

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

WHITNASH

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 10th April 2014 at 7.15 p.m. in the
Whitnash Community Hall

PRESENT: Mayor – Cllr P Birdi
Town Clerk – Mrs Jenny Mason
Members of the Public: 18
Members of Police: 1
Press: 0

The Mayor, Councillor Parminder Birdi, welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting.

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 12th APRIL 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th April 2013 were approved and signed as a true record.

2. MATTERS ARISING OUT OF THOSE MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

3. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor, Councillor Parminder Birdi, welcomed everyone to the 2014 Annual Parish Meeting.

It has been an unproductive and difficult year for most people nationally and locally. It has been a year of consultations involving the Local Plan, Heath Authorities, Police, Fire and Rescue and Gypsy Traveller sites just to mention a few. Most residents that I talk to feel that these consultations are just a tick box exercise and they feel that their views are often ignored. I can understand that because we the elected residents of the Town Council feel exactly the same.

Warwick District Local Plan and Housing Strategy have caused the most concern followed closely by the boundary changes reviews. Members of the Town Council have worked hard in supporting local residents' campaigns and joining forces with other local like-minded neighbouring councils. Odds are stacked against local knowledge led intelligence, but in favour of large developers.

I hope that in the short term the famed Whitnash Community Spirit will see us through. In the long run we have to develop our own long term vision for our Town through developing our own Neighbourhood Plan. I would urge all of you to get involved and shape the future of our Town. You will hear more about the Whitnash Neighbourhood Plan later. We managed to find £15 000 of external funding to help deliver the Neighbourhood Plan.

Another important issue close to my heart was to identify and support local traders. We were successful in getting Operation Footfall funding to deliver a local business directory and website to promote local business. Work is underway and we hope to launch the directory soon.

In the various reports you will also hear about how your Town Council has worked hard to identify other external funding to keep the local rates low.

My grateful thanks go to the Chairmen, committee members, helpers and sponsors of the Christmas Lights Working Group for putting on another fantastic show, all involved in the Whitnash Fun Day event they delivered another impressive community event. Special thanks to Whitnash Tymes Team and Don Samways for delivering the Tymes for a number of years and assisting with the delivery of the new colour Whitnash Tymes – I hope you all liked the new improved version.

My grateful thanks also go to all Town Councillors, County Councillor and District Councillors and their spouses for giving their time freely.

Grateful thanks also go to all Town Council staff and contractors for their dedication and commitment beyond the call of duty.

I would also like to thank all residents and local town organisations that work to make Whitnash a better place to live – Friends of Acre Close, Whitnash Sports and Social Club, Whitnash Twinning Association, Whitnash Short Mat Bowls Club and Whitnash Youth Club just mentioning a few.

My sincere thanks also go to the local Police Team – they have a difficult job to do and have to manage change at the same time.

A lot has been done, but there is a lot more to do. Your Town Councillors are mere residents who are trying to do their best for the Town. They cannot do it alone and I finish with a famous quote:

“Ask not what your Town Council can do for you, but what you can do for your TOWN.

Cllr Parminder Birdi, Mayor of Whitnash 2013 / 2014

4. POLICE REPORT

PC Charles Harrison and PCSO Sharon Underwood have left the Whitnash team for pastures new, and we wish them all well in their new roles. The team has been joined by PCSO Matt Slemensek who joins us from Leamington, and PC Neil Ward who has joined us from a response shift, having previously been the Warwick Town officer for 7 years.

This has been a very challenging year for Warwickshire Police, a reduction in budget, and the implementation of our alliance with West Mercia Police bringing in changes to our every day practices. This being said, statistically we are performing well, total recorded crime in Whitnash has reduced from 275 crimes to 164 crimes, a reduction of 40%

Community priorities: throughout the year the team has worked to the priorities set at the Safer Neighbourhood Forums which have been successful, however they can be more so. This year the team will be trying different engagement methods in an attempt to increase the number of people spoken to, and to identify possibly unknown concerns.

And finally: Neil has brought with him a great deal of neighbourhood Policing experience as well as operational planning, and looks forward to working with all community groups whether to address their concerns, or assist in the planning of an event.

PC Neil Ward – Warwickshire Police

5. WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Cllr Bernard Kirton Warwickshire County Councillor and Warwick District Councillor reported that he has been invited to be a member of the Warwick District Planning Committee and is astounded by the restrictions put on elected members when planning applications are considered when these restrictions should be on the developers!

Warwickshire County Council is also debating the future of the Council and a scheme that was debated recently that you do not have to live in an area if you want to stand for election as a county councillor.

The Heathcote Hospital parking charges for blue badge holders is unacceptable when this hospital deals with people with disabilities.

Cllr Bernard Kirton – WCC and WDC

6. WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

This year I have represented the Independents at Warwick District Council on the following committees:

Overview and Scrutiny (scrutinises the work of the council other than finance matters that being scrutinised by the Finance Scrutiny committee, Standards Committee (to try to ensure good standards of governance), Members Development (training for Councillors), the Grant Review Panel (awards and monitors major grants to voluntary organisations and the Conservation Grants working party. The Health Working group of which I am Chairman has been looking at how W.D.C. should be scrutinising health issues. I am also a shadow portfolio holder for Neighbourhood Services and Community and Corporate Services. The shadow portfolio holders are given briefings on the work and performance of their areas so aiding their ability to hold the portfolio holder to account. I also represent W.D.C. on the Plato Trust. The trust has houses in the district that provides homes and support to Individuals who have mental health issues but want to live independently.

My apologies for work I have not been able to do such as some of the support groups and sadly having to give up the Fun Day Committee.

I try to report at every full Whitnash Town Council meeting what I have been undertaking in the previous month either on committees or for Individual residents. Need for social housing and planning are the main issues raised with me by individuals.

The year has been dominated by the Local Plan and I suspect the coming year will be too. With three new members to the Independent's Group we have opportunities now to join with others to try to out vote the ruling party should we wish to. It also means we will be able to share out and or cover more groups. The last year of an administration is also interesting with more and more decisions becoming 'party political' the nearer you get to the elections.

I also want to notify the Town Council that the concurrent services precept is being looked at again by Warwick District Council.

I gain great satisfaction from representing the wonderful town of Whitnash. I am proud to do so and will be seeking re-election in 2015 if the people of Whitnash want me!

Report from Cllr Mrs Judy Falp - Warwick District Councillor

7. REPORTS FROM CHAIRMAN OF:

Christmas Lights Working Group Annual Report:

Plans are now afoot for the 2014 Whitnash 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 prestigious event, which is always the flagship event on the Whitnash calendar.

I, as the Chairman of the organising committee, cannot thank the team of volunteers enough for their help, which has already started with Jenny Mason and her team trying to raise awareness to the major local organisations and secure sponsorship for the forthcoming event. The efforts from Jenny continue 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 Town Councillors, all put themselves out from the early days and special thanks go to Kitty for her tireless endeavours to raise sponsorship and raffle prizes.

Last year we were proud to have been able to erect new lighting at Home Farm Crescent & Coppice Road and have secured funding to replace the remaining 'old style' lights with new low-energy LED

spirals for the Acre Close area. These will be on show for this year and will further reduce our electrical consumption and energy costs.

We are proud to arrange the entire event without the assistance of the major media companies and radio stations, like the larger towns in the district. We would like to thank the Royal Horse Hungry Horse for the major sponsorship last year and as usual the financial support from an array of local companies and individuals. Without this generosity we could not put on this popular community event. We are currently looking for a main sponsor for this year.

Special thanks go to Sigourney Gowlett and her team at the Plough, for their outstanding assistance on the day, along with our own team of volunteers, including Adrian from Booths Electrics and Dave Herbert from Whitnash Homes & Gardens.

The crowds turned out in force to enjoy a the hugely successful and spectacular event to celebrate the switching on of the Christmas Lights in Whitnash, on Sunday 1st December 2013, at the Plough & Harrow Pub.

Comments received following the event included various accolades from senior local dignitaries from around our county, along with others stating that this was the best ever switch-on event, with more attendees than ever before.

The Whitnash community was entertained by live musical acts and a master Magician, John Gordon. The eclectic mix of local talent included the outstanding Amy Thomas, a highly talented choir / opera singer, who at the age of 13 made a sensational performance that made the hairs necks stand up in awe. Alongside Amy, there was Lee, a rap artist performing all of his own material, Joe Dolman, a young guitarist and singer, whose performance was likened to Ed Sheeran, and Nigel Walton, an extremely professional blues / crooner style singer. As usual I was proud to compère the event.

We were thrilled to welcome back the ever popular Harry Rag Band as the headline act, who performed an exciting array of popular rock songs from the sixties and seventies to entice the crowd. They were ably supported by another local live band the Koalas.

As ever, the sideshows included fairground rides & attractions, bouncy castles and the usual selection of stalls for local organisations and charities, including a bottle & chocolate tombola and raffle stall.

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

The lights were switched on by representatives from Leamington Football Club, last year's Southern League Champions, with the festivities and music continuing until 7.00pm.

Following the switch on and during the festive season, individuals and businesses were encouraged to illuminate their houses and premises, as usual, which were judged by the Town Council on Sunday 22nd December. Awards were presented at a ceremony at the New Year Town Council meeting on Thursday January 16th 2014.

Special thanks to all concerned and looking forward to this year's show on Sunday 7th December.

Cllr Simon Button - Chairman Christmas Lights Working Group

Finance and General Purposes Committee Annual Report:

F&GP committee is made up of 8 members in the current term of office and meets 8 to 10 times a year. The main purpose of F & GP committee is to set and manage annual income and expenditure budget of the Town Council and manage associated risks. Whilst the decision makers are elected members, the day to day financial management is carried out by the Responsible Finance officer (Town Clerk) and Finance Assistant.

The main income source is the precept that each household pays through annual rates. Whitnash Town council is a relatively small council our annual precept is approximately £100K, that is approximately £30 per household per year. Just to put it in perspective the national average varies from £20 to £125 per house hold.

1 % of annual precept roughly equates to £1000 and that makes it very difficult to raise funds for capital or large projects. F & GP committee has been working extremely hard to raise income through external funders to keep local rates down. This year the total, precept amount is £102,602 equating to £36.05 per household that is weekly increase per household of £0.06.

This prudent approach has been made possible by Whitnash Town Council and Towns organisations working hard to bring in grants and external funds to deliver some projects. This year this additional funding was approximately £30k, we would have had to raise the precept by over 30% to cover this cost.

The detailed income expenditure figures are available on request to all Whitnash residents.

Finally I would like to thank the members of Finance and General Purposes for giving their time freely, The Responsible Finance Officer and the Finance Assistant for their professional input and all the Towns organisations, donors and external funders for making it possible for us to maintain events and services without excessive rate increases.

Cllr Parminder Birdi – Chairman Finance and General Purposes Committee

Hall and Playing Fields Meeting Annual Report:

The past year has been and will continue to be a trying time for this committee.

We have been busy developing a project and management progress spread sheet which has highlighted the need to take a much tighter control and management of the town assets.

The need for an Asbestos report highlighted this; we are at present looking at possible solutions to this problem.

A mandatory building structural inspection and survey is about to be carried out, we will wait for the completion of this before proceeding with any major hall projects.

A more economical electric water heater has been installed for the Kitchen sink which only works on demand; the old gas heater was cycling 24/7, however it is still usable for large functions. The gents toilet flushing was also working 24/7 without control we have now fitted a control system which only works when the toilet is being used.

Carbon Monoxide monitors have been fitted to all three rooms where the gas heaters are present. Emergency lighting has been checked and upgraded where needed; also a 4 yearly wiring check has been carried out. A monthly check sheet is to be introduced to check health and safety items mandatory or not.

The project management sheets cover all the areas under the committee:- Church Green, Chapel Green, Acre Close Field, Washbourne Field, Town Flower Tubs and Baskets together with Millennium garden.

We have replaced wire mesh on one end of the basketball pitch with boards. A disabled access has been provided for wheel chairs and buggies when the Acre Close Gates are closed.

No further developments have been pursued on the cracked hall floor.

Friends of Acre Close continue to take an active part in Acre Close Field.

A new water resistant Notice board has been purchased for Home Farm Crescent and will be fitted soon, depending on the success of this, will determine if more will be purchased, subject to funding.

A new digital lock has been fitted to the inner entrance doors to the hall this is to stop unwanted intrusions when meetings are in progress and as a safety requirement for staff working on their own in the hall.

It is our aim to keep this Hall facility open for town use until an alternative facility can be built.

Cllr Ian Colls – Chairman Hall and Playing Fields Committee

Cllr Margrave thanked Cllr Colls for all the hard work, effort and time he commits to the Community Hall.

Planning Committee Annual Report:

Whitnash Town Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications that are submitted to Warwick District Council. We do not have the final say on planning applications made in Whitnash.

We receive about 4 to 5 applications at each planning meeting which happen about every 2 weeks during the year. The committee is 9 in number but other councillors are permitted to attend the meeting and speak, any comments are noted and then a decision is made whether we agree or disagree. We can only object on planning grounds.

Our comments are sent to Warwick District Council who note our comments and then grant or reject the application which is not always in agreement with Whitnash Town Council response. We can send a representative to the District Council's planning meeting to put our view them for deliberation.

If an application put before the councillors at a meeting is known by any member personally, or they have interests in the development, they must declare the fact, and this is noted in the minutes, it in line with the Standards Board of England rules and regulations.

Some planning applications are not put before the Council as they are known as 'Permitted Development' i.e. Extensions to houses, this depends on the size and where it is located.

Cllr Brian Smart – Chairman Planning Committee

8. WHITNASH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Twelve months ago at the Annual Parish Meeting Planning Consultants Kirkwells, who have been asked to support Whitnash Town Council to produce a Neighbourhood Plan, gave a presentation on what Neighbourhood Plans were all about. With the town having had its designated plan area agreed by Warwick District Council it was now time to work on producing a draft plan to take to residents. I am pleased to now give an update as to what has been happening over the last twelve months.

In June last year at the Fun Day the Town Council had a stall to raise awareness of the plan and seek residents who would be interested in being involved. A meeting was then held in July. This was not well attended but a start on Ideas for how Whitnash may look in the future was made.

I was asked to get involved with the plan and in September met with Kirkwells to see how we could progress the work. In October another meeting was arranged with an invited audience. This comprised of residents and Councillors who came to the July meeting, representatives from Whitnash Organisations such as schools, the Whitnash Society and, local businesses.

With Kirkwells support we then started to look at what we thought was important in Whitnash, what we would like to preserve, what we would like to enhance and what we would like new.

It was not easy! We wanted to keep our Community Spirit our Excellent schools our Historical Environment and what few Green spaces we had left. We had to contend with planning applications being granted as we formulated the plan on our boundaries and in Fieldgate Lane so preventing us including things in our Neighbourhood plan as planning applications and conditions had already been granted. The Local Plan timetable was shifting and we wanted our plan to be ready when that was.

It was also not easy to look forward to 2030 at to what we though Whitnash might be like and what it would need. We have however had a number of meetings since, sifting out what we would not be able to change but needed to be noted and what the group felt was important to have in the draft plan. The dedication and Ideas from members of the group has been fantastic and has already led to a visit to Chase Meadow Community Centre to see what could be achieved for a Community Hub and a

commitment from Warwick District Council to fund a Feasibility Study to see if a new Community Hub is possible and where best for it to be located.

Our wish to preserve our historical environment has led to the Town Council making representations to W.D.C. to keep East Whitnash as part of Whitnash in the proposed boundary changes. The Whitnash Brook valley is very important for Whitnash and should be preserved and enhanced. We want more cycle routes to keep our residents safe and healthy

And take hopefully more cars off our roads. We want developers on our borders to fund this. We want to keep our local shops and protect and clearly identify our borders and more ideas that will be seen in the draft plan.

The draft plan will be produced by the end of April and we hope residents will respond to this with their agreement or suggestions to include, enhance or delete items. Once these proposals have been looked at we will then complete a final plan to go out to residents in a referendum for approval.

Cllr Mrs Judy Falp – Chair of Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Cllr Shepherd thanked Cllr Mrs Falp for all the work she does for this Town Council.

9. FINANCIAL REPORT OF AUDITED ACCOUNTS FOR 2012 – 2013

Financial Summary 31 March 2013:

	Year ending	
	31 March 2012 £	31 March 2013 £
Balances brought forward The total balance at the start of the year	105168	112842
Annual precept Money received through precept in Council Tax	91245	98470
Total other receipts Other income additional to precept	48953	124563
Staff costs Total expenditure on staffing including salaries, employers costs	56187	60553
Loan interest / capital repayments Cost of servicing the Council's borrowings	1535	1535
Total other payments All other expenditure not accounted for above	74802	148108
Balances carried forward The position at the end of the year and the start of the next year	112842	125680
Total cash and investments Money held in current and deposit accounts	114616	122167
Total fixed assets and long term assets Book value of the Council's assets	712337	806122
Total borrowings Outstanding capital balance as at 31 March off loans from third parties	2780	737

(Statement of accounts was signed off by the auditor, Grant Thornton, on 27th September 2013)

10. ANY MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Annual report for Whitnash Short Mat Bowls Club founded in 2010

Currently we have 40 members and it's still growing.

Last year we only run two sessions in the winter but with these membership numbers we will run two sessions throughout this year for the first time.

We have organised various Social events - Free drum head service, New Year bowling event with a difference -party style with a four coarse meal and coffee followed by a musical Quiz all for £10 per head and Annual Sunday lunch at the Golf Club.

We are having a special Easter bowling event. New members are welcome.

Ian Colls – Chairman Short Mat Bowls Club

The League of Friends representatives need new members and helpers for the various events they stage to raise funds etc. Their Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday, 1st May 2014.

Anne Steele reminded members of the march to Leamington Town Hall on 23rd March 2014 to raise awareness about the large housing developments being proposed south of the River Leam.

The Mayor thanked Anne and Ray Steele for their commitment to the Town.

Susana Cortes introduced herself and gave a summary of the PhD she is doing about Children in Whitnash.

There being no further business the Mayor thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting closed at 20h30.

SIGNED: DATE: