

DUNCHURCH ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY MINUTES

Held in Dunchurch Community Library, School Street, Dunchurch on Wednesday 23rd May 2018 at 7.00pm

PRESENT:

Cllr H Roberts [Chairman of meeting]

Cllr H Morshead
Cllr D Roberts

Cllr Hallahan

Clerk to the Parish Council:

Miss L Foster

OTHER:

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:

30 members of the public

The meeting started at 7.00pm.

1. TO ACCEPT APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr N Jones
Cllr N Sodhi
Cllr G Jones
Cllr Eccleson

As the Chairman Cllr Eccleson was unable to attend the meeting, a chair of the meeting had to be nominated. Cllr H Roberts was proposed by Melvyn Macartney, seconded by Mr Waller and approved by all present.

2. TO CONFIRM MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 15th MAY 2017

The Minutes from the Parish meeting held on 15th May 2017 were proposed by Cllr D Roberts and seconded by Mr Waller and were confirmed as a true record. We proceeded to confirm everyone's approval of the minutes. Everyone confirmed the minutes and the minutes were signed by Councillor Roberts (Chair).

3. PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2017/18

Cllr D Roberts delivered the report on behalf of Cllr Eccleson -

PARISH COUNCIL

Our Parish Council Office continues to work well and is in a convenient location. Our rent for this space contributes to the overheads of the library facilities in the village.

We have suffered this year with internet issues and have recently not only relaunched our website but changed our hosting service to give us a more robust email provider.

I would like to thank our Clerk, Lyndsay Foster and our Responsible Financial Officer, Tricia Knowles for their ongoing support throughout the year.

I should like to thank my fellow Parish Councillors for their support in this voluntary role and their attendance at Parish Council meetings throughout the year.

We must conclude that in general the residents of Dunchurch see the Parish Council as performing well. This is demonstrated by an apparent view that there is little need to attend our meetings or to communicate with us to voice their views - or is it that maybe apathy is thriving in our community!

The Parish Council remains under strength and we need additional members to come forward to be considered for membership. Our recently formed Neighbourhood Plan team also needs new members to assist in developing the plan for Dunchurch.

We pride ourselves upon the fact that we are not a Parish Council focussed on political parties and their policies but act for the singular good of our community.

DUNCHURCH LIBRARY

The Parish Council have a 25-year lease from WCC. The continued success of our library is totally dependent on a number of dedicated volunteers and I should like to formally thank them for their ongoing hard work.

YOUTH SERVICE

This Parish Council is dedicated to the success of the youth club and will continue to support it from our funds and grants when available. We believe it is an important service to the village community. It has not been without its challenges. The Warwickshire Youth Service closed its youth club department down and this left our youth club facing potential closure. The Parish Council considered employing our own youth workers however, we managed to secure the services of Rugby Play-Rangers, part of RBC.

CRIME, ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND SECURITY IN DUNCHURCH PARISH

Thankfully levels of crime in our Parish remain relatively low, however we still subscribe to the view that residents should not be complacent in terms of their security.

LOCAL COMMUNICATIONS

Parish Council Web-site.

The Parish Council web-site, dunchurchpc.org, has recently been updated. The upgrade will allow us much easier access to change and add information ourselves rather than relying upon a hosting service and support to undertake this work. We are in the process of uploading documents etc to bring it up to speed. You will appreciate that this takes some time between dealing with the day-to-day activities of the Parish and trying to fit in the website.

Information relating to the running of the Community Library has a dedicated site, dunchurchlibrary.org.

PARISHIONERS FORUM

The Parishioners forum has now been a part of the official agenda for the monthly Parish Council meetings for some years. The three “ P’s ” - parking, planning and pollution have been the most prevalent topics for discussion.

LOCAL PLAN

There has been a very obvious level of interest in the Local Plan and with the various protest groups set up to challenge it. The local plan itself is a complex subject.

As a reminder and perhaps a memory jogger to some of you, the Parish Council was opposed to and attended a number of meetings back in 2010/2011 when the Rugby Borough Core Strategy was first launched for public consultation in June of that year. The figures used then in the housing trajectory were challenged by Dunchurch PC and we stated that RBC would never meet them and they didn't.

The Core Strategy outlined RBC's planning policy framework and future vision for development in the Borough. This Parish Council made public its concerns at that time that there would be a high level of development around Dunchurch with the resultant increase in traffic and pollution in the village. Unfortunately, these concerns seemed to fall on deaf ears! We are now experiencing the results of that strategy in the form of the Local Plan.

There are already approved planning applications in Cawston, Ashlawn, Limetree Village and Dip Bar field which total 2500 houses. Warwickshire County Council are promoting development between Alwyn Road and Cawston Lane. The one area where the Parish Council does agree with RBC is that without a Local plan speculative developers will simply run riot. However, it needs to be the right Local Plan.

