

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

WHITNASH

Minutes of the meeting held on 21st April 2016 at 6.00 p.m. in the
Whitnash Community Hall

PRESENT: Mayor – Cllr Mrs J Falp
Deputy Mayor – Cllr S Button

Town Clerk – Mrs Jenny Mason

Members of the Public: 14

The Mayor, Councillor Mrs Falp, welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting.
Tribute was paid to the HM Queen on her 90th birthday.

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 16th April 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th April 2015 were approved and signed as a true record.

2. MATTERS ARISING OUT OF THOSE MINTUES

There were no matters arising.

3. MAYOR'S REPORT

The reporting year started in April with elections in May for National / District and Town seats. This was the first time for many years when all three have been held on the same day. A new Mayor and Deputy were duly nominated and seconded at Mayor Making in May 2015. The committees were set up and started to meet in June and Chairmen were elected at the first meetings.

Reports will be given on the year by the Chairman of each committee, but I would like to mention some of the activities and achievements of the year.

Our Neighbourhood plan which had taken over two years to produce was voted on by the residents in an election in November. The first in Warwick District and a resounding YES was given from those who voted. From this the need for a Community Hub has been identified and a feasibility study paid for by the Town Council and District Council was undertaken. A working group with Councillors, members of Whitnash Sports and Social and the Head of Whitnash Primary School was set up and Warwick District Council have awarded half a million pounds of funding to assist with the creation of a hub subject to conditions.

While having to work in the wettest weather for years a new measured mile, gym equipment and path was installed in Acre Close with funding from the Town Council, Warwick District Council and Wren Environmental.

Parents raised a petition to ask for a Lollipop person to be appointed for Ashford Road after concerns for their children's safety on the way to school. I was pleased to see that the County Council agreed and a gentleman was appointed. Well done to the parents.

New grit bins, benches and tubs have been purchased and will be installed in the town.

The normal business of the town is well managed by our small staff team and I must thank them for all their hard work and commitment.

Mr Ian Colls was thanked for his continued work to keep the hall in good shape.

Cllr Mrs J Falp, Mayor of Whitnash 2015 - 2016

4. WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Report from Cllr Bernard Kirton – Warwickshire County Councillor:

Warwickshire County Council has made money available to Cllr Kirton for road improvements to road and streets in Whitnash. Members have been asked to submit problem areas as soon as possible to enable repairs to be undertaken.

Warwickshire County Council has had significant cuts imposed on it by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I am forced to wonder what knowledge the Chancellor has of Warwickshire! In this time of financial stringency, we should take every opportunity of funding that is available to maintain the standard in Whitnash.

Funding has been found to keep the Libraries that were possibly going to close on Sundays open for at least the next year. We need to ensure our library is kept open as it has been my experience that many children get a good start when brought to the library by their parents or school and make use of the books in the library

5. WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Report from Cllr Mrs Judy Falp - Warwick District Councillor:

The District year started after elections for all 46 seats. We were pleased that once again all three Whitnash Residents Association Councillors were elected to represent Whitnash. Cllrs Heath and I were re- elected and Cllr Margrave was elected for the first time.

I must play tribute to our long-standing Cllr Bernard Kirton who stood down at that election. His achievements and service to Whitnash on the District Council where he held nearly every position you can as a Councillor, Chairman, Member of the Executive, Group Leader, Chair of Planning and much more was fantastic, thank you Bernard.

The roles I have held this year are:

- Group Leader
- Member of the Planning Committee
- Member of Licencing and Regulatory Committee
- Member of Standards Committee
- Member of the Health Scrutiny Sub- Committee.
- Council representative on the Plato Trust

There have been many training sessions to assist returning members and the many new Councillors at the District. The change of political make of from a council where the administration only had a small majority to one with a large majority has made it even more important that we opposition parties scrutinise all decisions made and hold the administration to account. The local plan adoption, combined authorities along with the council offices relocation have all been on the council agendas and continue to be so.

I am pleased that the District Council agreed our Neighbourhood Plan after a large majority of residents who voted said YES. From this has come a commitment to assist with funding of a New Community Hub for Whitnash. They also provided some funds towards our measured mile, gym equipment and path.

It has been a busy year for me personally with being Mayor of the Town as well but, my fellow District Councillors Tony Heath and Rob Margrave have covered for me when I had civic duties. Residents have contacted me with concerns over housing, planning, fences, hedges, dog fouling and refuse collection.

Report from Cllr R Margrave - Warwick District Councillor:

It has been nearly 12 months since the good people of Whitnash entrusted me to be one of their District Councillors. I have attended many hours of training in addition to the Council meetings. (3 this week alone).

I am a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which meets regularly, I have a substitute for Judy on the Planning Committee, and the St Mary's Land Working Group (but as they have chosen to only meet in the day I haven't been able to make any meetings due to work commitments). Despite working full time, I have managed to attend most of the council meeting's that I have been scheduled to attend.

The prominent issues at the District council have been the Local Plan, Gypsy and Travellers sites, none of which have yet reached a conclusion. Other major issues are the District's plan to privatise the operation of (not ownership of) the leisure centres and this week the district have moved forward with the plan to relocate the offices to the current site of the multi-story car park adjacent Tesco in Leamington from Riverside House.

District issues that are continuing to affect Whitnash over the next few months are their plans to allow another 75 houses south of Fieldgate Lane adjacent the 110 being built today, the undecided location of the G & T site.

On a brighter note, as a result of New Homes Bonus money WDC have committed up to £500K to Whitnash towards a new community hub. All three district councillors will be taking a close interest in ensuring this project comes to fruition in the next few years, although despite that some there are still many hurdles to overcome.

I can't say if this is typical or atypical but I have only been approached by 3 Whitnash residents for help with issues in this first year.

Report from Cllr Heath - Warwick District Councillor:

In Cllr Heath's absence, the report was read by Cllr Mrs Falp.

The last twelve months I have served on the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee at WDC which monitors and question intentional financial spending by the council. It is a committee that has updates on progress or various projects, a risk register to oversee expenditure and contract performances throughout the year. It is not a committee that you would wish me to report on at Town Council meetings as it would probably bore you.

A much more interesting committee which I service on is the recreation committee which, as you know, for the last months has been deciding to go external for the running of the council's leisure facilities at Newbold Common, St Nicholas Park and Kenilworth after having agreed to spend £12 million pounds updating and improving them first. For the last two months, we have been agreeing the terms of the tender documents to ensure the existing users are well taken care of and will not lose out when the new management eventually takes over at the end of 2017/18 This work is not yet complete.

Another major amount of work has been the adoption of the revised Local Plan which has met with much criticism all across the District after everyone had thought we had agreed the final version only to find the Inspector refused to accept it asking that we take it back and include yet more houses as part of Coventry's allocation. The areas that effect Whitnash have been East Whitnash, another 300 houses, Golf Lane a further 75 along with Fieldgate Lane 107 and Woodside Farm which is now in Whitnash following the boundary changes will give us another 280 houses. We now have no more space to build so we must watch carefully the other nearby developments along Harbury Lane to ensure the traffic continues to move and the environment is not totally overwhelmed by houses. My colleague Cllr Falp as a planning committee member will probably add to this

During the year, more local problems have been sorted such as overgrown hedges blocked drains and controversially travellers who continue to invade nearby Spartan Close causing many problems with local businesses and residents. There is a meeting on Friday this week to discuss further measures to combat this happening again. Unfortunately, the two District Councillors in Warwick Gates and the County Councillor for the area do not get involved preferring to let others try to sort it out so hopefully we can. We must be vigilant to prevent the travellers invading Acre Close or Washbourne Field. That is why I arranged to have the fencing erected at the top of Chandlers and Washbourne Roads.

6. REPORTS FROM CHAIRMEN OF:

Christmas Lights Working Group Annual Report:

Plans are now afoot for the 2016 Christmas Lights Switch-On, which as ever will be organised by volunteers from Whitnash Town Council, their families and friends.

Huge efforts go into arranging this event, which is always the flagship event on the Whitnash calendar. I cannot thank the team of volunteers enough for their help.

Jenny Mason and her team are constantly sorting things out throughout the planning process and her diligence and invaluable expertise help to ensure that all loose ends are tied up for the event to run smoothly.

The committee, made up of past and present Town Councillors, all put themselves out from the early days. Unprecedented thanks go to Kitty for her tireless endeavours to raise sponsorship and raffle prizes. We will do everything we can to keep you on our team.

We thank The Co-operative Energy for the major sponsorship and as usual the support from an array of local companies and individuals. Without this generosity, we could not put on this popular community event. We are thrilled to state that we have already secured a major sponsor for this year, who will be Phillips 66. This is excellent news.

The crowds turned out in force to enjoy a the hugely successful event to celebrate the switch on at the Plough & Harrow Pub on Sunday, 6th December 2015. The weather was definitely on our side.

The Whitnash community was entertained by live musical & dance acts and a master Magician, John Gordon. The eclectic mix of local talent included St Margaret's Church Choir, singing traditional Christmas Carols, Ignite Youth Dance, a very young and excited dance troupe, Fit2Dance, who performed some fabulous dance moves in 3 different acts and Suruj Bhangra, from In2Cultures, who thrilled the crowd with some wonderful Bhangra dancing.

We welcomed two live bands, the Intruders, who performed some fantastic and popular rockabilly songs, and then the crowd were introduced to the Shots, who entertained the packed arena with a range of wild and alternative music in their very own inimitable style, plus the usual sideshows and selection of stalls for local organisations and charities. As usual I was proud to compère the event.

Father Christmas was visited by around about 300 excited little children.

Unbelievable thanks go to Dave Stocks for his help with this.

Following the switch-on the illuminated buildings around the town were judged by the Town Council and awards presented at the Town Council meeting in January 2016.

Again, thanks go out to all concerned and we looking forward to this year's show on Sunday, 4th December 2016.

Cllr S Button - Chairman Christmas Lights Working Group

Finance and General Purposes Committee Annual Report:

The committee holds 7 meetings a year its primary role is to manage the council's annual budget for the financial year which starts on April 1st through to March the 31st each year.

In November, we start to plan for next year's budget which is finally approved by full council in January in the New Year. It is worked out by the total budget amount divided by the number of equivalent band D properties.

We have had to increase the Precept (Budget) by 8.8 pence per week, this is due to employees' pension cost increases, insurance for equipment on Acre Close Park, and the shortfall of money from the District Council called concurrent services, this is for cutting the grass on public open spaces.

We believe we give good value for money and where ever possible we seek grants from various organisations to fund projects the council wish to carry out.

The next few years will prove challenging with possibility of the District Council cutting and funding to us.

Cllr Smart – Chairman Finance and General Purposes Committee

Hall and Playing Fields Meeting Annual Report:

I was elected as Chairman in June following on from Ian Colls who stood down as a Councillor at the election. Ian had worked really hard as Chairman and undertaken a lot of the repairs and improvements of the Community Hall himself along with Cllr Smart. As a volunteer, he still assists with Cllr Smart when he can, thank you Ian and Brian.

All regular maintenance and checks for the hall and playing fields have been undertaken. A new contract for mowing all the grass has been awarded and for the position of groundsman. Dave Herbert and his son James work hard to keep our playing fields and the church green clean and well maintained and he has recently restored some of the benches on the church green and laid our surround to the War Memorial. Thanks, must go to members of Whitnash W.I. with support from the groundsman and Ian Colls who maintain the garden around the memorial. Though none of us W.I members are getting any younger we will continue to help maintain the memorial as long as our bodies allow us!

The Measured Mile, gym equipment and new path was installed during the wettest winter for years. We hope residents will appreciate the chance to cross the field on a tarmac path, be able to stroll around the mile and try out the gym equipment. Work to improve the bund with trees and bushes is ongoing. The Friends of Acre Close support the council by looking after the newly planted cherry trees and flowers and weeding and any jobs they can to help keep the park looking good.

Warwickshire County Council awarded the town council a grant to undertake consultation with residents on what play equipment they think the Town Council should put on Washbourne Fields with money that will be received due to planning agreements for housing within the town. A person has been appointed to take this forward and questionnaires, door step interviews and visits to groups will take place from the end of May

Cllr Mrs J Falp – Chairman Hall and Playing Fields Committee

Planning Committee Annual Report:

The Whitnash Town Council planning committee is currently made up of 8 councillors, with many years of experience of planning in the town and district between them. We meet monthly to consider applications that have been submitted since the previous meeting.

Applications considered typically average about 4 or 5 per meeting, and can range from something as innocuous as a new front porch, to large scale housing developments. Most, however, tend to be single or double storey extensions.

If any member has some sort of interest in a particular application, it has to be declared, and is noted in the meeting minutes. This is in line with the Standards Board of England rules and regulations.

Whitnash Town Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications made in and around the town that are submitted to Warwick District Council. We are consulted in the same way that local residents are consulted, but contrary to what some people think, we do not have the final say. That remains the remit of Warwick District Council.

We can only object on valid planning grounds, and we have to consider the potential impact of each application. Any comments we make are noted, and a decision made by the committee as to whether we object, or have no objection.

Our comments and decisions are sent to Warwick District Council who then consider them together with other responses received. We sometimes send a representative from the Town Council to the District Council's planning meeting, who can then present our view to them. They then either grant or refuse the application as they see fit, and this is not always in accordance with the Whitnash Town Council response.

I would like to thank all the committee members for their input and commitment, and also the Town Clerk and the administrative staff for all their help in preparing for our meetings, compiling the minutes, and submitting our comments to Warwick District Council.

Cllr McFadden – Chairman Planning Committee

7. FINANCIAL REPORT OF AUDITED ACCOUNTS FOR 2014 – 2015

Financial Summary 31 March 2015:

	Year ending	
	31 March 2014 £	31 March 2015 £
Balances brought forward The total balance at the start of the year	125680	151650
Annual precept Money received through precept in Council Tax	91160	102602
Total other receipts Other income additional to precept	69647	95666
Staff costs Total expenditure on staffing including salaries, employer's costs	61533	63244
Loan interest / capital repayments Cost of servicing the Council's borrowings	767	0
Total other payments All other expenditure not accounted for above	72537	88748
Balances carried forward The position at the end of the year and the start of the next year	151650	197926
Total cash and investments Money held in current and deposit accounts	142432	186403
Total fixed assets and long term assets Book value of the Council's assets	808049	784220
Total borrowings Outstanding capital balance as at 31 March off loans from third parties	0	0

(Statement of accounts was signed off by the auditor, Grant Thornton, on 3rd September 2015)

8. ANY MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

No matters were raised

There being no further business the Mayor thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting closed.

SIGNED: DATE: