

**MARSTON ST LAWRENCE PARISH COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**  
**HELD ON 2<sup>nd</sup> APRIL 2019 AT 7.30PM**  
**IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

Present: Cllr Gale (Chairman), Cllr Scott, Cllr Skermer, Cllr Tims, Christine Coles - Parish Clerk, District Councillor Rosie Herring, Helen Howard (NCC Highways) and nine villagers

**19/13. Apologies**

Cllr Goodwin (unwell)

**19/14. Community Liaison Officer from Northants Highways**

Helen Howard attended the meeting on behalf of Northants Highways.

She spoke about the Thenford Road which was inspected in March by Stuart Mann. A separate team look at bigger schemes that cost more to repair. The road has been included in the new financial year for major carriageway patching and resurfacing. Problems and defects can now be reported on [www.fixmystreet.com](http://www.fixmystreet.com) with photos.

Cllr Scott spoke of the quality of work on the Marston to Farthinghoe Road which was excellent and compared it to work on the Marston to Thenford which was not so good. Work was also carried out on the Cockley Road recently as it was part of the signed diversion route when Farthinghoe was shut. Road closure signs were in the wrong place and some of the diversions routes were awful. The Chair spoke generally of the difference in the way big work and pothole work is carried out.

At this point the Chair noted that Highways have agreed to move the 30mph sign round the corner at the Greatworth end when budgets allow.

Thanks was given to Helen for attending the meeting and she left.

**19/15. 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 better places to live in the country. 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 and is the best in the County. The Brackley Pool was opened, there was a visit from HRH Prince Harry to Silverstone, they had a successful commemoration lunch to mark the 100th anniversary of the ending of WW1. They also held dinners to celebrate the sporting achievements of Mercedes Formula 1 team who won for the 5th successive year, and they celebrated the success of Brackley Town FC who won a fairy tale final at Wembley to bring on the FA Trophy. As SNC move forward with LGR they are holding regular Parish & Town Clerks Forums, with alternate Forums including PC Chairmen.

**Local Government Reform (LGR)**

The past year has been dominated by the events at NCC dealing with the fallout from it. As the new municipal year in 2018 began, NCC had just issued a Section 114 Notice, the local government equivalent of a bankruptcy notice. The unitary councils would abolish NCC and all the 7 districts and boroughs. He proposed that there should be one in the North encompassing Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough and East Northants and one in the West taking in Daventry, South Northants and Northampton Borough. Max Caller also recommended that the Secretary of State appoint Commissioners to take over the running of the council.

In May the Secretary of State advised he was minded to appoint Commissioners for take control of all matters of Financial and Strategic decision making and Governance and Scrutiny. Mr Tony McArdle and Mr Brian Roberts were appointed. In November a third Commissioner, Malcom Newsomme was appointed to take over Children's services and to recommend how these would be structured in the future.

In effect this meant that there was only one proposal that would fulfil all the criteria, namely the one set out by Max Caller for a West and North unitary council.

As a result of this, Cherwell and South Northants both decided that their partnership would need to be broken and everything that SNC had achieved with Cherwell unwound. This process has been ongoing since the autumn and will be complete by June. The unwinding of the Cherwell partnership has resulted in a management restructure at SNC. Yvonne Rees took a new post of joint chief executive of Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell and Richard Ellis took up the post of Chief Executive of SNC. The other members of the senior management also split between Cherwell and South Northants.

In December an order was passed in parliament to delay the elections that were due in 2019 until 2020. That should dovetail with the new elections for the new councils.

The current timetable is not fixed, but is something along the lines of: -

- Secretary of State consultation ended 25 January 2019
- Secretary of State to indicate his opinion of the proposal – spring 2019

Assuming he is minded to proceed

- Orders laid in Parliament around the time of the Easter Recess, it moves from immediately before to immediately after, but approx. late April /May
- Shadow council will come into being 14 days after the order is made
- Shadow council will comprise of all the members of all the councils and those from NCC who represent this area
- Shadow council will elect a shadow executive to do the work and prepare for day 1
- The new council will come into being 1 April 2020
- SNC will cease to be a council on 1 April 2020
- Elections to the new unitary authority will be 7 May 2020

There is a lot of work between now and then to get a council set up and running to be safe and legal on day 1. Thereafter there will be many issues to be dealt with but the focus will be on being ready for the first day.

### **Transformation (SNC/Cherwell)**

The saying a week in politics is a long time rings true sometimes even one hour is challenging for South Northants Council especially as 1 year ago SNC with partners at Cherwell District Council were delivering joined-up services to both communities with considerable benefits to the residents and significant value for money savings to the Council Tax payers.

