

Ogbourne St Andrew, Ogbourne Maizey and Rockley Parish Council

Minutes of the AGM

Monday 13th May 2024 at 7pm at The Haven, Ogbourne Maizey

Present: John Hetherington (JH) (Chair)
Jan Whitehead (JW) (Clerk)
John Edmunds (JE)
Alan Brown (AB)
Brian Dean (BD)
Alison Purchase (Parishioner)
Ian Davis (Parishioner)

Apologies: Nicky Place, Carys Gregory

1) Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

Flood action plan now prepared and Jeff Mason has agreed to project lead this if we need to undertake the work as a parish.

Environment Agency attended the village but there is little that they are able to do to assist us.

We can take some actions ourselves. ARK did have permission from EA to re-route the river.

Wet Pits is likely to flood each year following the re-routing of the Og. We will need to monitor this each winter.

A noticeboard has been ordered to replace the broken board at the top of Ogbourne St Andrew. This should arrive this week and will be erected as soon as possible.

Rockley have also been contacted to see whether they need a new board.

We now have permission to co-opt a replacement councillor.

A MyWilts ticket has now been raised to have the bridge repaired on the footpath.

Both planning issues have been raised with Wiltshire Council – now awaiting an update.

The road closure on the A346 has been delayed until w/c 20th May.

Footpath issue has been raised again via MyWilts app.

2) Chair's Report

As Chairman of the Parish Council, it is my pleasant duty to give an overview of the activities of the council over the last twelve months. The good news is that the Parish Council has continued to function in a broadly successful fashion for another year. No riots, no insurrections, no fights.....barely a disagreement. Hopefully, we are all focussed on delivering the best for our community and work harmoniously and conscientiously to this end. I would therefore like to start by thanking all of the Councillors for their contributions throughout the year. Parish Councils are referred to as the third tier of government (presumably behind Westminster and the local councils) but nonetheless, in terms of sorting out day-to-day community problems, they can be of more relevance to individuals than the powers that be. So thank you to all of our Councillors for picking up on local problems and doing their best to find solutions to them. A

special thank you goes to Nick Parsons. A former Chairman of the council, Nick has made a significant contribution over a number of years. Due to his personal circumstances he has reluctantly decided so step aside from Council duties. Let's hope this is just a pause, not a cessation. Of course, we would be a rudderless bunch of do-gooders without the guiding hand of our clerk always on the tiller. Jan Whitehead has worked tirelessly again, over the last year, not only to keep us in order but to handle all of the administrative matters of the Parish. There is a heavy burden of paperwork and e-mails associated with many issues such as parish council meetings, interactions with local and national bodies, insurance, health and safety, parishioner concerns, village maintenance, adjoining councils, record keeping, the village website and managing and reporting on our finances. All of this accomplished with calm and charm. So a big thank-you to Jan.

I will now mention one or two of the major issues we have dealt with over the last year. The biggest issue to hit the village has been the floods of early 2024. The worst flooding that any of us can remember resulted in some serious flood damage to a number of properties in Ogbourne St Andrew. Raw sewage flowed in the streets and the main village road became impassable to all but the most determined drivers of the most robust vehicles. In fact their passage exacerbated the problems as bow waves inundated some properties. Some cars were written off, many were stranded and some villagers trapped in their homes. In response to the floods, an Extraordinary Open Meeting of the Council was held on the 23rd January, convened by Jan Whitehead and attended by 26 parishioners, together representatives from ARK (Action for the River Kennet). This was a very fruitful meeting out of which came a number of recommendations for action. Subsequent discussions with colleagues from Marlborough (where similar flooding occurred) have confirmed our impression that neither Thames Water nor Wiltshire Council has the funds or intention to come to our rescue. Of course, it is a scandal that in a relatively rich and prosperous country in the 21st century, foul drains should be overflowing into our streets and into our houses.

One of the underlying causes is the ingress of rainwater into the sewage system. Whilst the Parish Council does not have the right or the resources to intervene in Thames Water's sewerage, we feel there may be some areas where we can provide some mitigation of the effects of the floods. These include regular clearing of ditches and drains along the main road in Ogbourne St Andrew, a possible upgrade to the verge on the South side of the village road to provide a stable porous surface, possibly using French drains, and management of the water flow down the downland track which feeds rainwater and debris into the village. These options are currently being researched and we intend to bring forward some actions in the near future.

Funding such works can prove very expensive and so we need to consider an increase in the precept, should we decide to go forward with a programme of works.

The second (much more minor but quite dramatic) incident was the removal of one of the villages Speed Indicator Devices by a wayward vehicle which left the A346 at speed in Ogbourne Maizey. Jan has followed this through and we are hoping to soon have either financial compensation or a replacement SID in place soon.

In other news, The Church has finally got the go-ahead to reorganise the internal space to provide a more usable environment. The aim is to provide running water, a small kitchen and a toilet! (You can tell we are in the 21st century!). So congratulations to the PCC for their dogged attempts to fight The Church of England, The Victorian Society and a wall of bureaucracy to get this done. They are now embarking on a period of fundraising, mainly from public bodies and charities. However, some top-up funding will need to be raised in the local community

Following a local inquiry held in The Silks, the application to create a new public bridleway connecting Green Lane to the Ogbourne St Andrew downland track was finally approved. Although

the local landowners were opposed to its designation, it will greatly benefit the wider community and we trust users of the bridleway will do everything they can to respect the concerns of the landowners.

The community pub is entering a new phase with the arrival of a tenant, Thomas Frake, who should breathe new life into its operation. The village owes an enormous debt of gratitude to the army of volunteers who have got us to this point and we are optimistic that this new chapter for the Silks will be the foundation of a successful future. One of the purposes of The Parish Council is to foster well-being in The Parish and there is no doubt that the pub has contributed enormously to the sense of community in the parish. We are very supportive of their efforts and wish the pub every success in the future. Nicky Place is working with the pub to enhance and broaden the range of social activities it has on offer.

Finally thank you all again for all your efforts. Let's continue to work together to support the community to the best of our ability over the coming year.

John Hetherington

Chairman. May 2024

3) Election of Chair

JH stepped down as Chair.

JH agreed to stand again. Proposed: AB, Seconded: BD. Approved unanimously

4) Village Maintenance

Some strimming has taken place at Crawlings Piece. Request has been made for some cutting back of hedges too.

The widening of the footpath from Crawlings Piece to the bus stop was discussed at LHFIG in May and has been approved. Follow up actions will take place to establish if the work can be done simply, otherwise the work will join a queue for costing.

Action: JW to contact parishioner to provide an update

5) Roads and Footpaths

As soon as the roads are dry JW will contact Martin Cook about filling potholes and clearing the silt.

Action: JW to contact Martin Cook

Tractors and farm vehicles are now driving over the banks alongside the ditch which is breaking this down into the ditch again, and they are also driving at speed. Tractors are legally using the bridleway from OSA for access in both directions which causes congestion. It may be possible to access or exit the farmland from Green Lane in Ogbourne Maizey. Possible request that a one way system is implemented to prevent congestion in both the village and on the bridleways.

Action: Ideas to Brian Dean who will write to landowners.

Action: JH/JW to check with WCC re any weight limits on bridge in Ogbourne Maizey

6) Community Engagement

Ogbourne Family Fun and Games event will be held in the Leach's field on Saturday 22nd June at 12.30. Further details will be published.

Action: JW to send thanks to NPL for organizing this

7) Planning

None received.

8) Finance

JW ran through the finances to year ended 31.3.24.

The council showed a surplus of £1894.61 to 31.3.24. Significant variances resulted from late payment of Parish Clerk expenses and purchase of the defibrillator box for Rockley.

JW would like to thank Carolyn Davies who agreed to be the independent examiner for the Parish Council accounts. The accounts have been checked and verified.

Due to the level of income and expenditure of the Parish Council it was agreed that we should declare ourselves exempt from the Annual Governance and Accountability Return and publish our financial records on the Parish Website as per previous years.

The Council approved the accounts and agreed JW to send relevant paperwork to PNK for external auditing compliance purposes.

Action: JW to send submission to external auditor before deadline of 1st July.

Expenses since last meeting:

WALC Subscription £153.44

Noticeboard £558

Insurance £220.48

Precept received £4434

Donation £50

Current account on 13.5.24 £7,541 Savings account £6,005 TOTAL: £13,546

The Parish Council normally makes a contribution at this time of year of £500 to the PCC for the maintenance of the churchyard. This was approved unanimously.

Action: JW to arrange payment as soon as possible.

9) Correspondence

None

10) AOB

Weeds on the south side path in the churchyard are overgrown.

CCTV camera in porch has been disabled.

Action: JH to follow up on both the above with the PCC

The footpath outside The Forge is still blocked following the heating oil leak and this now presents a safety issue due to the number of tractors using the village road. This issue to be followed up to seek an update on the situation and when the footpath will be reinstated.

The 20mph limit in Ogbourne Maizey is not being observed despite the new signs.

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 19.56

Date of next meeting: 01/07/24