

# Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2016

- 1 Chair: Mr George Glaze, Chair of Eckington Parish Council.
- 2 Present: 7 Parish Councillors and 2 electors.
- 3 Apologies: Apologies received from Cllrs Bainbridge and Brown.
4. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 14 April 2015: Cllr Ransted proposed, and was seconded by Cllr Wilkes, that the minutes were a true record of the meeting. All present agreed, and they were duly signed by the Chair.
5. Parish Council Report: The Chair gave the following report:

The last Council year has been a demanding one.

Disappointingly the 2015 election for Eckington Ward was uncontested and only five Councillors were elected. Fortunately the Council was quorate and able to transact Parish Business.

The Community should be grateful that by July the four vacancies had been filled by co-option and the Council was better able to discharge its' responsibilities.

When complete, Eckington Parish Council consists of nine Councillors, all volunteers, a Parish Clerk and a Parish Lengthsman.

As the first level of elected representation the Parish Council is close to the community it serves and its' primary responsibilities are;

- to represent the local community.
- to deliver services to meet local needs.
- strive to improve the quality of life within the Parish.

To meet these responsibilities the Parish Council continues to have at least one representative on each of the main village committees and regularly sends Councillors to other appropriate local meetings. Thus the Council is kept informed on both local and wider issues.

The reduction in both Central Government and County Council funding, noted in last years' Parish Council report has persisted. Accordingly the work load of the Parish Council continues to increase and become much more onerous to meet Community expectations.

A summary of the work done over the last year includes the following.

The reduced Highways maintenance schedule has inevitably led to some deterioration in **roads and footways**. The Council has continued to press WCC Highways both directly and via our County Councillor to address these issues. It is pleasing to note several footways have been resurfaced, potholes repaired and white lines re-instated in the village. However more needs to be done to maintain and improve safety under dark skies.

The Council has considered and commented on 35 **planning applications**. The work of Cllr Bainbridge in preparing briefs, often including photographs has been invaluable when considering applications. Also during the last year your Council has initiated and supported enforcement actions against suspected breaches of planning control. This your Council believes is an important element of maintaining Public Confidence in the planning system. The Council is responsible for the upkeep of the **Cemetery and Churchyard**. This includes conducting an annual safety inspection of the gravestones and making good any damage. Maintaining the **War Memorial** is also an important Council responsibility. We are indebted to Cllr Wilkes for his continual work in keeping the memorial to such a high standard throughout the year.

The **allotments**, also managed by the Parish Council continue to be popular. All plots are taken and there is a current waiting list of two.

**Footpaths** are also an important leisure facility that the Parish Council values highly. They are regularly walked by the Footpath Officer to ensure they are well maintained. The

Modification Orders for the footpaths at Hammock Lane and Piercing Lane continue to follow due process. Following a site visit by the Inspector last April the modification orders were confirmed. It is hoped that Hammock will be open shortly after completion of some drainage improvements. However, progress with Piercing Lane is further delayed because of difficulty associated with a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The Parish Council continues to support the **Recreation Centre** with an annual grant to assist with running costs of this valuable community asset. The past year has seen the conclusion of developments to the Recreation Ground funded by a Section 106 grant from the Hanford Drive development.

Another source of funding for community projects is **New Homes Bonus**. This is paid via Wychavon District Council and is allocated to projects that will benefit the community. Following a pause of NHB payment arising from the General Election the new Government did eventually confirm continuation of this scheme. However, WDC are now applying a far more stringent protocol and the PC has only been successful with one application during the year. Your Parish Council is always pleased to receive new applications for NHB funds but any proposed scheme must demonstrate wide community benefit.

The **Community Speed Watch** scheme is now established and volunteers can often be seen out checking speeds. The Parish Council continues to utilise the VAS sign as a further reminder to errant motorists.

The Council also supports the village entry into the **Parish Games**. Thanks go to Mr Colin Chapman for organising the event. Eckington came second again this year but a long way behind Bretforton who won with a record score.

The **Eckington Neighbourhood Plan** has seen much progress during the last year. Initially led by Ian Pickford but latterly by Colin Chapman the Steering Group has recently held the second public consultation event to test community reaction to evidence gathered to-date. Survey results are still being analysed and some important comments were received. However initial feedback is strong support for small managed developments associated with community schemes in the village centre and northern approaches. The SG will move on to policy writing with an intention to have the plan adopted by year end.

However this would be an incomplete summary if other issues that could best be considered as work in progress were not included. The first such item is the **382 bus** service taken over by First in September of last year. The two hourly interval timetable was not ideal and now a new time table appears to marginalise Eckington and reduce even further the attractiveness of the service. The Parish Council fear that without changes the usage will fall further and within short the service disappear completely. As the service is now commercial (subsidy free) WCC have suggested this matter be discussed directly with First. Efforts to engage with First via Pershore Public Transport Group are ongoing. Also, the problem of **flooding at Eckington Bridge** remains. It has taken WCC Highways one year to conduct a ground level survey and only now is modelling being conducted to assess the viability of raising the road level on the floodplain.

I would take this opportunity to thank all Councillors for their time and commitment in dealing with Council matters, our clerk, Louise for her attention to detail and guiding the Council through difficult decisions. Also thanks to our lengthsman Phillip for keeping the village spick, span and safe.

Finally a reminder that your Parish Council is always pleased to hear from villagers so please attend a Council meeting or contact one of the councillors to raise any pertinent matters.

6. Other Issues  
None.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at 7.45.