

Chelveston-cum-Caldecott Parish Council

Northamptonshire

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly

9th April 2002

Minutes of the **Annual Parish Assembly** held at 7:30pm - Monday 9th April 2002 in the Chelveston Village Hall, Chelveston-cum-Caldecott.

Present :- Councillors :	Cllr. A.R.Dale Cllr A.J.Palfreeman Cllr. M.L.Foulger Cllr. M.J.Izzard Cllr. P.S.Logue Cllr. S.E.Stopps	(Chairman) (Vice-chair) (part)
Clerk:	Mr. M.H.Hunter	
District Council:	Cllr. R.Gell	
Public:	29 members of the public (just under 10% of electorate)	

1 Apologies Received

- 1.1 Cllr Dale opened the meeting at 7:30pm and welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the format. He introduced the new Clerk, Mark Hunter, and asked for any apologies. Apologies were received from Cllr Meeson due to work commitments.

2 Minutes of Previous APA – 27th March 2001

The minutes of the previous APA – 27th March 2001 were previously approved and signed at the Ordinary meeting of the Parish Council held on 16th July 2001.

3 Chairman's Report

The Chairman reported on the year, starting with the problems arising with a previous Clerk, which left the Council administration such that the Council was not performing all its functions adequately (e.g. bills were not being paid). This led to a cash surplus that was commented on at the annual audit. The Chairman thanked Cllr Foulger for stepping in as acting Clerk during the year until a new Clerk was appointed in January.

The village circular walk (footpath linking Water Lane to Bidwell Lane) had been quoted at £15,000. Given the short distance involved, this was considered too expensive. The Council was trying to include the footpath in a larger scheme to link Chelveston to Higham Ferrers under the "Walk to School" programme, but had not been successful this year.

The state of the street lighting was a concern, with the concrete lampposts likely to need replacing. East Midlands Electricity Distribution had notified the Council that bracket lamps could no longer be attached to their powerline poles, as they intended to move all their cables underground. Since the cost of replacing with a new lamppost was currently £600+, the Council could only budget to replace two a year.

New street signs were erected during the year, mainly paid for by ENC, to enable visitors to find some less obvious parts of the village (e.g. Pokas Cottages). One had been delivered with a spelling mistake and this is to be replaced.

Direction signs had been quoted for (£500+ each) for the village hall and "Children Playing" signs for Water Lane. The Council was looking for alternate suppliers.

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Due to Cllr Izzard's efforts in litter picking round the village, a map of the most likely litter spots had been drawn up, resulting in ENC paying for two new litterbins. A third bin has been requested for the bottom of Water Lane near the ford. It was suggested that a fourth might be located near the village hall.

The Chairman then went through a detailed explanation of the finances, covering 2000, 2001 and the budget for 2002. The increase in the Precept (the first since 1996) and the savings in the Clerk's salary were to be used to fund the replacing of the lampposts and the new verge maintenance contract (previously NCC), which would result in an increased service of 8 instead of 4 cuts a year. Comments were made about the standard of the first cut, but the Council had agreed to judge the contractor on the whole year performance.

The Council had been successful in getting a 50% grant of £2,500 toward a traffic-calming scheme on the Raunds Rd. The Council wanted to know the villagers' views on what they wanted. Comments included - no traffic calming measures, more action by the police, installation of a speed camera, fake speed camera, red tarmac 30 on the road, 30 mph sign that lights up if approaching too fast. NCC does not recommend bumps or humps. It was noted that HGV's changing down gears to get through road narrowing or bumps could increase noise pollution to nearby residents. The use of 30 mph repeater signs was not permitted (legal reasons), nor was a weight limit application going to be successful until after the A6 bypass was built. In view of the money involved, Cllr Palfreeman wanted the chosen scheme to be a proven one, rather than a new experiment.

The meeting requested the Council should further investigate options available and arrange to display the options at a meeting for the villagers to attend and debate.

4 Village Hall

Cllr Logue (Chairman of the Village Hall Committee) had to leave the meeting, so Cllr Foulger (Secretary of the Village Hall Committee and Trustee of the Abigail Bailey & Ann Levitt Educational Foundation Trust – known as the School Trustees) explained that the hall is owned by the School Trustees, along with the adjacent schoolhouse. The hall is leased to the Village Hall Committee, which in turn hires it out to other organisations (e.g. W.I., Parish Council, Church) for their meetings and other events (e.g. parties, fairs, carol services).

The hall (built in 1864) needs many repairs undertaking, the most urgent being an unsafe disused chimney, which is coming away from the wall. This will be removed to make safe. Unfortunately this cannot be claimed on the insurance. The School Trustees are not eligible for grants (usually 20% - 50%), but the Village Hall Committee could, if there was a change in the lease. The Northants partnership – community regeneration scheme was mentioned.

Following some debate, it was suggested the Charity Commissioners be approached to change the status of the Trust, since it was 35 years since children were last taught there, thus combining the two charities. Cllr Foulger explained that approaches had been made twice before, but had been refused. The meeting expressed the view that the village needed a village hall, but that it should be a village asset. The Chairman advised that the Parish Council hold £2,000 (ring fenced for the village hall), but the Council was not prepared to release this money until the status of the hall had been settled.

The meeting requested the Village Hall Committee and the School Trustees approach the Charity Commissioners to combine the function of the two groups, such that the village hall is owned by one charitable trust eligible to receive grant aid.

