

Marston St Lawrence Parish Council
Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
Held on Tuesday 29th September 2015 in the Cricket Pavilion at 7.30pm

Present: Cllr's Richard Gale, Mick Scott, Chris Skermer, Matthew Timms and Christine Coles (Parish Clerk)

The Chair welcomed Cllr Ron Sawbridge and Bruce Benyon from Hook Norton Brewery to the meeting.

15.9.1 Apologies

Cllr's Daniela Carletti and Stephen Goodwin

15.9.2 Declarations of Interest

There were no interests to declare.

15.9.3 To approve the minutes of meeting held on 19th May 2015

The minutes of the meeting of 19th May 2015 were agreed and signed, proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Chris Skermer.

15.9.4 Matters arising (for information only)

The problem with the standing water outside Kytle Farmhouse has been rectified as three new drains have been put in.

15.9.5 Open Forum

Cllr Ron Sawbridge (County Councillor) read out a report. The Middleton Cheney division consists of 13 parishes and there are small and big issues in each. The parishes cover a fair spread in area and border Oxfordshire. There is a greater impact from across the border in Oxfordshire. Residents shop in Banbury, use the health facilities and schools in Oxfordshire. There is massive house building going on in Cherwell and 23,000 houses will be built. This will increase the population by 80,000. There will be an increase in traffic, and the medical and education provision will come under pressure. Some RAF bases are closing down.

There will be traffic counts taking place on the B4100 to measure traffic. Farthinghoe are concerned about HGV traffic. A meeting has been held and an initial plan discussed for a bypass. Overthorpe is a restricted access village. South Northants Council and the police objected to it and wanted it removing as it was not enforceable. The parish are hoping to get a Special Constable in the village. People do use the village as a cut through but for the time being the village will remain as restricted access.

Consideration is being given on the impact of HS2 construction vehicles using the A43, A422, B4035 and Junctions 10/11 of the M40. Councillors will be looking at the impact of this. A meeting is being held with Northants and Oxon Councillors and Cherwell District Council will look at mitigating the effects on villages.

Northants County Council finances are very tight. The government has reduced the money they give to councils. NCC are doing things more economically and sharing services with Cambridgeshire and Norwich City Council. This helps to make the council run more efficiently. There is no spare money.

There are a lot of children in the care system. Seven years ago there were 500 children in care. Now there is 945. The elderly population is increasing. More people are going into care but authorities would prefer them to stay at home.

Cllr Sawbridge asked if there were any issues in the village. New drains have been put in recently and dropped kerbs. Cllr Scott noted the recent theft of lead from the church roof. The police did not offer help in any way.

15.9.6 To receive a verbal report from The Chairman on planning applications received and to determine the procedure for considering planning applications in future

Three applications had been received since the last meeting:-

S/2015/1790/FUL, Proposed changes to the boundary of Lane Cottage incorporating new post and rail fences and the relocation of an existing gate at Lane Cottage and Elm Cottage. The Parish Council raised no objections.

S/2015/1895/FUL, Alterations to existing outbuilding to provide self-contained guest accommodation at Marston Hill Farm, Sulgrave Road. The Parish Council had no objections but raised a comment about the dormer window being reduced.

S/2015/2025/FUL, Demolition of single storey side extension. Construction of two storey side/rear wrap-around extension at 2 Field View. The Parish Council had no objections.

Councillors agreed to continue meeting to look at planning paperwork and councillors to attend where possible. It was agreed that the Parish Clerk did not need to attend these meetings.

15.9.7 To receive a report from Cllr's Gale and Timms on consultations with Hook Norton Brewery concerning the Marston Inn

In June, the Chair and Cllr Timms met Bruce Benyon from Hook Norton Brewery to look around the pub. They discussed the possibility for development of the building and site. The question of the previous application to build two houses at the back was mentioned but it was turned down on appeal. The property could be divided. One half could be a small pub and the other half converted into a cottage. The cottage could be used as a holiday let or bed and breakfast to generate more income, or sold separately.

Mr Benyon noted that the pub has been closed for 3.5 years. The application to build two houses was turned down despite a positive pre-application meeting with the case officer. District Cllr Rosie Herring and Cllr Ian McCord, Leader of SNC has said that the Parish Council could extend the boundary. Some parishes have taken on pubs but only the minority are successful. He spoke about the Fox and Hounds pub at Charwelton. The pub was bought for development but planning refused. It was sold to the village but they struggled to make it work. A new tenant is making it work but he is leaving as he cannot get security of the tenure. He did offer to buy the pub. Small communities running pubs encounter lots of difficulties.

Another option is to make a small village pub and make this the hub of the village. Hook Norton Brewery would be willing to invest if there is a reasonable profit from the sale of the development land.

Hook Norton Brewery are currently in discussions with SNC about de-licensing the property. The pub has been up for let and for sale on the freehold market for some time now. One offer of £100K was made.

Mr Benyon spoke about 'Pub is the Hub' which is a website which supports local rural communities in succeeding. The Prince of Wales is the patron and there is access to advice and limited funding. Mr Benyon was not sure if SNC or NCC have similar funding available.

The Chair replied that the Parish Council would be supportive in the building of two houses but there would be more resistance in the de-licensing. He had heard that it had been difficult for people to view the pub. Mr Benyon disputed this as he has carried the key in his car for three years. The Chair asked if Mr Benyon knew of any smaller pubs that are going down a similar route? Mr Benyon agreed to ask but they are more popular in geographical peripheral areas. The Chair had visited a micro pub in Newbury recently. Although the rent is high, there are no business rates to pay, insurance is cheap and the tenant did not have to sell much beer to make an income.

Cllr Scott asked Mr Benyon if Hook Norton Brewery had done anything about boundary changes. Mr Benyon replied no as this request would have to come from the Parish Council. Mr Benyon is already talking to the directors at the Brewery about the concept of fitting out a village pub and there is a company in Cropredy which could help with the refurbishment.

Mr Benyon spoke about a case study of a pub in Wales where a card system was operated. However someone would still need to buy the stock and look after the pub. Although the pub would be used by many teams during the cricket season, a more viable option would be to keep the pub open a couple of days per week.

The Chair thanked Mr Benyon for attending the meeting and he left the room.

Councillors continued the discussion and felt that the option to refurbish the pub and two houses would bring back a community asset and the village would be less unsustainable. The pub would not serve food and a small scale pub would produce less wastage. The Parish Council should ask the District Councillor for help in getting the boundary changed. It seems that Hook Norton Brewery are prepared to invest in the pub.

Action: Councillors to each produce a financial plan which is satisfactory to Hook Norton Brewery and the village and meet again.

15.9.8 To receive a progress report on the construction of a parish website

The website will cost £500.00 to set up and £300.00 to maintain for one year. There is a website hosting cost of £60.00 to set up and £60.00 annual fee. Councillors also felt it was important to have live news with a notice-board. The cost is £70.00 to set up and a £70.00 maintenance fee. The website would be within the village control and events can be put on it.

Councillors agreed to accept these costs.

Action: The Parish Clerk to arrange and get the website set up.

15.9.9 To consider a draft 'Welcome to Marston St Lawrence leaflet'

This is still work in progress.

15.9.10 To approve an application for a grant from 'the transparency fund'

It was agreed to submit a grant form from the transparency fund for a total of £1060.00.

Action: The Parish to complete and return the form.

15.9.11 To receive a verbal report from Councillor Scott re condition of the bus shelter

The bus shelter is in very good condition considering its age (20 years). It is due for a treatment again and Cllr Scott agreed to spray with a preservative at a cost of £50.00. Councillors agreed to accept this cost.

15.9.12 Finance

The following payments were approved under statutory powers

- £49.14 to EON (street lighting maintenance for qtr ending 30.06.15)
- £149.67 to EON (electricity)
- £226.94 PWL (lighting)
- £125.00 to Parish Clerk (hours)
- £8.00 to Parish Clerk (mileage)
- £22.27 to Parish Clerk (expenses)
- £49.14 to EON (street lighting maintenance for qtr ending 30.09.15)
- £5.00 to Northants CALC (Training course attended by the Chair. Total invoice amount is £39.00 but a training voucher for £34.00 will be used for part payment)

Proposed by Cllr Timms and seconded by Cllr Skermer.

The budget for 2016/17 would be discussed and set at the December meeting.

To accept and approve the Annual Return for 2015/16

The external audit is complete with no issues arising. The Annual Return was approved and accepted by the council. The appropriate notice has been put on the board.

15.9.13 Correspondence

From

Library Resource Centre, Mobile Library Routes for 2015/16. On notice-board.

Northants CALC, Notice of AGM 17th October

Northants Police and Crime Commissioner, Parish Special Constable starter pack

Northants CALC, Transparency Fund

SNC, Development Management Contacts

SNC, Council Tax Reduction Scheme

One item of correspondence was highlighted:

Northants Police and Crime Commissioner, Parish Special Constable starter pack. The village name is spelt wrong on the poster. The Parish Clerk to write and ask for a new one.

15.9.14 Date, time and place of next meeting - Tuesday 8th December 2015, 7.30pm in the Village Hall

Meeting finished at 9.15pm

