around the new South Bristol Link Road is currently opposed by the Executive.

Community Access Review is in progress to reduce the cost of providing Library and Children's Centre services. During Phase 1, libraries and children's centres are being combined in Worle and Yatton, while the Congresbury Library is being handed over to the Parish Council to be run entirely by volunteers from 1st July. Yatton Library is having major refurbishment and is closed for the summer.

Social Care costs for elderly & disabled adults and vulnerable children has been rising and the Council is facing a large overspend. The 3% Social Care Levy is part of the 4.75% rise in Council Tax, but fails to cover the rising costs. The recent promise of extra funding from government will help to avert the immediate crisis. **Home care** services have been re-commissioned. The initial contract for Worle failed and new providers took over, which improved matters. Three providers will cover the whole district for commissioned domiciliary care services: Brunelcare (Clevedon & Portishead); Alliance (Weston), and Notaro (Worle, Nailsea, Yatton and Rural Areas). The Council will have no staff employed in providing direct home care.

Education Support Grant will be withdrawn from local authorities. North Somerset has not set up arrangements with schools in preparation. It has been decided that statutory and non-statutory school support will be commissioned from Somerset County Council (albeit with some locally based staff). All North Somerset schools are in the process of joining Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) and many have done so already. The outcome of this process is uncertain and feelings are mixed.

Health Overview & Scrutiny panel has been much involved with looking at the NHS **Sustainability & Transformation Plan** (STP) for the area which includes Bristol, South Gloucestershire as well as North Somerset. The three Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) have merged for this purpose. Details of STP proposals are not yet clear, but there has been a public engagement relating to future provision and potential changes at Weston General Hospital. This relates mainly to overnight A&E staffing, no highly specialised operations requiring Intensive Care but more routine and planned operation which require only High Dependency care. The shortage of GPs, particularly in the Weston Area has become a concern.

Weston Town Centre Regeneration plans have progressed with plans for new housing on the current Locking Road car park. Weston College University Centre is due to be opened at the Winter Gardens. The adjoining Town Square and Italian Gardens are undergoing redesign and refurbishment. Much of the finance is from external funding streams.

Puxton Parish matters mainly related to road conditions. The Flood Defence works generated problems for residents of Wick Lane for a period of time well in excess of what was anticipated and the subsequent repairs to the road surface fell far short of what we had hoped. We are told that more permanent repair work is in the schedule of forthcoming highways improvements. The construction works at Stonebridge Farm, Hewish generated issues including the amount of mud on the A370, the volume of HGV traffic bringing landfill materials and damage to the surrounding area. The Council's Enforcement team were notified. Speeding on sections of the A370 is an ongoing problem and the police are aware.

It was noted that this was the first day of Cllr Leimdorfer's 15th year as Ward Cllr for Congresbury and of his 3rd year as Ward Cllr for Puxton. This achievement was applauded by the meeting, supported by a voluble and genuine murmuring of thanks.

Hewish & Puxton Village Hall Report - C Richardson, Chair (Read by Minute Taker)
(AGM's have historically been held in November, this report covers November 2016 to date)

Since taking over in November the new committee has been trying to make the necessary improvements to bring the hall up to a standard that complies with fire regulations, health and safety requirements and improve the hall for all users. In order to comply with regulations it was necessary to make changes to the configurations of some of the fire exit doors, add push bars to some exit doors and closures to others. Improvements have been made to the emergency lighting and a suitable regime for testing the electrical installation and fire fighting equipment has been put in place. Unfortunately these have involved some considerable expenditure. However, all these changes were necessary for us to be in a position to continue hiring the hall legally.

Unfortunately the leaks in the side extension brought the ceiling down in the committee room. On inspection, it proved that another repair was only putting sticking plaster over a terminal wound. We therefore had no choice but to replace the whole roof on the side extension. In addition to this repair the leak in the ladies toilet, which appears to have been there for a long time and has also caused damage to the floor and partition wall was repaired. Work to the floor and wall will be undertaken at a later date. Finally we have installed an external control for the boiler so that casual hirers can turn on the heating for an hour at a time, saving the requirement to keep changing the boiler controls.

As said, these improvements have been costly. Fortunately the hall had reserves which have paid for this work and as long as there are no disasters there should not be further significant expenditure in the foreseeable future. However, due to the sterling work of Pauline Pearce, our booking secretary, we have seen an increase of casual bookings. We hope this continues throughout the year, which will enable us to put funds aside for the future.

I would like to thank my fellow committee members, in particular Don and Pauline. I think there was more to do than any of us expected but they have all worked hard to try and improve the hall and the service we want to provide to all our hirers.

The Hall is held on a leasehold basis and the lease has just two years left to run. The Landlord is minded to sell his freehold rather than to offer a new lease. Local estate agent David Plaister gave us time, free, to conduct an initial approach via the Landlord's agent. The Committee needs to develop a purchase proposal with the expectation of needing to pay £100000 for the freehold (against an initial asking price of £150000). This will be the most significant task facing the Committee, and it begins in earnest with a public meeting here, in the Hall, next Tuesday 9th May at 8pm. The very future of this Hall is in the hands of this Community of Puxton and Hewish.

The Village Agent - Bill Wallace

Village Agents offer people over 50 help in accessing information and advice so that they can make informed decisions about their present and future life. Each agent serves a group of Parishes, Bill has five, including Puxton. Village Agents are trusted, local and independent contacts who can offer a face-to-face one-stop service, and who understand the particular needs and concerns of a rural community. The service is free, confidential and covers a huge array of concerns such as Transport, Finance, Benefits, Mobility, Carers, Fire Safety, Befriending, Social Isolation, Unwanted Callers & Scams and Volunteering. This national service is run, in the West of England Area (the old Avon), under the auspices of West of England Rural Network (WERN). In North Somerset it is administered as part of North Somerset Council's Community Connect service. Telephone 01275 888 803, or visit [village agents@wern.org.uk](mailto:agents@wern.org.uk) for more information. Cllr Popperwell thanked Bill warmly for this introduction to his work - work that was new to most of those present and that was offering a patently useful service.