

Nettleton Parish Council: Chairman's Report for the year 2013 to 2014

1. Introduction

This report is intended to provide a brief overview of the Parish Council's activities during the year. I will be pleased to provide more detail if requested and questions will be most welcome at this Annual Parish Meeting or later.

2. Parish Council

A new Parish Council (PC) took up office in May 2013. There were only 7 candidates for the 9 places and therefore the Parish Council co-opted a further 2 members. The members for most of the year were:

David Kerr (Chairman); David Pearce (Vice-Chairman); Stephen Beare; Di Bell; Jeanne Bush; Audrey Flint; Ray Maddock; Fleur Shanahan; John Wright.

There was one resignation during the year: Di Bell resigned in December and subsequently Al Caie was elected. Di was a member of the Parish Council for 30 years and I wish to thank her on behalf of the Parish Council for her long and dedicated service to the community.

3. Objectives for the Year

The PC prepared a Business Plan which set objectives to assist in the organisation of the Council's business for the year and to establish priorities against which the performance of the Council could be assessed. The main topics are those covered in this report.

4. Planning applications

About 30 planning applications were reviewed by the PC and comments provided to Wiltshire Council (WC). Also, several pre-applications were considered and comments made to the applicants. The PC appreciates the opportunity to comment on proposals at any early stage prior to submission to WC.

5. Wiltshire Council Consultations & Events

During the year the PC responded to several WC consultations including ones on land drainage by-laws and footpaths. The final version of WC Core Strategy is still awaited. The final draft has been considered by the Inspector who has made some significant comments which still have to be resolved. The document categorises Burton and Nettleton as "small villages", which means that the only new development expected to be permitted is infilling within the existing village boundaries. In West Kington no new development is expected to be permitted.

Councillors attended some of the WC Chippenham Area Board meetings in order to keep abreast of WC activities and initiatives. These meetings are held at various venues and are of course open to the public and I would encourage parishioners to attend the occasional meeting.

Four councillors have attended WC events to brief councillors on the new Neighbourhood Planning Process. The slides from these events can be provided to anyone interested.

6. Roads Maintenance and Flood Prevention Measures

This was identified as a high priority and the PC with Stephen Beare acting as lead councillor have made a major effort on these important issues. In addition to the routine filling of potholes and unblocking of road gullies and drains, the following longstanding problems have been addressed:

- Burton Brook: The Environment Agency have agreed to clean out the Brook, opposite the old Plume of Feathers, removing Ash saplings etc to prevent “back up” of water and the potential flood risk to the highway and to properties.
- Nettleton Loop: The road from the Post Office to West Kington road has been in a very poor state of repair for some time. WC have agreed to resurface it in this financial year.
- Flooding of Nettleton Mill area: Grips have now been cut on the Fosse to channel water into adjacent land and soakaway ditches completed by the road to Nettleton Mill.
- Flooding by Manor Farm: The pipework has been jetted and WC have agreed to pipe the ditch around the bend in road which should solve problem of flooding of the road.
- West Kington Road, Nettleton. The pipework has been jetted and WC have been asked by the PC to pipe the ditch where it is close to the narrow carriageway and thus becomes blocked by the verge being pushed into the ditch by heavy traffic.
- Landowners are being reminded of their legal liability in respect of maintenance of watercourses and hedges overhanging highways.
- A Snow Plan was prepared and spare bags of grit provided. WC provided a local farmer with a snow plough.

7. Highways Safety

This was identified as a high priority. However, no specific action has been taken yet by the PC. Any suggestions on specific action needed will be welcomed.

8. Parish Council Land

Two areas of land which the PC believed from local knowledge were owned either by the community or by the PC were investigated. These are a small area on the West side of Nettleton Road in Burton, occupied by a scout hut until the 1980's, and a small area in Nettleton Shrub opposite Raybarrow. In both cases the PC believe it should be possible to obtain Possessory Title after 12 years from the date the land is fenced and possession evidenced. A small annual income has been secured from way leave payments for electricity poles sited on each of the sites. The PC now need to consider potential uses of the land and associated maintenance arrangements. Any suggestions will be welcomed.

9. Allotments.

Following a request received from parishioners the PC is undertaking an investigation to identify potential land availability and locations for allotments.

10. Communications & Website

The PC now uses the website www.nettleton.org.uk, provided and operated by Ray Maddock, for all PC documents and we believe that this should provide effective information on PC activities. Any comments on this will be particularly welcome.

11. Precept and Finance

The annual precept for 2013-14 was £5000, unchanged from the previous year. The disposable income, after essential costs are met, is only a modest £1200. Thus, it is clear that any major expenditure will have to be financed through grants, local fund raising or other means.

David Kerr

Chairman

22nd April 2014