

# ACTON BRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

## Annual General Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 1st May 2018 at 7.30pm in the Parish Rooms

Present:

R Holt, Chairman  
S Pardoe, Vice-Chairman  
C Ballantyne-Roberts  
R Forbes  
D Hall  
J Oliver  
Clr H Tonge,

Apologies were received from Clrs H Bayley, C Fifield, CW&C Clr P Williams

Public – one Village resident was present.

- 2 Acceptance of the Minutes from the AGM held on 16th May 2017 was proposed by Clr D Hall, seconded by Clr S Pardoe and were signed by the Chairman.

3 **Matters arising from AGM 2017.**

Two actions arising from requests by residents had been addressed at the June 2017 meeting. These were;

1.0 Resident of Milton Rough had requested attention to the low kerbs of the pavement in Milton Rough. CW&C Highways had been contacted and the renewal has been placed on the schedule of work for 2018 / 19.

2.0 Resident of Station Road had raised an issue on the use of Hazel Pear Wood by dog owners exercising their dogs and the lack of attention by the dog owners to the removal of dog waste. The Woodlands Trust warden has installed notices at the entrance to the Woods that ask owners to remove the waste.

4 **Chairman's Report 2017/18**

The Chairman gave his report of the work over the last year. He commenced by stating the amount of work that the Parish Council (PC) put into consideration of the varied planning applications for building work in the Village. The PC are guided by the NPPF and CW&C Local Plans when making comments.

The PC has had concerns this year over some decisions to approve some applications that appear to depart from the guidelines. This matter has been raised with CW&C Planning Department and it is pleasing to report that a senior manager is to attend the PC meeting in June to discuss the concerns.

The Chairman thanked the Ward Councillors for their very valued support throughout the year and said that the interface with Planning Officers has been particularly noticeable and helpful to the Parish Council. One facet of the planning application process is the ability of CW&C Councillors to call-in applications if thought necessary. This procedure can be used to take particular applications out of the hands of an individual planning officer and puts the decision with the full Planning Committee. This procedure has been used by our Councillors on our behalf on two occasions. One example of the use of this process and was successful was in the appeals enquiries for the Town Farm Quarry. This example showed how important is the work of Ward Councillors and the links with neighbouring Wards. We are very grateful for their efforts and support and we thank them sincerely for their work.

## **Security, Police Work & Road Safety**

The Village has a PCSO, Nichola Devey, assigned to our area. Nichola holds regular surgeries where residents can raise issues. A recent success has been the action to stop the use of Hill Top Road by HGV.

Particular efforts have been applied this year to speeding matters and road safety. The PC meetings with CW&C Highways have carried on this year. Data collected by CW&C showed the excessive speeding on Station Road, as a result the speed camera signs were installed and Police enforcement has been applied. Although these have had some effect the Police presence is only periodic and the overall effect is not satisfactory. The Parish Council decided to pursue a project to install interactive signs at strategic points in the Village. Supported by grants from the Police and Crime Commissioner and our CW&C Councillors together with the increased precepts levied last year and this year the intention is to fund the purchase of two interactive signs for the Village that can be transferred to any of four locations.

The PC met with representatives of CW&C (Highways) and selected the four sites (Acton Lane, Hill Top Road, Milton Rough and Station Road). The PC has also obtained quotations from a number of manufacturers of interactive signs.

The competitive quotations received have been examined to secure the most cost effective and long term solution. The final details are being resolved and the project should soon be ready to go ahead.

The Parish Council believe that moving the signs between locations will have more impact on drivers and hopefully will curb some speeds but in the end it is down to individuals and how they drive. We can only hope that with more prosecutions and the impact of the signs there will be a reduction in the speeding.

## **Financial matters**

The Chairman gave an overview of the PC financial status and mentioned the provision for funding of the interactive signs that had been made in the precept. He said that normally the PC expenses do not amount to great sums of money, approximately £2,200 per year and are relatively straight forward. Our annual precept covers basic matters such as insurance, membership of Council related bodies and associations together with the Clerks salary. We also plan for and anticipate Parish Council commitments to ABCA for external decoration of the Parish Rooms.

Our precept for next year, 2018 - 19, is based on the records of expenditure over several years and the forecasts of anticipated expenditure for the next three years. The figures took account of the loss of the New Homes Bonus Community Fund, also the fact that the PC now have to pay for elections. When setting the precept, the PC had discussed at length the forecast expenditure plus the desire to act positively to curb speeding. A big start to the purchase of the interactive signs was made last year and this has been further increased this year to where we believe the project can go ahead. The purchase and installation cost will be in the order of £7,000 in addition there will be costs for moving the signs and their maintenance. Also as mentioned earlier we have received grants from the PCC and the CW&C Councillors towards the cost.

The auditing of the accounts takes on a different format this year. Because the Parish Council expenditure is under £25,000 the accounts will not be subject to external auditing. The new arrangement allows the Parish Council to apply for an Exemption Certificate but stipulates that the accounts must be published on the web site and must still be checked by the Internal Auditor.

The Chairman thanked Peter Young for acting as our independent internal auditor. He said Peter reviews the accounts prepared for the Council by the Clerk and, with the Clerk, completes the associated paperwork before the accounts are published. He also stated that the PC accounts have always been cleared and passed with flying colours and gave sincere thanks to Peter and Margaret.

## **Regulations and Data Protection**

The Chairman explained the new procedure that has been introduced this year called Transparency Code for Smaller Councils which requires information to be published on-line. The PC have complied with the Code and did already publish copies of meeting minutes on the Village web site. Expenditure is always covered in the minutes and copies of the accounts are also published. Special thanks go to Clr Pardoe for processing the necessary documents to comply with the Code and publishing them on the Village web site for the Parish Council.

The Chairman also mentioned that currently there is additional legislation arising from the Data Protection Act and a new issue called General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requires action and will be complied with. The Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils are preparing guidelines and Clr Pardoe has again picked up the baton for this and is preparing a review for examination by the PC leading to adoption of GDPR by the PC.

The Chairman then gave brief details of some the many and varied topics that the PC has covered this year.

### **Superfast Broadband**

Following discussions with residents, Openreach and Connecting Cheshire considerable work has been done in the Village to expand and connect new services

### **Footpaths and PRow**

Part of the Parish Council duties involves protection of Public Footpaths and PRow in the Parish. The PC has been notified of changes made to footpath signage by persons unknown at some locations in the Village. These have been followed up with CW&C. The Chairman thanked Clr Steve Pardoe who last year conducted an extensive survey of all the PRow in the Village and submitted a report to CW&C of work to be done to keep them open and usable.

Although partly under the work covered by planning applications, the PC liaised with CW&C to secure the retention of the existing route of the PRow that runs from Hill Top Road to Strawberry Lane

Also in relation to the PRow subject, the Parish Council were pleased to support a new initiative in the area for **Local history and footpath walks, called 'petal walks'** by the Saltscape organisation. A map and information has been installed, at the Parish Rooms, of a route for one 'petal walk'

### **Hazel Pear Wood - WOODLAND TRUST**

Woodland Trust and groups of volunteers have worked on the maintenance of the woods and there is a link in with the volunteers to arrange more working parties. The PC are pleased that the Woodland Trust are active and respond to requests by the PC.

### **Seat at Acton Lane and Seat at Cliff Road.**

The Chairman gave information regarding the seat near the top of Acton Lane. This was in need of repair and restoration. The seat had been given and installed by Weaver Vale Cycling Club, to commemorate one of their members and resident of Acton Bridge, Alan Littlemore. The Club were approached and were happy to arrange the replacement of the seat. The Parish Council made a donation of £100 to the cost.

The seat at the junction of Cliff Road with Hill Top Road is also in need of replacement. Arrangements have been made with ABCA, the WI and the PC to cover the costs. A contractor has been appointed to do the work.

### **'Best Kept Village'**

The 'Best Kept Village' competition has been reinstated after a period of suspension. The Chairman said that the litter pickers can be depended on to do their work but urged all residents to

do their bit and help to get good scores from the judges. We were very pleased that a volunteer came forward to tend the flower beds at the front of the Parish Rooms. The Chairman then gave detail of the various other committees and organisations that the Parish Council has representation on that serve the Village.

### **The Joint Cemetery Committee**

The PC have members on the Weaverham, Cuddington and Acton Bridge Joint Cemetery Committee. Most people will be aware that this committee manage the Cemetery Grounds at Gorstage. This local facility is a very valuable asset for our Village. We thank our members, Clrs John Oliver and Hazel Bayley for their work on our behalf.

### **Weaverham and Acton Bridge Trust**

The Trust is a joint charitable organisation made up of a number of separate charitable bodies in the locality, including what was once the Milner Trust in the Village. The Trust functions under the Chairmanship of the vicar of Weaverham St Mary's church. The Trust looks after deserving cases and applications for financial support. Clrs Steve Pardoe and David Hall are our representatives.

### **Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils**

The Council are members of the Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils Association, including Cheshire Community Action. Both these organisations provide established forums to raise and discuss matters in association with other parishes. ChALC are additionally available for consultation on procedural matters and produce guidance on subjects as required, particularly new legislation.

### **Weaverham High School**

Clr David Hall continues to serve as a Governor of Weaverham High School. This no easy task he has undertaken, school finances are a hot topic. We thank David for his services and his many hours of effort in his role as our representative.

### **ACTON BRIDGE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION (ABCA)**

The Chairman made special mention of the work done by ABCA in the upkeep, maintenance, organisation and control of the Parish Rooms and its facilities. Although the Council own all property and facilities on behalf of the Village, ABCA manage and operate them on behalf of the Council. ABCA is a registered charity, has its own constitution and leases the Rooms and facilities (at a pepper corn rent) from the Parish Council. ABCA organises its own fund raising so that by and large the Rooms and facilities are provided with small direct cost to the Parish.

The PC are sincerely grateful to Jane Evans, Chair of ABCA, and her team, principally Gill Spanton for bookings and secretary plus Peter Hurst treasurer. A special mention was also made to Bob Heaton for the management of the maintenance work and keeping tabs on the various contractors employed to do the work. Add to this work load the actual hands-on work that Bob does in the many and varied tasks in keeping the Parish Rooms in top condition and we recognise that we are greatly in his debt and give our grateful thanks to him.

Recognition was also made of the work of the two sub-sections of ABCA that manage the tennis and the bowls. The playing facilities are in great shape now and will give many years of enjoyment to the bowls and tennis members. Bowls section have just drawn up plans and costs for replacement of the storage building. Very well done and congratulations to all on your great efforts.

Once again I thank ABCA on behalf of the Parish Council and the Village for all that they do for the rooms, the events and including the very high quality Newsletter – thank you very much.

### **WOMEN'S INSTITUTE**

The Acton Bridge WI, like WI groups across the Country, fills that vital role in rural villages of being the ready source of assistance in the many and varied activities in the village. The supporting

work that goes on all the time is not mentioned so we would like to say thank you to the WI for all their efforts in the Village.

The Chairman then gave his thanks to the Clerk, Margaret Holt. Margaret is the first to minimise her input but, as mentioned, there is a never-ending list of extra work to comply with the latest regulations and just when it looks to be sorted there is something new.

The Chairman offered his sincere thanks to all the Council members for all that they do and the jobs and actions they take up on behalf the PC. He gave personal thanks to the vice chairman Steve Pardoe for his support and help in many matters. In addition to everything else he does, Steve keeps the very informative Village web site up to date and interesting. It is now an easy contact point for many people and out-side organisations.

The Chairman asked for questions or clarification of any matters in the report. There were no queries.

Clr Pardoe gave a vote of thanks to Chairman which was endorsed by all the PC.

Mrs Jane Evans, Chair of ABCA, thanked the PC for their constant support and assistance. She made particular reference to the support for the proposed replacement building for the Bowls Section.

## **5 - Village Matters and Topics**

### **a) GDPR**

There was a brief discussion on GDPR and that advice and guidance is constantly changing. It was mentioned that Parish Councils may be excluded from having to appoint a Data Protection Officer.

### **b) Weaverham Trust**

Clrs Pardoe and Hall mentioned that there are some problems with administration at the moment that are in part caused by the fact that the Vicar of St Mary's is in the process changing parishes.

There were no other matters. The AGM was closed.