

**MARSTON ST LAWRENCE PARISH COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**  
**HELD ON 18TH APRIL 2017 AT 7.30PM**  
**IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

Present: Cllr Gale (Chairman), Cllr Goodwin, Cllr Scott, Cllr Skermer, Cllr Tims, Christine Coles - Parish Clerk, District Councillor Rosie Herring and thirteen villagers

**17/01. Apologies**

County Councillor Ron Sawbridge, Judith Johnson and Joyce Scott

**17/02. To receive a report from County Cllr R Sawbridge**

The budget for the financial year 2017/18 was agreed at the County Council Meeting on the 23rd February. Preparation of the Budget has not been easy, with continuing financial pressures reflecting the reduction in the Revenue Support Grant from central government and the rising costs being created mainly by the demand led services. These are Care for the Elderly and Disabled, and Services for Children and Families. The County Council part of the tax paid by residents has been increased by 5% with over half of this being ring-fenced to fund additional social care costs. The total net budget for the year is £416.8M. This includes £153M for Adult Social Care and £134M for Children, Families, and Education.

During the last twelve months the council has helped provide a safe environment for over 3,000 of the most vulnerable children and there are currently about 1,000 children in the care of the County Council. At the other end of the age profile the demand for adult social care is as high as ever and care assistance has been provided for over 11,000 elderly people. During the past year the Fire and Rescue Service attended over 4,000 incidents. This number is continuing to fall year on year reflecting the success of the fire prevention programme carried out through Home Safety Checks. On Education, additional school places have continued to be created with 300 more secondary school places than the previous year.

As his term of office comes to a close it is appropriate that he reflects back on some of the achievements of the County Council over the last four years. Not least is the hard work that has transformed the Children's Services from a poor service into one that is fit for purpose. The investment and sustained improvement programme relating to this service now enables the council to press on with the implementation of a new Children's Trust which will further enhance the care given to vulnerable children in the care of the local authority. In addition there is cost effective and good quality adult social care services, and the highways maintenance alliance with Kier is recognised as best value and ensures that there are the resources to repair over 40,000 potholes every year.

Cllr Sawbridge is extremely pleased that the County are slowly moving towards the eventual provision of an A422 bypass for Farthinghoe. No village in the county deserves one more than Farthinghoe and he now thinks there is a strong chance of this being provided within about three years.

The only other item he mentioned was the new office block which has been built just behind County Hall in Northampton. This opened in March and was built primarily to enable all the County Council staff to be located in one modern energy efficient office block. This will result in other now obsolete premises being either let or sold to other organisations.

This is the last report to the parishes from Cllr Sawbridge as he is not standing for re-election on May 4th this year. He was first elected for the Brackley West Division in 2001 and then re-elected for the enlarged Middleton Cheney Division after the boundary changes in 2013. During the sixteen years he has been particularly interested in services for children and education.

He has been Chairman of numerous committees and in 2011/12, he had the honour of being elected Chairman of the County Council. He has particularly enjoyed his time as a County Councillor and he thanked all the residents of Marston St. Lawrence for the support extended to him.

**17/03. To receive a report from District Cllr R Herring**

**A Great Place to Live**

South Northants District continues to be ranked as one of the best places to live in the country. The Halifax survey rated SNC area as 16<sup>th</sup>, they have changed the methodology from previous years. Unemployment is one of the lowest in the country although SNC runs a job club to help anyone get back into work. The waste and recycling record is one of which SNC remain proud having achieved 59.9% recycling rate. This puts SNC in 11<sup>th</sup> position in the country.

**SNC Financial Highlights**

Funding continues to be reduced from central government, SNC are getting less money from grants but with growing housing numbers, growing business rates they continue to balance the books. The government gave SNC a four year financial settlement and they have a little more certainty but there are still many levers that government can pull to control expenditure. SNC continue to be one of the best at collecting council tax with 99.1% of all tax collected. Only about a dozen councils consistently collect above 99% the national average is 98%.

**New Homes Bonus**

New Homes Bonus continues to be paid by SNC into separate parish ring fenced funds. SNC is one of the few Councils that pass this money back to directly benefit the areas of housing growth. Changes made by the government mean that in 2017/18 new homes bonus will be paid for 5 years not 6 as in 2016/17. It will reduce further in 2018/19 to 4 years. There is a new "deadweight" factor, that means in effect the first 155 houses built in SNC area will not qualify for new homes bonus. For 2017/18 the current allocation process will continue dividing the available pot by the number of houses per parish. This will be reviewed during the year. The money accrued to date is safe and is still available for the parish to use. The rate of growth will slow in future years and should be flagged early. 2017 will see another £703,192 been added to the allocations to the parishes. In the previous years £2.2 million has been allocated bringing the total to £2.9 million. So far £1.35 million has been spent leaving £1.54 million awaiting a bid from the parishes.

**Council Tax**

The SNC part of the Council Tax bill was raised by £5 a year for a Band D property. The total now is £180.37 per year. Just in terms of their bin collections it is 87 pence per bin per week to have it emptied. (Based on Blue, Black, Green, Food)

**Chief Executive**

Sue Smith reached her 60<sup>th</sup> birthday in February and decided to take life at a slower pace. She was the first Joint Chief with Cherwell and has served SNC and CDC well since 2011. A replacement Joint Chief is being recruited and will be confirmed by Council on 23 March. When they will actually start is not known as yet.

**Planning**

The Local Plan Part 2A is now being discussed. The draft of this is public and available. SNC request feedback on this draft before a formal consultation will begin in the summer. In particular there are maps showing the village confines which in large part have changed much but do take into account any changes where for example a development has been allowed on appeal. There is a general desire to have clearer confine lines that can be followed on the ground.

The next steps for the plan are:-

- Summer 2017 – formal consultation
- Autumn 2017 – analysis of the comments made and changes (if any) made to the draft
- Early 2018 – Public Examination with the Planning Inspector
- Publication of the Plan with the Inspector Comments
- Autumn 2018 – Adoption of the Final Part 2 Plan.

There is a new Central Government White Paper that proposes changes to the planning system and the way that numbers of houses are assessed, until we know the details of these it is impossible to say if SNC plans are adequate or need revision. We continue to keep a watching brief.

One of the main areas of contention at planning appeals is the issue of the 5 year land supply. Developers often argue that this development should or should not be included in the formula. The White paper suggests there will be a standard method of assessment that all can follow. This should bring welcome clarity and mean there is some comparability between local authorities.

SNC have a land supply sufficient for 8.2 years. The land supply is based on assessing the number of houses they plan to build per the Core Strategy document, versus the number of planning permissions granted. They must have a minimum of 5 with a buffer for under delivery. At 8 they are well outside the bounds of argument.

### **Elections**

There are elections planned to Northamptonshire County Council this year only.

### **Brackley Leisure Centre**

This year SNC had a ground cutting and are moving along with the new Brackley Leisure Centre. They aim to have this new 6 lane pool, with learner pool and other improvements to the gym areas completed by the end of the year. Towcester Centre for Leisure had an equipment refresh in Oct when the new contract began. There are no major building works planned for Towcester although additional car parking is being put in place. The new leisure contract is now in place and delivering substantial returns, SNC moved from a position where it was costing every year to run these facilities, to a position where there will be a return to the council each year from the new operator, Parkwood Leisure.

### **Brackley Town Expansion**

The developments of Radstone Fields continue to deliver housing rapidly. SNC had the biggest increase in new homes in the past year than at any time since the building of Grange Park at the turn of the century.

### **Towcester Town Expansion**

An outline planning permission for Persimmon Homes and Bloor Homes has been in place since 2014. The design code to cover the design of the houses has been agreed in the past twelve months and the detailed planning permissions for the first approx. 500 been granted. Work started on the new roundabout to give access to the land, opposite the racecourse entrance in March 2017. This will take a few months to build and have some overnight closures on the A5. Ultimately this housing development will bring a relief Road to Towcester. SNC has been working closely with government to get the relief road delivered early. The present agreement states it must be in end to end, by the occupation of the 1017<sup>th</sup> house. SNC want to get this nearer to 2020 with the help of Central Government. Ian McCord, Leader SNC, has met with the Roads Minister, along with Andrea Leadsom, MP, to keep making the case.

### **Moat Lane**

Moat Lane continues to be developed with work starting on the corner site along Northampton Road for retail shops and apartments above. The work that has been done is of an exceptionally high standard and is a real enhancement to the town.

### **Horton Hospital Consultation**

SNC have been working with Cherwell, Stratford upon Avon and Banbury Town Councils to challenge in a very robust form the proposals to reduce the services at the Horton Hospital. They have written to the NHS to tell them that the split consultation is, in their view, unacceptable and they need them to have a single holistic consultation. This issues affects about a third of the area of SNC and they will continue to put the case that the residents need better treatment than this.

### **Supporting Local Business**

SNC are determined to have a council that is open for business. To get the message out SNC hosted, at Towcester Racecourse, an evening to meet with local business and help them network. They plan to hold another one this year. To help grow business attain these objectives we have allocated large areas of land for employment use in Silverstone and Junction 16 M1. The Silverstone land was subject to another outline planning permission to reflect the change in the market place and the desires of the new owners MEPC. MEPC have delivered several new units on the site and opened a metallurgy lab for companies to measure and test components and parts to exacting standards allowing machinery to be rented by the hour that would not be viable to buy for smaller companies. To support business SNC have introduced a series of grants for Towcester Town Centre funded from planning S106 money. This fund has £140,000 to match fund up to 50% the cost of shop front changes in Towcester. We are hoping to do similar in Brackley when funds are available. Both our market towns have a new policy to help bring long term empty properties back into use. SNC will give rates relief on properties that have been empty for more than 6 months in the centre of Brackley or Towcester.

### **Supporting Major Projects in the District**

SNC have arranged a £3m loan facility for the Silverstone Heritage Centre which is being funded by £9m from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This will provide an excellent tourist attraction for the area and is due to open in 2019. Work has commenced on the refurbishment of the Grade 2\* listed Brackley Town Hall which has been funded by £2.3m from Heritage Lottery Fund and £500k from both Brackley Town Council and SNC. This will ensure the iconic building in the centre of one of our historic market towns is assured and will kick start the regeneration of the Town Centre.

Cllr Herring spoke briefly about the Unitary authority which was resisted by District Councils. OCC are pushing ahead. They are hoping to save £15M and have sent a holding letter to the Secretary of State. Two Districts are supporting OCC and all the others are against the idea. District Councils are well run and financially stable. The County has large debts and is responsible for potholes, elderly care and children in care. The problems will be more pressing in the centre. SNC currently have a joint agreement with Cherwell District Council. Northampton will wait until after the General Election and see what Oxford does. Cllr Scott asked how that will leave SNC? The New Chief Executive has a joint role with a County and District Council so her experience will be very valid and important. The bid by Oxfordshire County Council might have to go to a referendum and will be restricted by purdah.

The Chair asked Cllr Herring for more information on planning and sustainability. He had attended a recent meeting. Marston St Lawrence is a small village with village confines. He asked how that ties in with sustainability and would this apply if someone applied to build a new house? Cllr Herring replied that some villages want more houses but others try to stop development.

Sustainability is about villages working together and not being in isolation. She would like to see a village not been able to grow more than 10% over a 10-15 year plan so that villages are protected from big developers.

A discussion took place about the current leisure centre in Brackley and what will happen to it. It requires a lot of maintenance. SNC own the building but lease the land. There have been trade offs between NCC and SNC to allow house building and a more efficient and better use of the land. There have been delays but Cllr Herring was unsure what they were. The new leisure centre should be finished by the end of this year. The new operator Parkwood Leisure currently runs Spiceball Sports Centre and Woodgreen Leisure Centre in Banbury.

Cllr Herring wished the village well with the idea of the defibrillator and said there is a location map and application for mobile phones.

**17/04. To discuss the idea of a defibrillator for the village**

The idea was raised by Siobon Cook a parishioner and local Police Officer. A defibrillator has huge potential benefits to help someone who may suffer from a sudden cardiac arrest. Greatworth PC have already started the ball rolling and have received information from East Midlands Ambulance Service that the cost of the device and cabinet would be £999.00 & VAT. Greatworth are looking to raise the money by applying for a grant from the New Homes Bonus Fund. The cabinet would be secured with a key and combination lock. The 999 Ambulance Control operator would supply the caller with the combination code to access the defibrillator in an emergency. The device is easy to use and it is impossible to shock someone whose heart does not need shocking.

