

Minutes of Whitbourne Annual Parish Meeting

held on 15th May 2019

Attendance:

Present: R. James (Chairman); J. Bromley (JB); P. Wood (PDW); G. Cupper (GC); P. Davis (PD); C. Wier (CW); S. Knowles (SK).

In Attendance: K Phillips (Clerk). 2 members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence

M Clark (MC).

2. Report from Chairman of the Parish Council

See attached report given by the Chairman. Having read out the report, it was proposed by GC and seconded by PDW to thank the Chairman for his commitment in keeping the War memorial gardens in excellent condition.

3. Public discussion of any matters relating to Whitbourne

Two projects were brought to the notice of the meeting.

A/ "Litter Action Whitbourne". This was an initiative to have regular litter picks within the Parish. Necessary equipment will be provided. Currently, insurance covers volunteers between the ages of 16 and 90 and ways were being investigated to ensure those outside these ages could participate.

B/ "Our Man in the Moone". A series of events was planned to help engage the community in celebrating one of Whitbourne's most famous residents, Bishop Francis Godwin, who wrote the book that was published in 1638. Funding had been obtained from the village shop and the Lottery to support these events. More funding was being applied for to enable the events to be taken on tour to other local venues, including Bromyard. Momentum is gathering in the publicity of the book, which includes the local brewery at The Talbot planning to name one of its beers with the title of the book, "Our Man in the Moone".

Maureen Williams thanked the Chairman for his kind words and wished the new Councillors well in their new role.

The meeting closed at 19:22.

Signed Cllr James (Chairman)
15 May 2019

Annual Report from the Chairman of Whitbourne Parish Council

This has been the final year of the four year term in office of the present Parish Council. Sadly we had to say goodbye to four of our most experienced councillors who decided not to stand again for the next four year term. These four councillors have notched up a total of over one hundred years of service as parish councillors between them. They are:

Anne Evans who has also been the council representative on the Manorial Court, and therefore able to keep the council informed of any problems that the residents of Bringsty Common may be experiencing that we could easily miss when we are dealing with matters more in the centre of the village.

Jerry Cummins who in the past has been both Chairman and Vice Chairman of the PC, a governor of the sadly no longer Whitbourne Primary School, and also our representative on the District Church Committee.

Noel Knight who first became a councillor back in the early 1980s and with his knowledge of planning regulations has been invaluable when we have given our comments on local planning applications. He has also served as our representative on the Playing Fields Committee.

And lastly but by no means least Maureen Williams who has been vice Chairman during the last few years and Chairman previous to that. She has been invaluable with her ability to tap into and apply for grants that have benefitted the Parish, in particular the help we received towards the cost of renovating

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the War Manorial. She was also the Chair of the working party that drafted the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) that is so important in guiding our planning policies for the future.

Unfortunately due to factors beyond our control two items from last year's report that I had hoped would have been concluded by now are still ongoing.

The first of these is the poor state of the former Wheatsheaf Public House. Approximately six months ago myself, the ward councillor and other members of the parish council had a site meeting with the owner of the property at which we put forward sensible development options that would be acceptable within the NDP and likely to pass planning, to which the owner gave a favourable response. Unfortunately the hoped-for planning application was a long time coming and when we did receive it we were unable to support it because it would not be compatible with NDP, and also we had road safety concerns. But of course we can only make comments - the final decision will be made by Herefordshire Council (HC).

The other project that is taking longer than we had hoped is the highways and public transport works that we are planning to carry out with the s106 monies. This is the money allocated to the parish to be used for certain categories (ie. road safety, public transport and sport facilities) by the developers of Ardley meadows. The reasons for the delays in getting this work done is in no way the fault of Peter Wood as head of the working party or our ward councillor, who have both worked tirelessly to get this project completed. The problems have arisen because we are one of the first parishes in Herefordshire to benefit from this scheme and HC are unsure of some of the administration issues concerning it. I am hoping that we will have some clarity in the next few weeks and will be able to proceed with the work planned.

On a brighter note, with some excellent work by Maureen Williams who managed to obtain a grant from the War Memorial Trust and some generous public donations, we managed to get the village War Memorial cleaned and improve the legibility of the lettering. This work was completed in time for the very well attended armistice service which marked the 100th anniversary of the end of the Great War.

On financial matters, we have managed to keep the Parish precept for 2019/2020 the same as the previous year at £12000, a proportion of which is spent on the repayments of the loan for the build of the village hall which is soon to be completely paid off.

Unfortunately we are still seeing a few dog owners failing to pick up their dog poo on the village green and also the playing fields which are supposed to be a dog free area. This is despite the PC putting up more signs in the centre of the village to remind dog owners of their responsibilities. Another worrying trend with the new internet age is that we have an increasing number of emails with minor complaints sent to the volunteers who give their time to run the PC the Playing fields and the Village Hall, some of which are quite rude. The ideal way to express your views is to come along to the meetings of PC in which time is always set aside for public questions. Or better still come and join one of the committees and help to improve the facilities in the parish.

One of the first tasks for the new PC is to decide how we can make better use of the playing fields. Now that we no longer have a village school and with an ageing village population, is it the time to look at alternative sports facilities. The playing fields committee are desperate for new members with new ideas and the drive to see them through, so if you feel you can help with this please come forward and volunteer.

Looking forward to the coming year we are hoping to get better signage when leaving the A44 to try to stop large HGVs from entering the centre of the village on route to Clifton via the bottom road.

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Finally I would like to thank members of the Playing Fields and Village Hall committees for their hard work in keeping these facilities open for the parish to use, despite the challenges they have encountered during the last twelve months. Also a special thank you to the chairs of both committees Clive Pickering and Peter Wood who are both standing down in the near future but have put in an amazing amount of work during their terms in office.

So I am optimistic for the future of the Parish Council, with several new faces around the table with new ideas, a good Ward Councillor in Nigel Shaw who in the past has been a strong voice for the Parish at HC, and our PC clerk Kevin Phillips who is always available and a reliable source of knowledge on the correct procedures for the PC.

Ron James.