

# MINUTES OF THE EASTON ON THE HILL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

## Held on Tuesday 5 March 2019 in the Village Hall, Easton on the Hill

Present: Chairman – Cllr Mike Simpson  
Locum Clerk – Alison Benfield  
7 Councillors  
39 Members of the Public

1) Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 May 2018 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman

2) Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

3) Playing Field

The Chairman provided a verbal report including some of the background to the current situation. He indicated that the Parish Council are still trying to get ownership of the land and that it was currently in the hands of a solicitor. He referred to the outcomes of the Village Plan, which recommended that consideration should be given to relocating it closer to the village. He went on to say that the Parish Council were keen to see a Working Party formed from village residents and interested parties to work with Cllrs Davis, Forman and Rawlinson who had been nominated as the Parish Council representatives with a view to looking into options and reporting back to the Parish Council bi-monthly culminating with some costed recommendations in November to enable the Parish Council to budget accordingly.

5 residents agreed to work with the 3 nominated Councillors.

Various questions were asked about the setup of the Working Party and through discussion it was established: -

- There would be no link between the WP and an Association at the current time. Part of the investigation the WP would need to undertake would be an ongoing management structure but at the moment those forming the WP would be a 'Task and Finish Group'. Individuals would be free to decide if they wished to be involved in the longer term when that stage was reached.
- Working Party to consider its own terms of reference for review by the Parish Council. But would include the requirement to deliver a set of costed recommendations to the November meeting. It was acknowledged that if one of the recommendations was relocation this may take longer than November. It would also be required to report back to the Parish Council bi-monthly, preferably in writing so that it was included in the agenda papers for the meetings and was accessible to the residents via the Parish Council website. The Clerk confirmed that the actual meetings of the WP would not be expected to be public meetings and it would be for the WP to decide how, where and when it wished to meet.
- Concern was raised that the recommendations were not supported by the Council. The Clerk commented that the Parish Council was forming this group with the express intention of getting the views of the village and other interested parties and therefore the Parish Council members would be remiss to not adopt the recommendations without very good cause. She further commented that it was for the residents of the village to hold the Parish Council accountable for its actions and reminded them that there were elections scheduled for May 2020 should they be unhappy with the working of the council for any reason.
- In terms of funding it was acknowledged that grant funding should also be considered in addition to the Precept. However, it was also acknowledged that getting outside grant funding for projects on the playing fields would currently be very difficult as the Parish Council could not prove title.

- The situation of the bridleway was briefly discussed. The Chairman commented that the declarations that had been sworn to support the Parish Councils application for proof of title included reference to the bridleway being converted to a by-way for all traffic. A request for this to be formalised with be presented to East Northants Council at a later date.
- Although not known at the current time it was expected that there would still be an interest from a local rugby club to use the field following a previous discussion but the stumbling block at the moment is the lack of title as they were unable to get grant funding. It was acknowledged that the Cricket Club had similar difficulties.
- It was noted that the timeframe for proving title could be up to 2 years. The land registry is required to advertise that the Parish Council are claiming title and this could be challenged – however this is highly unlikely as it has been in the public domain since 2005 that the Parish Council do not have the title and no-one has tried to claim it so far.
- Comment was made for and against moving forward with the WP at this time when the ownership was still not confirmed. However, the general consensus was that to wait for another 2 years before starting to progress the future of the site as a whole would be a waste of the time and that during the next 2 years some positive steps could be made towards the future. It was felt that with the registering of the land being in progress a strong case could be made to grant funding bodies to support the plans – whatever they may be.
- A question was put asking what age group people consider the playing field is for with the general response that it is for all ages when you look at the whole site not just the play equipment.
- With respect to the children’s play area it was agreed that if the consensus of the WP and village was that this element should be relocated closer to the village this could be done without any impact on the playing fields themselves. A general discussion took place on this particular element with reference to the Village Plan and the survey that was carried out, during the consultation meetings with the younger residents and their parents the consensus was that the play equipment was located too far out of the village to be used.
- As a final discussion point it was asked how the WP could be expected to get costing for work to be done without the funding to appoint experts. The Chairman stated that they should discuss this with the Parish Council but that there are a number of residents in the village with specific specialist skills that may be willing to assist pro-bono. He reminded those present that the pavilion was originally built through fund raising.

The Clerk agreed to contact all those who had offered to be on the Working Party to assist them in arranging the first meeting within the following week.

#### 4) Traffic

The Chairman provided some background to why the Parish Council was looking to form a Working Party to investigate and consider traffic issues in the village. He commented on the 3 vehicle activated speed devises that had been purchased and installed in the village by the Council and that through these data relating to the numbers and speed of vehicles could be captured. However, since their installation the volume of traffic within the village had increased and the speed of the vehicles on the A43 had risen also. He commented that a number of villages had been successful in getting the top speed within the residential areas reduced to 20miles an hour and that consideration needed to be given to if this would be relevant for Easton on the Hill. Having discussed the matter previously the Parish Council has nominated two Cllrs to act as representatives of the Parish Council.

2 residents agreed to work with the 2 nominated Councillors and to agree the WP terms of reference and report back to the Parish Council with a plan of action.

#### 5) Village Plan

The Chairman introduced this item with reference to the Governance Review that the Parish Council had been involved in the summer of 2018. He highlighted that facilitating the completion of the recommendations within the plan had been one of the actions from the review and therefore the Council were now keen to pursue this with the community. He went on to say that it was a very well researched document and that a lot of work had gone into it. A majority of those in attendance

indicated that they either still had or had seen in the past a copy of the plan and some individuals involved in the process added detail to that mentioned by the Chairman on what had taken place and the outcomes achieved.

Various questions were asked about the setup of the Working Party and through discussion it was established: -

- It was questioned what recommendations were included other than the issue of the Playing Field and Traffic in the village to which the Chairman read out a number of other recommendations including – documenting the history of the village, improving the environmental environs, planning matters to maintain the character, public transport, a village guide and support for businesses.
- The intention is to deliver the recommendations in the plan not produce another one!
- No Cllrs have been nominated to represent the Parish Council on the Working Party at the moment as it was an oversight at the last Parish Council meeting to make the nominations.
- It was agreed that there is a large supply of expertise in the village that could be involved in bringing the plan to fruition with the groups and society's that were very active, including but not limited to the history and the horticultural societies. The Clerk commented that the Plan was the village plan and not the Parish Councils and the best way to complete the recommendations was for the village to do it for themselves. Discussion took place on entry to the Britain In Bloom competition and it was commented that the horticultural society were due to discuss this at its next meeting.
- A resident put themselves forward to work with Cllrs once nominated by the Council

#### 6) Comments from residents

##### a) Village School – an update on the village school was requested.

The Chairman of the School Governors gave a brief history of the school, the trust and the goals that had been set when it was formed 100 years ago. He stated that there had been challenges in recent years and as a result the school had closed.

The school building has now been passed back to the trustees and they are looking into what they can do going forward to support the original goals. There are 6 trustees and all live in the village. The Parish Chairman noted the work that the trustees had put into getting the building back into the trusts control with the Chairman of the School Governors passing thanks to all those who had assisted in this matter. He then went on to detail some of the more recent work that have been undertaken to increase the viability of the school going forward. A long-term lease had been signed with the Little Day Nurse to deliver pre-school education in the village and that they were doing work to spruce up the building. He indicated that more work was ongoing and it was expected that more would be forthcoming.

On being questioned as to what was planned, he indicated that the trustee had been focussed on getting the building back but were now looking to the future but that it was early days and too soon to say any more on the plans.

Finally, he responded that the trustees were comfortable that although they now have the running costs of the building to meet, they were comfortable that this expense could be met without causing difficulties to the trust.

##### b) Irresponsible Dog Ownership – not picking up dog poo

Comment was made that there was a shocking amount of dog poo not being picked up in many areas of the village and a request that something was done to highlight the problem.

A number of comments were made relating to this matter and it was generally agreed that if someone was seen to not be picking up, they should be challenged and requested to do so – but conversely if someone was seen to be picking up then a ‘thank you’ should be given. A view was expressed that whereas some areas of the village appear to have more problems than others, overall the problem appeared to become worse during school holidays when children were left to walk the dogs as they were often more reticent to clear up than adults.

A discussion took place on the roll of the Dog Warden and if the village could employ their own one. It was stated that previously incidents had been reported to the Clerk who then informed the Dog Warden. The Clerk at the meeting indicated that it would be better if those who saw an issue reported it themselves directly to the Dog Warden as to report it to the Parish Clerk not only added another level of reporting it could overload the Clerk and would stop them working on other matters that they may need to be doing.

A resident report 2 dogs that were left loose in the mornings in an area of the village and it was requested that they do report this to the Dog Warden so that they could investigate further.

c) Parish Council Governance

A resident stated that although the Parish Council had in the past few years had a difficult period with a number of governance issues he was pleased to see that it appeared to be moving forward in a positive manner and he wished to thank the new Councillors who had recently been co-opted for putting themselves forward and to wish them luck going forward.

He went on to say that with the introduction of the new website and the change in style of the Council meeting minutes it was clear that the Parish Council was looking forward and changing its behaviour and that the village as a whole needed to work together and move forward in a positive light.

He also commented that changing behaviour was one thing however the Councillors should remember that they represent all of community and that the decisions made should be for the benefit of all not just individual gain. He stated that there was more needed than better governance and etiquette to move it forward and he understood that the Councillors were to have training and he asked if it had taken place, if it had helped and if everyone had attended.

The Chairman responded to thank the resident for his positive comments. He agreed that the actions and behaviours of Councillors did need to change and that it was sad that it was bad matters that caused the residents to turn out in such high numbers at the December and January meetings. Finally, he indicated that the training that had been held recently was not just linked to the Code of Conduct but other matters also and was the first of a series of training sessions for the Council as a whole and those that had not attended the first session would be offered alternative options.

The Clerk also thanked the resident for his kind words and stated to the meeting as a whole that it was their council and that it was their responsibility to hold those the Councillors account. With elections scheduled of May 2020 the community had the opportunity to show through the ballot box their views on the capability of the current council.

Signed:

Date:

Parish Chairman