



Lassington Oak

# Highnam Parish Council

Highnam ~ Linton ~ Over ~ Lassington

## Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting, held on 23 March 2017

Present: Parish Councillors – M Welch (Chairman), D Davies (Vice Chairman & DC), Y Watkins, C Coats, T Talbot, M Moir

In attendance: R Hicks (Clerk), J Rosam(WAF), and 2 members of the public

**1. Apologies for Absence:** Cllrs V Tustin Smith, S Doyle, A & F Fowler and Police

**2. Approval of the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 26 March 2015**

The minutes, which have been available in the Parish Office and on the parish web-site, were approved and signed by Chairman

### **3. Police Report**

#### **Crime Figures**

<b>Offence</b>	<b>2015/6</b>	<b>2016/7</b>
Violence	6	8
Sexual Offences	2	0
Burglary	12	8
Theft	21	6
Fraud	0	13
Criminal Damage	7	2
Drugs	3	1
Other Notifiable	0	1
Totals	<b><u>51</u></b>	<b><u>40</u></b>

#### **Previous Years**

2014/15	31
2013/14	33
2012/13	62
2011/12	38
2010/11	30
2009/10	73

#### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The above figures relate to the reported criminal offences for the Parish of Highnam within the specified timeframes. As ever there may be additional criminal offences that have not been reported to the Police and members of the Public are encouraged to report any criminal offences that occur. The Constabulary are able to receive complaints by a variety of means, including telephone, email and use of social media. This may be a good opportunity to reiterate the use of the 101 number as a means of reporting non-emergency incidents instead of using 999, which is still used for emergencies.

The Fraud category, shows 13 offences in this last year. They relate to an investigation I am dealing with, but owing to the manner in which crimes are recorded, it is because the offender lived in the Parish at the time of the offence. They are historical and this should not cause any alarm to the public. With these crimes taken out of the total sum, it can be seen that the number of reported crimes is well down on the same period for the previous year.

Should Police colleagues be unable to attend, please can I ask that any queries raised are forwarded to me and I will look to respond either directly or via you if that would be appropriate.

#### **4. Neighbourhood Watch Report**

1. The roll of NHW is to put in place a structure for neighbours to support each other by keeping an eye on each other's property and belongings, reporting incidents that may upset the ambience of the area and the circulation of information received from the Police or their neighbours.

2. There are some 718 households in the Parish of Highnam and NHW is arranged around NHW co-ordinators who take on responsibility for a small number of properties in the area where they live. This is usually 12 to 15 properties.
  3. There has been the usual turnover of co-ordinators as a result of people leaving the village or reaching an age where they feel unable to continue. However, due to a recruitment drive following the burglaries that occurred last year, the overall number of schemes has increased from 29 to 37. The number of properties to be included in all schemes is now 673, an increase of 73 on the year.
  4. When there has been an incident that could impact on Highnam, all co-ordinators receive 'Watchword Messages' from the Police either by e mail or by telephone. The co-ordinators can then make a judgement as to whether it merits the information being shared with their neighbours either by e mail, a telephone call or a slip of paper through the letterbox.
  5. As the Key co-ordinator for Highnam, I have direct contact with the NHW Field Officer in Coleford. The Field Officer is employed full time by Gloucestershire Police.
  6. The spate of burglaries across the Forest region has unfortunately continued. Encouragingly, 5 arrests were made which lead to convictions and prison terms. There does appear to be another, as yet unidentified, group active in the Forest but Highnam does not seem to be as affected as the villages along the Wye valley.
  7. As reported last year, funding for all five Gloucestershire NHW Associations was withdrawn two years ago by the Police and Crime Commissioner. Like the other Associations, the West Gloucester NHW Association have very little funds remaining to fund its newsletters, mailing costs, AGM expenses and funding for specialist courses. Parish Councils are being approached to make a small donation to allow the Association to continue with its work.
  8. It still remains my intention to step down as the Highnam Key Co-ordinator but I have not yet been successful in finding a willing replacement. Notwithstanding, I will continue until a replacement has been found.
  9. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the co-ordinators in Highnam who provide their support, the Police and in particular our Rural Beat Officer and the PCSOs who regularly patrol Highnam and who respond quickly to our problems. I would also wish to thank the distributors of The Link who distribute the Association NHW Newsletter and, finally, the encouragement and support NHW receives from the Parish Council.
- Chairman reported to the meeting that Parish Council had agreed to grant NHW, the sum of £100 annually, to be reviewed annually, to cover leaflet printing costs

### **5. Chairman's Report**

Thank you for coming, and welcome. This meeting provides an opportunity for residents to hear reports on the activity of the last twelve months, and to express their concerns and hopes regarding future prospects relating to our extremely precious environment in which we all live.

The Parish Council have been operating at full strength, until recent resignations of Adam Smith and Sally Adcock; there are currently two vacancies for Parish Councillor.

A number of projects are currently being progressed; the first of these is Communications. A new, professional website is reaching conclusion. The effectiveness of leaflet distribution has been demonstrated with the excellent turnout to vote on the NDP, and the attendance of around 50 Highnam residents at the TBC Planning Committee meeting when the application for 40 Houses on land off Oakridge was refused. A Facebook page has been started, and consideration is being given to increasing our copy in the Link and to erecting further notice boards in the village.

With regard to Oakridge, a sub committee is still meeting in order to be prepared for the event of an appeal of the TBC decision; a strong case needs to be presented, and Parish Council is considering the need for the engagement of some expert advisors. Also being considered is an update and strengthening of the NDP.

A further project is the LIFE project, coupled with an update of the Parish Plan. An open day is to be held on 8 April 2017 in the Parish Room where ideas are being proposed and sought to benefit the community for the future. A further leaflet drop will be done to ensure the best possible turnout, and to ensure that everyone who wants to be heard, can have the opportunity to have some input.

### **6. District Councillor's Report**

*Cllr Derek Davies gave the following report.*

I would like to express my gratitude to all persons in this lovely Ward of Highnam for the wonderful way they reacted to the planning application from Over Farm. Some 160 letters of

objections were written to Tewkesbury planning department. The Parish Councillors and clerk worked fiendishly to urge that the recommendation to permit was rejected. More than 50 persons turned up at Tewkesbury planning committee to support the parish.

Both Nick Cook and Charles Coats spoke for the permitted three min, and gave good sound reasons of objections. Pointing out the dangers of breaking the ring road that carefully embraces the 700 houses within, the impact on the environment, pointing out that Highnam has 90 houses under current construction, without breaking Oakridge to accommodate 40 additional properties

Sustainable means, ensuring better lives for ourselves, doesn't mean worse lives for future generations.

Now that the recommendation by the planning Officers" to permit" is overturned, the Applicant has the right to appeal that decision.

The duty placed on the officers is to use their Planning skills to any appeal against the Members decision "to refuse" the Application.

So if an appeal to test the decision is made, may I suggest that the Parish Council receive the same help kindly given freely by the Parishioner's.

Tewkesbury BC waste company UBICO a company owned jointly with several other Authorities is about to purchase new vehicles as part of a review to enhance the service of waste and recycling to our customers. Because of the growth of customer base we are forced to make changes to days of collection, we have notified every one of the new arrangements. We sincerely trust the new system will be a huge success with all our staff on duty to iron out any snags in the initial starting phase. If by chance you experience any problem, please check with the Borough office. I am always available to iron out any small problems that may occur.

We, like many Councils, are increasing the tax rate marginally by 2% , the Government are stating that some of the rates will be given to the County Council to assist the burden of the elderly and vulnerable among our society.

You will have just received your new rating bill for Tewkesbury. We still remain the fifth lowest Rate District Authority in the Country. That is something to be proud of year after year.

I would like to extend my thanks to the Parish Council under Mike Welch Chairman, Richard Hicks Clerk, also the Parish Councillors without which we could not operate.

### **7. County Councillor's Report**

The year has been dominated with Highways and Development issues, however I have tried to use my dedicated funding for safety issues.

The budget has seen a continuation of the dedicated Highways local funding of £30,000 per Member which is helpful for local projects Parishes would want progressed. I particularly welcome the rethink on the Lengthman scheme which was not in the budget but many of us in Rural Communities found this a beneficial service and £500,000 or half a million £ has been put in to secure the scheme across the County

We have successfully fought off some development recently and trust that we can continue to \keep Highnam the Rural Village that is not urbanized.

There are some local highway projects booked, not least the repairs to Lassington Lane, including drainage work at the top end and surface repairs further down towards the historical church. A recent pledge of extra funding for Highways is very welcome and obviously I will be seeking as much as possible for the Highnam Division

Other issues include of course the ongoing need for providing for adult social care and GCC added a Council Tax levy 2% in order to meet that need.

As always I thank your Parish Council and the Clerk to the Council for all the help and support.

### **8. Highnam Community Centre Trust**

The Trust have seen another strong year and continues to abide by the stated aims of its constitution.

The business year 2015/2016 saw strong bookings and an annual revenue has increased for the sixth year in a row. There are significant cash reserves that assure both essential maintenance and repairs can be made in a timely manner and periods of operating loss can be covered. The halls continue to see strong demand from both the local and wider community and Corporate

bookings remain positive with some organisations making advanced bookings into mid 2018. The Trust will continue its business strategy of encouraging commercial serviced bookings during the working week while supporting both local groups and casual bookings throughout the week. By providing a service to commercial organisations such as Gloucestershire County Council and the NHS the Trust can generate a necessary revenue stream without having to engage the local community in fund raising events. The Trust has identified that it's legal position is not fully compliant and has started a joint project with the Parish Council, who are the Guardian Trustee, to resolve these issues. I would like to thank the Parish Clerk, Richard Hicks, for his efforts in sourcing legal documentation for the project and to the Parish council for engaging with the Trust to remedy the legal issues. It is important to stress that if these issues are not resolved it could result in the closing of the halls on either a temporary or permanent basis.

The continued professional approach applied by the Bookings Manager, Bill Hawkes, ensures both safe facilities for all users and reduced legal exposure for the Trust. The Trust is indebted for the continued efforts undertaken by Bill and I would like to register our thanks to him. The continued success of the Trust could not have happened without the ongoing efforts of the Caretaker, Mark Farmer, who undertakes a large proportion of the major work on the buildings and grounds. I would like to register the Trusts thanks to Mark for yet another year of sterling work. Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the board of Trustees who give their time and experience voluntarily; the Treasurer Bob Train and Secretary Martyn Ridge. The contribution they make is not immediately visible to the local community but is essential to the successful management of the Trust. We are keen to broaden the knowledge, skills and experience of the Trust and I would like to take this opportunity to ask other members of the community and users of the halls to contribute to the running of the halls by becoming a trustee.

### **9. Williams Andrews. Foundation Report**

The Foundation is a charity dating from 1837 and was set up to promote and support educational and training needs for the children of Lassington. In 1955 it was amended to include children in the Parish of Highnam as well as Lassington and in 2015 it was amended again to include any child attending the primary school who was looking for assistance with a school related activity. It has between £800 - £1000 to disburse each year from its investments to those *in need of financial assistance*. Over recent years, grants have been made to assist with the purchase of equipment for the Scouts, towards the costs of sixth formers' attendance at university interviews and participation in overseas' aid projects. Individual families have received grants towards participation in the Primary School residential projects. The trustees are also prepared to consider making contributions towards the costs of books for students embarking on university and college courses, again, where there is *a particular need*. Last year a grant was been made to the Primary School for whole class music lessons.

Trustees are appointed by the Parish Council every four years; they are Mrs Sheila Humble, Mrs Josie Smith, Mrs Joyce Dole, Lt Col RA Retd Ted Felton and Mrs Sarah Smith. Josie and Sarah Smith are the 2 representatives from Lassington.

The Foundation publicises the availability of such grants mainly through The Link, the parish Council web-site and noticeboard and Mrs Humble has regular contact with the primary school. In the case of grants to individuals and families, the Foundation's discussions and decisions are confidential.

The amount of money at the Foundation's disposal is relatively small, but the trustees believe that the Foundation continues to be able to make a useful contribution both to individual families and to groups within the community.

The trustees are pleased to invite any resident of Highnam who would like to discuss the possibility of a grant being made in the categories outlined above to contact either the Foundation's Chairman, Mrs Sheila Humble on 01452 526556 or the Clerk to the Foundation, Jean Rosam on 01452 416946. This could be in connection with a personal enquiry or an organisation in the village.

### **10. Questions from Floor**

Q asked about TBC Chief Executive budget has increased by 32% this year; is this a pay increase? Cllr. Davies will obtain the background to this item and respond, but he assured those present that this was not a salary increase.

Comment was made that the Parish Council Planning sub group is pulling together various skills and will be well placed to respond to an appeal of the Oakridge refusal. It is important that Highnam recognizes that more houses in the future are inevitable, but we need to be more proactive and ensure that we are content with the location of any future housing; the support from Residents of the NDP stands us in good stead.

TBC have been engaging new staff, including a new Dep. Chief Executive and a new Head of Development Services.

Q was asked about parking at the Lassington Reach development, causing problems for larger vehicles turning into Maidenhall. Bellway Homes have already been spoken to twice about this, and will be contacted again if the problem persists.

A reminder that a drop in event is being held on 8 April 2017, and all are to be encouraged to put forward ideas for the deployment of S106 monies for the benefit of the community; other sources of funding are also being looked at to enhance the project, but it must be for what the village wants and needs. An explanation of S106 monies was given as the contribution made from all new developments for the enhancement and benefit of the community.

The meeting closed at 8.12pm.

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