

# Minutes of the Easton on the Hill Annual Parish Meeting

Held remotely by Zoom video conferencing on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021 at 7pm

**Present;** Councillors; J Hamilton, E Hanson, T Nicol, J Rawlinson (Chairman), D Sharpe, S Woodman

Clerk: J Rice

Members of the public: I Lawson, S Forster, C Mountain, D Davenport, J Watson, D Wheatley, S Cherry, B Connolly, P Fletcher

Apologies were received from C Briers, R Woodfield, H Harrison, District Councillor, A Peteira PCSO, Cllr Dow, Cllr Holwell.

- 1) **To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2019 (there was no meeting held last year due to the pandemic)**  
The minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2019 were confirmed as a true record by those that were present then.
- 2) **Matters arising.** There were no matters arising.
- 3) **PCSO, Artur Peteira's report**  
There was no report available due to personal circumstances. The Clerk explained the new system in the country that Northamptonshire are doing to create links between the police and the community via an appointed Police Liaison Representative (PLR). Cllr Sharpe is currently the PLR.
- 4) **Our Ward Councillor, Helen Harrison's report**  
The report was shared and read out, shown below. The planning system was confirmed as the same as currently with applications going to ENC.
- 5) **Parish Council Chairman, Jerry Rawlinson's, report including Clerk's finance report.**  
The reports were shared on screen and read out, shown below.
- 6) **Parish Council Playing Field Improvement Committee Chairman, Keir Dow's, report**  
The report was shared and read out, shown below. Mr Cherry reported that the football foundation may have a funding stream for clubs playing at the PF.
- 7) **Village Plan Working Party report**  
D Davenport read out the report and that an Open Eve event is worth being considered to revisit the plan. It was commented that a Neighbourhood Plan is also something that may be worth being seriously considered in the future.
- 8) **Other Parish Council groups' reports**  
**Traffic working group and Trees and Greens** – see presentation that was shared by Cllr Nicol
- 9) To meet and hear feedback from village groups;
  1. **The Cricket Club** – see attached report, in addition the plans to allow a trial of Wittering Premier Football club and Macca Sports using the ground were confirmed and the collaborative working with the CC and PC. Concerns over parking and traffic will be addressed.
  2. **The History Club** – see attached report plus their website.

3. **Harmony on the Hill.** J Rawlinson gave a brief update and welcomed and encouraged new members, including bell ringers who are much needed.
4. **T21 Café.** T Nicol, Trustee gave a report about the venture with the Downs Syndrome Group charity, the plans for the new café at the Easton Garford school premises are agreed with work starting on 10/5/21. There will be vacancies for volunteering and paid staff, opening in October.
5. **The Garford Trust**  
S Forster, Chairman, gave an update about the struggles the school has faced in the past but now there are success stories from the nursery and now the café. They are working on the Charities Commission status problems to finalise this and the key priority of education is still apparent with the recent home schooling support via laptop deliveries offered during the pandemic. They are offering a multi-community space to complement the village hall and applying for grants. They're pleased to see the nursery growing and with a forest school planned. A comment was made that a joined up approach could be considered for village organisations approaching the same grant providers as they are competing at present.
6. **The Village Hall** – including the application for a license to sell alcohol, deadline for consultation 10/5/21. (Parish Council to decide their response at an extraordinary meeting after this meeting.)  
See attached report. There were no objections to the application – everyone agreed it was a good idea.
7. **Horticultural and Craft Society.** D Davenport gave an update, below, and said there were slides of the virtual show on the website. Hoping for a live show this year.
8. **Friends of the Church** – see report below.

10) **To receive comment from residents of the village on any other matters of concern.**

There was a comment from a member of the public about any extra traffic from the café and reassured that there is a car park available so no problems anticipated.

### **Report from Helen Harrison, District Councillor**

My report:

It has been a great pleasure to serve as your District Councillor for the last 6 years. It is rather sad to have said goodbye to East Northants Council as we move from the old two tier system of local government to a new Unitary system.

It gave me great satisfaction to have been able to support important projects in Easton on the Hill with my Member Empowerment Fund. Projects like the installation of a defibrillator, the Peace Garden and the outdoor gym equipment are all great community initiatives that I have been proud to support.

I am pleased to tell you that I am standing to be elected to the new North Northants Council for our area - Oundle Division. I hope very much to be able to continue to support Easton on the Hill should I be successful.

The Oundle Division will be represented by three Councillors. All the functions and services of the old Districts, Boroughs and County Council will now be provided by North Northants Council. The new Council covers the whole of East Northants, Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough.

There will be 5 planning committees. One strategic, council-wide committee and 4 local planning committees covering the old District and Borough areas. So, Easton on the Hill planning will continue to be looked at by an East Northants committee.

All other services will be run on a council-wide basis with some, the Children's Trust for example, being run on a county-wide basis.

For now, this is all very new and we are all getting used to this new way of working. If you have any queries or issues, please do get in touch and I will be here to help where I can.

Cllr Helen Harrison



## **Chairman's Report April 2021**

At the time of the last meeting over 2 years ago the Council was not in a good position. Resignations had left the Council with mainly co-opted members and a locum Clerk and the situation went from bad to worse with more resignations and replacements having to be co-opted. However, as time passed I am pleased to say that improvements have been made and in the last year progress has been significant. We now have a new (permanent) Clerk who has helped to steer the Council through the difficulties and problems caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the Council has been more professional in its actions and intentions.

The meetings of the Council, committees and working parties have been hampered by the need to "meet" electronically, nonetheless the work has carried on regardless and all concerned should be pleased with the efforts and outcomes. There seems to be more village involvement than previously and hopefully this is a trend that will continue. With the upcoming elections we are moving from a Council where only 3 of the Councillors were elected

(in 2016) to one where 13 candidates will stand for the 11 vacancies and I would like to thank those who have put their names forward.

Since the last meeting a lot has happened with regard to the Playing Field. The matter of registration with the Land Registry has been finalised and this means that the Village, through the Council can lease the land to the Cricket Club. The lease is in the final stages of preparation and once this is done the Cricket Club will be able to apply for funding from outside sources, with priority being given to supplying electricity to the Clubhouse. The old changing room building which had fallen in to a poor state of repair has been demolished and a car parking surface has been installed. Discussions are ongoing with regard to the surface condition of Ketton Drift and options are being considered.

## FINANCE REPORT FOR ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 20/21

### Main points

- Balance carried over at end of 2019/20 was £3254. This was due mainly to a committed change to LED lighting contract, payment off of a public body loan, solicitor costs and high payments to locum staff member. It was a tricky year for many reasons.
- The precept was raised by 33% to rebuild the reserves of money and there was a tight control over payments. Many jobs were done by volunteers that may otherwise have cost the council more money to do.
- The basic budget last year was £23875 and expenditure was £21764 (91%) the main savings being in reduced street lighting costs, a revised insurance premium and room hire costs due to online meetings. There was a new bench installed on Stamford road and new electricity pole in New Town. The registration of the playing field in the council's name was costly but worth it.
- The basic receipts were £33000 thus covering basic expenditure however there were also 3 grants for playing field improvements applied for and received, totalling £49,967.
- There were also donations to the project received of £7255.
- Not all of the grants have been spent as yet and so the carried forward figure of £21754 includes £10k to be paid to Playdale soon and also some donations not yet spent. Regardless of this, a carried forward figure of £11754 is a much healthier position. The VAT reclaim of £5626 is due in soon also.
- The main focus has been the playing field improvements and the grants were spent on the new path, the 2 pieces of gym equipment, demolition of the building and new car park and fencing. The 7 pieces of play equipment are due to be installed soon plus more fencing.
- Another grant of £20,000 is hoped for soon and £750 grant from Maud Elkington has been received, plus more donations totalling £890.
- For 21/22 the precept was increased by a small inflationary amount only (to £33000) and the reserves will continue to be built up sensibly. The council has the precept payment but no other income apart from allotment rent of around £150. Projects this year include continuation of the playing field, (new) councillor training due to election and a new notice board – this has been purchased already and the remainder will go into general reserves. Any other projects or ideas need to be planned with an open evening maybe when restrictions allow.

### CURRENT POSITION £

c/f end of March 2021	£21754
April receipts	£35269 (includes donation and <b>precept of £34148</b> )

April payments £6851.65

**Balance now £50172**

Need to pay Playdale £12507 for second instalment of play equipment and will receive VAT reclaim of £5626

## Playing Fields Improvement

### Recommendations

- The site includes a cricket pavilion which has been re-furbished by the cricket club which leases an area from the PC. The site also has another building, intended as a changing room, which was constructed by villagers around 35 years ago, but which has never been used. It is falling into disrepair (and potentially dangerously), it is very unsightly (it's built of breeze blocks) and the general consensus was to actually demolish it and (possibly) start afresh.
- Next, up-grade the equipment in the existing children's play area.
- Purchase new fitness equipment which would be suitable for all ages, to be sited around the perimeter of the field.
- Implementation of a "nature" area to encourage children in particular to take an interest in the natural world.
- Construction of a perimeter path to facilitate easy movement around the field, and also to use the fitness equipment.
- Improvement of the parking area, which being completely unmanaged at the moment often becomes muddy and rutted in the winter months – again, a detractor from the area's appeal.
- Improvement of the perimeter fencing.
- Installation of a "MUGA" (Multi Use Games Area) to attract new clubs or teams to utilise the area.

### The Phased Approach

It is clear that all of the recommendations have a cost implication, in particular the MUGA (estimated cost around £80,000). It is therefore sensible to adopt a phased approach to carrying out the recommendations, using grant funds wherever possible. It has been agreed by the PC that the initial phase should incorporate demolishing the changing room building; making good the car parking area; installing a perimeter path; and improving the perimeter fencing.

The PC was able to source a grant which was used to instal the perimeter path at the beginning of May 2020. Already, it has been noted that people are using this to wheel babies and children in pushchairs, which gives us confidence to move to the rest of the initial phase.

The reason for putting this work first is quite simply that there seems little point in purchasing equipment when the access would still be difficult and unappealing. The very act of taking down an unsightly and potentially unsafe building, creating a level and un-rutted car park, and improved fencing, shows that the PC are serious about making the Playing Fields a place where people want to visit.

The second phase will be to purchase further fitness equipment, and more equipment for the playpark area aimed at older children: it is acknowledged that teenagers are very poorly served at the present time.

The third phase will be the nature area – but this could in fact be undertaken alongside phases one and two, subject to budgetary constraints. At the same time, we would like to instal a bike/scooter zone in an area which will need to be cleared and made suitable (it is within hitting distance of the cricket field, so a high fence will need to be installed, or the site made unavailable on match days).

The fourth phase will be the installation of a MUGA. This, clearly, may take some time to come to fruition, as the fund-raising needed for such an undertaking will be a substantial task. The Playing Fields Improvement Committee have started work on a communication to be delivered to all villagers. This could also be used to approach corporate entities for more substantial donations.

### **The Playing Fields Improvement Committee**

This is a formal sub-group of the Parish Council, made up of 10 members: 5 Parish Councillors and 5 non-Councillors, whose tasks are to implement the recommendations. They have drawn up this long-term vision for the site supported by a project plan, investigated the first phase of play equipment, sourced a contractor for the car park improvements, and purchased the first 2 pieces of fitness equipment.

In addition to the 10 members, there are a number of other village volunteers and societies with particular specialisms and who are happy to give their time and expertise to different phases of the project.

#### **Completed so far**

Augean Grant applied for and successful.

Perimeter path has been installed

Fence on the 'road side' the length of the cricket pitch. Funding sourced to continue the fencing around to the 'play area' – Installation to be done after installation of new play area

Demolition of the changing rooms

Installation of a car park

Further revenue streams investigated and applied

Village fundraising campaign

New play equipment purchased (awaiting installation)

Fencing purchased for perimeter of pay area.

## **Notes for the Annual Parish Meeting, 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

### **Subject: the Village Plan Working Party**

The Village Plan Working Party last met formally in February of 2020, following the "village event" at the end of January. (Villagers will hopefully remember this event at the Village Hall, whereby the topics from the Village Survey were represented on different tables, with information as to progress and requests for feedback or for volunteers where relevant.)

The feedback from the event overall was very positive, although there did seem to be some confusion as to whether the event was really just about the Playing Field improvements.

Following on from the report made by the VPWP to the Parish Council, and in direct response to the event, the VPWP were asked to assume the work of the Playing Field Group. This was agreed, and a new Playing Field Improvement Committee set up, which will no doubt be the subject of a separate report.

However, the VPWP is not defunct, and indeed could now take a fresh look at the suggestions made but not yet implemented from the event (clearly, a lot of working and committee groups have ceased the majority of their activities due to the pandemic, leading to limited opportunities to continue many of the regular activities).

There is no fixed date as yet, but perhaps following the Parish Council elections, the work of the VPWP may be revisited.

## **Easton on the Hill CC**

## **Parish Meeting 2021**

### **Background**

Cricket has been played in Easton on the Hill for over 100 years, with the club establishing itself in the early 1970's at it's current location on the Easton on the Hill playing fields.

Over the last 4 years the club has tried to invest in facilities to bring them up to the standard required to play safe sport in 2021. Funds have been secured to partially refurbish the pavilion, install new nets, replace the ancient sight screen at the deeps end of the ground and to install a much- needed fence around sections of the playing area.

### **Status in 2021**

The club has around 15- 20 playing members, of which around a third either live in the village or are originally from EOTH. There are also around 50 social members from the village, who also form most of the players for the social matches also played at the playing field.

Currently the club has one competitive team, competing in Division 3 of the Hunts League on a Saturday afternoon and in 2021 there will be 7 home Saturday matches between May and September, starting on May 8<sup>th</sup>. The club also, in normal times, plays 5 or 6 Friday evening 20 over per side (T20) matches, which are often accompanied by a BBQ or pizza night – these matches, along with the annual Chairman's 11 v Village match at the gala, provide 90% of the funds received by the club in any year.

In 2021 the club will also be sharing its facilities with a midweek side from Ketton, who play 6 or 7 Thursday evening matches in a local midweek league and several the players from this team also play for EOTH CC on a Saturday.

### **The Future**

As with all village cricket clubs there are 3 main challenges to face to ensure ongoing survival.

- Funding to ensure we always have the equipment to maintain a good, safe playing surface and outfield, in addition to the ongoing running costs of the club e.g., insurance, kit, balls, water etc.
- Attracting enough players from a dwindling pool of young people taking part in sporting activities.
- Have enough volunteers to manage the day to day running of the club.

Easton on the Hill CC is in a difficult position with the first point as our only real asset is the pavilion and currently there is no permanent power supply to it. A long- term lease is in the process of being agreed with the Parish Council

and securing this will give us the length of guaranteed tenure required to seek funding of around £20k to install a new power supply to the pavilion. This project will allow the CC to generate more sustainable income from the pavilion and will give a power supply to the broader playing field, creating more opportunities for this village asset to be used.

In terms of the last two points on our “survival list” we are currently doing ok on the volunteers’ front – we have a group of 6 or 7 people who keep the club running from admin, playing organisation, cricket tea making and social activity points of view. In fact, it is the playing numbers that always need to be added to in order to keep the club going – we have two or three young teenagers coming into the Saturday side who live in the village, but we always need more, and the Friday night social games are a great way of integrating younger players into the club.

If any villagers wish to join the club to play, please contact either Shayne French- Stanton (07944 718226) or Tyler Sculthorpe (07501 920195). We are also holding an open net session which new players are welcome to join on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> May at 6pm.

Anyone wishing to become a social member, please contact myself on 0771 3066940 or [david.wheatley1980@gmail.com](mailto:david.wheatley1980@gmail.com).

We look forward to seeing as many villagers as possible during our Saturday games (dates will be in “What’s on the Hill”) and / or our Friday evening social games, the first of which is on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> June, if the government lifts the majority of CoVid restrictions on June 21<sup>st</sup>, as planned.

Thank you,

David Wheatley

Chairman Easton on the Hill CC

## **History Group Report**

Despite the lockdown we have been working in the background.

We have continued to help people discover more about their relatives who had lived in the village and identify graves in the churchyard.

The project collating information on the Polish Paratroopers based in the village and surrounding areas during WW2 is nearly complete.

Although we have been unable to organise talks you may have noticed that we have started to submit short articles for News & Views.

Our committee member Helen Tomblin is now the curator of the NT Priest’s House, so we have strong links and hope to add more information on the Village’s History to the displays there.



It's hoped that we will have a website up and running before the end of the year and also that we will be able to restart regular talks in the village hall.

We are always happy to receive your stories about the village and its inhabitants.

## **Notes for the Annual Parish Meeting from the Horticultural and Crafts Society**

As confirmed by the Chair Joy Forster at the AGM in January this year, 2020 turned out to be a very different year from what started as usual with the well-attended AGM. From then on most activities and events became virtual or cancelled altogether due to the pandemic.

Junior members were given an Easter themed craft package, and sunflower seeds to grow. The flowering plants were subsequently entered in the junior show class, Tallest Sunflower.

There was a 'click and collect' style plant sale in May, with many plants grown and donated by Marion Cutforth, Christine Lawson and Al Perna, as well as those purchased, grown on and re-potted by a handful of ever-willing volunteers.

The Society's allotment strips continued to be well tended to by the allotment holders.

In terms of the Annual Show, as preparations progressed it became obvious the usual show format could not proceed, so it was agreed to put on a Virtual Show in August. There were 87 entries from 26 entrants over 30 classes. Graham Lilley (our village web-site webmaster) was very helpful in organising and publishing the entries on the Society pages of the village web site. The slideshows are still available on the village web-site if anyone is interested.

Although we had said that there wouldn't be any judging or awards, the Committee did feel that some awards ought to be given. Many residents will recall that we lost a village stalwart, Harold Gregory, in 2019 and a cup was donated by another villager in his honour. The winner of the first Harold Gregory Centenary Award was Rose Mackie. Rose is a Junior Member, and the award was for a 'Model made from scratch'. It is in the slideshow, and is well worth a look – it's a model of Easton, with the Church, the Post Office and other buildings. A great deal of effort was put into it, and Rose is a deserving recipient of the award. We also awarded the Banksian Medal – this was to Al Perna for a box of vegetables.

We then awarded runner up prizes to Ollie Beardsall (an incredible 15 entries); Alistair Brown for some wonderful woodwork; and others.

Finally, there was the sunflower competition for junior members, which was concluded in September. This was won also by Rose Mackie – with a specimen over 3m tall.

Sadly, there were no more events until the virtual AGM in January 2021. We have again arranged a short programme of events for this year – including another Plant Fayre along the same lines as last year. We are, though, planning a “live” show for August, so watch this space!

With regard to membership, there were 109 “paid up” members in 2020, with the growing Junior Hortis now at 20. The Society took the decision to waive membership fees in 2021 for those who paid in 2020. New members will pay a £2.50 subscription for 2021.

### **Friends of Easton Church**

As with most groups in the village, the Friends of the Church have had their activities adversely affected by the pandemic. We have though been able to continue regular maintenance of the churchyard with volunteers in socially-distanced groups. We know this has been appreciated by the many villagers and walkers using the churchyard for regular exercise.

Work on re-wilding some areas of the old churchyard is proving very successful in widening wildlife diversity and together with the delightful display of spring flora is making the churchyard a local ‘destination’. Northamptonshire Gardens Trust recently featured an article on Easton’s progress in Rewilding God’s Acre.

The Peace Garden continues to provide a welcome amenity space. During the period when the church has been closed mourners have appreciated being able to use the Garden and seek solace following funerals.

It is intended that, once restrictions are lifted, The Friends will be able to resume activities in supporting the use and preservation of our beautiful church.

Robert Woodfield

Chair – Friends of Easton Church

## **EASTON ON THE HILL VILLAGE HALL**

**Registered Charity No 272834**

### **ANNUAL REPORT FOR PARISH MEETING – 28<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2021**

This report focuses on activities for the last twelve months up until the end of April 2021.

This time last year the hall was in a difficult position, we were in lockdown, several of the trustees had resigned and the future of the hall was in question. The trustees at the time completed a village survey which very clearly demonstrated that the village wanted to see the hall remain open and saw it as an essential part of our community. As part of that survey the hall committee reached out to villagers asking for volunteers to join the management committee. Due to the determination of the old committee a new committee and a further eight new trustees were voted into position in October. The new committee would like to thank the outgoing trustees for their support and hardwork during the handover period and for their years served in role.

The last year has been an unprecedented year for all our lives, activities and businesses. The Village Hall is no exception and for a large proportion of the last year the Hall has remained closed due to Coronavirus restrictions. We were able to open for a few months in the summer/autumn but under restrictions which meant limited numbers and no socialising. Consequently, the hall use is at 13% of 'typical' year. We have only received £657 in Hall Hire fees for the year. Fortunately, we have applied for and been able to benefit from COVID lockdown related grants. A further application for an £8,000 post lock down re-start grant has also been submitted. The grants have enabled us to keep the hall maintained and safe during lockdown and also benefit the community with a donation to the playing fields development. Our bank balance is healthy, and we are not at risk of facing difficulties with running costs providing post lockdown we can secure a good level of hire.

We plan to open the hall on May 17<sup>th</sup> for limited activities and then a full reopening on June 21<sup>st</sup> in line with government guidelines. Relevant communications will be made through What's on the Hill, via Representative Trustees and village notice boards.

During lockdown the Hall management committee took the opportunity to complete research with all hirers, village clubs and societies. Based on that research we have already made some small changes – the heating system is now more efficient, the lighting has been greatly improved and the cleaning equipment and materials upgraded. There are a small number of other minor improvements planned.

One of the key messages from the research was the need to be able to sell alcohol and improve the way that this is managed to make it simple and less onerous a process. Consequently the hall committee have applied to extend the premises licence to include the sale of alcohol. We are currently in the consultation period and are looking forward to this being approved so that we can offer a better proposition to our village clubs, societies and activities. Rest assured we will not become a "party venue" and anyone from outside the village and all requests for parties selling alcohol will be reviewed by the management committee and asked to apply for a TEN. The alcohol licence is for the benefit of the village.

We are working closely with Garford Education Trust on the development of the school hall and do not want to see ourselves in competition but to build a partnership where we can work together to both benefit our village community. Consequently it is likely that we will be looking at further improvements to our facilities for example, the kitchen and storage, to ensure we provide a welcoming, fresh, exciting experience within a beautiful traditional venue.

We look forward to a busy year where the hall re-establishes itself at the heart of our village community as a centre for socialising and village events.

DRAFT