

**ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
OF
FECKENHAM**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD
15 MAY 2014 At 7:15pm**

Present: 10 parishioners, FPC Clerk S Arble, WCC Cllr Gretton, RBC Cllrs Chalk & Clayton

F Hawker chaired the meeting.

Apologies: R Williams, Officer Waterhouse, Mr & Mrs White and P Dormer

Minutes of the 16 May 2013 Annual Parish Meeting were approved.

Chairman of Parish Council & Amenity Trust R Williams Report

Time passes but still Feckenham Council continues to promote the interests of the Parish.

This year we saw changes on the Council with 2 retirements due largely to work commitments, but also new councillors filling the gaps and we were pleased recently to welcome Slade Arthur and Pat Dormer to the Council. We are now back to full strength.

In April, after 21 years living in the Parish, Andrea and I moved to live a mere 7 miles away in Alcester but I retain business interests in Feckenham, and am willing to continue to offer my services as a councillor for the immediate future. After all, I cannot give up my allotments nor my visits to see my bar friends in the Rose and Crown now, can I?

Once again, a major part of our efforts have been directed to seeing that the roads and drains around the Parish are kept in good order and although the annual pooling's of water in Astwood Lane continue to cause concern, overall I think the Borough and County Councils have done their best in these financially challenging times. In October we reminded all riparian land owners of their responsibilities to keep the watercourses and ditches clear and this seems to have worked well with no reported incidents this year. The RBC did provide us with some 'Dads Army' humour when military vehicles arrived and erected a wall of sandbags on the corner of Swansbrook/Astwood Lane just as the flood risks had subsided. I thought they were a snipers nest for the TA on exercise!

The Planning debate over developments at Webheath rumble on and we were visited by consultants from WCC who brought us up to date with their contributions and assessments on flood risks. The debate rages on but only time will tell what impact on village life, the new dwellings to be built in Webheath will bring. Let us hope it is all good for our commerce and entertainment divisions. Major construction works to enlarge the mains sewer from Redditch to Stockwood will be inevitable and whilst this could flood the shop out with new business, there will inevitably be some temporary disruption from contractor's vehicles.

A major project this year was the support given to improving the Mill Lane surfaces where the adopted surface ends and continues as a bridlepath passing the Cricket Club. After extremely generous contributions by residents of Mill Lane and

elsewhere in the village, the Parish made further efforts and managed to gain support from the Traffic Group and WCC's Cllr Phil Gretton who very generously dipped deep into his discretionary fund to make the final contribution that allowed work to get under way. An order was placed with a local Redditch firm JMC, who completed the resurfacing to WCC Highways standard over 3 days in February. The surface should last for a considerable time and hopefully require little maintenance in the near future. Cost net of Vat was circa £8,800. We are now seeking out grant support for another project, Moors Lane! Now this will be challenging. So far estimates to relay the surface as far as the Allotments have indicated a figure in the region of £15,000 will be required. Come on; get your cheque books out. We shall be calling....

We also petitioned RBC to complete proposals made by an earlier council committee to provide a tarmac pathway between the sheltered bungalows in Coupass Cottages through the meadow to the rear and into Turton Gardens car park; which was completed without cost to the Parish although it assumed responsibilities for ongoing maintenance. Cost to RBC was £6,800! When you compare that to what JMC did to Mill Lane, it makes you wonder!

Despite our complaints to the WCC to visually improve the aspect of the Estate Gates erected by WCC at the 3 entrances to the village it was not possible to get these repositioned save for a small change to one of the gates in Droitwich Road. It is a real pity that this opportunity was not grasped by WCC and sorted. I feel personally aggrieved at the way they were erected and that Highways' could have done more here.

Last year I reported that a Development Planning Committee had been formed to consider putting in place a local development plan to self regulate planning and development in the Parish but that this had dissolved after the costs and resources available had been considered too much to implement. It was hoped that Cameron's initiative to parishes to get involved in self regulation would nevertheless make its mark on Redditch Planning Committee and that they would give greater weight to our observations and decisions of either support or rejection of parishioners plans. How wrong we all were.

