



Highnam Parish Council Highnam ~ Linton ~ Over ~ Lassington

Highnam Parish- Annual Residents Meeting

Parish Room: Tuesday 19th May 2022 @ 19.30hrs

Present: Cllrs C Coats, M Welch, V Tustin Smith, J Smith, B Harding, B Badham, R Keene, B Nicol and P Dyche

In Attendance: Clerk, Councillor P Awford and Councillor P McLain and 6 members of the public.

1. To receive apologies for absence

Mr Yan Watkins (HCCT)

Mr Steve Doyle (NWS)

Mrs Jean Rosam (William Andrews Foundation)

2. To approve minutes from the meeting held on Tuesday 4th May 2021

Proposed Cllr M Welch, Seconded B Nicol, all in favour

Minutes approved.

3. To Receive County Councillors Report Councillor P Awford

The Police Commissioner announced £600k of grants available to support speed and road safety. Craig Freeman as our Local Highways Manager is leaving and all correspondence should be directed to Sally Godwin.

Two Mile lane was re-surfaced.

The GCC Cabinet changes are as follows:

Cllr Dominic Morris replaces Cllr Vernon Smith to cover the Highways and Flood portfolio and Cllr Nick Housden replaces Cllr Tim Harman as the portfolio holder for Area Health and Levelling Up

4. To receive District Councillors Report Councillor J Smith

Over the past year Highnam has done a lot of work streamlining processes and discussions have been had re the future of Highnam, to position the Parish Council at the heart of the village. As a Borough Councillor we have liaised with many Parishioners over numerous concerns and provided action in many cases and responses. Not always the response wanted but an honest one.

More work needs to go into engaging the whole Parish in Council business/meetings as the Parish Council is only there to represent you, not themselves/ourselves, so come along to meetings.

The Commercial Transformation Team at TBC of which I am a member is streamlining a lot of services to improve speed of response to the consumer and save tax payers monies. Examples of this can be seen where many parishioners have signed up to paperless billing for Council Tax.

Bulky waste collections can be booked on line and the .garden waste collect scheme. Internal TBC departments have been overhauled too, examples of ones affecting parishioners would be licensing applications and the planning system has been made easier.

Planning issues locally have been dealt with by BC's, where there have been queries or purchased outstanding issues. Great concerns were expressed by numerous Parishioners over the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan, that after poor communication is now back on track. All queries received responses and the information you provided has been kept for future use. We value hearing your views.

Locally, I have been involved in Lassington Reach and the initial work re replacing the dead trees,

getting a maintenance contract and getting a disability ramp installed. I am glad to say all is now in the very capable hands of Pete Dyche who has built on considerably, what was started. Communication with the PC is good with Borough Councillors providing monthly written and if possible verbal reports, on the work of TBC affecting the parish. Regular update on new policies, agreed standards and notifications are passed on. We also are happy to clarify or chase up concerns that are not addressed at Parish Council and can't be reported via TBC website, and further clarification is needed. Examples of work the Borough Councillors have been involved in are grass cutting, hedges, pollinator patches, sculptures, whose land is whose, footpath clarification, vandalism of fencing and stiles, flooding, fly tipping, dog poo, to name but a few. Post Pandemic we have had a busy year, and hope to continue the good work alongside a full Parish Council.

5. To receive Chairman's Report

Intro: This is my first report as Chair. Formal opportunity to thank former Chair Mike Welch for his many years of service and good he has continued as a Cllr. Working in tandem with Jo Badham as new Parish Clerk. Steep upward learning curve for us both: I think we are just beginning to get to grips with what these roles entail. Formal thanks to former Clerk, Richard Hicks for his nine years of service.

Part reflective look at past year, part looking forward into the current year. Busy time, great deal of activity and hard work.

Councillor Changeover: We have said goodbye to Kevin Emmerson and thank him for all his past work. We have welcomed Bob Harding with his particular interest in the environment of the village, and Pete Dyche, who brings a welcome representation once again for Lassington Reach to provide a full complement of nine Cllrs.

Precept: For the first time for a number of years we have increased our precept by £10k from £40k to £50k. In part this reflects the increase in population arising from the Lassington Reach development, but also reflects the increased workload generally for the Council leading to an increase in hours for the Parish Clerk arising from adopting a more proactive approach to representing the interests of residents.

Governance: We have had a particular focus on improving working practices, transparency, Cllr involvement and formalizing our internal structures:

The Planning Group has become the Planning Committee.

The Parish Plan Programme Board remains.

The Environmental Working Group remains.

Two new Groups have been formed: Transportation and Traffic Mgt. and Grant Bidding.

Standing Orders and Cllr Code of Conduct have been reviewed and updated.

Planning: Work has continued with the preparation of a new NDP. Following a residents survey two Open Days were held last October to present draft proposals and to gauge residents' reaction. A Call for Sites exercise was undertaken and this has very recently been scrutinised by TBC Planners who have recommended a full Environmental Screening Review be undertaken of the whole Plan. We currently await advice as to whether a Habitats Review will also be needed.

28 Planning applications have been submitted and scrutinised by the PC in our role as statutory consultees. No objections were raised on 21 applications; 5 objections were made, but in 4 of these cases TBC decided to grant consent nevertheless. 2 applications await decisions.

We have liaised with M7 Planning, development promoters on behalf of the landowner, in relation to composite plans for an expansion of the Highnam Business Park and for the construction of 95 houses to the west of Lassington Reach. We have formally objected to this application, and await our opportunity to present our concerns to TBC's Planning Committee when this application is considered, probably next month.

We have continued to work in close collaboration with Churcham, Huntley, Westbury, Blaisdon and Minsterworth Parish Councils to express our joint concerns regarding a major development proposal for up to 4,000 new houses on land between the A40 and the railway line to the west of the Highnam Roundabout, 800 of which could have been built in Highnam. Fortunately, FoDDC are currently rethinking their Local Plan and are canvassing views on a policy of dispersal which would negate the need for this new settlement. HPC will continue to closely monitor progress on this.

Parish Plan: Work on deploying more of the balance of the £256,000 Lassington Reach Sec 106 funding has been made on the following projects:

Oakridge Footpath: Work on this flagship scheme was undertaken by One Call Contractors working on behalf of TBC. Great to see this so well used and to receive such positive feedback from residents. Thanks to Cllr Bill Badham for his support with this.

Cost - £114,000

The Dell: Match funding made available to the PCC to enable the footpath to the Church to be widened and resurfaced.

Cost - £10,000

Old School: HCCT have embarked on a major refurbishment of this listed building, but have recently uncovered extensive dry and wet rot in the roof timbers. An additional @£100,000 is required to complete these works, and HPC is supporting HCCT in securing this funding.

Funding support - £40,000

Lassington Wood Playing Field: Work continues with TBC to finalise a Project Brief and to invite competitive quotations for this work

Budget provision - £56,000

Environmental Management Plan - The PC has continued to work with the Environmental Working Group on the deployment of their budget and has been rationalizing and streamlining approval and payment mechanisms. Budget - £26,000

Other Initiatives:

Defibrillator: Many thanks to FC Highnam for agreeing to fund the cost of relocating their unit to the outside of their changing rooms and to Highnam Stores and Post Office for agreeing to host a new unit, to be paid for by the PC, on the frontage to their building. Once installed this will provide a network of four units within the village.

Heart of Highnam: This initiative, jointly managed by Cllrs Badham and Harding, aims to set up a volunteer corps to undertake small scale ground works around the village. Progress with this has been slow, but there is no shortage of work to be tackled.

Jubilee Celebrations – The PC has provided funding support of just over £900 and a grant from the Community Fund of £995 to the Group organizing this event, and we look forward to a fun couple of days when the whole community can come together.

Conclusion: It's been a privilege and honour to chair the Council: hard work, lots to learn, challenging, but ultimately rewarding. My thanks to all Cllrs for their unstinting support, to Phil Awford, Paul McLain and Jill Smith for their support as County and Borough Cllrs respectively, to Jo Badham for the administration of the Council, and to Valerie Tustin Smith as Vice Chair for keeping me in check at times!

6. To receive Environmental Working Group Environment Working Group and Wild Highnam Parish Report summary May 2022

Summer 2021

Feedback from the village has been received regarding the type of sculptures you would like to see.

Based on these preferences three beautiful nature-inspired wooden sculptures have been installed around the village. a giant ladybird, made of oak, in the playing field. A fox, made from part of a giant sequoia, is standing guard on Oakridge, overlooking Lassington. The final piece, an amazing bench carved from cedar of Lebanon, was purchased with assistance from our WI group, to commemorate their Centenary. Its carvings of oak leaves, (to reflect the Lassington Oak), plus local wildlife.

Work was carried out to mark out the pollinator patches which we know contain orchids, wild fritillary and donated cowslips.

Ed Drewitt, a well-known local author, naturalist and photographer gave a baseline wildflower and grasses identification training session to members of the community who are committed to surveying our pollinator patches, twice a year and identify rarities. This will help our strategy in continuing to encourage wildlife around the parish.

25 bird box kits have been being purchased. The cubs will build these and then work with our group to install the boxes in suitable areas earning new badges in the process.

Wild Highnam group's trail camera are made available to parishioners so that visiting garden wildlife can be identified

Autumn 2021

Pollinator Patches doing well.

Highnam Cubs led by Tristan and Guided by Emily from the RSPB, plus various helpers, installed 25 bird boxes around the village

Jubilee plans include planting clumps of immature trees in suitable spots.

The Environment Management Plan makes provision for a total of 50 bird boxes to be installed Eventually. We hope to purchase and make the final 25 during the next 12 months.

The school has been involved with plans to plant 70 trees around the parish, to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 and for an outdoor classroom in Lassington Woods,

The EWG targets were drawn up from the Highnam Parish Plan questionnaire, where all parishioners were asked to comment on how they wanted the environment to develop.

The wildflower pollinator patches have done very well this year. We have completed baseline species surveys and look forward to seeing how these patches develop in future years.

The annual Wildflower Project report has been completed and passed to Tewkesbury Borough Council for review and was uploaded to the Parish Council's website.

The new path around Oakridge slightly affected the wild patch opposite Poole Ground but mature perennial plants were saved where possible.

There was a successful bid by the Parish to Highways Glos CC, for 30 small trees and 100 hedgerow whips, forming part of their ash dieback replacement scheme.

The Lassington Wood and John's Wood Management Plan will have been formulated to help improve the woodlands for both wildlife and the community. Tasks include habitat improvement, reinstating a nature trail, cutting back brambles from main footpaths, botanical surveys and installation of a low impact outdoor classroom area.

Winter 2021/22

Tewkesbury BC has endorsed the implementation of the Lassington Wood and John's Wood Management Plan, which aims to help improve our woodlands for both wildlife and the community.

On 10th December the first step in helping to improve the woodlands for both wildlife and the community took place This involved a volunteer Working Party, mainly from the Wild Highnam group, who undertook the arduous task of clearing bramble and undergrowth at the Lassington Wood main entrances. The entrances are now much safer for all.

The walk through Mary Grove field into Lassington Lane, has seen work to clear the brambles from the pathway and make it a little safer.

The main entrance to Lassington woods were cleared of brambles and the kissing gate amended to make it pushchair and mobility scooter friendly.

4th February. The EWG, together with several volunteers from the Wild Highnam group, planted

100 hedging whips. The whips will grow into a lovely new hedge in Lassington Reach

5th February 9 young trees were planted in Mary Grove and Astmans farm and remaining whips and a short stretch of willow hedging were planted in the playing field This planting has been registered as part of the Queen's Jubilee Green Canopy initiative, which invites everyone to 'Plant a tree for the Jubilee'. Three of the trees in Mary Grove field will be dedicated to past Highnam Scout Leaders.

Spring 2022

Friday 4th March involved thinning of saplings and over-crowded young trees in John's Wood. The plantation on hasn't been reviewed since it was planted, nearly 30 years ago, with the result that it's overcrowded with many spindly trees. Added to this, several of the young ash are suffering from the die-back disease that is prevalent in our area. The trunks were sawed up into lengths and stacked to provide habitat for wildlife.

Our final bramble-clearing work took place on Fri 18th March creating some scalloped edges along the wood that borders the football pitches, to increase the area of butterfly-friendly edge habitat and reclaim the spectator's bench from brambles.

The mowing regime was agreed with TBC and their contractors UBICO. This involved the non-mowing of two new pollinator patches along the Oakridge footpath to the north. These were set out as the work to construct the path had encroached on the area leaving an opportunity for the extra patches which were scattered with wild flower seeds.

6th May: The remaining gravel left over from the new path has been spread from the north stile by the allotments towards the playing field. This will help when winter rain saturates the area. In addition wood chippings, donated by Over Farm, were spread over other potentially muddy areas and the steps and handrail were renovated.

Future work

Continue to carry out work in accordance with the EWG plan. This includes maintenance of Lassington and Johns Wood.

Monitoring habitat the pollinator patches.

Planting where suitable.

Other community work if appropriate.

Responding to residents' concerns and wishes relating to the plan.

7. Neighbourhood Watch Report

No report was received; however, Steve Doyle attended the last parish council meeting to advise council his is retiring.

8. Highnam Community Centre Trust Report

The Trust has seen bookings returning to levels approaching usage rates pre-pandemic and continues to provide Village Hall services to Highnam Parish and the wider area. The Trustees current focus is to adapt to post-pandemic trading conditions and the renovation of the Old School building.

The last few months have been a rollercoaster for the Trust and the Old School renovation. We have started the project, encountered major problems, solved them only to find even bigger ones. The Trust is working with its partners to resolve these issues and put the renovation back on track.

During the period of renovation the other halls have stayed open and this is thanks to Mark Stock, our caretaker and Jo Badham, our bookings manager. Jo started as bookings manager in February 2022 taking over from Bill Hawkes who provided the service for the last eleven years, for which we are most appreciative of. Bill has been a cornerstone of the team that has overseen the Trust's transition over the past twelve years and both the Trustees and Centre users owe him a debt of gratitude.

9. Williams Andrews Foundation

In his will, dated 4th November 1837, William Andrews endowed the dividends of £650 to his daughters, then to his grandson and following his death the dividends were *"to go to the parish of Lassington near the City of Gloucester, to be received by them yearly for ever to be given to some person to learn the poor children of that Parish to read and write"*

Originally 3 Trustees were appointed by Gloucestershire County Council and two by Lassington Parish Meeting. The Scheme has changed over the years to include the Parish of Highnam and in 2015 the County Council severed its interest in the Foundation. Now all 5 trustees are appointed by Highnam Parish Council immediately following elections. Sadly, one of our longstanding Trustees, Col Ted Felton, died last year and has been replaced by Mr Paddy Roche. The appointment was approved by Council.

The emphasis is still on educational grants, for those in financial need, and last year grants were made for computers, study guides and school trips. The Foundation has a small amount of money to disburse and met to discuss grants at its AGM in July last year. The accounts were also agreed and the annual return made to the Charity Commission. The Foundation publicises the availability of such grants through The Link and regular contact with the primary school. In the case of grants to individuals and families, the Foundation's discussions and decisions are confidential.

The trustees are pleased to invite any resident of Highnam who would like to discuss the possibility of a grant being made to contact either the Secretary, Jean Rosam (416946) or the Foundation's Chairman, Mrs Sheila Humble (526556).

Meeting closed @ 20.40hrs

Signed.....

Date.....

Next meeting: Thursday 30th March 2023