With the announcement of the Section 114 notice issued due to the financial failure of Northants County Council, the government appointed commissioners to come in to take financial management control of the County, the Government then decided to replace the County authority and` pursue a two unitary solution for Northamptonshire to replace the County Councils, Borough and district councils in Northamptonshire.

The unitary proposals were consulted on and were duly agreed by the Government and therefore in May 2020 the Council, Daventry District Council and Northampton Borough Council, will cease and be replaced by a new West Northamptonshire Council.

The law does allow for Local Authorities in this case Cherwell as they are in Oxfordshire to be part of the new West Northamptonshire proposal as they are under a different Police and Crime commissioner area.

Sadly Cherwell and South Northants are divorcing, so all the hard work in bringing them together has to be undone, as with setting up the partnership, they work so well together and have delivered great services and still are and Cllr Herring once again thanked everybody affected by the changes, for the professional way they go about their role as officers in putting the residents first.

Cherwell having made the decision to leave the working arrangement then had discussions with Oxfordshire County Council and the joint Chief Executive Yvonne Rees applied for and was appointed as the Joint Chief Executive at Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council and whilst they still meet up with Yvonne in her new role Cllr Herring knows she did an amazing job when she was at the helm at SNC and continues to do so in her new position.

SNC then appointed an Interim Chief Executive Richard Ellis, Richard had been part of Yvonne's management team, so he was able to hit the ground running dealing with the arrangements with Cherwell and the pressing work on setting up the new shadow board necessary to bring about the creation of the West Northamptonshire Unitary Authority. The new management team is in place and they have the necessary officers to continue to provide excellent services to the residents.

The ongoing excellent relationship with Cherwell is a great way of how local Government can work together in partnership and as SNC go into the unknown let's hope South Northants commitment to providing great services and strong financial management over many years will be at the forefront of the new Unitary Council for West Northamptonshire.

### **SNC Financial Highlights**

SNC continue to be one of the best at collecting council tax with 99% of all tax collected. The national average is 98% and SNC remains the 16<sup>th</sup> best in the whole of England on collection rates. SNC are considerably higher than the other Authorities in Northamptonshire.

### **New Homes Bonus**

Unlike many Councils SNC uses some of the New Homes Bonus it receives from new developments to invest in the local community. Local organisations can bid for grants to help them achieve their objectives. Grants are awarded by the Community Funding Panel that meets four times a year and application forms and details of the criteria can be found on the SNC web site. In 2018-19, almost £1.507m of grant funding was awarded to communities within South Northamptonshire across 167 projects to improve their environment and lifestyle. Over the lifetime of the New Homes Bonus Scheme over £3.3m has been re-invested in the Community.

### **Council Tax**

The SNC part of the Council Tax bill was raised by 2.99% which is £5.55 a year for a Band D property, making total now £191.33 per year. The increase is in line with inflation. SNC only get to keep 11% of the total bill. Northants County take the biggest share at 71%, PCC 14% and the Fire Service 4%. SNC is a large authority, has always been well managed and balanced the books. Cllr Herring confirmed through a question from the floor that once there is a unitary authority It becomes one authorities money.

## **Planning**

### Local Plan part 2

After five lengthy years, South Northants completed the LPP2 and submitted it to the Inspectorate ahead of schedule on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2019. It has been acknowledged, and SNC have been allocated an Inspector who will begin his due diligence in June 2019. Should issues be raised by the Inspector requiring attention, they will once again be presented for public consultation and should this be the case, it is likely that the Plan will become 'statute' during the winter of 2019. At this stage it will replace the 1997 South Northamptonshire Local Plan. Cllr Scott asked if mineral extraction is covered under the Local Plan?

*Action: Cllr Herring agreed to find out.*

### **Neighbourhood Plan**

Two Neighbourhood Plans have been 'made': - Harpole and Kislingbury. There are a number of other villages/parishes that are at various stages of 'making' their plans and when completed will be presented for consultation and scrutinisation. Once adopted and 'made' they will lie alongside the Local Plan Part 2. Although some expense is incurred when preparing the NP, it is a vital means of protecting the rural villages. Whilst promoting acceptable development it avoids speculative development.

### **South Northamptonshire Land Supply**

This Council has built up a good reserve of planning land in-hand. SNC have been fortunate with growth for both dwellings and employment land in Brackley, Silverstone, Deanshanger and Towcester. This has enabled SNC to build to 11.2 years of land supply. (The Government's guide is 5 years plus 20%). With the anticipated Unitary, even with, SNC 11.2 years, Daventry DC 6 plus years and Northampton BC 2.3 years these numbers will not meet the average figure required by the Government's minimum requirement! This actually puts greater emphasis on the need to protect rural villages and thus SNC should encourage Neighbourhood Plans.

### **Conservation and Heritage**

This Council is fortunate firstly to have such a committed Conservation team but also to have a District with so many Conservation areas. The team continue to work through the total of 96 villages and hamlets, updating where necessary and removing certain villages that no longer marry up to the Conservation requirements, thus they maintain a very high standard.

### **West Northamptonshire SUE**

A joint development of 7,700 dwellings with Daventry DC and Northampton BC in the area from Kislingbury to Harlestone Heath. This includes a proportion on SNC's land known as Norwood Farm. Attached to this development are the usual primary schools (2), health centre, retail shops, green spaces, sports fields and the Sandy lane Relief Road (SLRR).

### **Brackley Town Hall Restoration**

On the 11th September the newly restored Town Hall was re-opened. This was the culmination of a project that was funded jointly by the Heritage Lottery Fund (£2.3m), South Northamptonshire Council (£500k) and Brackley Town Council (£500k) that has totally refurbished the iconic Georgian Town Hall in the centre of Brackley so that it may continue to serve the community for many, many years to come. The Chair asked if there was any prospect of a tenant?

*Action: Cllr Herring to find out.*

Towcester Town Expansion

### **Towcester Relief Road (TRR)**

Included in the Section 106 agreement for the Towcester South Urban Expansion (SUE) is the completion of the TRR by occupation of the 1016<sup>th</sup> dwelling, sometime in 2026. This Council has been trying for some time to accelerate the delivery of this road. Recent negotiations with Persimmon Homes and Highways England have brought us to the brink of an agreement. Should this agreement be sanctioned, this Council will see the road started in March 2020 and completed in March 2021. This is no mean achievement. With the TRR in place HGV vehicles will be encouraged through signage to use the 40mph TRR rather than go through Towcester town centre at a restricted 20mph. Hopefully this will have a huge impact on the Air Quality in Towcester Town Centre.

### **Health & Wellbeing in the District**

**Brackley Leisure Centre.** January this year saw the official opening of Brackley Leisure Centre, it was a truly special and incredibly successful day. Olympian champion swimmer Mark Foster said he hopes the new pools will inspire future generations to stay healthy as he cut the ribbon on South Northants Councils £4.5m redevelopment of Brackley Leisure Centre. SNC promised Brackley a new pool and SNC have delivered it.

**Towcester Centre for Leisure.** SNC are incredibly pleased and proud that they are able to commit just over £1million towards making long overdue improvements to Towcester Centre for Leisure. More and more people are using the leisure centres, they know that people who come from the town and the surrounding areas to Towcester will all really welcome this investment.

**Summer activities for children.** 1207 children from across the District enjoyed the summer activities they provided, making 2018 a record year. Much work went into ensuring they were able to provide great opportunities through the summer holidays to children from all walks of life, including those with disabilities and children from low income families.

**Towcester & Brackley Community Fun Days** took place at the Islington Road Recreation Ground in Towcester in May and at Brackley's Leisure Centre in Springfield Way in June. Hundreds of families attended these free events which showcased the clubs and activities available to young people in South Northamptonshire.

**Disability Sport.** SNC started the South Northants Disability Sports Forum just over a year ago and the Forum consists of local sports clubs, third sector organisations, Legacy Leisure, Northamptonshire Sport and of course South Northants Council. One of the aims of the Forum is to break down the barriers faced by disabled people making it possible for people to lead healthy lives, and that means all people.

**Towcester Watermeadows** came to life in October when Chairman Cllr Richard Dallyn hosted a fun run to raise money for the hospices which serve South Northamptonshire. The Watermeadows are currently underused, Cllr Dallyn thought this would be a great way to introduce new people to this wonderful public space, and for anyone who keeps putting off that lifestyle change, this could be their first step towards a longer and better life.

### **Art & Culture**

**Centre Screen.** The rural cinema scheme continues to be popular in communities where the village hall or library (in Brackley) is a convenient place for residents to get together for social activities. Some village groups have invested in their own film equipment now, but many rely on Centre Screen to provide it, show the film and deal with licensing. There are more regular screenings in South Northants than other parts of the county: Blakesley, Blisworth, Brackley, Cogenhoe, Culworth, Evenley, King's Sutton, Marston St. Lawrence, Milton Malsor, Moreton Pinkney, Nether Heyford, Paulerspury and Whittlebury.

