

Present: Chairman: Barry Haycock, Clerk: Gail Coombs, Police, County Councillor Ben Smith, District Councillor Ashley Warren and 16 Parishioners

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr's K Fenwick, I Dyckhoff, M Hulbert, Jo Sharp.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes were read and agreed as a true record of the meeting. The Chairman signed the minutes.

3. MATTERS ARISING

Any matters arising from the previous minutes have been addressed at the regular Parish Council meetings.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Read by Cllr Barry Haycock in Cllr Fenwick's absence.

Once again it is my pleasure to report on the work of the Parish Council for the last year, a year without any major events but one during which we have continued to work for the benefit of all parishioners. As usual we have met roughly once every six weeks and have dealt with what seems like an ever increasing amount of paperwork.

We had objected to the closure of the car park in Bucknall Wood, but got nowhere with the Forestry Commission who just ignored objections. The suggested new bus service through the village never materialised; clearly finance was a problem.

The Council as owners of the Village Green are in the process of having that ownership registered with the Land Registry. We have purchased the telephone box for the princely sum of £1 and now have the job of getting it painted. We have also purchased a second seat for the green, with help from Councillor Ben Smith's fund for small projects, and will shortly get that installed. We were glad to see the white lines around the village repainted. You have no idea how much effort went into getting the ones on the corner of Main Street and Silver Street done.

No major planning applications were received during the year. The modernisation of the three cottages on the green was completed and I understand that two have been sold. With at least 5 other houses available for letting and four more about to come on the market, there could be quite an influx of newcomers in the next year. However, we are concerned at the current activities at Mini Farm, on the Blakesley Road. It appears that people are staying there overnight. The District Council is taking active steps to ensure compliance with planning requirements. The owners have been told to apply for planning permission for the additional caravans on the site, but they appear to be dragging their feet on lodging a proper application. We will continue to monitor the situation.

You will all have received copies of Abtalk about once every 2 months. This is funded by you through the Parish Council and we hope that you all find something of interest in each issue.

As you will hear from our Clerk, our financial position remains sound. We have a large reserve which will be available for a burial ground in the future if required.

After serving the Parish Council for several years, during which she has also produced three delightful and active children, Gail Coombs has decided to take up teaching and give up the clerkship. In thanking her for the hard work she has put in, I must congratulate her on the unflappable way she has dealt with all the problems we have given her. Bob Carter has agreed to take over from her and will do so from next month.

Finally, I must thank all the other Councillors for their contribution during the last year.

Cllr Haycock thanked Cllr Fenwick for his work during the year. Cllr Haycock also thanked for organising the mowing of the Green and with Mrs Jill Tolson for the production of AbTalk. He also thanked the Clerk.

5. ACCOUNTS

The clerk read through the accounts. The expenditure during the year is less than the previous year. The Clerks salary was not paid during the financial because of the meeting dates. There were no questions.

6. ORGANISATION REPORTS

6.1 Parochial Church Council

Report read by Richard Tomalin

I had thought that this year had been a quiet year until I looked back through the Minutes of the PCC meetings and realised what a busy and varied year it has been for the PCC. In February, Canon Bridget presented Jan, Richard and Barbara with their certificates of authorisation to assist in the administration of Holy Communion. One of them has assisted at each Communion service throughout the year.

At the beginning of the year, Jan Miles organised a rota for all the jobs which need to be done on a regular basis in the church. As well as the jobs needed for the services, it also included the jobs needed for the general smooth running of the church. It has worked very well for this year. Janet Abbott agreed to take on the job of sending cards out from the

church for people who are ill or who are in other circumstances such as bereavement, where our thoughts and prayers are needed. This had been an enormous help to the PCC. Service cards were started and available to take from the back of the church. These list all services in the benefice for four months and they have been well received.

In June, the PCC presented Peter Byng with a book to mark his licensing as a Reader. We all very much value the help and support that Peter is able to give to Abthorpe.

We have hosted several big events over the year. On June 22<sup>nd</sup>, we hosted the Deanery Confirmation. Bishop Frank took the service and this was followed by refreshments in the Old School. We had very good feedback on the event and it was a joyous occasion. Our Benefice service in August had the theme of Lammastide- celebrating the first grains of the harvest. Archdeacon Christine Allsopp was the preacher.

On 28<sup>th</sup> September, we hosted the Benefice "Back to Church Sunday" at our Harvest Service. We followed this with a Harvest lunch in the school. This was an enjoyable day and we were amazed at how everything went so smoothly. It was rather hectic for the small team organising both the service and the lunch afterwards, but with keeping lunch simple and with John and Joyce Riches serving coffee after the service, we did have time to run between venues and it all worked well.

Our main fundraising was a Barbecue this year instead of our usual Pig Roast. This went off very well and it was a beautiful day – one of the few during this summer.

