

# Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2017

- 1 Chair: Mr George Glaze, Chair of Eckington Parish Council.
- 2 Present: 4 Parish Councillors and 1 elector.
- 3 Apologies: Apologies received from Cllrs Cameron and Brown.
4. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 12 April 2016: Cllr Bainbridge proposed, and was seconded by Cllr Ransted, 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 again been a challenging one.  
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.

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 and endeavours to be close to the community it serves and its' primary responsibilities may be summarised as;

- 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.

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. The New Road footway is scheduled for resurfacing at the end of the month. The Council will continue to press for improvements to maintain and improve safety within the village under dark skies. This year the Council has considered and commented on **28 planning applications**. The work of Cllr Bainbridge in preparing briefs, often including photographs has been invaluable when considering applications. Perhaps the most contentious application is 15/01013. Although not within the Parish but because of the interest it generated your Council spoke at both the Committee stage and Appeal hearing. The results of the appeal against planning refusal are anxiously awaited.

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 currently taken.

**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 footpaths at Hammock Lane and Piercing Lane that were subject to modification orders are now fully open.

The Parish Council continues to support the **Recreation Centre** with an annual grant to assist with running costs of this valuable community asset.

An important 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.

Deplorably the Government has changed the parameters for awarding NHB and the recalculations have resulted in a loss of some £21k to the community.

Moreover, WDC are now applying a far more stringent protocol but the PC has been successful with one application during the year on behalf of Eckington Cricket Club for new practise nets. 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 continues thanks to the ongoing supervision by Cllr. Ransted and volunteers can often be seen out checking speeds. This scheme was established following widespread community concern regarding speeding traffic. It is disappointing therefore that more volunteers are not forthcoming to support this valuable deterrent. 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 a close second this year, again behind Bretforton.

The **Eckington Neighbourhood Plan** has seen much progress during the last year. Led by Colin Chapman the Steering Group has progressed to policy writing with an intention to have the draft plan available within short. It is anticipated that whoever presents the next Parish Council Report will be able to confirm successful adoption of the Plan.

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 2015. Ongoing timetable changes continue to marginalise Eckington and other rural communities so diminishing even further the attractiveness of the service. The Parish Council fear these changes will result in the usage falling further and so the service disappear completely, thus resulting in serious social isolation. As the service is now commercially based (subsidy free) discussions have been held with First via Pershore Public Transport Group. To improve the attractiveness of the service current proposals are to establish a midday community mini bus schedule. To fully explore this option a public meeting has been arranged for 13<sup>th</sup> April.

Also, the concern of **flooding at Eckington Bridge** remains. WCC Highways have completed necessary ground level surveys and modelling is now being conducted to assess the viability of raising the road level on the floodplain.

The Parish Council continues to receive reports of dog fouling within the village. To assist dog owners three new bins have been purchased and strategically placed around the village. It is really hoped these facilities will be used to keep our surroundings clean and safe.

I would take this opportunity to thank all Councillors for their time and commitment in dealing with Council matters. Unfortunately two Councillors have tendered their resignations and I would particularly like to record my thanks for their contributions to Council during their term in office. Also thanks to Louise our clerk, for her attention to detail and guiding the Council through difficult decisions. In addition 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. Police Report

The last 12 months has continued to be busy throughout our policing area which extends from Whittington, Upton Snodsbury and Dormston in the north to Bredon and Beckford in the south. We have carried out active engagement within our policing area in the form of monthly police surgeries and local parish events. The whole team remain committed to tackling all levels of crime throughout the area including rural crime and poaching and providing security advice and support to victims and vulnerable residents.

This report is based using the recorded crime figures between 10/04/2016 and 10/04/2017 the comparison is relating to the corresponding dates in 2015/16.

Overall the police recorded **85** incidents that were reported by members of the public this is compared to **97** incidents reported the previous year.

Of the **85** incidents the Parish had **21** recordable crimes (incidents where a specific offence has occurred) this was in comparison to **28** recordable crimes the previous year.

The breakdown of offences is as follows:

|                              | <b>2016/17</b> | <b>2015/16</b> |
|------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Burglary Dwellings</b>    | 3              | 0              |
| <b>Burglary non dwelling</b> | 5              | 3              |
| <b>Theft of Vehicle</b>      | 0              | 2              |
| <b>Theft from Vehicle</b>    | 2              | 2              |
| <b>Theft Other</b>           | 4              | 3              |
| <b>Criminal Damage</b>       | 2              | 5              |
| <b>Arson</b>                 | 0              | 1              |
| <b>Other Offences</b>        | 5              | 12             |

(Includes mostly domestic related incidents and concern for safety)

Overall the figures show a steady but low crime rate for the past few years. Whilst there has been 3 burglaries in the past year we believe they were isolated incidents. We have continued with increased patrols in the area and have issued security advice.

The figures clearly present the picture that Eckington and the surrounding area is still a safe place to both live and work, however we all have a responsibility to ensure we maintain this.

On behalf of the team and myself I should like to offer my thanks to the Parish Council for all its help over the last 12 months. I would also like to say thank you to the Parish as a whole for its continued support of the local policing team and for the numerous calls we have received relating to suspicious activity, all we ask is that you continue to do this.

#### 7. Other Issues

The following issues were raised regarding the 382 bus service:

- Villagers and the Parish Council should be doing everything possible to preserve a commercial bus service.
- It was felt that perhaps a community bus service may hamper the survival of the current 382 service.
- It was felt that the social impact of losing the current bus service, on the community as a whole, would be extremely concerning to the Parish.

The Chair confirmed that the PC also shared the above concerns and have been liaising with WCC, First and Pershore Transport Group regarding this important issue.

It was noted that all of the above and the possibility of a community bus service to run alongside the 382 bus service, would be discussed at the village meeting to be held on 13/04/17.

There being no further issues, the Meeting was closed at 8.00pm.