

**MARSTON ST LAWRENCE PARISH COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**  
**HELD ON 17TH APRIL 2018 AT 7.30PM**  
**IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

Present: Cllr Gale (Chairman), Cllr Carletti, Cllr Scott, Cllr Skermer, Cllr Tims, Christine Coles - Parish Clerk, County Councillor Rebecca Breese, District Councillor Rosie Herring and four villagers

**18/14. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

**18/15. To receive a report from District Cllr R Herring**

**Great Place to Live** - South Northants continues to be one of the best places to live in the country and the area is ranked 13th.

**Waste recycling** - Waste and recycling has had a good year. SNC is the 8th best authority in the UK for recycling. A contract has been signed with a new company for the process of recycling. The new company is much nearer which means reduced transfer journeys by trucks. This saves fuel and reduces emissions.

**SNC Financial Highlights** - SNC continues to be one of the best at collecting council tax with 99% of tax collected.

**New Homes Bonus** - SNC uses some of its New Homes Bonus to invest in the local community. In 2017-18 £1.152M of grant funding was awarded to communities within South Northants across 120 projects. Over the lifetime of the New Homes Bonus Scheme, £2.6M has been re-invested in the community.

**Council Tax** - The SNC part of the Council Tax was raised by 3%.

**Chief Executive** - A replacement Joint Chief Executive Yvonne Rees was appointed in early 2017. She has experience at County and District level.

**Plans** - The preparation of the Local Plan Part 2 has been an ongoing project. This will replace the existing policy that was adopted in 1997.

**5 Year Land Supply**

National Planning Policy demands that every council has a bank of permissions granted so development can take place in that area. Throughout the year SNC maintained a full land bank SNC can demonstrated a bank of almost double the 1680 minimum at 3296. Our land supply is 10.2 years.

**Conservation and Heritage** - The District has 1831 Listed buildings, 96 villages and two market towns. Both towns and 51 of the 96 villages have historic areas designated as conservation areas, recognising their special architectural and historic interest.

**Policies and Strategies**

Throughout the year the council has updated or introduced some new policies and strategies.

**Brackley Leisure Centre** - SNC has invested over £4M in Brackley Leisure Centre. It is behind schedule but hoped the centre will be finished by the summer of 2018.

**Towcester Leisure Centre** - Improvements have enhanced programme usage, community well-being and environmental benefit.

**Brackley Town Expansion** - SNC has provided funds for the restoration of Brackley Town Hall as part of the regeneration of Brackley Town Centre which enabled the Town Council to get £2.3M from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Town Hall will re-open this year. The main meeting room is accessible for dances. There is also a restaurant downstairs.

**Towcester Town Expansion** - Work started opposite the Racecourse in March 2017. This housing development will bring a relief road to Towcester.

**Horton Hospital consultation** - A large part of the year was spent opposing plans for the reconfiguration of the Horton Hospital. SNC were successful in getting a referral to the Secretary of State on the proposals for maternity services.

**Broadband** - The 95% target for UK coverage by December 2017, set by Central Government, has been achieved.

**Help for residents with Home Safe** - The vulnerable, disabled and elderly are being offered free home repairs following a partnership between SNC and Care & Repair (Northants) Ltd. The scheme entitled Home Safe will offer support with a range of small home improvements.

From the floor Mr Scott asked how SNC would look at plastic disposal? Cllr Herring replied that SNC have a good recycling policy and there are some issues with shipping abroad. SNC will continue to deal with waste sensibly. It was noted that people have a responsibility to stop using plastic.

The Chair asked if the restaurant in the Town Hall at Brackley is open to the public? It is for commercial use and will generate extra income for the town.

Fly tipping was discussed. There has been a local incident where rubbish has been dumped on private farm land. The police will not give a crime number and SNC will not get involved. Cllr Herring agreed to take this further.

**18/16. To receive a report from County Cllr R Breese**

**Central Revenue Grant** - The bulk of Northamptonshire's funding comes from a central government grant. Whitehall announced some time ago that this source of funding would end in 2020 and councils would need to move towards locally raised revenue. For now NCC gets £673 per person per annum compared to London Boroughs which receive in excess of £1000.

**Council Tax** - NCC raised its share of council tax by 2.98%. This is in line with inflation. NCC takes 73% of the total bill, the PCC 13%, SNC 11% and the parishes about 3%.

**Chief Executive** - Paul Blantern left the authority in October last year. A professional interim Chief Executive was then appointed who left after the publication of the Value for Money report in Mid March. An in house Officer has now stepped up to the role as the way forward is established.

**Value for Money Inspection** - The Government Inspector delivered a harsh analysis of how NCC has been using its funds over the last few years. NCC were not unduly more badly funded than other local authorities. NCC and other shire counties have to deliver the same services to a more dispersed population which increases the delivery costs and generally do not have the same revenue raised opportunities. Additional pressures stem from the decision in 2010 to keep the council tax base as low as possible following the economic crisis starting in 2008. Decisions taken then have had an impact on the council tax base today. A 20% increase in council tax today would be required to cover the deficit.

Total spend by NCC this year was £429M. The largest is spend on adult social care for both the elderly and vulnerable adults. This is a statutory duty and a member of the public who asks for an assessment is entitled to have one. There are just over 6000 vulnerable adults being supported by NCC and the total spend is £190M. The population of over 85's with complex care needs requiring help has increased by 30% in 3 years. The next largest is Children's Services costing around £174M. In 2016 there were 900 looked after children. Now in excess of 1050. 70% of the budget is spent on 3% of the population. The other 30% of council expenditure is on services like waste disposal, highways, bus passes, libraries and trading standards.

The Inspector made one statement in his report which stands out *'In Local Government there is no substitute for doing boring really well. Only when you have a solid foundation can you innovate'*.

So what is next. The message from Central Government is that Northamptonshire must reorganise itself into Unitary Authorities. There is an indication it should not be more than one but less than three. The model split the county in two, Daventry, Northampton Borough and South Northants could form one, the other four districts would form the other unitary. There is a complication however as SNC and CDC have joint working in the delivery of local services. After 6 years of hard work, the management and delivery systems are now almost completely intertwined. This was ignored in the Inspectors report.

A Unitary Authority is one which sweeps away the County Council and all the District Councils as well as Northampton Borough and devolves all the responsibilities of the county and districts into a single authority. There is local representation and the delivery of services like planning have local input and are felt not to be too far remote. The Leaders are working together and proposals should be ready by the end of July. It is unclear at this stage what will happen. There is a debt of £1M and the County are locked into projects for 10-15 years.

Clr Herring noted that elections in the District next year will be put back until May 2020. There will be a consultation on the unitary idea and it will be important to respond. The current tax base is capped at 3% although extra is allowed for social care. If the County Council is dissolved the Unitary Authority may start with a different tax base. It has been historically low in South Northants.

Clr Scott asked if three unitary authorities would be viable? Two have been suggested but Sajid Javid expects three. The current saving by the joint working of SNC and CDC is £1M per year.

Clr Scott spoke about the layby on the B4525 near the Middleton Cheney roundabout which has been kerbed and filled with topsoil. This would have been an expensive repair when there are potholes that need filling in. This could have been paid for by Section 106 money.

Finally Clr Breese spoke about Angel Square which was funded entirely by the sale of several Northamptonshire properties that the Council owned and were occupied by various NCC departments. As well as coming in under budget it is saving the Council around £30K per month in running costs. NCC are being forced to sell it now to balance the budget.

**18/17. To receive a summary of the finances for year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018**

An unaudited overview for the year was circulated to members.

Total income for the year was £3826.82.

Total payments for the year were £4612.57.

The Chair made the following points. The Clerks salary was increased as she was paid holiday pay which had been backdated. The website costs remain high.

The Parish Council are to look at a cheaper solution to try and reduce this expenditure. A lot of money is spent now in keeping the Parish Council compliant. The reserves are more than adequate.

**18/18. To receive an update on 'The Marston Inn'**

The Chair gave a brief report. Tidying will happen and the contractors are arriving later this week. The hedge will be tidied at the front and boundaries tidied at the back. A small bonfire will be lit to burn the rubbish. The details will be put on the Facebook page. The Parish Council will contact Hook Norton Brewery again to ask if the pub can go back on the market.

**18/19. The following village reports were received:-**

**Village Hall (Cllr C Skermer)**

The land for the village hall was gifted 80 years ago next year. There are big plans to improve the hall for the next 80 years and the VHC are embarking on major fund raising projects. They have carried out minor improvements to the billiard room but the insulation and heating need updating to improve the whole ambience, especially for the winter months.

The dance classes have now ceased after many years but there are still regular users such as table tennis, billiards, Dolly Mixtures, martial arts and craft group. The Panto was a great success again enjoyed by children of all ages, the film nights have been less popular this year but having acquired a license for the sale of alcohol, they have held several lunch time village bars which have enable the village to get together. It has made it easier for party bookings and quiz nights.

All this is due to the commitment of the committee and especially the following, Dave Scott who has agreed to act as the Project Manager and has got the ball rolling, Richard Gale who is working on the fund raising for the future, Maurice Skermer who keeps a close eye on finances and deals with the day to day running of the hall and all the other volunteers who help with grass cutting and maintenance.

**Dolly Mixtures**

As in previous years the January meeting was cancelled in case of inclement weather. The AGM was held in February. The officers were re-elected en-bloc. The club enjoyed a varied and interesting programme. Talks included beekeeping, Rosie Jeffries talking about the Farming Centre at Greatworth and her hopes and aspirations for the future, Anne Watts gave an insight into her nursing career all over the world in deprived and war torn areas. In November Brenda and Anne made Christmas crackers and cards. The annual meetings included a meal out in May, Garden party at Culkein in August, Harvest Supper in October and a Festive Social Evening in December. The club have continued to support the Poppy Appeal and the Star and Garter Home. They welcomed Diane McLeod as a new member. Membership remains static and new members are always welcome. Everyone contributed towards organising speakers, providing delicious refreshments and raffle prizes. Thanks was given to Anne (Treasurer), Nicola (Secretary) for carrying out their duties so efficiently and also to Kay (Vice-Chair) for taking over when Joyce is away. Thanks was given to those who attend each month. The club look forward to another interesting and fun filled year in Dolly Mixtures in 2018.

**Cricket Club (Dave Scott)**

1. The club continues to be well supported.
2. A new training bowling machine has been purchased this year with the support of the SNC New Homes Bonus Grant and Tesco Bags of Help schemes.
3. Indoor nets are on-going and outdoor nets / training will start in April.
4. Adult teams entered in SNCL Premier League, Division 2 and two cup competitions.
5. Junior teams entered at U11 and U13.
6. First Saturday league fixtures on 28 April (1st team at home versus Syresham, 2nd team away versus Syresham A).

7. Mid-season social quiz night on Friday 22 June.
8. The club has obtained a club premises certificate for the sale of alcohol.
9. The club has offered to host a national Women's Softball Festival; one of a number being organised by the ECB.

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

The regular league season ended on 16th April and the Club has had a degree of success. The A Team won the Croughton and District League and also the major cup competition, the Sid Willis. They were Runners-Up in another cup. In the individual Cups, they had three representatives with David Wiggins winning the individual trophy and Philip Walker, the Over 50s cup. David also had the highest break trophy. In the Eydon league Marston won the league and the League Cup, besides having two individual finalists but neither managed the final stop. There have been more social billiards with several players enjoying evenings of play and chat, especially for the less accomplished but no less keen players. The club are happy to welcome new members.

#### **Table Tennis**

The club meet on a Thursday night 8.30-8.45pm. Thanks was given to Sue Gale for her support with the finances. The club raises money for the village hall. There are a number of new members and total membership is 23. The Club makes more money in the summer months than winter.

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

There was a sudden resignation and there have been visiting and retired rectors. A new Rector called Father Nick has been appointed. Bell ringing continues. There are links with Greatworth PCC and joint working with the Church Wardens as there is little support in Greatworth. The arrangement is working at the moment and may become more formal.

#### **Clay Pigeon Shooting**

The Marston Marauders Club still maintains a regular membership consisting of about 25 – 30 members, a handful from this Parish but also includes people from around the South Northants district and some in North Oxfordshire. They participate in clay pigeon shooting with 5 other clubs from neighbouring counties in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Each club hosts a clay shoot and alternate venues every month in a Winter and Summer League. The Marston Marauders host their shoots in March and September at Burgess Farm in Middleton Cheney. They are a friendly local club and welcome anyone new or old to shooting with a shotgun into this club. They hosted 2 successful shoots in the past year, one in September and had 109 entries and again last month in March had 111 entries. The club also does have access to a couple of let days of game shooting on Marston Estate during the game season of the year of which Phil Tyler is the Captain and organizes those days. If anyone in the Parish feels like they would like to join the shooting club then feel free to contact Simon Powell or Phil Tyler. Their email address is [marstonmarauders@outlook.com](mailto:marstonmarauders@outlook.com) or on the internet search using Google for Marston Marauders and you can find a small website where they maintain the fixtures and results and locations of the venues along with a few pictures taken by a few friends along the way, for anyone that maybe interested.

#### **18/20. Guest Appearance – Thomas Pymfrey MDCLXXXIV (1684)**

He made an appearance and is safe and well. He is stored in the fireproof cabinet in the village hall.

#### **18/21. Other matters to discuss**

There is £1031.00 left to spend on the New Homes Bonus Allocation. It is hoped that ideas can be given on how best to spend it.

**18/22. Open Forum**

A vote of thanks was given to the Chair for his help with the organisation of the recent litter pick. The community were very appreciative of his efforts. The ideal time to have a litter pick is in early March before the vegetation starts growing but the wintry weather got in the way this year.

**18/23. Date and time of next meeting, Tuesday 22nd May 2018 at 7.30pm in the village hall.**

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

Meeting finished at 8.49pm.