## **Communities**

**Residents will now benefit from a new community transport scheme.** ABILITY Community Transport is providing a service across the rural communities of South Northants to provide a weekly shopper bus service to the main shopping areas of Towcester, Stony Stratford, Wolverton and Northampton. South Northants Council has awarded a grant of £59,924 towards ABILITYs total project costs of £171,214.

**Good Neighbour schemes** are established by communities and run by local people to provide day to day support for other residents in their village and community, particularly those more isolated or older residents, who may need help on an occasional or regular basis.

**South Northants Council Wellbeing Activity Map**, developed by SNCs Community Services Team is now live on their website. You can search for activities near where you live by entering your postcode on the website. Lots of the activities are free of charge and none cost more than £5 per session. They include opportunities for sports, arts, learning and socialising.

**Annual Comfort & Joy Campaign.** The annual Comfort and Joy campaign, started in 2015, ran again in December, which helps those who are staying in refuges as a result of experiencing domestic abuse. Jointly organised by the Daventry District and South Northamptonshire Community Safety Partnership and the Daventry District Forum, its aim is to provide people with a few gifts and treats, as well as food, toiletries and other essential items.

## **Environmental Services Report**

This year has been very active and positive for the teams in Waste & Recycling, Licensing and Environmental Health, with significant achievements thanks to their hard work.

### **Waste & Recycling**

SNC were the 7th best authority in England for recycling out of 345 areas and one place higher than before. Of the waste that is collected, 60.5% is recycled thanks to the residents taking care to make sure the right things go in the right bins – this is good for the environment and keeps costs down.

### **Licensing**

#### **Supporting Local Business**

This year, South Northamptonshire features in a national league table of local authority areas as being in the top 40% places in the country. The ranking is a measure of growth, innovation, social equality, health and happiness. Despite it being a time of uncertainty, the District continues to be a good place to live, work, invest and grow.

Eighty-three per cent of the working age population is employed, and the District's workforce also has an above average level of education, with over ninety per cent qualified to NVQ1 and above.

The Chair asked if the planning principles will continue? Cllr Herring replied that whilst the unitary plan is developing, it is not clear whether there will be individual planning committees for each area. It is hoped they will keep as much local emphasis as possible.

#### **19/16. To receive a report from County Cllr R Breese**

There was no report from Cllr R Breese.

#### **19/17. To receive a summary of the finances for year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019**

An unaudited overview for the year was circulated to members.

Total income for the year was £4659.17. Total payments for the year were £4768.85.

Income shows a grant from SNC for the defibrillator. The cabinet was purchased in 2018 and the defibrillator purchased and installed in 2019.

The precept has been increased for 2019/20 by £200.00 to £3300.00. Lighting is the biggest item of expenditure. EON are increasing their prices each year and the Parish Council are now looking at alternative suppliers. The lamps in the lights are mercury and expensive to run. The cost to change to LEDs is about £1700.00. A villager has written to ask if consideration can be given to turning the lights off between 12 and 5am. This will be incorporated into the future discussions. Cllr Herring agreed to support a request for grant aid to pay for the street lighting. Website costs are high and the Parish Council are looking at ways to reduce these costs. It was grant aided for three years which helped with set up and running costs. This has finished now.

*Action: The Parish Clerk to check when the PWL will finish.*

**19/18. To receive an update on 'The Marston Inn'**

The Marston Inn has been re-registered as an Asset of Community Value for a further five years. This means the property cannot be sold without the Parish Council being told. Three meetings have been held in the last 12 months. The planning agent, Fisher German was appointed last summer to find a way forward. The Brewery have discussed a pre-application with SNC. The plan is to demolish the pub and rebuild a newer one nearer to the road facing down the village. The garden will be kept. 9 houses are proposed and made up of the following mix: 2 x 2 bedroomed and 6 x 3 bedroomed. The matter has not been formally considered at a Parish Council meeting and will be discussed further in May. Hook Norton Brewery are keen to keep the pub. The pre-application advice from SNC is that they have to provide a business case to prove there is a need for a community hub. Thanks was given to the Chair for his persistence with discussions with Hook Norton Brewery.

*Action: Cllr R Herring agreed to speak to the Planning Officer.*

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

**Village Hall (Cllr C Skermer)**

The Village hall is 80 years old and there are plans to update the hall to make it suitable for the next 80 years. The committee members have expertise and are a group of forward thinking people who are willing to give their time. Other people connected to the village have offered their help too. Thanks was given to Dave Scott, Richard Gale and the Parish Council's support as they have secured grants from HS2, SNC and the Lottery. The planned improvements include air source heat pumps, solar panels to reduce the cost of heating, insulating the walls and lowering the ceiling which will make it a warmer environment. The stage will be removed to provide more space and retractable folding walls are being sourced to make variable size spaces. The entrance and cloakroom areas require configuration if funds are available. The next stage is getting the tenders and contracts sorted. The committee is lucky to have a professional Project Manager on its committee. In the words of Christopher Wren, 'Si monumentum requiris circumspice' (If you seek his monument, look around.) The committee hope to see as many people as possible at the AGM on 16<sup>th</sup> April at 7.30pm where more details will be available.

**Dolly Mixtures (Joyce Scott, Chair)**

Once again they have enjoyed a varied and interesting programme. Talks have included, Information about the Air Ambulance, Saints, Sinners, Stars and Scandals in Northamptonshire, Bert Manton showing them how to create Country Crafts where they all tried their hand at making Corn Dollies with varied amounts of success. In August John Shepherd showed his animal slides, September saw Martin Sirot-Smith dressed in period costumer as Lawrence Washington, Lord of the Manor of Sulgrave and Stuchbury. He recounted stories of how Laurence came to Sulgrave which was interesting and amusing as usual. In November Brenda and Anne led in making Christmas boxes and Christmas cards.

The annual meetings included, the AGM in February, as it was an extremely cold evening they postponed their Beetle Drive until March, they enjoyed a meal out in May, harvest Supper in October and a Festive Social Evening in December. They did not have the Annual Garden party. They continue to support the Poppy Appeal and The Star and Garter Home.

They decided to change their charity collection from Cancer Research to collect for whichever charity they wished to support that year. They welcomed Katie as a new member. Membership remains static and new members are always welcome. They all contributed to organising speakers, raffle prizes and providing delicious refreshments. They look forward to another interesting and fun filled year in 2019.

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

The sun shone on Marston St Lawrence Cricket Club. 2018 was the most successful in the 120 year history of the club in winning the South Northants League Premiership for the first time, the Wardington Cup and best kept facilities in the league. In 2019 they will be fielding two Saturday league teams, entering various cup competitions and junior competitions at various age groups. The junior section continues to attract strong support in developing the future cricketers. The club is a major presence in the communities of Marston, Greatworth and the wider area, providing excellent sporting and social opportunities. They always welcome new members, whether players or supporters.

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

The main local league is the Croughton league and this is the only club to field two teams. The A Team won the League last season together with the Sid Willis Cup competition. This season sees the A Team second in the league and in the running for the Ron Jackson and Terry Annable Cups. The B Team led the league for the first three weeks of the season and have finished in 4<sup>th</sup> – the highest place for over a decade and winners of the Clyde Burbridge Cup (highest placed of lower teams). The individual competition has two Marston players as the finalists. The Eydon league has one team from Marston. Last year they won the League and the League Cup, and this season have again won the League. There is a short doubles league emanating from Marston in the late Summer which has been successfully run by two Marston players. Overall some success, but a lot of enjoyment.

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

There are two tables and people meet between 8.30-10pm. 7-12 people attend and are connected or live in the village. It is a fun and informal activity and costs £1 per week.

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

The Rector covers 6 parishes within the Chenderit Benefice. The North Porch has been partially taken down and is being rebuilt. Services are well attended and more people attend the family services. 20-25 people attend on a regular basis. There was good attendance for Mothering Sunday. The toilet and kitchen are long term plans.

Bell Ringing – Numbers are decreasing as people are moving away. There are currently 6-7 local ringers who meet at 7.45pm on a Monday night.

### **Clay Pigeon Shooting**

The Marston Marauders are still continuing to flourish and enjoying the monthly clay shoot. With a turnout of about 40 people shooting during the course of the year, they recently had one of their best results with a 2nd place in the small league. They have seen a number of new shooters for the team and hope to continue to offer a local pastime for people to enjoy.

If there is anyone who would like to participate please feel free to contact Simon Powell or Phil Tyler and they can make you feel welcome. Emails can be sent to [marstonmarauders@outlook.com](mailto:marstonmarauders@outlook.com).

The Chair noted that all the village reports received tonight were very positive which was pleasing.

### **19/20 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.

**19/21. Other matters to discuss**

- Councillor Vacancy. There has been a vacancy on the Parish Council for some time now. Elections have been postponed until May 2020. One villager has shown an interest and they can be co-opted at the next meeting in May.

**19/22. Open Forum**

The annual litter pick will take place on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2019 and there will be refreshments after in the village hall.

**18/23. Date and time of next meeting, Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2019 at 7.30pm in the village hall.**

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

Meeting finished at 8.49pm.