

## **MINUTES OF ETCHILHAMPTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 24 MAY 2018 7pm IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

**Present:** Mrs Bridewell, Mr & Mrs Bearman, Mr Charles, Mr & Mrs Clark, Mrs Cowdry, Mr Hanson, Mr Holgate, Mr Read, Mrs Robertson, Mrs Usher, Mr Woods. Guest Speaker Mr Philip Whitehead, Wiltshire Councillor.

**Apologies:** Mr & Mrs Chadwick, Mr Ralph Smith

### **AGENDA**

#### **PART I – Guest Speakers:**

##### **1 Mr Philip Whitehead, Wiltshire Councillor**

Mr Philip Whitehead gave an informative slide presentation on Wiltshire's finances. The meeting was amazed at how much of the revenues were spent on youth and those in need including home care. This left comparatively little for all other expenditure hence Wiltshire was on an economy drive. £24m cost savings were needed this year.

Matters such as highway maintenance including pothole repairs had to compete on a priority basis. Hopefully new pothole equipment would enable more repairs to be done. Parishioners were urged to use "My Wiltshire" to report holes but they could also ring up County Hall.

On the idea being floated by Devizes Development Partnership of a new station at Lydeaway to be financed by new housing there Mr Whitehead said that this had got off to false start. Before all else a proper case for a station had to be made to give to the rail authorities and operators. This needed hard evidence not yet begun to be gathered. If an attractive railway case were to be made it would then have to compete for Wiltshire resources with other proposals already in the pipeline such as Wilton and Corsham. Even Westbury was under cut-back threat. The next round of franchise bidding by rail operators was not until the 2020s so it was not known who the operator then would actually be.

Whatever the rail case produced there would be no new housing at Stert to pay for any station or facilities. This was an AONB and Wiltshire would not approve it.

Library use in Wiltshire was on the increase and this was helped by having multiple facilities in library buildings. In Devizes Wiltshire used dedicated space for front line public contact enabling it to save money by selling off its facilities in Snuff Street.

Grass cutting of verges, especially on highway junctions was important and the contractors would now start working on smaller roads leaving vegetation 900mm high to encourage wildlife.

Mr Whitehead was thanked for his presentation and for dealing with a number of questions.

## **2 PCSO Sam Burnside, Wiltshire Police update**

Unfortunately PCSO Sam Burnside did not turn up for his session.

## **PART II – Ordinary Agenda**

### **3 Minutes of the last meeting**

The Minutes of the last meeting were approved and signed.

### **4 Matters arising**

None.

### **5 World War I Commemorative Beacon**

Mr Edwards of Manor Farm Stert had kindly agreed to have a beacon in the usual location on top of Etchilhampton Hill. This would be lit on Remembrance Sunday at 7pm as part of the nationwide beacon programme. Anyone interested in providing materials or helping in any way was asked to notify any Parish Councillor.

Wiltshire was also planting commemorative trees and the Parish Council had agreed to participate with planting just outside the west side of the playing field fence near the lane. Native species would be selected if possible.

### **6 Points from the Public not otherwise covered**

A parishioner asked about the parish stewards and their ability to deal with potholes. It was suggested that potholes identified by parishioners or councillors should be notified to Parish Councillors and then made into a list for prioritisation. The next visit of the Steward would be on 26 June and he had been asked to prioritise cleaning the central village track between the Village Hall and the Old Mission Hall. Mr Woods had unblocked some gully inlets but he did not have the equipment to do a full clean. Recent flooding due to rain and the high water table was exemplified by water gushing out of BT manholes at different points created an ongoing threat. This had been made worse by lorries breaking the edges of soft verges creating very muddy conditions.

### **7 Parish Council Treasurer's Report and Annual Accounts**

Mr Nash presented the Parish Council annual accounts. He explained that the Precept had had to be increased to cover the unexpected costs of repairing the bus shelter at the Mixon. Gazebos and a storage shed had been acquired thanks to a gift from the Social/Amenity Fund. There were no further questions.

### **8 Parish Council Chairman's Report**

Mr Woods presented his Chairman's Report, tabled.

Highways safety - Wiltshire had not erected a "Slow children" sign as originally requested and its erection of the wrong sign was still being considered by Wiltshire's Highway Engineers.

Broadband - The Council's initiative to secure high speed fibre broadband was going well with only a few of those who wanted fibre to the premises remaining to be connected.

BT phone kiosk - Enquiries were underway with BT about repainting the phone kiosk.

Flooding – Flooding would continue to be monitored but Wiltshire gave priority to areas where buildings actually flooded.

Playing field – The suggestion of use of part of the playing field for car parking had been dropped as the Village Hall was no longer providing funds. The focus now was on improving the access slope opposite Badgers which Wiltshire had designated as street works requiring the use of specialist, more expensive, contractors. It remained to be seen whether any grant money could be obtained.

Playing field grass cutting – This had been done to a high standard by Mr David Stevens and he had been re-engaged for this year.

Governance - The Council now had to cope with new accounting/auditing rules and EU General Data Protection rules - a lot more red tape and expense.

Caravans - Following dialogue between Mr Woods and PCSO Burnside of Wiltshire Police the illegally parked caravans near the Old Road on Etchilhampton Hill had been removed.

St Andrew's Church - Donations of £250 for churchyard maintenance and £48 for green bin emptying had been given to St Andrew's Church.

Thanks – Mr Woods thanked everyone present for attending, those who had helped the Council with various tasks, particularly Mr Hanson in relation to the Lydeaway proposals and acting as the internal auditor, Mr Charles regarding the playing field access, Mr Smith who had stood in for him when he was unwell, and the Treasurer and the other Councillors for their ongoing work.

## **9 Any Other Business**

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.50pm.