The Parish Council set out our strategy to challenge the Local Plan very early on. We took legal advice from a very experienced Barrister who was well versed in such matters. We were guided on the development of a Neighbourhood Plan and an approach to challenge the Local Plan. We also asserted ownership of various parcels of village green – such as the land upon which the Lord John Scott statue is erected.

The draft Local Plan is currently going through its ‘examination’ stage. The Planning Inspectorate are responsible for examining the Local Plan and they support the Government's aim for every area to have an adopted Local Plan.

The local plan sets out local planning policies and identifies how land is used, determining what will be built where. The Local Plan, when adopted, will provide the framework for development across our region.

Local peoples' views are supposedly vital in shaping a local plan. However, development proposals should be consistent with the national planning policy framework (NPPF) – wherein lies the issues! The NPPF ‘flies in the face’ of previous planning rules.

This Government is promoting development to meet the perceived needs of the housing market and is not only instructing Local Authorities to build but is offering them cash incentives to build more homes.

The Inspector's role is to test the “soundness” of the draft Plan, whether the duty to co-operate has been met and whether the plan is legally compliant. However, the responsibility for producing the Plan, and then deciding whether or not to adopt it, lies solely with the local planning authority. In other words, it is for Rugby Borough Council to decide how they wish to proceed after the Inspector produces his report into the Examination. The adoption of a Local Plan can only be overturned by a successful challenge in the High Court on a point of law.

The Parish Council have therefore challenged areas of the RBC Local Plan based upon the Boroughs' interpretation of Government Policy. It is only by reference to policy documents or factual evidence that the Examiner will take notice of any challenge. The Examiner graciously accepted our traffic survey figures where we had challenged the calculations used by RBC/WCC Consultants. We addressed all issues by referencing our challenges in writing to specific policy or other official documentation.

Unfortunately, some people believe that simply making unsubstantiated statements about increases in traffic, pollution, vibration etc will be taken into consideration. This is clearly not the case and does not feature in examination. The Examiner will not consider planning applications already approved despite their effect on the local area – for example the recent decision on granting planning on Ashlawn Road.

Planning Applications

The Parish Council has continued to monitor planning applications in the village. We respond to concerns raised by residents and register objections where appropriate. The Parish Council has no vested power with regard to planning applications.

Dialogue with Local Authorities

We are lucky to have two Borough Councillors and one County Councillor as members of the Parish Council. Access to local council officials is a regular part of the Parish Council's activities'.

Parishioners should be aware that a strong Parish Council can help to protect our services and the benefits to our community. If this Parish Council fails, its duties would be undertaken by RBC and we would effectively lose our 'voice' in the Region.

TRAFFIC SURVEY & POLLUTION

The Parish Council recently undertook a detailed traffic survey over a 7-day period to include a weekend. The last survey undertaken was in 2010/11. Our survey showed an increase in traffic at the Dun Cow junction from 15000 traffic movements a day to 17000. Also, we monitored Adkinson Avenue where residents reported that it was becoming a 'rat run' during peak periods. We found that there were over 2000 traffic movements a day via that route.

We also monitored queue lengths and found that there were a staggering 120 vehicles queued along Rugby Road at peak periods with some 30 vehicles down Southam Road at the same time. This is all before the further development around the village.

Increased traffic leads to even more delays and pollution. Pollution is poisoning our residents. Scaremongering it is not! Measured levels of this toxic gas at the Dun Cow junction are well outside of EU targets and Rugby borough Council have no firm plan to reduce these levels. They simply want to wait until 2026 to build a 'spine road'.

We are about to undertake our own pollution measurement exercise as part of the Neighbourhood Plan. This Parish Council will not tolerate such an indifferent attitude to this problem and will continue to challenge RBC.

PARISH AMENITIES

Playgrounds

The play facilities are regularly inspected and faults and vandalism are rectified expeditiously.

Village Handyman

Matthew Lee continues to provide us with excellent service as Village Handyman and we thank him for his efforts during another year. Matthew also provides us with updates as to the general condition of play equipment and is often seen picking up litter in the village.

SUPPORT FROM COUNCILLORS

County & Borough

During the year we received support from some of our Borough and County Councillors and I take this opportunity to thank those that have not only graced us with their presence at Council meetings but also supported this Parish Council.

PERSONAL SUMMARY

There have been times this year when I have seriously considered stepping down from the Council due to personal business pressures. However, I chose to remain. I reiterate the view that the role of Chairman can be a thankless and a daunting task. However, I feel that I am undertaking this task for no other personal gain than to achieve a sense of satisfaction that the needs and benefits to the community are achieved through the motivation of success and personal sense of duty to the community.