5 Women's Institute

Mrs Christine Foulger (President of the Chelveston-cum-Caldecott WI) told the meeting the local branch had been going for 81 years. The WI mission statement is to "improve the lives of rural women". The local branch meets once a month and visitors (male & female) are most welcome (£2 at the door, includes coffee). Membership (from the village, Higham and

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Raunds) is down to 15. Fund raising activities include the recent Barn Dance (raised £300). The WI campaigns on both local & national issues.

6 Parish Church

Cllr Foulger (Churchwarden of St John the Baptist Church) described the 13th Century parish church. The average Sunday (9:00 am) congregation is 20-24, of whom 8-12 come from the village. The churchyard is still open for burials.

The 5 bells in the tower are unable to be rung, as £30,000+ is needed to rebuild the bell frame (£3,000 raised so far). Also, the vicar would like water piped into the church, with toilets and kitchen facilities installing (estimated £15,000 - £20,000). The Diocese does not contribute to the upkeep of the Church; rather the parish has to pay a Parish Share of £5,500 for the provision of a Priest. Fund raising includes organ recitals, Snowdrop Sunday, Principally Plants, Garden Fetes, Autumn Fairs, etc.

7 Bus Services

Mr Nigel Whyte (NCC Rural Transport Officer) and Janet Wincott (NCC) attended the meeting for this item. Mr Whyte thanked those villagers who had completed the recent questionnaires (16 out of 196).

In view of the requests for a service to link the village to Raunds and Higham, and the reluctance of the bus operators to deviate their present routes, NCC felt it would be more cost effective to set up a shared taxi scheme. Effectively, this provided a bookable taxi service, to Raunds or Higham (and back), at bus prices. The service would operate weekdays and weekends to 10:30 p.m. (i.e. same as normal bus operations).

The meeting was very supportive of this proposal and requested NCC and the Parish Council proceed with the setting up of the scheme.

Mr Whyte also spoke about the Parish Transport Grant (£10,000 per year) toward the operation of a community minibus if the parish wanted to set up its own transport scheme.

8 Village Housing Developments

The Chairman outlined the 1995 outline proposal to develop Duchy Field (which included 38 houses, a recreational area, the shell of a village hall and a shop to be rented at £1/pa to a shopkeeper), the 1995 Village Appraisal, the development at Top Farm (Disbrowe Court) and the current restricted in-fill status of the village.

Cllr Gell commented on the County Plan and that the areas for future development in the district were (in the main) already identified, so there was unlikely to be any rapid expansion of the village unless the villagers themselves asked for it.

The meeting debated the need of any further housing, the lack of facilities and affordable housing for the children growing up in the village.

Since access to the Duchy field was a problem, a roundabout on the B645 at the junction with Caldecott Rd was suggested. Not only would this provide safe access to any proposed new estate (and keep it away from Water Lane & Duchy Close), but it would also reduce speeds on the B645 of traffic entering the village.

In addition to Duchy field, the field alongside Caldecott Rd was suggested, along with the field opposite the houses in the Sawyers Crescent.

There was some concerns that developers would build what they wanted, rather than what the village wanted (e.g. Disbrowe Court), but Cllr Gell advised that the new planning regulations (PPG3) gave the councils more control than previously.

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A suggestion was made that potential developers / land owners be invited to submit plans, to be exhibited to the villagers, to give them a better idea of what any new developments might look like. Such plans would be for discussion only and did not imply consent by the villagers of any new development in the village.

The meeting requested that the Parish Council should conduct another Village Appraisal, especially in light of the new County Plan (2005-2020) currently being prepared.

A question was raised about the status of RAF Chelveston and the adjacent housing annex. Since a number of these properties were now vacant and the government policy of selling off surplus stock, rumours had been circulating about ENC housing "problem families" on the estate. Likewise rumours concerning the MOD land (which did not require planning permission in the usual way) included a travellers camp and a Home Office Immigration Centre. Cllr Gell declined to comment on rumours.

The meeting requested that the Parish Council should try to clarify the future of RAF Chelveston and the housing annex.

9 Any Other Business

The Chairman invited comments from the meeting. Topics included -

- Possibility of erecting warning signs to indicate lorries turning into JST.
- Use of the grass area opposite JST (NCC land) as a place for a village sign. The area is to be mown to keep it tidy.
- The hedge of the empty house down Water Lane (held in trust) that was overgrowing the footpath.
- The future of JST – the owner has indicated the firm may vacate the site, if a suitable buyer or developer was found.

The Chairman advised the meeting that the Parish Council was largely unelected (insufficient candidates at the last election) and that May 2003 would be the next opportunity for new councillors to serve the community.

Cllr Gell told the meeting that, from his observations over the years, the Parish Council was working hard for the village and the drive and enthusiasm of the Chairman was not to be underestimated.

The Chairman finished the meeting by announcing Cllr Foulger had now completed 35 years as a Parish Councillor, as well as being a Trustee of several charities, Churchwarden and undertaking many other unsung, and often unrecognised, duties around the village. The village would be poorer without him.

The Meeting closed at 9:25 p.m.

Issued on 16th April 2002

Pages 677- 680 signed under seal as true record

Adrian Dale
Chairman of the Parish Council

Mark Hunter
Clerk to the Parish Council