
PUXTON CIVIL PARISH - 2019 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Hewish & Puxton Village Hall - Thursday 9th May 2019 At 8.00 pm

Chair: Jim Corbett, Chair of Puxton Parish Council **Minute Taker:** Don Hill **Attendees:** 5

MINUTES

069/19 Apologies: Sue Popperwell, Tom Leimdorfer, Lisa Dadds, Christine Richardson

070/19 Matters arising from minutes of last year's meeting: The minutes were circulated meeting attendees, and signed as a true record in June 2018. Colin Barker, whilst not being at the 2018 meeting, pointed to the Village Hall Report as providing an inaccurate reflection of the inherited position reported by the incoming Hall Committee when they took over in November 2016. He felt that this deserved an apology that needed public placement. Whilst not within the remit of the present meeting to pursue - that will need to be done directly with the Hall's current management, attendees noted his complaint. However, it was agreed that bringing the matter forward within this forum would give additional exposure to these concerns. *(Visits to the minutes page of hewishandpuxtonvillagehall.org.uk and puxtonparishcouncil.org.uk minutes page of April 2018 and May 2018 (wrongly posted as 5th April), from which internal staff protocols and correspondence progressed) will provide the background to the issue).*

071/19 Reports from Interest Groups: were received from The Parish Council, North Somerset Council, St Anne's Church Academy and Hewish & Puxton Village Hall. Copies of the reports were with the attendees, deemed as read, and are attached to form a part of these minutes.

072/19 Open Discussion: Colin Barker referenced his concerns at minute 070/19 above and mentioned various outside agencies he proposed consulting to establish the efficacy or otherwise of the the Hall management's operations and reporting. He also raised concerns about the external lighting: although North Somerset Council and the police apparently have no issues with the lighting, he felt it was too bright and too directly impinging upon his property. Some attendees went out to look at the lights and others asked questions relating to directly facing windows and the degree of consultation the Hall management had undertaken. Don Hill, member of Hall management, assured the meeting that the issue was being reviewed as a result of concerns already raised with Hall management. Colin was also concerned that the Hall appeared to be hired to groups, virtually all of whom come from outside the Parish *(the hall accounts on its website referenced at minute 070/19 above refer to the annual amounts of income per type of use)*. Lynda Redding noted that her parents were closely involved with the fundraising, building and management of the Hall when it was first established and, at that time, the family did not live in the Parish but in what the Charity Commission refer to as 'the area of benefit': she also reported that the recent party held to celebrate the purchase of the Hall freehold was attended by some 70 people from in and around the Parish and represented a successful and happy reminder of the sort of community event that used to be held in the past and that could be held more often in the future.

073/19 There being no other topics raised for discussion, the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance, and the meeting closed at 8.50pm.

REPORTS

PUXTON PARISH COUNCIL - SUE POPPERWELL, RETIRING CHAIR

Please accept my apologies for being unable to be present to deliver this report personally.

Councillors: We are entitled to have a maximum of seven Councillors. During the past year we have had six. I did not present myself for re-election for the next four year term of the Council, but Cllrs Jim Corbett, Jim Howard, Peter Penfold, Clayton Penfold and Lynda Redding did. As no other candidates came forward, these five were duly elected to serve for the next four years via an uncontested election. At the Annual Meeting of the Council held this evening Cllr **Jim Corbett** was elected as Chair of the Council, and Cllr **Lynda Redding** as the Vice Chair. There are two vacancies, which we are able to fill by coopting members at any time. Do please contact one of the existing Councillors, or the Parish Clerk, if you would like to find out more about the role, or put yourself forward for selection.

Policing: As mentioned last year, we no longer have police attendance at meetings, but they remain willingly available if we need to contact them and they perform periodic speed checks along the A370 as part of the motor cycle team activity. Sadly, all efforts to start a Community SpeedWatch team over the past years have fallen, through a lack of volunteers.

Parish Maintenance: As last year, we had the services of a parish maintenance company for eight months of the year to keep signs clean, keep the bridge repaired, litter pick and cut greens and lay-bys etc. We would ideally like to employ them every month, but current budgets have not allowed that. Health and safety issues have tended to inhibit 'official' litter picking activity, although Wick Lane is unofficially 'picked' on a fairly regular basis by concerned local residents. Under a grant available via North Somerset Council we have been able to order some litter picking kits and, if we can get volunteers to come forward to use them, we will be able to make a difference to the visual amenity of the Parish. **Gully clearance**, pothole repair and hedge flailing are some of the regular matters we work closely with our North Somerset Council area Officer on. We know residents experience considerable frustration over the time it takes to 'get things done', and that some of the work seems to be of a temporary rather than a permanent nature. Sadly, this is a harsh reality of the budgets available and the spending priorities North Somerset Council officers have been constrained by. We are awaiting a date for a new **Oldbridge River bridge** - already designed - to be built. Sadly our existing, attractively rural, bridge is no longer considered fit for purpose and highway regulations demand that it be replaced by a more robust structure.

Puxton Road Speed Limit: The Council re-visited this topic again a few months ago and decided that, despite the £8000 cost of introducing a 30mph speed limit along Puxton Road, we will continue to press for one, as planned building developments in the surrounding areas can only increase the pressure of vehicles - many speeding - along that road.

A370 Safety: Notwithstanding the budgetary pressures North Somerset Council are experiencing, it is alarming and entirely unsatisfactory that issues of pedestrian safety on such busy residential roads as the section of the A370 between Junction 21 and Congresbury seem to be subservient to other spending priorities. With much of the path virtually impassable, we continue to fight for its proper maintenance. The excuses for the work not being done are legion, but essentially, officers have simply not been provided with the funds needed to do the work. Other than assessing the scale of the job via clearance of test patches, absolutely nothing has happened - except an ongoing and significant worsening of the path as a usable asset. We are currently waiting to hear if, based on 50% of the cost being borne by the Parish Council, we can get a central reservation installed in the area of the bus stops between Wick Lane and the Full Quart.

Broadband: Despite its organisational problems, Gigaclear continues to lay underground cabling in the lanes around us. We also have Truespeed offering a fibre-to-the-home service via cables carried on Power and telephone poles. Neither service is likely to be operational during the course of this year. Truespeed will be able to proceed quickly once they get enough registrations of interest - they need some 30% of an area's homes to register before they commit to service provision.

Finance: We have had a successful internal audit. As predicted last year, we are having to undergo an external audit again this year, as the movement of £40,000 from the Community Fund to the Village Hall has pushed our income/expenditure above the £25000 threshold below which an external audit is not needed. There is a small cash balance in the Community fund, which should cover the legal costs attaching to the £40,000 passed to the Village Hall towards their purchase of the Hall freehold. This £40,000 sits on the Community Fund account as an asset in the form of a first charge in the unlikely event that the Hall should cease to operate. The St Anne's car park freehold came to the Parish as a Section 106 arrangement; it has been controlled via a lease from the Parish to North Somerset Council, but during the past year that lease has passed to the Priory Learning Trust, which now runs the school. Although the car park's asset value, in the event of the school's closure, would obviously be considerable, because of its route to us via the S106 system, it stands on the Council's Asset Register in the sum of £1.

On a personal note, I would like to pay a huge debt of thanks to the all those current and past Councillors who have been in office in the course of the past four years. They have held the team together during a perhaps less easy period in its history. I would also like to thank the Clerk, who has been a great support to me during my past three years as Chair of the Council, as well as to the other Members.

NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL - TOM LEIMDORFER, RETIRING WARD COUNCILLOR

My apologies for not being able to attend Puxton's Annual Parish Meeting. It has been a privilege to represent the parish for the past four years. I indicated in my report last year my intention not to seek re-election after 16 years on North Somerset Council since I was first elected to represent Congresbury in 2003.

The first paragraph on my report last year can be repeated this year: **North Somerset Council** decisions in recent years were mainly in response to increasing budget pressures. The recent rise in **Council Tax** will have been an unpleasant surprise to residents struggling with rising costs. The poorest experienced the largest percentage increase, widening inequality in our district. At the same time, the Council's overall funding is reducing, resulting in **cuts in services for both vulnerable adults and children**. Cross-party representations by the Local Government Association have been ignored by government.

Local Plan 2036 'Issues & Options': This was published in September for a three month consultation period. It is linked to the *West of England Joint Spatial Plan* which is subject to a long public inquiry from July to October this year. The main impact on Puxton relates to the proposals for a 'new Banwell' garden village of 1900 dwellings south of Puxton.

Weston General Hospital: The Clinical Commissioning Group proposes that Weston Hospital A&E should be open with consultant led medical urgent and emergency care from 8.00 am to 10 pm, supported by overnight GP out of hours service 24/7 with the possibility of direct admission to the hospital. The 'critical care' service will be downgraded from 'level 3' (intensive care) to 'level 2 (high dependency) which will result in complex surgery cases moving to other hospitals. These proposals are opposed by North Somerset Council and consultation is still ongoing. Some aspects of the proposal are supported such as the aim to perform a greater volume of operations which are not highly complex.

The National Grid Hinkley C Connection Project: is under way. The early work is in the region of the Iwood/Churchill substation. The major works in the area of Hewish will not start till late 2020, but will then affect the parish for four years.

Climate Emergency: Cllr Mike Bell and I submitted a motion to call on Council to recognise the Climate Emergency as highlighted in the IPCC report, to ask officers to report on what active steps we need to make North Somerset carbon neutral by 2030 and call on the government to provide powers and resources to make this possible. This motion was passed unanimously at the March meeting of Council.

Highways Safety Issues: Throughout my term of office, highways safety has been a major issue in both Congresbury and Puxton. In my first year as ward councillor for Puxton, we finally managed to get the much needed interactive signs to slow down traffic outside St. Anne's School. We have tried to get an uncontrolled central refuge crossing to make it safer to cross from the bus stop and the Parish Clerk has continued ongoing negotiation with the Council. Congresbury has also tried to get such a central refuge to facilitate crossing the A370 at Moorland Park. North Somerset Council's resistance to spend money on pedestrian safety matters is reprehensible and reflects a warped sense of priorities. It is hoped that this might change with the new administration following the recent elections. We also had difficulty in making progress with improving the

condition of the footway along the A370 all the way from Hewish to Congresbury. Our Area Officer has made a start on one section, but much more needs to be done. The Parish Council and my successor will wish to engage with officers and the new Executive Member on these issues as well as potential new speed limits.

As residents will be aware, the membership of North Somerset Council has changed dramatically as a result of last week's elections and a new administration will be formed. The financial pressures resulting from central government policies will be the same, but priorities are likely to change. Once the 'dust settles', it will be important for the Parish Council to engage with relevant officers, particularly over highways issues.

I wish to express my thanks to our Parish Clerk Don Hill, to your retiring Chairman Sue Popperwell and to all Parish Councillors for their help and co-operation. I wish my successor, Cllr Stuart Treadaway every success in supporting your parish.

ST ANNE'S CHURCH ACADEMY - LISA DADDS, HEADTEACHER

We have had a really exciting last year at St Anne's and we continue to flourish. In April 2018 we formally joined The Priory Learning Trust and became St Anne's Church Academy. We are already seeing the benefits in terms of working within this multi-academy trust both educationally and financially.

Our school continues to grow and we now have 343 school children across our two campuses and over 120 Nursery children registered with Little Learners. We also employ over 70 staff.

During 2018 we celebrated our 150 year anniversary and are very grateful to all of the local residents who came in and shared their memories with our children as well as those who came to visit our museum that we created. It is amazing to read the old log books and see the similarities as well as the differences over the last 150 years. I wonder what the next 150 will bring.

We have continued to make enhancements to our Hewish campus with new ramps, window art, the development of our Jill Dando news centre and much, much more. We are delighted that we now have a defibrillator on site that is able to be used within the village too should the need arise. If ever anyone wants to come in and take a look I would love to show you around as we are very proud of our school.

HEWISH & PUXTON VILLAGE HALL LTD - CHRISTINE RICHARDSON - CHAIR

We have had an exciting - if stressful - year! The formalities of setting up a limited company as the vehicle for buying the Hall's freehold and as the operating format for the new registered charity were formidable. We would certainly have been lost without the freely given professional skills of estate agent David Plaister in liaising with our Landlord and negotiating the deal, and of solicitor Nick Redding in managing the legalities and paper flows relating to the company set up, the freehold purchase, and the Community Fund contribution.

Throughout all of this stress and uncertainty, Pauline Pearce, our Bookings Secretary, has performed valiantly in maintaining our existing regular hirings and also in significantly expanding our income from casual hirers. All the time, with the most admirable tenacity and stubbornness, Lynda Redding and her fundraising team have continued to pursue funding opportunities, both to complete the purchase of the freehold - achieved during the summer of 2018, and to continue the fundraising effort so that we can, over time, update the fabric, layout and facilities of the Hall. Lynda has also committed serious time to organising surveys and design briefings to ensure that our plans for the future development of the building are solidly and sustainably founded.

Hewish and Puxton recently held an extraordinarily successful party to celebrate the achievements thus far. We hope that the atmosphere of community-endeavour, experienced then, can be fostered and expanded so that Hewish & Puxton can boast the emergence of a genuine 'Community' being energised and flourishing 21st century style.

Behind all that has happened have been our financial backers - all on record, and our Trustees, without whose commitment and determination none of this could have materialised. A huge thank you to everyone!