It is very easy to sit outside the Parish Council and criticise its actions. All members of the Parish Council, with the exception of the Clerk and RFO are unpaid volunteers and give of their time regularly and freely to the village. We have guidelines which we must follow and endeavour to do so at every instance.

Positivity is important, but actions of the Parish Council may not always be aligned with perceived priorities of individual Parishioners that is why I would encourage people to communicate with us and make their views public. Better still 'volunteer' or present us with the problem and the solution. These are challenging times for Dunchurch.

Thank you.

4. REPORTS FROM OTHER BODIES

Neighbourhood Plan Committee (NP)

The steering committee has been formally established. The NP group have had 3 meetings (1 informal, 2 formal). All requirements to declaration of interests and code of conduct have been completed. The steering group were delivered a presentation from Neil Pearce of Avon Planning regarding the development of a neighbourhood plan.

Robin Aird is the Chairman of the committee and has been in contact with Sophie Leaning from Rugby Borough Council. She has provided a map of tree that have a preservation order. Robin was surprised to see that no Scots pines on Coventry Road were covered by a TPO.

Robin was concerned about the lack of support for the neighbourhood plan. He would like to see a councillor committed to attending all meetings.

The process of completing the neighbourhood plan is likely to take around 2 years. The steering committee will be compiling a survey for every household and would appreciate a high response from all residents as this will support the basis of the plan.

The committee is looking for more volunteers to join the committee.

It has been suggested that the neighbourhood planning committee have a stall at Dunchurch fete. This will be considered by the group.

Residents would like improved communication from the NP group through the Parish Council.

The NP group will discuss with the Parish Council the use of social media to promote the plan and provide updates.

It would be helpful for someone to provide an in-depth history of the village. It was suggested Mr Waller could possibly help with this.

The festival group stated that if any information needed to be shared they would share on the neighbourhood plan committee's behalf.

Community Speedwatch Group

This group has been formed in Daventry Road. They have the use of a community speed gun. If any other area in the village would like to form another group please contact Dan to discuss this. It would require 7-8 volunteers in the group to facilitate training with the police. It would be helpful for the Clerk to post details on the website. Registration numbers of offending vehicles cannot be released. It was suggested that statistics would be helpful to produce.

Save Dunchuch

We have carried out a survey within the village and distributed 2 leaflets. We spoke at the Local Plan examination of which the inspector supported the removal of Lodge Farm from the Plan.

The group would like to support the neighbourhood plan committee

Festival Group

The festival group would like to work together to promote the neighbourhood plan. It would be good publicity for them to appear at the fete on the 16th June.

The procession for the fete this year will be along the footpath as opposed to wheeled floats on the road. This is due to a decision by the police that a traffic management company would be required to close the road. The festival group has decided that the money would be better used to be donated to local causes as opposed to paying for a traffic management company.

Councillor Roberts offered thanks to all groups for their efforts over the past 12 months.

5. OTHER MATTERS RAISED BY AN ELECTOR OF THE PARISH

Mr Waller was concerned about the buttercross monument. He would like to see it protected once it has been repaired. Cllr Roberts confirmed that Warwickshire County Council will provide repairs and will then seek to provide protection following this. The residents would not like to see it moved. Residents would like to know if people that hit the monument are persued by the police. Cllr Howard Roberts confirmed that the Parish Council have considered installing CCTV at the crossroads which may aid the police should the monument be struck again.

A resident was concerned about the number of HGVs driving through the village. Can a variable weight limit be added to the road or a chicane?

Southam Road residents are concerned with cars parking on both sides on the road. Lorries have been hitting cars on their way past. Are there any measures that could be taken?

Residents would like to see a Parish Council Plan for Dunchurch regarding painting of lamp post, general maintenance and grass cutting.

Many residents are extremely concerned about the appearance of the village including grass cutting, verge cutting and weeds in the area. It was reiterated that Rugby Borough Council cut the open grass areas and the Parish Council has submitted several requests to cut grass within the area. The street signs are another issue regarding the appearance of the village. The Parish Council is working on this with Warwickshire County Council as we did have an approved quote but WCC has now stated we must use their contractors.

Mr Waller would like to see a list of assets and an investment strategy.

Residents are concerned about the poor mobile signal in the area. It was stated that 3 network seems to be the best provider for coverage in the area.

Cllr H Roberts stated if anyone sees any problems please report them to the Clerk. The Parish Council has limited powers.

Residents were concerned about the condition of the benches on the Heath and opposite The Green Man. The Parish Council will discuss the bench on the Green however the bench on the Heath belongs to Rugby Borough council and has been reported numerous times. It will be reported again.

Robin Aird stated the issue of parking will be further discussed as part of the neighbourhood plan process.

The meeting ended 9.00pm

Signed:

Chairman

Date: