

Whixall Parish Council

Chairman: Ian Mercer

Minutes of the **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** held on
Wednesday 11th May 2016 at
Whixall Social Centre starting at 8.00 pm

Present:

Chairman: I Mercer

Clerk: K Hatton

Members of the Parish Council: D Edgerton, C Platon, J Spenser, S Marlow, J Hardiman, B Harris, J Fitton

Shropshire Councillors: C Mellings and P Dee

Members of the public: See attached list.

63/16 Welcome and report from Chair- Cllr Ian Mercer

Cllr Mercer declared the meeting open and welcomed everyone to the meeting. He acknowledged the changes within the Parish Council since last year and gave thanks to Cllr Edgerton who chaired last year's Annual Parish Meeting and thanked the councillors for their support.

Cllr Mercer provided an overview on activities associated with the Parish Council over the last 12 months and made reference to the following matters:

- By-election (date of poll- 17th September) costs were £1,000+.
- Flooding- provided update. Shropshire Council now has assurances that work to clear ditches by riparian owners will take place.
- Public attendance at meetings. He thanked those who have attended and acknowledged that more people have attended than in previous years. He encouraged public attendance at meetings.
- Planning applications.
- Road safety matters.
- Improvements at Social Centre.
- Donations to other organisations by the Parish Council.

Cllr Mercer paid particular thanks to outgoing Vice Chair, Cllr Spenser and incoming Vice Chair, Cllr Platon and special thanks to Shropshire Councillors Chris Mellings and Pauline Dee for their continued support and to the Clerk.

64/16 Approval of last year's meeting minutes

Cllr Mercer proposed the approval of the minutes of last meeting held on 13th May 2015. *Minutes were available to view.* Seconded by Cllr Spenser.

65/16 Outline of Life project: Aspirational conservation outcomes for NNR

Luke Neal of Shropshire Wildlife Trust introduced the context of the presentations to follow: Natural England has applied for a European funding known as the 'LIFE bid' and Shropshire Wildlife Trust has bid for Heritage Lottery Fund money.

Neither organisation currently knows whether their bids will be successful.

Dr Joan Daniels presented information about the LIFE bid and about the plans that Natural England aspire to undertake if they are successful in their bid. She also shared information about the work to date on the Moss.

The following points were part of the presentation:

- NE bid was submitted last October.
- It is for 5 million pounds of European money.
- The raised peat bog of Whixall, Fenns and Bettisfield Moss is of international importance.
- Natural England has spent the last 25 years trying to restore the peat bog after significant damage caused by various factors, but this is still only a 'first fix'.
- Natural England hopes to make a step change to address the high levels of ammonia, the pollution and the water quality.

- The valuable help from volunteers.
- How to restore the bog; removal of trees and scattering of bog moss.
- The purpose and advantages of the restoration of the bog; acts as a sponge, absorbs carbon and is an extremely rare and special habitat.
- SSSI status.

Dr Joan Daniels answered questions from the public on the following subjects:

- Removal of trees.
- Blocking of culverts.
- Hydrological survey- (referred to Luke Neal) that has been commissioned by Shropshire Wildlife Trust
Residents were upset that they were unaware of the hydrological survey. Luke apologised for this but stressed that it was in order to see how to help with the flooding problems in the World's End area. The report from the survey will impact on a few landowners and will follow a process to acquire feedback from the relevant parties.

66/16 Consultation feedback

Luke Neal provided some background information Shropshire Wildlife Trust's bid for Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) money and the context of the consultation. He discussed the serious challenge of conservation and reiterated the importance of the site (the Moss) which, locally, is very poorly understood in general. Luke described the LIFE bid as the 'hardware of conservation' and the HLF as the 'peopley bit'.

Luke explained how they conducted the consultation and presented the results.

The proposal of some *kind* of visitor centre on the old scrap yard site was very popular, with the facilities associated with that, i.e. toilets/ cafe/ play area.

Luke answered questions from the public on the following:

- Flooding.
- Culverts.
- Ditches.

67/16 Shropshire Wildlife Trust's plans for the scrap yard and fields

Sara showed a map of the land/ fields hoped to be purchased by SWT and presented an architect's 'concept design' plans for a small visitor centre on the scrap yard site whilst explaining that they are not looking to attract excessive amounts of people and that traffic consultants don't think that traffic would be any worse than when the scrap yard was operational.

She discussed the concept of the design which interprets the peat cutting history of the moss and would illustrate the height that the moss used to be.

Two architects were asked to produce concept plans to a brief and budget, it was felt that this architect had best understood and interpreted the special nature of the site and brief.

An example of the type of bird hide (with wheelchair access) proposed, location and direction it would face was shown. Sara stressed that these were preliminary ideas and not set in stone.

In response to questions from the public Sara reiterated that SWT will maintain their ditches when they become the landowners and that they have a responsibility not to flood out their neighbours.

The Chairman, Cllr Ian Mercer, thanked Dr Daniels, Luke and Sara for their presentations and reassured the members of the public that the flooding issues will remain a focus for the Parish Council and will remain an agenda item for the foreseeable future.

Further debate continued on the subject of flooding with regard to the management of the moss and climate change and the impact on agricultural land.

Cllr Mercer gave reassurance that the Parish Council will try to facilitate conversation between affected parties to collectively address the flooding issues.

Luke and Sara pointed out that with regard to the plans for the scrap yard site they will be submitting an outline planning application and as such there will be an opportunity to comment via the planning process.

68/16 Parish Debate

Cllr Mercer invited questions for open debate on any other parish matters. There were no questions raised or comments made.

Cllr Mercer thanked the members of the public for attending and hoped that we would have a good subject for debate next year. He declared the meeting closed at 9:45pm.