This year we saw the first application of any size in the village since Turton Gardens, an application for 8 dwellings at The Paddocks. Notwithstanding a special meeting of the Council which attracted the attendance of 47 parishioners and its decision to support this application, the dangers of leaving all in the hands of the Borough Council became apparent when the Planning Committee rejected it notwithstanding a further groundswell of support from the Village at that meeting to which I and several other parishioners (both for and against) attended. I have since attended other local parish/town councils who have given this Council renewed impetus to take the Local Committee forward once again and we are investigating the opportunities to gain grant assistance to this end. Whether it occurs will largely depend upon your support and enthusiasm to see Feckenham village evolve or decay.

Grant assistance was given this year to your Village Shop to help with the EPOS cash register, to the Allotments committee, and to Feckenham Football Club who have expanded the children's junior teams and need junior toilet facilities.

Following a winter road accident in Cruise Hill, the Millennium Bench was damaged beyond repair and your council funded a replacement. Last month Cllr Slade and I travelled to Rowington to collect the Bench and following a coating of teak oil, it was thence transported to site where IPS Building Services contractor Marc Bradley made an excellent job of fixing it to its concrete plinth assisted by power tools loaned by Dormer Plant Hire of Astwood Bank. We are hoping that the adjoining farmer will

favour the community by cutting back and lowering his hedge so that the splendid view of the Malvern Hills can be exposed to those wishing to take rest on the bench (it is reversible!).

Traffic through the village continues to be monitored and a recent initiative by Road Safety Partnership has seen the introduction of a temporary speed camera. On its first day it stopped over 100 vehicles!

English Heritage made contact to offer an initiative to raise awareness of our ancient ditches which are all that remains of the Feckenham Hunting Lodge reputed to have been used by King John many centuries past. A team of parishioners have sharpened their swords and are getting involved, aided by EH.

The Clerk provided internally audited 2013/14 **Statement of Accounts**. The Clerk reports that the precept received was unaltered at £8,300 and the total income was £18,267 which includes VAT recovery and donations towards the Mill Lane project. The balance of funds carried forward to 2014/15 is £18,317. A significant percentage of these funds are ring fenced in Reserve Accounts.

The accounts were internally audited by Mr R Fletcher to whom I offer our thanks for offering once again his services. An external audit will take place after a four week period.

RBC Cllr Clayton Report

1. Abattoir application granted.
2. Local Plan 4 enquiry starts 16 June. This represents an opportunity for parishioner representations to be made.
3. The Inspector requested more evidence in support of Plan.

ACTION: Cllr Clayton to forward information about the public enquiry.

The Council offered a vote of thanks to Cllr Chalk for his many years of service to Feckenham.

WCC Cllr Gretton Report

1. Thanked the Council for its efforts.
2. 1.99% WCC tax rise.
3. Bulk of savings due to WCC commissioning services rather than directly providing services.
4. Both Redditch libraries remain open.
5. Hartlebury energy from waste plant agreed.
6. Local schools operating as academy schools are performing far better than previously.
7. Alexander Hospital now has a higher likelihood for 24 hour A&E service.
8. Fire Service reduced by one part time fire engine.
9. Divisional Fund was used for Mill Lane repairs, St John's Church and other local causes.
10. Speeding checks are occasional, not temporary.

Local Police Officer Waterhouse Report

In terms of Policing we have recently been joined by Police community support Officers Clive Rainbow and Paul Davies both of whom have been around the village and I'm sure you will be seeing them more frequently in coming months. They have recently undertaken some speed checks in the village and a number of motorists have been dealt with accordingly.

You will recall that a few months ago we placed a PACT (partners and communities together) post box in the village shop giving residents the opportunity to inform us of any concerns. The box was in the shop for a week and the result being that speeding traffic through the village was the main concern of majority of those who posted issues. As a result of this the Camera safety partnership carried out research on the Droitwich Rd and subsequently has undertaken some enforcement work, a summary of which I have requested for you. Briefly though the enforcement has reduced the speed of traffic on the road and a number of motorists prosecuted for excess speed offences. Local PCSo's will continue to supplement this initiative.

The post box would seem to be a good means of giving residents the opportunity to highlight their concerns and will be seeking to place the box in the shop in the near future, dates of which I will ask to be published in the Parish magazine.

We have had some thefts around the village this year and I always try to disseminate this information via village watch email system as quickly as I can. We would expect to see an increase in thefts of garden equipment etc this time of year and would urge all residents to ensure all tools etc are locked away and security marked where possible. Redditch Borough Council has a limited supply of Smart Water for marking property at a cost to Redditch residents of £15 (significantly discounted). These can be purchased from the town Hall at Redditch but worth a call to check availability before attending. (0152764252).

Anyone requiring more detailed information about security products will find excellent information at www.securedbydesign.co.uk

The non emergency number for Police is now 101. This number will automatically select the nearest force to where the call is made from. Other information can be found on the West Mercia Police web site.

Chairman of the Square Management Committee I Ridley Report

The Management Committee has again worked throughout the year to ensure that The Square remains in top condition and is available for the use and enjoyment of the villagers of Feckenham as stipulated in the Trust's governing document.

It has been a busy year with regard to events taking place on The Square. In December the annual Carols on The Square attracted larger numbers than ever before. Members of the Committee served mulled wine and mince pies to an estimated 300 people as they enjoyed carol singing around the brightly illuminated Christmas tree. The Christmas lights were officially switched on by our former chairman Peter Masters. This event and the tree are provided by the Committee as a gesture of thanks to the villagers who support The Square all year round. A bucket collection yielded £413 for the County Air Ambulance charity.

In May the three yearly Flower and Garden Festival took place and The Square was used as a venue for plant sales. The Parish Church kindly made a donation of £150 towards the upkeep of The Square. This was closely followed by a successful Jubilee Barbecue when The Square was used for a simple but enjoyable celebration. The organisers donated £120. The Wake in June also attracted large numbers for the traditional selection of attractions and a donation of £100 was contributed. In July the Committee organised its own fundraising event which this year took the form of a Wild West Fun Evening. The Redditch Westerners constructed part of a western town at one end of The Square whilst Cow Pie and other desperate dishes were served at the other. A handsome sum of £720 was added to The Square's funds as a result. Finally, the annual Scarecrow Weekend saw over 3,000 visitors viewing scarecrows around the village and enjoying teas in a tent erected on The Square. The Entertainments Committee, which organises the event, is working with the Committee to purchase a new set of lights for use at events held on The Square. The

Committee is extremely grateful to the residents of The Square for their understanding and patience with all the activity taking place on their “front lawn”.

The Committee continued to mow and maintain The Square and this year decided to dispense with the expense of the use of contractors to stock the flower tubs. A Committee member is doing the vast majority of the work herself. A working party of Committee members replaced and restocked many of the tubs in the spring and other vital maintenance jobs were done at the same time.

Looking ahead, it is likely that some expense will be incurred due to essential work on the trees. Two of the chestnut trees at the High Street end of the site are unwell and it is likely that they may have to be removed. The Committee is of the opinion that the appearance of The Square would be substantially altered if these were replaced by small, young trees and is likely to opt for replanting with mature stock. It is anticipated that grants and donations will be sought if this proves to be necessary.

Finally, the Committee thanks the Trust for its support over the year and looks forward to continuing to work with Trust Members to ensure that The Square is maintained for both current and future generations of villagers.

MEETING CLOSED AT 7:45PM

Minutes prepared by Sean Arble, Clerk to the Council, on 3 June 2014.