The Chair noted that this idea has not been discussed at a Parish Council meeting. There is money in the reserves which could be used and VAT could be claimed back. Concern was expressed that money could be better spent on sorting out the pavements but this is not the Parish Council's responsibility. There may be funds from the Summer Ball held a few years ago. It was previously agreed the funds would be split between this village and Greatworth. This would come under the remit of the Summer Ball Committee. The unit would need checking weekly and should be placed outside and accessible for all such as on the village hall wall. Ownership, maintenance and responsibility would have to be discussed. The unit would need to be connected to a constant electric supply and electricity usage is about £30 per year. This matter will be discussed at the next Parish Council meeting in May.

**17/05. To receive a summary of the finances for year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017**

An unaudited overview for the year was circulated to members.

Total income for the year was £409.89.

Total payments for the year were £3652.44.

The Chair made the following points. The Parish Clerk is paid for the hours she works. Thanks was given to her for her work and support. The website is a necessity but not the cheapest. The Parish Council have made two contributions to the Glimpse. The Queens 90th birthday celebrations were a one off. If a defibrillator is going to be purchased, then funds will have to be built up again.

**17/06. To receive an update on 'The Marston Inn'**

The previous planning permission application for housing which went to appeal was turned down due to unsustainability. A year ago Hook Norton Brewery (HNB) appointed a lady to undertake a survey. A report was never received. HNB then developed a new set of plans which were sent to the Parish Council after Christmas. They were very favourable and included plans for 2 four bedroom houses and 2 two bedroom houses. The plan was to demolish the back of the pub and redesign to make it more user friendly. The pub could be divided into two.

The two bedroom cottage could be used by whoever takes the pub over, or as a holiday or residential let. The new proposal from HNB is to knock the pub building down completely and rebuild further forward on the line of next door allowing another small house behind the new building. They have asked to see a business proposal if there is one.

The main comments made were:- Moreton Pinkney have proved that developing a pub can work, Hook Norton Brewery should be looking after the state of the front of the pub which might encourage interest from the village, it would be cheaper to knock the building down and start again, access needs to be resolved, if the pub was smaller, it might be more sustainable and of interest to someone, the village do not want the pub to go nor stay as it is, it means thinking outside of the box, the biggest asset is the front garden and there are very few pubs where you walk from the bar onto the garden. The Parish Council have details of someone who can tidy up the garden. The Chair will chase HNB again.

Mrs Gale asked if there was anyone present at the meeting to look at a business plan? So far nobody has come forward with any enthusiasm. The Parish Council are supporting HNB and trying to represent the best interests of the village. It would be hard to write a business plan without knowing costs.

**17/07. The following village reports were received:-  
Village Hall (Cllr C Skermer)**

The AGM is scheduled for 25th April. There have been lots of bookings. The hall is used by regular local clubs such as Billiards, Table Tennis, Dolly Mixtures, Film Nights and the new Marston Craft Group, Martial Arts Group, Dance Unlimited and a frequent booking by a workshop course run by a village member. In addition there have been dances, parties, dinners, usage by the Parish Council, Parochial Church Council and elections. The Committee Trustees have met regularly to prioritise the needs and to manage the upkeep and potential improvements. The usage has meant increased electricity and ensuring a balance is kept with neighbours. The hall have acquired a non alcohol license which allows them to sell alcohol but not store it. Council rates have been an issue as they had to apply for discretionary relief and only found out today that it has been accepted. The main focus for the future is to improve the heating and insulation which will require considerable fund raising.

**Dolly Mixtures (Cllr Scott)**

The January meeting was cancelled in case of inclement weather. The AGM was held in February and the officers were re-elected en-bloc as there were no other candidates for the post. The group enjoyed a varied and interesting programme. There were talks from Alan Wolstencroft about the charity work he does in Sierra Leone, helping to build and improve classroom development at the Good News Pentecostal Community in Waterloo, Freetown. John Sheppard showed slides of his visit to the Antarctic, Graham Holton warned of the dangers of postal and telephone scams. Karen Williams brought Iggy along to show how having a Dog for Good has changed her life and there was a hilarious talk from Chris Bazeley on the history of 'The Privy'. The annual meetings consisted of a meal out in May, a Garden Party at Culkein in August, Harvest Supper in October and a festive Social Evening in December. The group have continued to support the Poppy Appeal and the Star and Garter Home. They decided to change the charity collection from Cancer Research to collection for whichever charity they wished to support that year. They did this because there are a few members who remembered June Walker (a past member who died of cancer) whom they started the annual collection in her memory. This year they welcomed two new members Jo and Sue but lost Christine (who moved away). Otherwise membership remained fairly static. It would be nice to encourage others to come along and see what we do. New members are always welcome. Everyone contributed towards organising speakers, providing delicious refreshments and raffle prizes. They now look forward to an interesting and entertaining 2017.

### **Cricket Club (Cllr Scott)**

The new season starts on 28th April. There has been a positive response from younger members. There are two senior teams and 3 junior teams. The Club are hoping to have a licensed pub.

### **Marston Billiards Club (Maurice Skermer)**

A successful season has been completed with Marston A winning the Croughton league. The other team did not fare as well but had more wins during the season than for some time so enjoyable. The A Team were also runners up in the Sid Willis Cup, the premier team competition. In the individual competition, David Wiggins was champion, with another club member as runner up, Peter Somerton who was runner up in the over 50s cup. In the Eydon league, Marston finished 3rd in the League. Though still a bit short of the number of members they would like to have, they have a degree of success and some enjoyable sessions.

### **Table Tennis (Susan Gale)**

The club meet on a Thursday night from 8.30pm-10pm. Everyone is welcome and children can attend with their parents. There are 6-8 regular people and two tables. The players do not play other teams. The cost is £1 per week.

### **Church (Cllr Scott)**

With the completion of the re-leading of the Nave roof and Chancel lead repairs, all roofs are now in good order. With the new roof alarm system they hope to deter further lead theft. Repairs to the North East window of the Lady Chapel have now been carried out - this was damaged during the lead theft. The continued subsidence of the North East Corner of the North Porch is of concern, and will need addressing over the next year or so. The Servery and Toilet Facilities are still at the paper chase stage. During this time of Interregnum the church are fortunate to have the support of retired incumbents and the many helpers of which they are most grateful. Special thanks must go to the following, The PCC members, Joyce for her work as Sacrosanct and the Church Warden support team. Sue for her past Secretarial work and grass mowing. John for his excellent book keeping. Stephen the Church Warden Emeritus and Clock Winder. David the Church Warden who is an inspiration to us all. The PCC will miss both David and Helen for the commitment and support they have given over the last few years. The PCC do have financial concerns as the general running costs continue to increase and the giving has fallen over the last year. The PCC have been approached by Greatworth PCC to look into the possibility of a joint PCC, Secretary, Treasurer and Church Warden. This is a temporary measure to test the workability and to encourage Greatworth to re-instate their own PCC.

### **Clay Pigeon Shooting (Simon Powell)**

The club are now at a permanent site in Middleton Cheney. 32 people are signed up and 60 people attend each month. Scores are improving and membership is far and wide. There are not many people in the village involved. There are two parts to the club. The Game shooting takes place in the Game season and clay shooting which takes place once a month at six clubs. The club make good representation.

### **17/08. Guest Appearance – Thomas Pymfrey MDCLXXXIV (1684)**

He is well and made a guest appearance at this meeting. Cllr Scott explained that he is an unusual historic relic and was given to the village. The Parish Council have looked after him and in the past he was hung in the pub or housed in the village hall.

### **17/09. Other matters to discuss**

There were no other matters to discuss.

**17/10. Open Forum**

Concern was expressed about vehicles using Squirridge Hill at speed. Satellite navigation systems are sending delivery drivers down the road. Cllr Skermer replied that complaints have been made about this problem all over the country. There may be a road sign that can be placed to prevent delivery drivers using the road but permission would be needed from Northants Highways. Although the Parish Council were successful in arranging for the 30mph sign to be moved at the top end of the village, they may struggle to stop the speeding here as the speed limit is 60mph. They will discuss the matter at the next meeting.

**17/11. Date and time of next meeting, Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2017 at 7.30pm in the village hall**

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and this concluded the meeting.

Meeting finished at 9.10pm