

Minutes of the Pillerton Hersey Annual Parish Meeting

7:00 pm, Tuesday, 23 May 2023

The Church of St Mary, Pillerton Hersey, CV35 0QQ

Present:

Cllr Hewson (Chair, PHPC)

Cllr Brooks

Cllr Hitchman

Cllr Thomas

Alana Collis (Clerk, PHPC)

Members of the public

Guest speakers

1. Welcome

The meeting was chaired by Cllr Hewson who welcomed everyone and opened the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

Cllr Forsyth had sent his apologies to the meeting.

3. Approval of minutes of previous Annual Parish Meeting

It was resolved that the minutes of the pervious Annual Parish meeting, held on 26 April 2022, were a true and accurate record (Proposed: Catherine Hewson, seconded: Alec Hitchman).

4. Annual report of the Parish Council for the year ended 31 March 2023

Cllr Hewson shared a report of the Parish Council activity for the year (see meeting pack). Key highlights since April 2022 included that village life has returned to more normal with the community getting together more post-Covid.

A new councillor was co-opted in November 2022 and all members of the PC were returned uncontested in the May 2023 elections.

Most of the parish council activity is around planning applications and the Chair noted that the council does engage with other activity. A key example of wider work regarding planning is the application for change of use and development at Hogwood Farm; which the parish council supported and liaised with Oxhill PC in this. Unfortunately, the application was refused but has recently been resubmitted. The application highlighted that when a planning

application is submitted, early engagement from the applicant is extremely useful but the parish council must maintain an unbiased approach without predetermination.

Other activities which the parish council has engaged on included cost of living, work with landowners and homeowners to maintain hedges and ditches and the recent purchase of a new grit bin for the Oxhill Bridle Road. As a non-main road, this is a location where WCC would not provide a bin and keep it filled with road salt. However, residents often note that there is run-off from fields which goes across the road and freezes in cold weather, particularly on the sharp bend.

There are ongoing concerns from residents regarding the speed of traffic, litter, dog fouling and connectivity (internet). The parish council is not responsible for some matters and therefore has limited influence or ability to affect change, particularly with a limited budget. However, the parish council is open to supporting anyone who wants to initiate community activity in these areas.

Regarding the village green, the parish council has formed a working group to work towards getting the land registered and putting in place an agreement for access to Springfield Farm which is via the track which is part of the village green.

There have been cross-council discussions regarding primary healthcare at Lighthorne Heath (Upper Lighthorne). Although not too near to Pillerton Hersey, the provision or lack of facilities in the new, large development would have secondary impact on facilities in places such as Wellesbourne and Kineton which parish residents do use.

Cllr Hewson thanked councillors, residents and the Clerk for their contributions over the last year.

A resident raised the issue of the ditch clearance on the Oxhill Bridle Road but there is a crest of a hill which prevents water moving away. Cllr Hitchman said that the landowner has given permission for the ditch to be cleared/excavated further. It was agreed that the parish council will liaise with WCC Highways to see if the work can be done.

5. Annual financial report of the Parish Council

Cllr Hewson summarised that the parish council has resolved to reduce the precept with a deficit budget and use some of the reserves that are in place. The council has introduced a reserves policy and have had annual internal audit which covers finance and general inflation. Attendees noted that the main cost is the Clerk (which is a requirement) and other inflationary costs.

6. Report from local and community organisations

Royal British Legion, James Kerr

Mr Kerr outlined that the local Royal British Legion (RBL) branch provides support for veterans and their families. It is the nation's largest charity with many volunteers. They offer a wide range of assistance from welfare to wellbeing.

The annual poppy appeal is a national symbol of remembrance. The funds raised are used to provide vital support for those in need. This includes care homes and rehabilitation. There is pride being able to support those who have served their country. There is also the National Memorial Arboretum, a key part of the RBL – 150 acres that offers something for everyone.

Over the last year, £1,441 was raised by residents of Pillerton Hersey, Pillerton Priors, Butlers Marston and Combrook with over £7m raised across England and Wales. The charity and local branch are always looking for more volunteers. Alan Brooks is the collector for Pillerton Hersey. Recently, card machines have been successfully introduced in the cashless era. Mr Kerr shared that he will be stepping down in the future.

Cllr Hitchman asked how RBL activity impacts Pillerton Hersey specifically. Mr Kerr said he is not aware of anyone locally but there is an RBL club in Stratford. Cllr Thomas asked if there was any link between RBL and Commonwealth War Graves. Mr Kerr said that the Commonwealth War Graves are a separate organisation that receives proportionate input from all countries in the commonwealth who lost people fighting in war.

Mr Hitchman asked if RBL supports war memorials. Mr Kerr confirmed that the primary focus is to support the living. There are other similar organisations that support veterans e.g. Help for Heroes. There are some regiment specific charities which also support the RBL network.

A resident mentioned that HS2 found an unexploded bomb near Cubbington which was destroyed. It was noted that there were bombs dropped over Whatcote and between Butlers Marston and PH.

The Remembrance service in the church usually attracts 90-100 people. In the local area, 2021 was the best year for fundraising and in 2022, £1,500 was raised.

The Poor's Lot charity, Terry Hitchman

Mr Hitchman provided an overview of the Poor's Lot charity. The charity is administered by four Trustees and was set up in 1933 for the benefit of Pillerton Hersey. This was varied in 1969 to include Pillerton Priors and Butlers Marston. The purpose is to relieve need within the parishes.

Most funds are distributed to individuals. The Trustees let a small portion of land which is currently agricultural tenancy. The annual accounts and minutes are shared with the parish council who are responsible for appointing Trustees. Mr Hitchman shared an excerpt from a historical record from WCC.

Cllr Hitchman asked if there were surplus funds how could this be spent? A bus shelter would not be appropriate. Mr Hitchman said these things usually go to individuals.

One of the Trustees, Rev Goble will be stepping down from the Trustees due to leaving the area and new Trustee will need to be appointed. The Trustees will work to identify possible candidates and work with the parish council.

7. Reports from county and district councillors

Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Warwickshire County Council

Cllr Seccombe was unable to attend the meeting.

Cllr Malcolm Littlewood, Stratford District Council

Cllr Littlewood introduced himself as a newly elected Conservative district councillor who is in a minority under the new Liberal Democrat majority council. Cllr Littlewood noted that there have been boundary changes in the district which now has three Green party seats (Shipston N and S), one independent and 25 Liberal Democrats. The remaining seats are Conservative.

Cllr Littlewood is aware of the local planning issue of the anaerobic digester. The application involves an external consultant who is validating the economic assessment. Part of the challenge is regarding the feedstock which is not clear. The proposal appears to rely on maize and rye grass silage, but the geographical source is not known. The applicant may make additional information submissions. Cllr Littlewood said that the planning team are on top of the issue.

Cllr Littlewood said he would also like to speak with the parish council regarding the Hogwood Farm application.

The new Liberal Democrat led council intend to hold the main business meetings of the District Council in the evenings so this will impact Cllr Littlewood's evening availability when there are District Council meetings.

Cllr Hitchman asked when the changes of the new Liberal Democrat led council will come into effect. This was confirmed as being immediate following the election earlier in May.

Mr Hitchman raised a concern about the quality of the work where when verges are mowed there is grass on the road. Cllr Littlewood noted that there is a move to reduce mowing to support biodiversity. Mr Hitchman noted that there have been several rounds of mowing including mowing of the whole village green.

It was agreed that the Clerk would contact SDC re substantial mowing of the village green – this is all within the curtilage of the village.

The Chair raised the concern about the amount of work done by the Clerk to support the elections and now the cost is incurred by the Council. Cllr Littlewood asked this to be put in writing.

Cllr Thomas also raised concern about the cost a Clerk which is seen as mandatory and unfair on a small parish council to have to find the money for. Cllr Littlewood asked Cllr Hewson to put this in writing.

8. Community discussion

Mr Newcombe wanted to discuss the verge issue further. If the verge is mowed and the grass is left on the verge, then the wildflowers are lost – the grass needs to be removed in order to protect the flowers and support biodiversity. WCC Biodiversity did a survey on

verges and identified a multitude of flora. Mr Newcombe supports mowing of the verge for safety but considers that it should be mowed in August and the cuttings removed. The verge has a classification as a local wildlife site, and it would be good to maintain it as such.

There is a move from WCC to look after the biodiversity and maintain the local wildlife sites. Cllr Hewson asked Mr Newcombe to send some information for the parish council to use in the liaison with WCC and related activity.

9. Closing remarks and refreshments

Cllr Hewson thanked the residents for attending and invited them to stay for refreshments.

The meeting was closed at 19:59