

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF WHILTON

Held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 9 April 2014 at 6:30pm

13 Parishioners attended, with Mr Peter Wingrave, Chairman of the Parish Council in the chair and Mrs Erica Fothergill, Clerk to the Parish Council, as secretary. Mr Wingrave welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for taking the time to attend.

Apologies for absence were received from Keith and Anthea Hiscock who submitted reports for their village groups, which will be shared with residents at the meeting.

1. Minutes of the 2013 Annual Parish meeting held on 10 April 2013 were unanimously approved.
2. Matters Arising – None.
3. Chairman's Report

The Chairman thanked parish councillors for their ongoing conduct of affairs and for drawing on their considerable local involvement and experience to not only deal diligently with the day to day administration of affairs, but also continue their admirable record of bringing to fruition various long outstanding and difficult issues.

Notable amongst these was the registration of the village green, some ten years after negotiations commenced and despite DCC and NCC assurances that the only possible way forward was for your parish council to spend significant sums of money to engage legal assistance which would have meant increasing council tax to unacceptable levels. There were times when they thought they were fighting a losing battle, but Ken Bowers' dogged persistence, along with the support of his colleagues, has led to an important positive outcome when the village green was finally registered in November last year.

The diligent work ethic of the clerk, led admirably by Michael Thomas, has resulted in a completely blemish-free report from both internal and external auditors, which is a magnificent achievement.

Greg Lye has campaigned manfully for the long overdue replacement of Whilton's water main and was finally rewarded this year, along with his colleagues, with the actual commencement of the project in the Bringtons.

The team has dealt with some controversial planning applications during the year, notably:

- An application for 9 pit garages at Whilton Mill, which they opposed, was rejected on appeal;
- Storage for 350 caravans on the A5 at Norton Fields Farm Watling Street, Norton which they opposed has since been withdrawn, but is expected to resurface soon;
- They opposed several applications for wind turbines in villages around Whilton;
- Last, but not least, they opposed the application for a windfarm at Watford consisting of 5 turbines with a height of 126.5 metres or 415ft in.

Where already built, these turbines have substantially undermined the property values and environments of many people with whom it is all too easy to identify. It appears DCC and others are powerless to defend applications at appeal which means it is all the more important that parish councils and local residents steel themselves to present an effective opposition and bring some courage and endeavour to the fore.

This, your parish council is resolved to do.

4. County Councillor's Report

Cllr Osborne said that he was proud to represent Whilton and to have had a hand in the successful registration of the village green, after a battle spanning many years. He also said that he was no longer a member of the Planning Committee but that he has joined the Personnel Committee. He further reported that:

- the County Council had to make financial savings amounting to £33m;
- the elderly and their care would be most affected;
- they've managed to contain the rates increase to just under 2%;
- the county council have applied for more money for road repairs;

5. District Councillors' Report

As none of the three district councillors attended the meeting or submitted a report, Cllr Osborne gave a brief overview, as follows:

- developers are very active in the district with large housing developments proposed in Woodford Halse, Long Buckby, Weedon, West Haddon, Moulton and Harpole to name a few;
- there are a number of applications for wind turbines in Long Buckby, Watford, East Haddon, etc.
- although Daventry' District Council has increased its council tax, it remains one of the lowest in the country.
- the University Technical College for New Technologies in Daventry has opened and is doing well.

6. Report from Brington and Whilton Pre-School

The Early Years Manager, Jenny Holman, reported that the Pre-school had to say goodbye at the end of the summer term to four children going on to school but that a good number remained for the new school year. During the year this number has risen to fourteen with most children attending on all three days. This has helped them financially to recover some of the losses that they made last year.

During the last year their newest member of staff completed her level III in Childcare. The group can now boast that they have very well qualified staff to support and care for the children's needs, ensuring that the children progress through all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage effectively.

Since Christmas they have been open for a longer session on Wednesdays until 3pm for children over three, to give the older children further time to learn as they prepare for school.

Ofsted told them that they needed to improve their outside play which should take place daily which is not easy as they have no outside area. They visit the Spinney quite often and are trying to think of creative ways in which to incorporate this, without neglecting other areas of the curriculum.

7. Police Report

PCSO Sarah Gray, who was unable to attend, submitted the following figures:

Whilton & Whilton Locks		Whole beat	
Burglary Dwelling	0	Burglary Dwelling	19
Burglary Non- Dwelling	1	Burglary Non- Dwelling	18
Criminal Damage	0	Criminal Damage	22
Theft from Vehicle	0	Theft from Vehicle	6
Of Vehicle	0	Of Vehicle	1
Drugs found/Warrants	1	Drugs found/Warrants	5
Theft/ Shoplifting	2	Theft/ Shoplifting	45
Vehicle Interference	0	Vehicle Interference	0
Other Incidents	5	Other Incidents	91

8. Report from Whilton's Spinney Management Committee

Sadly one of the significant events to report for the Spinney is the death of the Chairman and initiator, Derek Brown, in May last year. The group misses his leadership, but because his hard work had laid down a clear framework they have continued to manage the Spinney with the intention of benefitting the whole community.

The Parish Council has been supportive in agreeing to take on the responsibility for provision of funds to pay the annual insurance premium. However, the group has no regular income, nor any funds to fall back on. They will be attending a funding fair later this month, to see if there is any possibility of applying for help with the maintenance costs.

The group has continued to improve the paths by putting down more granite chippings, but have faced certain obstacles. They thanked all volunteers who help, and Gordon Emery who so kindly moves the chippings from the field gate down to the Spinney entrance. The wet windy weather also caused a willow tree to fall across the fence, and this will soon be dealt with.

The Parish Council were thanked for their support and the group encourages villagers to enjoy the quiet beauty of the Spinney, which is usually especially colourful in spring.

9. Report from Whilton's Neighbourhood Watch - Nothing received.

10. Report from Whilton's Gardeners' Association

The Chairman, Roy Haynes, reported that they have adopted a new constitution which had been produced by the committee at their recent AGM in February which reads: *Whilton Gardeners' Association exists to promote gardening and an interest in all things related to gardening for members and other occasional visitors to the group, in a social environment. To come together to offer one off opportunities for socialising for all members and residents of Whilton.*

The Association meets 6 times a year, bi-monthly, normally on the first Wednesday of the month. They currently have 30 members, 3 down on last year. Their 2013 programme included 3 speakers. In July they visited fellow member Chris Lefley's garden in Nobottle and in August they visited 3 gardens in Whilton finishing up with a buffet at Roughmoor, which attracted 28 people. The year finished year with their usual Christmas Social and supper in December.

Subscriptions remain at £12 per person for 2014, but at the AGM they voted to raise this to £15 for 2015 which represents the first increase for 4 years. Members are eligible for a good discount on their annual seed order by way of a bulk ordering scheme. In addition, the new management at Whilton Locks Garden Centre have confirmed that production of a current membership card will continue to facilitate a 10% discount.

11. Report from Whilton's Village Hall Management Group

The Chairman thanked all those who had contributed in any way to the running of the hall during the year, especially Mary Kane for her work as bookings secretary. He reported that, once again, the hall had been regularly used throughout the year by the Pre-School and various village organisations, although private bookings had decreased. No internal repairs to the hall had been necessary during the year. Planned external work included a waste pipe, trimming a boundary hedge and repairing some guttering. Anthea thanked Maurice at the Village Hall AGM, on behalf of the Committee, for all the maintenance work he himself had carried out during the year.

Village Hall finances for the year ended 31 December 2013 showed healthy bank balances. No large capital expenditure had been incurred in the last year. Membership of the 200 Club had increased slightly during the year to 114, but the level of monthly prize money may need to be reviewed in future. It was agreed to include a subscription reminder in the next newsletter.

12. Report from Whilton's Parochial Church Council

The Church Warden reported that there are 32 parishioners on the Church Electoral Roll with all but 2 resident within the parish. The average attendance counted during October 2013 was 7 but this number increased at festivals.

The new service schedule, introduced in January 2011, developed with the Rector and the Church Wardens of all the parishes, continued to give a joint Benefice service on the first Sunday of the month, the location moving round the Benefice. On the remaining Sundays of each month, St Andrew's had either Holy Communion with Hymns, Worship for All or Evening Praise.

There have been 3 Weddings, 1 Wedding Blessing and 3 Funeral Services. The churchyard is kept tidy and mown and the small conservation area maintained and they thanked Roy Haynes for maintaining the churchyard to such a high standard.

13. Report from Whilton's Local History Society

Anthea Hiscock reported that the Local History Society had met 5 times since the last Annual Parish Meeting. In May they had an introduction to The Brook project, which is now under way. They are making a study of the history of the stream which rises just in Brington, flows down past Roughmoor and the Spinney, crosses Whilton, runs along the Whilton/Long Buckby border, and then flows south past Whilton Mill and Muscott through Brockhall to Flore, where it joins the Nene. As the study continues, Anthea will be giving talks about what has been found and Richard Oliver is taking photos of the stream through the seasons, hoping to use the results in conjunction with this study.

They've had two meetings as part of the Brook Project. The 1st meeting was on "Peopling the Map", when they looked at two parts of the stream and finding out about the people of Muscott who lived near the stream in the 13th and 14th centuries. The subject of the 2nd meeting was Roughmoor through eight centuries, again linking with the Brook Project. They plan to continue again in July, when they will be concentrating on the stream in Brockhall in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

They have interspersed these sessions with other subjects. In July they met to hear a recording of the memories of Will Adams, who died 20 years before in 1993 and were interested to hear the accent and speech patterns of an old man steeped in Whilton history. In November they had an outside speaker, Bob Illingworth, who gave an enthusiastic and informative talk about the restoration of the gardens at Canons Ashby.

Their next meeting is planned for Friday, 16th May, when they will be hearing about "Whilton on the eve of War." All are welcome to this meeting at 7.30pm in the Village Hall. This subject has been chosen as the whole country begins to commemorate the outbreak of the First World War. They will be taking this further in the autumn, when they will concentrate on the man from Whilton who won the VC in 1917. Details of this meeting will be announced nearer the time.

14. Allotments

The chairman of Whilton Allotment Group, Brian Melling, reported that 14 half plots at Whilton allotment gardens were all occupied throughout the last season, but that two adjacent half plots were now available.

Overall the weather was much kinder than in the previous year and after a cold and frosty mid-March, most allotment holders got off to a good growing period, not needing to water until late summer when the next round of seeds and plants went in, prior to the Autumn.

A new strimmer was bought with the cost shared between several allotment holders and turns were taken in keeping the grass paths in order. The mower donated by the Parish council, although cumbersome, does keep the apron between the road and the plots in reasonably good order. The members of this group meet regularly approximately every two months, taking it in turns to play host. The group also is affiliated to the National Allotment Association which offers advice on horticultural and contemporary issues.

In 2014-2015 WAG looks forward to working with the Parish Council in maintaining this valuable local resource as an attractive part of the environment and a hub for community activity which is healthy and life affirming.

15. Report from the Editors of Whilton's Newsletter

The Whilton Newsletter continues to be edited by the three editors Anthea Hiscock, Karen Whitcombe and Rochelle Lye. When they started they were a foursome, and would be happy to welcome another to their team; so if you are interested, please do contact them.

Meanwhile they are trying to provide articles which reflect parish activities, inform parishioners and enable those who wish to contribute, but they are dependent on people giving them information, so please get in touch with them if you have something to share. They are always interested in opinions, photos, poetry or prose, especially if it reflects the local community.

They thanked the Parish Council for their support, and the group of faithful volunteer deliverers of the Newsletter. They also wanted to record their appreciation of the work done by Gerry Heeley, who runs the village website; this, by its nature, is more up-to-date than the quarterly Newsletter, but it is their understanding that people still like to receive hard copies to browse.

16. Whilton Parochial Charities

The Trustees reported that only one application for a grant had been made and approved despite the expectation that demands should rise as difficulties multiplied for residents. The rise in share prices has allowed the giving of one £300 grant.

Ideas on how to achieve more applications from residents therefore continue to be most welcome should you have one, or know someone who might require some help. Their view remains that if the need is there it should be met, and if the funds are thereby extinguished then this should be accepted. Please be reminded that the qualifying criteria are permanently displayed on the two village notice boards.

Recipients of grants in previous years are welcome to apply again if circumstances remain the same or indeed if a new need has arisen. This fund remains for anyone normally resident in the Parish Boundaries and they urged everyone to mention the possibility to those who should benefit from the forethought of previous wealthier generous parishioners.

The three trustees to be approached are the community representative, Ann Gilbert at Langton Cottage, the Rector Reverend Sue Kipling at Brington Rectory and Keith Hiscock, as the Parish Council nominee, at Langton House.

17. Tuesday Chat & Social Lunches report

The Tuesday Chat/Social Lunch Team reported that these two activities have continued to run through the last twelve months. They have held Social Lunches in June, November and April. Anyone may come to these lunches, provided they book in advance. At present the cost is £5 per head. This provides a cooked main course, a choice of three desserts (or a taste of all three!), with soft drinks, followed by coffee and chocolates or mints. The meal is usually accompanied by general conversation and the draw of the 200 Club.

Tuesday Chat is an afternoon meeting and is also open to all. They meet from 2.30 to 4pm and there are cups of tea and a choice of cakes. This is also an occasion for conversation and the draw for the 200 Club. The charge for Tuesday Chat is £1.50 and there is no need to book; just go and you will be welcome. Dates for Tuesday Chat and Social Lunches are advertised in the Newsletter.

18. Whilton Warblers

Since the 2013 Annual Parish Meeting, a new organisation has sprung up in Whilton. This is the Community Choir, known as Whilton Warblers, which meets in the Church. The choir is not yet one year old, and does not yet have the committees and officers which may come with age! However, it has held two concerts and plans another for 20th June, and so might well be in a position to report something by April 2015.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7:30pm and thanked everybody for attending.