

Whittington Parish Council



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Minutes of The Annual Parish Meeting held on 29 April 2014 at 19.30 At Whittington Village Hall, Whittington

2014.1 Welcome.

The Chairman welcomed all guest and parishioner to the meeting

2014.2 Apologies

Apologies received from Cllr Guy, Mr D Hallmark, Mr S Cottam, Mr G Richards, PC S Woods.

2014.3 Attendance.

Cllr S Brooker, Cllr S Macleod, Cllr P Woods, Cllr M Baker
22 Parishioners and 4 guest

2014.4 Minutes of Parish Meeting Held 30th April 2013

The minutes of the Parish Meeting held on 30th April 2013 was moved by Cllr Brooker and seconded and adopted as a true record of the meeting.

2014.5 Matters arising from the Meeting held on 30th April 2013 - None

2014.6 Whittington Parish Council - Chairman's Report.

This is the 120th year of the Whittington Parish Council I wonder if a Whittington Parish Council has ever been under such pressure in respect of potential, possible and probable development as this current Parish Council is experiencing. A survey of the Parish in 2011 indicated that the majority of Parishioners clearly wished to preserve the rural identity and characteristics of the village setting. With this in mind, whilst the Parish Council is not averse to development, we wish to control development. With relaxed planning laws/regulations small communities should not be soft targets and should not be easy dumping grounds for housing quotas and where developers can make profits. Developments should maintain a rural characteristic, where greenbelts are preserved and comply with the emerging South Worcestershire development plan – which, following several delays, is due to be signed off this September I believe, and bring some benefit to the parish whether it be in the form of affordable homes, Section 106 funding and new homes bonus, a much needed community centre, extending the gas supply line to approximately half the village who are not on gas and community or recreational facilities for all.

A development of 256 homes plus a further 17 homes has been given the go ahead on the Worcester City side of the Swinesherd dual carriageway in the Parish of Whittington. This has attracted some £3.3million in Section 106 funding for community infrastructure and benefit. Of this £3.3m Whittington Parish has been awarded £50k. £287K goes towards a leisure centre in the Parish of Norton and the remainder goes to projects within Worcester City. The Council believes that this £50k awarded to Whittington is inadequate, unfair and unacceptable. In this respect the Parish Council made strong representation to Wychavon District Council. The outcome was not satisfactory but nevertheless

received an additional pledge of a further £25K. This particular development of 256 houses is to be part of Worcester City's housing allocation and not that of Wychavon. This gave rise to concern that Worcester City may be looking to extend the City boundary well into if not including the parish of Whittington. The leader of Wychavon District Council, Mr. Paul Middleborough has given us an assurance that this will NOT be the case.

Continuing with the theme of potential developments, an application is being made through Malvern Hills District Council for a development of two thousand to two thousand five hundred homes on land between Norton, Whittington Parish, St Peters and Kempsey. This will inevitably create additional pressure on the roads infrastructure which currently can hardly cope and whilst the single carriageway between the Tesco Island and the Ketch Island is being increased to dual carriageway this is hardly likely to relieve the problem unless the bridge at the Ketch is widened also – something I believe that is not going to happen.

A further development is being sought on land adjacent to the College for the Blind and two further developments are being sought, both of which are on land identified in the South Worcestershire Development Plan as NOT for development. One is outside but on the boundary of Whittington Parish, next to Swinesherd Village, a business Park with offices, car show rooms, restaurants, fast food outlets etc and the other within the Parish of Whittington on land between Swinesherd Village and Whittington Village. These are substantial developments which will inevitably change the appearance of the landscape and impact in one way or another on the rural characteristics, traffic volumes and community facilities, some of you may think for the worse, some may think for the better. It is therefore vital that if you have concerns or support for increased development you make your views known to the Parish Council either directly to a Councillor or through the Clerk.

The South Worcestershire Development Plan identified a need for 23,200 new homes. A number of respondents to the plan had disputed this figure and as a consequence the Planning Inspector wanted to explore in more detail the objective assessment of housing needs for South Worcestershire area until 2030. Discussions between South Worcestershire Councils and various consultants and developers took place with the external participants suggesting the figure of 23,200 was too low and proposed a figure in the region of 30-35000 new homes. It is my understanding that a round figure of some 9.500 of them being within Wychavon.

It is my belief, and I am not alone in this respect, that a number of developers are seeking planning permission now to pre-empt the South Worcestershire Development Plan. A number of Parish and Town Councils are beginning to say 'Enough is Enough!!

Whittington Parish Council has approximately 250 homes that through the precept brings an annual income in the region of £6800K. Additionally we constantly look for available grants for example New Homes bonus. We have cash in hand as at February of this year £28.481k of which £18K is held in a deposit bond account. Financial obligations include wages for our Clerk, the services of a Lengthsman, subscriptions, training, insurance and contributions towards the up keep of the Church yard. The Parish Council is looking towards spending money on enhancement of our surrounds, for example the two entrances to the village that are being destroyed by uncaring motorists persistently parking on the grass verges, and particularly during wet weather, destroying the grass, bulbs planted there and creating an unsightly mess. A recent purchase was the Grove Cottages sign in Narrow Walk to overcome a postal and delivery irregularity. The Parish Council will also look favourably at supporting the Village Hall Community Centre project – a priority for the village.

The Precept. Your Parish Council decided not to increase the precept but instead to keep it as per the previous year. This will in effect achieve an income of £6828 p.a. an increase of £128. Or 1.91% Due to a grant by Wychavon – of which thanks go to our County and District Councillor Rob Adams, of £383, in real terms for a Band D property the precept sees a decrease from £29.61p.a. to £29.55 or minus 0.19%.

Highways and community safety remain a concern for the Council. We have recently established that Narrow Walk, as previously thought is not a 'private' road but is in fact maintained at public expense,

i.e Highways. We have approached Highways in this respect. We have recently sought the support of Highways to protect the grass verges of both entrances to the village. The flooding near the Severn Trent pumping station close to the village hall remains high on our agenda and we continue to press Highways to resolve this matter. Two matters that continue to blight our community, speeding particularly on the B4084 Whittington to Pershore Road and anti-social parking in Church lane and Old Road remain a matter constantly raised with the Safer Roads Partnership, Highways and the Police Safer Neighbourhood Team. Unfortunately due to cut backs and reductions the police are not prepared to prioritise the matter of parking in contravention of the Access order and have advised us to "self-police". Highways solution, to which the Parish Council agreed, to the double yellow lines on the bend of Church Lane, has to some extent resolved some of the difficulties and improved road safety. In respect of the speeding, following a meeting with the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, a suggestion of a Community Project to enforce and educate motorists has been proposed and we wait for further details in this respect from our local safer neighbourhood policing team. We have told the local policing team that the Parish Council are prepared to fund or contribute towards funding additional signage, for example Community Concern road safety 'camera' signs. A significant feature of Whittington is the tree on the tump.

The Parish Council have applied for a Tree Preservation Order in this respect.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan. This was a Parish Council project in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and Government and District Council initiatives. We sought funding and designated status both of which we were granted. I was elected by the Parish Council as project manager and went about the task of research, training and inviting community participation and contribution. For the plan to be successful, public consultation, inclusion and participation must be evidenced followed by a successful referendum. As I progressed with the project my confidence in a successful outcome began to wane. I felt that to some extent whilst accepting that I was accountable, I was not being given the freedom to get on with the process of project managing and further seeing at first-hand how one official can over-ride a democratic planning process as in the case of Kilbury Drive/Bloor Homes Development planning application. Mindful of this, the costs involved (estimated to be in the region of £15 - £20K), not confident of a successful referendum and a great deal of my own time and expense involved I withdrew from my position as project manager. It is now up to the Parish Council to decide whether or not it continues to prepare a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Although small, we have witnessed a small increase in public attendance at Parish Council meetings but I do believe that through our developing communication strategy of Facebook, website, Susan's regular contribution to the Parish Magazine and our ever increasing bank of Email addresses, Parish matters are now receiving a wider circulation than merely the Parish notice boards at the Village Hall and opposite the Swan.

Finally, I wish to express my thanks to;

Rob Adams, our District and County Councillor who has attended virtually all of our meetings, provided significant support to the Parish Council and me personally through advice, awareness of grants, matters relating to planning, our representations in respect of the S106 funding being diverted away from Whittington and negotiations with Highways.

My fellow Parish Councillors for their support, contribution and ideas. We have had a small number of expressions of interest from Parishioners becoming Parish Councillors. We currently have one vacancy. Next year is election year and it is encouraging to think, we may well end up having elected members on the Council.

And lastly and by no means least, our Parish Clerk Carol who has been with us for a year now and who has proved to be an asset to the village and the council with her abundance of enthusiasm, guidance, ideas and especially her financial management which has already seen savings where previously not made. Cllr S Brooker, Chairman.

2014.7 Police Report. PCSO Lucy Morris- gave an brief update on policing in Whittington

2014.8 Village Charities Accounts. The Fanny Clifton and Elizabeth Stephens Charities

As reported in previous years, these village charities have been dormant for a number of years. The Elizabeth Stephens Charity dates back to 1668, and was a legacy of £50 with which three cottages were built in Swinesherd. These were liquidated in 1880 and the interest used to provide grocery parcels for the poor and needy of the parish. The Fanny Clifton Charity was founded by Miss Clifton's will in 1888. Her legacy of £900 was to be used to provide coal at Christmas for the poor of the parish.

The accounts show that no payments have been made and only a small amount of income in the form of interest has been received. Mr L Wiltshire, Trustee, 14th April 2014.

2014.9 Village Hall

The Village Hall AGM was held on 22nd April where officers were re-elected and the financial position was outlined. I am pleased to report that the hall had an excess of income over expenditure of £7672 which will be added to the Building fund. The retirement of Stan Slocome from running the Organ group and the recent suspension of the Whittington WI group will have an impact on the current financial situation. Helena Downham is also retiring and we have passed on our grateful thanks for her input over many years. With regard to new hall developments, we are in regular contact with Nick Hodgetts regarding his 'Whittington Green' scheme and we understand his conversations with the local planning authority have been very positive. We hope he will be in a position to seek formal planning permission within the near future. Should this prove successful, our plans to move the hall nearer to the Church would help to provide a multi use facility that would provide easy access for the Church users. Roger Phillips, Chairman.

2014.10 Whittington School Report.

The Whittington School Report was read out by Cllr S Brooker (Chairman WPC)

Whittington Church of England Primary School is a medium sized school with seven classes of thirty children. There are currently 209 pupils on roll in the school; we are full when we reach 210 pupils. This is the fullest the school has been in my time as head teacher. This trend of increased pupil numbers is typical for all the schools in the local area. After last year's successful Ofsted inspection our end of year results continued to rise with more children than ever achieving the best possible grades in their externally marked tests. This improvement is only possible because of the commitment of all staff to improve their subject knowledge, create a positive learning environment for all pupils, and ensure that learning is seen as positive and enjoyable activity. As well as raising academic standards we offer a varied and vibrant curriculum which is aimed at making the most of the abilities and interests of the children in the school. School trips continue to be a key feature of the curriculum. We run two residential visits each year. Year 6 visit the Malvern Outdoor Centre where they collaborate on a range of outdoor activities which build the Year 6 team. In Year 4 the children visit the Pioneer Centre at Cleobury Mortimer. Again the pupils participate in a range of activities, but this time the focus is much more on team games. As well as residential trips all classes participate in educational visits. These tend to be linked to a particular topic that the pupils are studying. This year the trips have included visits to: The Safari Park, Bishops Wood Environmental Centre, Cadbury World, the Horrible Histories play, Birmingham's Think Tank, and Worcester's Medical Museums. The arts also play an important part in the life of the school. Music is very strong across the school with the all of Key Stage 2 pupils learning a variety of musical instruments. We have performed live at the Young Voices choir extravaganza in Birmingham's LG Arena, as well as holding regular concerts in both the school and the church. Drama is also a strength, with two full scale performances each academic year.

Sport continues to thrive at Whittington with the boys football team doing very well in the league and the 'Small School's Cup'. It is a similar picture with the netball team, with victories in the league. The children also have opportunities to try out a range of sports which are coached by professionals in their field. These sports have included: golf, cross country, athletics and gymnastics. Wherever possible we try to include a competitive element to the sports and we regularly compete against local schools. We currently receive a sports fund grant which we are spending on training teachers, employing professional coaches and developing our grounds. Church links are stronger than ever with the pupils visiting the church regularly and parishioners working actively with the pupils at the school. We are currently developing a values driven curriculum where we spend half a term exploring a particular value and what this means to us at Whittington. Values covered so far include: responsibility, courage, friendship and perseverance. My staff, governors and I are very proud of Whittington Church of England Primary School and we all work very hard to make it the best school possible. Children enjoy attending the school and we deliver a challenging, engaging and varied curriculum where all pupils are apply themselves and persevere in order to achieve their best. Mr G Richards.

2014.11 Whittington Church Report. - Report for St Philip and St James, Whittington

The Annual Report and Accounts for last year (2013), of which copies are available, were accepted by the Annual Church Meeting held at Whittington on 6th April 2014. The report gives a summary of the past year highlighting any particular events that took place. Noteworthy amongst these for the local community were Whittington Sunday in May and the Village Carol Service in December. Average Sunday attendance stayed the same as the previous year at about 36. Finances continue to be a worry, although with good management we were able to pay our Parish Share to the Diocese in full. However, with the ever increasing cost of maintaining our Church building we were only able to give 5% of our regular income to charitable and missionary organisations. Overall in the year we spent some £5000 more than we received though this was mainly incurred on the work we did for the New Building to replace the old Jubilee Room; these included Architects fees, topographical survey etc. Our New Church room is still some way off but at least we now seem to have a feasible site as an extension to the Church, which in due course we hope will gain planning permission; this was determined after extensive consultation last August-October. We still await the outcome of our application for Listing; in the meantime we are investigating areas where we might obtain grants to achieve our goal (apart from Heritage Lottery which is dependent on listing) as well as sorting out ideas for local funding. To that end we have been opening the Church for tea and coffee on a couple of days a week, called the "Great Yew Brew", in the summer and autumn to encourage community use. Community support for a scheme as extensive as this will be vital and will be sought. As November 2015 is the deadline for the Jubilee Room to be replaced we have a lot to do in a relatively short time. God willing our efforts will be successful and we will be able to go forward and achieve all that we hope and pray for in the future of our Church. Brenda Giles and Alan Jarman, the current Church Wardens are retiring and their places will be taken by Janet Pearson and Jayne Rayer. I ask that you accept this Report and Accounts for Whittington for 2013. April 2014. Mr D Chestney.

2014.12 Whittington - WI

Although we are a very small W.I we have had an interesting and varied year of activities with Speakers some of whom have been our members. Amongst other things we have learnt about the use of colour and style in fashion, the history Kays, and enjoyed a most entertaining talk about how the National Garden Scheme came into existence and the wonderful amount of money it raised each year for deserving charities. One of our members, a retired teacher told us about the changes in education from the time she was at school in the First World War until the present day and another gave a demonstration on planting up a colourful hanging basket. We also held a Craft afternoon, had a visit to Twyford Countryside centre and a Christmas Lunch. This is just a selection of the things we have

enjoyed during the year. The highlight of the year was the celebration of 75th Birthday last February when we revisited our childhood with a traditional Birthday Tea - Sandwiches and Cakes followed by Jelly and Blancmange and an iced birthday Cake. We sang "Happy Birthday" to ourselves and played old-fashioned party games such as "Pass the Parcel". This year has flown past and once again we have the formalities of the annual Meeting next month when we need to appoint Officers to lead us through the coming year. Although we have had a good year there is increasing concern about the reducing membership and difficulties in finding willing volunteers to serve as Officers for the future. Mrs Chestney.

2014.13 Whittington Tree Warden -

The Whittington Tree Warden Report was read out by Cllr S Brooker (Chairman WPC) Brian Saunders villager and specialist in tree management has agreed to assist this post. He has made a preliminary tour of the Village and noted the trees in the Village and some possibilities and problems. Worcestershire CC through Wade Muggleton have this month confirmed the offer of a huge opportunity. They will allow the Villagers to transform the entrance to the Village. This as all will know has grown wild and remains scruffy and inappropriate as the gateway to the village. There is therefore a Landscape Project which will allow thinning and revitalising of this 'coppice'. It will also allow for new ground cover planting with appropriate plants. The potential for landscaping the roundabout zone remains to be discussed. That would be a task requiring particular care because of traffic hazards. In any event we must consider any possible adverse impact off on-coming vehicle lights blighting The Forge. Mr D Hallmark.

2014.14 County & District Councillor's Reports.

Councillor Rob Adams gave his Annual Report on behalf of the County and District saying he was delighted to be returned as County Councillor in May 2013 to represent the Upton Snodsbury Division. He highlighted that finance had been a major part of work during the year at County and District: at County he referred to

- Adult and Social Care
- Children and Young People
- Open for business
- Highways and the Environment

and at District

- South Worcestershire Development Plan
- Grow Save Charge Plan
- New homes bonus

Ward Walk held on 27 March 2014. Thanks were given to all who met him, Jack Hegarty (Managing Director) and Martin Cross of the Flooding Team at Wychavon.

He finished by thanking the Parish Chairman Steve Brooker, the Parish Clerk Carol Chambers and Parish Councillors.

2014.15 Any Other Business. None

2014.16 Date of Next Annual Parish Meeting - Will be advised in early 2016.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.10pm

Cllr S L Brooker
Chairman