

## Wilbarston Parish Council

### Notes of the Annual Parish Assembly held at Wilbarston Village Hall on 25th April 2019

#### Meeting commenced at 7.30pm

**Present:** Cllrs Richards (Chair), Smith (Vice Chair), Dale, James, Walkling, Willats and members of the public.

**Apologies** received from Cllr Dalton

**Welcome.** The Chair welcomed all present and explained that although the assembly is a formal requirement the meeting is intended to be informal.

#### **Presentations:**

##### **The Village Shop/Post Office**

Sharon Harding updated on progress with the new tearooms. All is on track for opening in the summer. Hours will be quite restricted initially due to planning conditions but once everything is established an increase in these, perhaps including some evening activities, will be explored. Expectation is that the facility will be used by local and passing trade. There will be a need to create a new access path over an existing grass verge and the parish council can assist with contact with Northamptonshire Highways (Cllr Willatts).

##### **Allotments**

Martin Dalton, the new Chair, reported that the Association is now dealing with day to day management of the sites and acting as first contact with any prospective new allotment holders. They are on the lookout for new committee members. Additional saplings have been planted in the hedge at Church Street and in co-operation with the parish council a new fence/gate has been erected at Rushton Road. Water supply at Church Street was a challenge in the drier parts of last year. attempts to locate the previous source at Rushton Road have been unsuccessful. It was decided not to enter the Open Gardens this year because the date is too early in the growing season. There are some vacant plots.

Discussion took place about the water supply arrangements. Cost of laying on a mains supply would be excessive and the current system is felt to be the best option. Problem is with time sometimes needed to be spent on pumping, perhaps due to overuse. Possibility and cost of installing some sort of semi-automatic pump control, probably solar powered, may be investigated and referred to parish council to look at funding sources.

## **Village Hall**

John Hooper reported that the Hall is financially sound. Booking income now running at £1000 per month. There is scope for regular daytime group bookings, and it may be possible to give some support for a limited period to trialists to encourage new activities. The hall is seen as a focal point for the village. Improvement work has continued through the year. In addition to the roof there has been a new boiler and fund raising is now under way for a new kitchen and detail of this will be checked with regular users before proceeding. Mike Doyle, Chair and currently on holiday, is very successful at tracking down and securing grants. The continuing efforts of Keith Langdon handling bookings and maintenance were also noted. The management committee is working well but they are on the lookout for new members, preferably somebody with IT experience to get the best from the Wi-Fi installation.

## **Music/Singers**

Cllr James reported on the Praise Band which performs in support of regular church services as requested and at special events. They are currently seeking a guitarist.

The Albany Singers have about 30 members, mostly local, and perform a variety of material. They will get involved with events on request and are happy to combine with other choirs. They are performing at an open-air event at West Lodge in Summer. They run one-off workshop on particular topics, such as Gospel Music. For anybody interested that meet on Mondays, 7.30pm., at Stoke Albany Village Hall.

## **Bell Ringing**

Peter Chilton gave a report on the process which saw the previous five bells renovated and increased to six. The re-dedication service in July was attended by around 140 people and was very moving. The bells are a part of the make-up of the village and can provide a backdrop to events such as Open Gardens. They also attract visiting ringers wishing to add Wilbarston to their 'collections'. It has been a successful year and the first full peal was rung in March, but the bell ringers would also like to attract one or two more, preferably younger, people. It can form a part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme programme.

## **The Church**

Cllr Dale reported that following Reverend Sally Hughes' retirement it has been possible to continue with most services due to cover from Jan Collins, a retired priest living in Corby, with support from David Osborne. It is becoming apparent that there will be no immediate appointment of a replacement for Sally and with the tendency to create bigger team groupings within the diocese there is currently considerable uncertainty. Regarding the building, the new roof is in place after excessive delays in the granting of permission to go ahead with the new material. The next project will again be the opening of level access on the north side together with the installation of a toilet. There are plans to improve the interior of the church.

## **Parish Council Report**

Cllr Richards advised that during the year the council had continued to carry out its activities in the usual manner and that this report would focus on key points rather than be all-embracing. No queries had been raised in the course of the annual audit (which now encompasses procedure as well as accounting).

The council had been sorry to receive the resignation of Cllr Royle due to increased other commitments and thanked her for her efforts. A vacancy exists on the council to be filled by co-option. Due to the delay of elections as a consequence of the proposed local government re-organisation this will be for one year only - and ideal opportunity for somebody to test the water.

Village Maintenance. Having good levels of reserves at the beginning of the year and by tapping into available grants the council had spent money on the fence and gate at the Rushton Road Allotments, the repair of the lights for the multi-use games area and the installation of a token pre-payment system, the acquisition and filling of grit bins otherwise earmarked for removal and the installation of the memorial bench on the playing field. It was felt that this type of expenditure was beneficial to the village and a decision had been taken to increase money raised through the precept for such purposes from the previous minimal levels. This is reflected in the 2019/20 budget. As a result, improvements to planting on the village green are currently being costed and the intention is then to put in place a commercial arrangement for maintenance of the green and the Rushton Road Allotments frontage.

'Good Neighbours' Volunteer Scheme. The response to the questionnaire which accompanied the Chronicle has been encouraging and a public meeting to explore this further will take place on May 16th. The existing volunteer driver scheme is supportive of this project which is being investigated with the guidance of Northamptonshire ACRE and projects a similar but more wide-ranging voluntary support network.

Bus Service. During the year the parish council had co-operated with others in Kettering and Corby to bring about the Welland Wanderer East and West bus services. Principal funding had come from Kettering and Corby BC's with additional finance from the ten parishes. The service runs twice a week, to Harborough and return on Tuesdays and Corby and return on Fridays. It has settled into a pattern whereby fares and concession funding cover about half the cost of the trips. Based on these levels sufficient remains in the kitty to continue until end September 2019 and Northants CC have access to funds to match this expenditure, effectively extending the service to March 2020. All is dependent on usage, which is continually monitored. Wilbarston is the lead council in this operation and contracts with Lawsons of Corby Ltd, the service providers. Good feedback is received from users on the manner in which the service is delivered.

Local Government Re-organisation. There is still considerable uncertainty. The request from the authorities in the county to proceed to a Unitary model has gone forward to central government but no response yet received. Keeping to the original timetable of implementation in 2020 looks increasingly unlikely. The parish council will continue to monitor. £1500 is being raised through the precept this year to meet any

currently unknown costs associated with the change. Any part of this not spent in the year will be carried forward to 2020/21 for the same purpose.

### **Parish Council Budget 2019/20**

This had been published in The Chronicle, with explanatory notes, and the reasons for major items had been mentioned in the Parish Council Report. There were no further comments or questions.

### **Conclusion**

The Chair thanked those who had attended for their contributions and efforts generally on behalf of the village. Thanks were extended to all the other volunteers who help with village activities but were not present.

Meeting closed at 9.00pm.

NR 26Apr19