

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Little Compton Parish Council held in the Village Hall on Monday 17th March 2014 at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllrs. Rudge (Chairman), Moorman (Vice Chairman), Ashford, Hall and Browne, Robyn Waller (Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer), Warwickshire County Councillor Chris Saint, Stratford District Councillor Stephen Gray and 14 members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence. There were none.

2. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 18th March 2013. The Parish Clerk, Robyn Waller, read the Minutes. The Reports from village organizations were made available for the public to read. The Minutes were agreed to be a correct record, proposed by Cllr. Ashford, seconded by Cllr. Browne and duly signed.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes. With regard to dissatisfaction with the slow response to work on the verge opposite The Orchard, Cllr Rudge read an e-mail received from Mr. Jeff Morris of the County Highways, dated 26th February 2014 in which Mr Morris stated that there were many issues that determined priority, safety of the public being of utmost importance. He further mentioned that under the Traffic Maintenance Act of 2008, three months notice of planned work was required. Mr Morris stated that a defect had been issued in July 2013 and that work had been planned for completion in October 2013. However, in February 2014, work had been ruled unable to commence for the following reasons: the level of water in the watercourse was too high, there was an exposed cable rendering the situation unsafe and the extent of work required had significantly increased. The situation has since been re-assessed and while it had been confirmed that the situation had worsened, it is no longer deemed high priority. Mr. Morris concluded that he will continue to push for resolution.

Cllr. Ashford expressed disappointment but gave assurance he also would continue to pursue the matter.

4. Annual Parish Council Report was given by the Chairman, Cllr. Jennifer Rudge:
I am pleased to welcome everyone to this Annual Parish Meeting of Little Compton Parish Council. I am also pleased to say that there have been no changes in Councillors since last year so the Council is still made up of Wayne Ashford, Stephen Browne, Clare Hall, Louise Moorman and myself, Jenny Rudge. Robyn Waller remains as our Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer.

There has, however, been some changes to the electoral arrangements of Stratford District Council. Parish Councillors are normally elected every four years and elections in this Parish were due to take place this year, 2014, but the arrangements for Parish Council elections have been regularised which means that the election of this Council will now take place in 2015 and every four years thereafter. Another change is that the number of District Councillors is to be reduced from 53 to 36. We come within Long Compton ward which will now be merged with Brailes.

We are very fortunate with both our District Councillor, Stephen Gray, and our County Councillor, Chris Saint, who rarely miss our Parish Council Meetings and who keep us up to date with decisions made at District Council and County Council levels, to advise us, follow matters up for us and help us when we need it etc. We thank them for all their hard work.

Village maintenance continues to be a never ending problem and we are very lucky to have Wayne looking after this. He is unrelenting in reporting problems, including ever recurring pot holes and

blocked drains, to the relevant authorities and following this up as many times as necessary. So often we are promised problems will be addressed and then nothing happens. The heavy rains of this winter have tested our flood prevention measures. During the last financial year we received a grant from Stratford District Council to reinstate the ditch on the south side of Oakham Road hill and have recently had the grips serving that ditch re-cut (at the same time having the other grips in the village cleaned out and re-cut). During the current financial year, we again applied to Stratford District Council for a Flood Grant and were fortunate to be awarded £2,400 to enable us to have made and fitted bespoke grids at the entrance to the three main culverts in the village – one under Malthouse Lane, the second under the road by 1 Red Lodge and the third under the A44 at the lay-by near the entrance to the village. The grids stop debris being washed into the culverts and hence possibly causing a blockage and are designed so that as the water rises in the ditches, the debris is pushed up to the platform at the top of the grid where it can be easily collected. These are working well. We do however still rely on landowners to keep the ditches clear and deep.

We have also been fortunate to receive a Road Safety Grant from Warwickshire County Council for the construction of two passing places on Barton Lane, which have now been completed. These are situated at a bend in the road where the speed of traffic and poor visibility has resulted in many minor accidents and ‘near misses’ in the past.

An ‘Autumn sweep’ was planned to clear leaves from footpaths and gutters – much of this was undertaken by David Whitley who worked incredibly hard leaving the footpaths less hazardous and drains less likely to become blocked. Our thanks go to him – but next Autumn we will need more volunteers to help him.

The week-end before last, in beautiful weather, a group of people could be found in the cemetery learning how to lay a hedge under the tutorage of John Hall. They were working on the hedge which we planted some years ago on two sides of the cemetery extension. This hedge laying event was sponsored by the Cotswold Conservation Board. If you have visited or passed by the cemetery since then you will see what a fantastic job they did. The Cotswold Wardens have also been busy, firstly attempting to deal with the spring in the Bridleway opposite Redlands Farmhouse and then clearing the ditch at the lower end near the entrance.

The Parish Council agreed to support the preparation of a Parish Plan for the Village. Although this comes under the umbrella of the Parish Council, it is a community lead venture designed to consult with residents on how they would like to see the village and facilities and activities develop in the future. However, the response has been very disappointing with only 22% of the questionnaires returned. There will be a fuller update on this by Cllr. Browne later in this meeting.

A second disappointment has been regarding the fouling of footpaths by horses – in particular the footpath adjacent to the A44 between the two roads entering the village. This footpath is separated from the road by a wide grass verge with plenty of room for horses, but pedestrians are faced with walking through horse excretion on the footpath. Notices requesting riders to leave the footpaths clear for pedestrians have been ignored and vandalised. If anyone knows anything about the destruction of these notices we would be pleased to hear of it as the matter is being reported to the police.

However – on the up side – the Parish Council’s financial position remains steady. We have been fortunate with grants this year – for flood prevention work in the village and for the construction of passing places on Barton Lane and also for work carried out by the Cotswold Conservation Board

in laying the hedge in the cemetery and by the Cotswold Wardens in addressing drainage issues on the Bridleway opposite to Redlands Farmhouse. As a result the Council has agreed to reduce the precept, which includes the Council Tax Support Grant, to £5,400 for the financial year 2014/15 – this is equivalent to Council Tax on Band D property of £33.56, and compares with £36.18 in the financial year 2013/14

Thank you for your attention and I will ask for reports from other village groups and then invite your questions and comments. Thank you.

5. Other Village Reports:

Acorns Primary School	Mr. Christian Hilton	Transcript attached
Neighbourhood Watch	Mr. Tony Fitch	Appendix 1 attached
First Response Team	Mr. Rory McDonald	Appendix 2 attached
Village Hall Committee	Ms. Jo McCarthy	Appendix 3 attached
Fuel Allotment Trust	Mr. Rory McDonald	Appendix 4 attached
Tree Warden Scheme	Mr. Jeremy Evans	Appendix 4 attached

6. Parish Plan Update A Report was then read by Cllr. Browne Appendix 5 attached.

7. Questions & Comments from the public.

In response to Cllr Browne's disappointment regarding the poor response to the Parish Plan Questionnaire distributed to all households before Christmas 2013 that resulted in only a 22% response, Mrs Fitch suggested that perhaps Christmas had not been a convenient time for residents. Mrs Collins questioned whether the poor response might be due to people believing their ideas lacked importance. However, Cllr. Browne assured that the questionnaire invited personal comment. Cllr. Browne also informed the meeting that the next steering committee meeting would be held at the end of April and further discussion would then be invited.

Cllr. Rudge commented that she had received concerns regarding the slow internet speed in the village. Mr Peter MacLean said that, on reporting a slow Broadband reception to BT, he had received a positive response resulting in a faster speed and suggested that other residents might make similar requests to meet individual needs.

Mrs Collins voiced concern regarding the speed limits on the A44 and asked for a request for random Police checks. Mr Fitch stated that Police were already engaging in random checks along the A44.

8. A.O.B. Mr Jeremy Evans thanked the Parish Council for their commitment to the village and their hard work.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.18pm.

Robyn Waller Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer.