

FARTHINGHOE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Annual Parish Meeting** held on Wednesday, 9th April 2014 at 8.00pm in the Village Hall

Present

Parish Council Chairman Prof. David Mellor
County Councillor Ron Sawbridge
District Councillor Rebecca Breese
Parish Clerk: Sue Shepard

Thirty nine members of the public.

1 Welcome. A warm welcome was extended to all speakers, representatives of village organisations and villagers.

The Chair expressed his real concern about the damage that had been caused to property by signs and notices put up by: "Say No to Solar" and "Save the Peacock" action groups. A vehicle stopped to read the sign in Cockley Road and an accident had only just been avoided as another vehicle narrowly missed it and the nearby telegraph pole. Apart from the damage, the signs and notices are a mess around the village.

2 Apologies: Neil Downing

3 Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 10th April 2013

The draft minutes had been uploaded on to the website after last year's meeting. John Grant proposed the minutes as being a true record of the meeting.

4 Matters Arising

5 Reports from:

PCSO Stuart Dowell read by the Chairman of the Parish Council, David Mellor
Your Safer Community Team are: Inspector Andy Hall, Sgt Micki Simons and PCSO Stuart Dowell

I'm one of two new PCSO's who have started for Brackley. Farthinghoe is one of the areas I cover, I have already visited the school to complete a stranger danger talk to the children and introduced myself to the teachers.

Please give my apologies for not being able to attend the meeting

Crime Report for the 1st April 2013 – 31st March 2014

- *March - Attempted burglary (non - house), Glebe Farm*
- *March - Theft from motor vehicle, Chapel Lane*
- *February - Criminal damage to vehicle, Baker Street*
- *February - Criminal damage to vehicle, Farthinghoe*
- *December - Burglary, Queens Street*
- *November - Criminal damage to vehicle, Clarkes Lane*
- *October - Theft from a house, Bowling Green*
- *September - Theft, Allotments, Queen Street*
- *August - Burglary, Bowling Green*

- May - Burglary (non - house), Queen Street
- May - Criminal damage to vehicle, A422
- May - Theft from motor vehicle, Bowling Green
- April - Theft, Farthinghoe

Northamptonshire Police are looking for:

Police Support Volunteers and Special Constables, if you are interested please contact Tel: 101 ext 341118 or email sav@northants.police.uk or visit www.northants.police.uk/careers

Stuart Dowell PCSO 7080

Brackley Safer Community Team

Tel: 101 ext 347449

sct-southnorthantsbrackley@northants.pnn.police.uk

County Councillor Ron Sawbridge for Middleton Cheney Division.

The County Council has been able to celebrate many achievements during 2013. The Highways Maintenance Initiative has been hailed as a great success and gained national recognition for its approach. Last month the council was allocated an additional £1.5m to repair the roads. In addition to this, and due to the efforts of Northampton MP Michael Ellis, the government has just announced a further £200m fund for local authorities and our county will be receiving some of this. However, it is estimated that it will require £100m to bring all the county's roads up to a good standard.

Youth unemployment in the county has reduced from 7.2% to 4.9% and Experian, the business and credit reference agency, has rated Northampton as the best place in the country to start a new business and with which to do business.

In February the council was awarded an additional £3.6m to complete the provision of Superfast Broadband over ninety percent of the county by the end of 2015 and countywide by the end of 2017. I am aware that the present slow speed of Broadband in our villages is very frustrating due to uncertainty over the dates when it will improve and I am endeavouring to obtain firmer information from the County Council. Last month, the Customer Service Centre was awarded the Service Excellence standard by the Cabinet Office. This recognises organisations that are efficient, effective, excellent, and equitable, putting residents at the heart of what they do.

The nation's indebtedness means that during the next few years we are not going to see any relaxation of the financial restraints on the County Council. There is constant pressure to save money in order to keep the council tax at an affordable and acceptable level. During the last three years the total grants received from the government have gradually reduced and the council has had to offset this by reducing costs. In the three years 2011/2013 the council had to save £133m, and in the year just started, a further £40m; £173m spread over four years. As a result the council has had to find different ways of operating and Northamptonshire is now recognised as the most efficient, innovative, and enterprising county in England.

Turning now to the budget for the financial year just started, the net revenue, excluding the school budget, is £428m with a contribution from the tax you pay of £227m. The biggest net expenditure is on Adult Social Care £146m, followed by Children and Families £114m, Environment, Development, and Highways £76m, Technical, Corporate and other Services £55m, Shared Support Services £26m, Public Health & Wellbeing £7m, and Chief Executive Services £4m.

This year, for the first time, the council decided not to accept the government's 1% additional grant if no increase in tax was made. Instead the council decided to increase the tax by 1.99% resulting in an increase of £20 a year on a band 'D' property. If the council had accepted the government's 1% 'freeze grant' this would have amounted to £2.2m whereas the 1.99% increase brings in almost double this amount which will remain as part of the base budget in subsequent years, something not guaranteed with the 'freeze grant'. The County Council have kept the tax at the same level for the

past three years and have exceeded the promise made by the Conservatives in the 2005 election manifesto to keep any rise at or below the level of inflation. Northamptonshire continues to have the lowest county council tax in the country. As a comparison, for a band 'D' property, it is £160 a year less than in Oxfordshire.

Following my election last September I was appointed as a member of the Health, Adult Care, & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, the Finance & Resources Scrutiny Committee, the Councillor Services & Governance Working Group, and as a substitute member of the Police & Crime Panel. All this is completely new to me because, as many of you know, my main interests in the past have all been connected with children and education. I am finding the Health, Adult Care, & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee particularly interesting. After a 40 year break responsibility for public health is back with local government and this is now my main area of interest through this committee. Obviously the change in health is going to entail close cooperation and working with the NHS and this is the focus of the Health & Wellbeing Boards. I am sure that everyone is aware that there are complex problems in the health sector. One in five of the children in year six is ranked as obese and, at the other end of the age range, most people will reach retirement age with a disability. The country faces a rising tide of need as people live longer but can spend much of the additional years in ill health largely due to preventable chronic diseases. This county has a particular problem due to the geographical imbalance in longevity, people in Corby living, on average, ten years less than people in the south of the county.

I am becoming increasingly concerned about the number of houses being built particularly in Oxfordshire. Not only have we substantial developments in our own county in Brackley, Middleton Cheney and Kings Sutton but also very large numbers of houses being erected across the border in Bodicote, Adderbury, Banbury, Bicester, and Upper Heyford, all of which will generate more traffic through our villages. I am also particularly concerned about the effect on people wishing to shop in Banbury. There seems to be a complete lack of information being passed from one authority to the other regarding any plans to improve the Oxford/Banbury Road. This road is already very congested at peak times – just imagine what it will be like when 1,200 houses are built at Longford Park, Bodicote, plus possibly another 400 close by, and a development in Adderbury. Through the Assistant Director Highways at County Hall in Northampton I am trying to bring about much closer working between the two counties so that we are made more aware of the improvements in infrastructure that are planned.

On top of all this we have HS2! Whether or not you support this project it is certain that the construction work required will bring problems to many of our villages, to motorists on the roads in the south of the county. The most recent environmental statement produced for the first phase of the project starting in 2017 highlights major adverse effects on the M40 slip roads, the A422, and the A43. The effect of large amounts of construction traffic, much of it using junction 10 and 11 of the M40, will have a detrimental impact on traffic flow through the area for up to three years and pose a potential nightmare for villages close to the route taken by construction vehicles. For Farthinghoe, the A422 is of great concern as the construction work being carried out close to the B4525 will inevitably increase the amount of general traffic coming through the village. I anticipate this will be a major problem. The County Council is being very active in supporting the villages in a concerted attempt to mitigate the environmental impact as much as possible.

Finally, I need to report on the very popular Empowering Councillors' Scheme. Since it started the scheme has funded projects across the county to the tune of over £2m. Last year, in this Division, the allowance of £7,000 was allocated by my predecessor, Councillor Ken Melling, as follows: £3,600 to Evenley Cricket Club for an artificial wicket, and £2,400 for play equipment at Greatworth Children's Park. Of the remaining £1,000, I have given £450 to Kings Sutton Parish Council for the purchase of a computer for the use of the public in the Memorial Hall, and the balance of £550 has been carried forward to the current financial year.

District Councillor Rebecca Reese

It has been a busy time at SNC and through Cherwell and SNC working together for the last three years, savings of £300,000 per annum have been made. SNC has also received awards for its innovative approach. Access to legal services is available through Stratford upon Avon District Council. Funding under the New Homes Bonus Scheme has been ring fenced by SNC and will be used to provide core services with 30% going to villages with any community group being eligible to apply. Where more homes have been built e.g. Silverstone, the village can apply for up to £78,000.

Council Tax has been frozen and although non domestic rates are collected by SNC it is then distributed by central government with councils being allowed to keep 50% except in SNC's case where it is subject to a tariff and only keeps 18%.

The new refuse collection system has reduced the amount of waste going to landfill with the recyclable materials going to Chester and the food waste to an anaerobic digester at Didcot.

SNC is going to petition against HS2 but has had limited success with some legal challenges. Although SNC had asked for a judicial review against the permission for wind turbines at Spring Farm which was successful, there was then another appeal by the developer and SNC now awaits the appeal decision in mid-July.

The Joint Core Strategy developed by West Joint Planning Unit for the next 15 years was intended to protect against inappropriate development and the development of the Local Plan which will be looking at village confines is also expected to further this aim but localism is not working.

Cllr Breese welcomes all contact with residents and ward members.

Chairman of the Parish Council, Professor David Mellor OBE

A warm welcome to all of you for attending this Annual Parish Meeting at the Village Hall! Firstly I would like to thank all my fellow councillors for their personal support and commitment over the past year. Thanks to our Clerk, Sue Shepard who has kept us on course throughout our deliberations. I would also like to welcome our new Councillor Sally Thomas who was co-opted last October when Dr Nigel Heywood left the village. Last year we thought that would be the last attendance by our County Councillor Ron Sawbridge but despite losing in May to UKIP he successfully defended the bi-election following the death of Ken Melling who sadly we never had the opportunity to meet. I personally am delighted that Ron is still on board to support our various projects. Thanks also to our District Councillor Rebecca Breese for her support.

Traffic Issues

Traffic continues to be a major focus of the Parish Council and in October 2013 our MP Andrea Leadsom and Councillor Sawbridge supported us when we had a visitation by David Farquhar (Head of NCC Highways Department) who promised to carry out several exploratory investigations to improve the A422 through our village and hopefully reduce the amount of heavy goods vehicles. Whilst David agreed we warranted a bypass it is quite clear that this is many years away with current budget constraints. The objective set was to achieve various improvements to the roads around the village by the time of the next F1 Grand prix at Silverstone in July 2014. The major goal is signage relocation to avoid a 60 mph speed limit by the Farthinghoe Play Area and the road to Hinton Aerodrome.

Farthinghoe Solar Park

The Parish Council were advised by Green Energy in December 2013 that they intended to apply for planning permission for a 66 Acre Solar Farm to the North East of the Village. It

was agreed that in February there would be an opportunity for residents to discuss with the land owner and Green Energy their various concerns. As many of you will know a very active 'No Campaign' evolved and many people have signed a petition unaware of all the facts. The Parish Council hoped to have a democratic vote on this issue but unfortunately a list of 150 signatories opposing the site has, we understand, been submitted to SNC by the Action Group and a group of 40 attended the Public Time of the Parish Council Meeting in March. Since representatives from across the village attended this meeting the Parish Council felt obliged that public opinion was against the Solar Park.

Unfortunately the Parish Council negotiations with Green Energy where we obtained in writing a £800 per Megawatt Community Donation for 25 years may now have been in vain. £200,000 would have gone a long way towards the School, Church, Play Area and Village Hall maintenance aspects until 2040.

As I constantly tell Parishioners I will only act the way the village asks me to and clearly you are not in favour of renewable energy in Farthinghoe?

Village Web-site

The Village web site continues to display a soft copy of the Farthinghoe Chronicle and various reports as they become available. Links are provided to the School, Limes Farm and Fox Inn. The web address is www.farthinghoeparishcouncil.org. This report is available for downloading now on the website!

Farthinghoe Chronicle

Thanks to Shirley Downing for editing the Chronicle over the past year and for keeping us aware of activities taking place in the community and thanks to the Fox Inn and Limes Farm we have been able to keep the cost to parishioners at zero. The new format is fresh and informative!

Grass Cutting

Jon Hampson has done an excellent job over the last year cutting the grass at the Play Areas and nominated areas we attempted to register in the name of the village. During the visit by NCC last October the Parish Council were encouraged to continue to beautify the village when and where we feel appropriate and funds permitting we will continue to do this.

Children's Play Area

The Parish Council still intends, subject to available funds, to update the equipment at the Farthinghoe Play Area and this would have been our first priority had the Solar Farm gone ahead. FPC and NCC together with Councillor Dashwood hope a reasonable project can be implemented over the next 12 months. Although Becky and Louise asked through the Farthinghoe Chronicle for your support and ideas on this issue the Parish Council is yet to receive a Public Time presentation on this issue.

The Local Plan

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Councillor Thomas and other Councillors who contributed to the South Northamptonshire Settlements and Development Management Local Plan. Information regarding this plan can be found at www.southnorthants.gov.uk Finally I would like to thank my Vice Chairman, Councillor Grant for chairing meetings when I am unable to participate due to overseas projects.

6 Financial report for year ending 31st March 2014

Opening balance at 1st April 2013: £2,358.66

The precept has remained at £6,500 for the coming year, no increase for the fifth consecutive year. The Parish Council also received other income: a VAT refund of £372.00, a contribution of £66.30 from Limes Farm and The Fox, each paying the printing costs for one edition of the Chronicle which is now funded by the Parish Council and £0.08 in interest.

Total expenditure £5,575.84

Balance at 31st March 2014: £3,893.01

This balance was higher than expected as it had been anticipated that £1,000 might have been paid out towards the new equipment for the Playground before the end of the year. The Parish Council has also budgeted a further £1,000 towards play equipment.

Annual lighting costs were £524.26 and £351.82 for maintenance: a small increase on last year.

Although there was a very small increase in the annual insurance premium, £521.64 instead of £515.21, the administration costs were less, £1,907.14 which included internal audit £145 but no external audit fee as all income and expenditure came in under the £10,000 threshold. There was a small increase in the subscription fee to NCALC from £123.48 to £130.44 but this is based on the number on the electoral register. The request for extra copies of the Chronicle has also seen a rise from £64.90 to £66.30 per month but the cost had been offset by the two donations from Limes Farm and The Fox in return for advertising space.

There was a pay award last year but the Clerk's salary remained at £1400 with £300 for expenses. She is planning to add the 1% from last year to the eagerly anticipated 1% for this year!

Mowing costs much reduced since the responsibility for the Village Hall grass was handed back to the Village Hall Committee: £810 instead of £1522.30. The Parish Council is still responsible for mowing the playground and paying for the verges to be cut in between County cuts.

There has been no increase in the cost of maintenance of the web site, which includes uploading minutes, and remains at £299.00 per annum.

The Parish Council is also a member of the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the £29 annual subscription goes towards helping them with their campaigns to protect our countryside.

Not much changes but I hope this gives an indication of how the Parish Council spends the precept on your behalf. The Parish Council will be pleased to answer any questions.

Sue Shepard, Clerk to Farthinghoe Parish Council

7 Reports from village organisations **Alms-houses – Chair, Jenny Forbes**

All of the Almshouses are currently occupied. Work is due to begin to replace the water supply to the three Almshouses. Other work, particularly to No 1 Almshouse will be carried out in the near future. For those of you who know Jennie Thompson, she has given her garden ornaments to the Farthinghoe School for their Memorial Garden and some of her furniture to The Katherine House Hospice shop. Jenny Forbes thanked all of her fellow trustees of The Charity of Thomas Amphlett for their tireless work and help in the management of the Farthinghoe Almshouses. Thank you.

Farthinghoe School – Chair of Governors, Graham Thorley

The school had decided that Academy status was not appropriate and remained Council maintained and the head teacher divides her time between two schools. The school has a full complement of children, 44 in total and is operating a waiting list which has never happened before. Results in the recent SATs placed Farthinghoe School as the best in Northamptonshire and 13th in the UK and therefore there would be no OFSTED report. The school is to be congratulated on this achievement. There is a creative curriculum where the whole school studies a particular topic and

Shackleton's Expedition to the Antarctic is one that has been studied recently. Charity Ambassadors raised £600 which was matched by Rotary as well as collecting for shelter boxes for disaster areas. It is a healthy school which has been re configured internally and includes a memorial garden. Graham expressed his thanks to the head, teachers, governors and kids for making it such a fantastic village school.

Farthinghoe Church – Ruth Dashwood

During the last year we have had seven baptisms, one marriage and one funeral. The work on the clock is progressing and the Yew trees have been trimmed. You will have seen that we have a new notice board and our thanks go to Mike Phipps for making it. The school has used the Vestry for drum and ukulele practice, and parents and villagers enjoyed the concerts.

Our thanks must also go to all the volunteers who keep the outside and inside of the Church clean and tidy. We now have a new cleaning system – several members meet together once a month to thoroughly clean the Church and brasses. We always welcome new people to worship at our Church as well as look after it!

Mother's Union – Ruth Dashwood

.....is a worldwide organisation dedicated to the Christian care of children and families. We have five faithful members in our branch and, as with the Church, we would welcome new members.

Church Piece Allotments

All plots are taken at an annual rent of £12. Currently three of the holders are from Brackley. If you would like a plot then please apply because there are change overs all the time.

8 Farthinghoe Peacock

Percy the Peacock took up residence in Farthinghoe during 2007 and it is estimated that he is about 10 years old and according to experts can live to approximately 14 – 15 years of age. A petition with 190 signatures want Percy to remain as a resident and roam freely in Farthinghoe. Councillor Grant pointed out that as an elected Parish Councillor it was his responsibility to represent the majority of the village wishes. Councillor Grant also pointed out that any attempt to harm or remove the Peacock from the village is likely to set neighbour against neighbour and urged all villagers to remain as friends and not fall out with each other over this matter.

Councillor Grant concluded that the motion to retain the presence of the Peacock in Farthinghoe was well and truly carried by majority.

A number of arguments broke out and some Villagers, particularly those living near to Limes Farm and Manor Lane, where he roosts, pointed out that they are severely affected by the noise he makes for approximately 3 months in the Spring/Summer and are woken up every night in the early hours of the morning. There are those who think he is nice to look at but the noise is unacceptable. It was suggested that if fed a Peacock could live for 30 years and certainly the Peacock was being fed by certain Villagers. The Villagers felt that they could not wait for nature to take its course and that a solution to suit both parties should be found.

Dave Clayton asked if the Parish Council could take any action to deter where he roosts. Would green netting act as a deterrent?

Gary Mills advised that he understood Limes Farm would be happy to accommodate the Peacock and build a suitable compound for his accommodation. Nicky Dorward was present

at the meeting and confirmed her agreement. Councillor Grant accepted that the Limes Farm suggestion was a potential compromise and promised to discuss this suggestion with Mrs. Sue Stubbs on her return from holiday but could not and would not under any circumstances take any action in her absence.

It was then asked how the Village would be notified of the Parish Council decision and Councillor Grant advised through the Farthinghoe Chronicle.

9 Other business

Proposed Solar Farm

James Harrison, the landowner, is working with the developer, Green Energy and had posted a questionnaire through every householder's letterbox. This was also to bring to the attention of all residents the Community Benefit that is on offer and keen that the village should benefit if permission is granted. The "No campaign" group had been very active but others had not been represented. The Government wants rid of coal fired stations and is looking at other ways of meeting the inevitable increase in the need for electricity.

There had been no explanation of the community benefit or at least it had not come to the table soon enough.

The action group have been actively campaigning against industrialisation with a level of support from the village and the Parish Council who registered their objections on behalf of the village. All those who signed the petition were aware of all the facts and nobody was pressurised into signing.

A number of people had met with Andrea Leadsom MP and had visited the site which highlighted the impact that it would have on Halse and Greatworth as well as Farthinghoe.

There is still time to make your comments known as responses will be accepted up until 10th April and may be beyond that date.

Superfast Broadband

Although it is suggested that Farthinghoe will be connected this year this is not considered to be a reality!

A Greatworth parish councillor wished to raise awareness of just how far reaching the impact of the proposed Solar Farm would be. The village should not get carried away by the offer of vast sums of money which may not be forthcoming if the company get permission and then sell on.

Any community benefit should not be a material consideration.

The Parish Council has to represent the village and the money could be legally secured.

Has the Jubilee Oak Tree died? Advised to contact Village Hall Committee.

The Chair thanked everybody for attending and closed the meeting at 9.30pm.

Sue Shepard

Clerk to Farthinghoe Parish Council

5th June 2014