Three weddings were held at Abthorpe during the summer. All of them were lovely occasions.

Unfortunately, the Village Fun Day due in September and organised by the Village Fund Committee had to be cancelled. We were due to serve teas in the Church as we had done in previous years.

The Village Committee organised a Christingle Service and we helped with this and provided the mince pies for after the service. Our Carol Service was the following week and these services along with our Christmas Day Service were fairly well attended and it was nice to see new faces in Church.

Two new committees were started during the year. The first meeting of the Giving Committee was held on August 26<sup>th</sup>. This committee consists of Alison Robbins PCC Treasurer, Barbara Malcomson PCC Secretary and Joyce Riches, Electoral Roll Member. We took a guideline of giving 10% of all our donations, which included collections, gift aid, tax rebate, and fundraising, but not the tote. This £1,233 was then split into 4 and we donated 25% each to Christian Aid, The PSP Association and Marie Curie cancer Care, leaving 25% for any emergencies, which is carried over to the following year if not used.

The second Committee started during the year was the Benefice Council. All PCC members from the 5 parishes in the benefice were invited to attend the first meeting on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. At this meeting, some guidelines were drawn up and the Council was renamed "Whittlebury PCC's Together" or WPT for short. This Committee will discuss things that are relevant to all the parishes and should help communication between the parishes as well as information getting straight to the PCC's, rather than waiting the PCC meetings where the church wardens can report back from their meetings. These meetings will follow PCC meetings so that information can be taken from one to the other. All PCC members will be able to attend the Benefice Meetings.

We received copies of the final version of the Deanery Mission Plan in May. It was generally thought to be good and all views of the PCC's in the Deanery have been listened to.

We have held our usual Spring and Winter cleans during the year and our Health and Safety checks and risk Assessments have been updated. We have replaced one of the new trees in the churchyard twice over the year and we hope that the present one will survive.

We were sorry to hear towards the end of last year, that Canon Bridget Smith will be retiring In March 2009. We will miss her, not only at our Church services, but also at the PCC meetings and the social events which she and David have always supported whenever they could. With the WPT committee already in place and the work she is doing to staff services, we hope that the interregnum will run as smoothly as possible. One big problem is that we are such a very small committee and we have to run our hands to everything from helping at services, fundraising, keeping the church in good repair and trying to outreach into the community. We greatly appreciate the help that we do get, but it would be lovely to have some new people on the PCC. With the interregnum now here it would be good to have new members and a strong PCC to see us through this phase of the church's life in 2009.

## 6.2 The Old School Committee

Read by Julie Dyckhoff

Over the year we have carried out some remedial work, tiles, collapsing kitchen cupboards. This year we are assessing the disabled facilities and access. The Pre-school is the main income.

## 6.3 Parish Path Warden

Prepared by David Robbins and read by the Clerk

Last year I reported that "on 31<sup>st</sup> march 2008 the Senior Rights of Way Officer together with 6 Right of Way officers were transferred to NCC's new contract partner MGWSP. Northamptonshire is the first county to take this step as regards footpaths. The legal arm of the RoW office remained with NCC. It remains to be seen how this new arrangement for RoW maintenance will work out now it is in the hands of a commercial enterprise. The initial reaction

of the parish path wardens (PPW's) was not very favourable, but I have had no contact with the RoW department or other PPW's since the move."

It is worth noting that the parish path wardens are appointed by the county (not the parish), and report to the Rights of Way team at the council offices at Riverside House in Northampton. In that respect there has been no legal change.

It has been a very quiet year with almost no contact from the RoW team, and little activity to report. However, in about two week times a new co-ordinator for the volunteers will take up her position. It is to be hoped that this will get things moving again.

Otherwise this year has been much like many others as I have continued to walk the paths and bridleway, do a little light clearing, put up a few waymarkers, observe and report. The Abthorpe footpaths network remains generally passable with care but I am aware that quite a few stiles have deteriorated to a very poor state indeed. Many of my requests for attention to these problems have been "on the books" for a long time.

I always welcome input from parishioners concerning problems in the network that they have encountered that I may have missed. These will always be passed onto the RoW team. As ever I am pleased to share details of local routes and contact details of the RoW team should anyone find them useful.

#### 6.4 Age Concern

Report read by John and Joyce Riches

We have helped a number of people and visit. We have and can circulate details of free loft and cavity wall for the over 70's, it can also be pro rata. We can provide carers free of charge for a few hours so that people can go shop, exercise or sleep. There are also cleaning services available. There will be a tea party for the over 60's on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June at 2.45 pm.

#### 6.5 Neighbourhood Watch

Liz Capurro resigned during the year. Mr Tomalin receives the main service emails and accesses the website relevant to our area. The Parish Council agreed to look for a volunteer co-ordinator.

#### 6.6 Silverstone Schools' Federation

Report given by Mrs Letts, Head Teacher

There are 84 children at the Infants School and 91 at the Junior School (this is a rise on previous years, the highest being 93, in the last 10 years). In September we have 23 starting. We have good team of staff that are healthy with few absences. We currently have one who will start maternity leave later in the year.

This year we have revised the curriculum, focusing on 6 themes. This programme also includes visits which enrich the curriculum. Governors visit regularly and talk to the children.

We have introduced the Forest Scheme. Each year group will visit either the grounds, Silverstone Pocket Park or Hazelborough Wood over several weeks. The Arts Council have included Years 2 and 4 visiting a Story Teller.

As a church school the Junior school has collective worship, with visiting speakers and help from the church.

General Maintenance work has been carried out on the buildings. The Infant school has had a storage room built off the hall. This has been very positively received. The Years 2, 4, 5, and 6 classrooms and the Junior School hall have been painted

We have a very supportive Friends Association. They have organised events throughout the year. Friends have helped purchase both fixed wall and free standing gym equipment at the Junior school and the Infant school have received free standing equipment. They have also purchased computers.

The school has 6 coffee afternoons that raise funds for a charity.

#### 6.7 Abthorpe Village Fund

Report read by June Wilsher

First of all I would like to introduce you to our new Chairman, Mike Partridge.

Mike has only been living in the village for a couple of years. He and his partner Tracey moved into Corner Cottage just in time to come out on the village green and enjoy the Fund Day in 2007. I feel sure that the event gave them a flavour of the village as a whole, as well as a perfect opportunity to get to know a few of their neighbours and make some acquaintances. This of course is partly what we aim to provide, for both old and newer members of our community.

As you know, I held the post of chair for four years and stepped down at our last AGM in November last year. However, I am Mike's assistant for the time being. So, the mix should be good, Mike with his youthfulness and energy and me with an old head on my shoulders.

Last year was a very mixed bag in terms of successful events. We planned lots for the year but, the weather poured much cold water on our plans for another successful BBQ day on the village green in September. Our BBQ at home only got lit once during the whole summer and I'm sure you all have much the same stories.

It would seem that Fish and Chips are taking preference, eaten indoors and available all year round. Tickets sell very well when Fish and Chips are the supper food to go with an event. Fish and chips goes very well with Bingo and

quizzes of all types. Perhaps we should be considering a healthy salad in between times, or we'll have to put our hands up to encouraging a fatter Abthorpe population!!

Last June we took 20 of the eldest folk in the village out to lunch at the Herb Centre in Banbury. The sun shone and the food was very nice and a good time was had by all. Sadly it was to be Fred Balderson's last outing with us, as he passed away just a couple of months after.

We held our AGM in November as usual. Earlier this year, Jane Miles and myself decided to step down as Chairman and Secretary respectively. We made the decision for a few reasons. Firstly, four years is long enough for anyone to hold the responsibility of these posts. Secondly, we felt that it is more ethical and healthy to give others the opportunity to take the reins and perhaps come along with some fresh ideas.

We put out leaflets in the village prior to the meeting encouraging new people to consider joining the group, and informing every one of Jan's and my intention to stand down and asking for nominations for new officers. There was a tear off slip at the bottom of the leaflet to fill in and return.

Unfortunately, no slips were returned to us and the days leading up to the AGM saw us feeling rather deflated, but it didn't alter our views about standing down. So, having just fleetingly discussed the situation, we prepared to perhaps make the decision to wrap the group up for one whole year and meet up again at a pre planned date, 2009.

To our amazement the AGM meeting took place with a few new people wanting to join us. We were all so pleased that we overlooked the fact that there was no one looking like taking on the rolls of Chair and Secretary.

Christmas saw us make a few changes to the events of recent years. The older folks in the village enjoyed their Christmas lunch as usual in the New Inn but, this time it was provided by the new tenants Robbie and Barbara Smith. As you will know, we always work with the church at Christmas and to this end we decided to put on a Christingle service with them, rather than the Carol Singing on the green. We provided the makings of the Christingle oranges along with our handy work of assembling them. The service was followed by the usual mulled wine, mince pies and juice for the children.

The beginning of the year saw us with the depleted sum of £425.00 in the bank after the cost of the Christmas festivities, but again this is part of our constitution and what we are all about.

This year started a bit late in planning events. This was mainly due to the fact that there was no one at the helm to get things going. I made contact with everyone, but, I didn't particularly want to lead the way and fall back into my prior roll of Chair. Thankfully one of the newcomers, Andrea Lambert got things going. As a result the first of many events took place on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> April in the form of a Fish and Chip Supper and Quiz.

At this point I would like to say a big thank you, on behalf of the group, to Barry and Liz Haycock for letting us use one of their barns for the coming event.

I guess most of the villages around about got rained off or cancelled their Fete's and other outdoor activities last year, because I have heard of quite a few local Barn Dances planned for the coming months. At least being under the cover of a big barn will mean that none of us is likely to get caught out this year!!

The band for the Barn Dance is called Bricks and Brussells. There will be a pig roast and BBQ, a bar of course and lots of fun and dancing. We hope to sell between 200 and 250 tickets which are available now at your front door or just a phone call away. See the flyer for contact numbers.

We are planning to repeat the outing for the elderly again this year, but have yet to decide on a date and destination. We also have a date booked in the diary for the Cameo Opera to come and entertain us. This is planned for 26<sup>th</sup> September.

We are already talking excitedly about some new ideas for entertainment for next year, but that will come after our usual Christmas celebrations in Abthorpe at the end of this year.

## 6.8 Abthorpe Broadband

Report written by Keith Fenwick and read by the Clerk

ABbA continues to provide broadband to many in both Abthorpe and Slapton. The considerable financial balance built up by 2007 allows us to continue to offer the service free after the joining fee has been paid. We continue to operate as a community service and hope that our timely response to problems when they do arise is at least as good as you can get from BT, Sky or any of the other service providers.

## 6.9 Leeson Trust

Report from David Darling

This trust was set up in 1642 by Jane Leeson for the benefit of us and 22 other villages. There is about £1,000 per year. In about 1975 the trust was re-established to the benefit of school age children and funds towards education. We currently support Sponne School and the 2 Silverstone Schools.

The trust also supports those in need and has purchased 2 electric wheel chairs for people in Towcester.

The Charity has succeeded in requiring the ownership of this school and land. This has been with the help and support of Arnold Thompson Solicitors.

## 7 DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Report given by District Councillor Ashley Warren

Abthorpe is part of Washington Ward and I am your District Council. It has been a quiet year at South Northants Council.

Council houses have been transferred to SN Homes. There is a programme of refurbishment. We have reviewed all departments and have reduced the number of staff. The number of planning applications is down and the searches are also down.

There have been a number of changes to planning laws. Government gave local authorities 5 years for land supplies but reduced it to 3 years. Appeals have been won and planning guidelines for sustainable villages.

Waste for SNC reduced from 49% to 29% (the majority is now recycled). The cost of running waste collecting is £3-6million. SNC is efficient in cost reduction and has received credit back for 11 tonnes of recycled waste. Farthinghoe works well.

The larger developments within Towcester are under the planning controls of WNDC. SNC has identified 30 acres of land. Also looking at rural development of walkways and the Mount.

As of 1<sup>st</sup> April Dog controls have been introduced, fines from £40 to £300.

## 8 COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Report given by County Councillor Ben Smith

I represent 22 villages within South Northamptonshire. This has been 4 years of changes. We have a new Chief Executive and we are working together to get the best value for money and to do more with the money. I am the Deputy Leader and I have responsibilities within the Council.

The Environment is developing and looking at growth, planning, climate change and travellers. We have been successful with the Audit Commissioner and Environment received the maximum 4 star award.

There is a £350m highway maintenance backlog. There is currently a £1.3m bill catch up programme the best way we can. Many Parish Councils are expressing their frustration at getting pot holes repaired. The current Pfi scheme is to mend the road all the way.

Councillors have a £10,000 Empowerment fund to spend on projects within their community. Abthorpe requested some of this fund and we supported the seat on the green project. Greens Norton created a Cookery book.

I continue to be member of the West Northamptonshire Development Committee (WNDC) which covers the area of Towcester, Daventry and Northampton and their surrounding villages. As the housing market recovers the discussion for Towcester by-pass will commence, currently the projected date is 2018.

I am also part of the Police Authority and we are in the process of recruiting a new Chief Constable. Crime across the region is reducing.

We are also in the process of developing our regional parks. Recently we have developed Salcey Forest.

## 9. POLICE

WPC Gemma Wollescroft represented the Police. Steve Horner is our Beat Officer. The crime figures for the year are as follows:

3 Burglaries; 2 Motor Vehicle incidents; 7 Criminal damages and 2 thefts handling.

The crime is up by 10 on previous years. Lately there has been a spate of farm equipment, chicken coups throughout local villages.

There has been 6 Anti-Social Behaviour Orders. 2 for rowdy/inconsiderate behaviour incidents, 2 civil disputes and 2 nuisance communications.

Clr Fenwick sits on the Community Panel and attended the recent meetings. This panel has identified priorities of villages. The main pointes are Speeding/ASB and vehicle nuisance. The police also offer advice on Crime Prevention in rural locations.

## 10. AOB

### 10.1 Speedwatch

Speedwatch is a programme where residents have agreed that there is a speeding problem. Several residents were agreed to be trained to use the Speed gun. Abthorpe is involved in a rolling programme and we have the equipment for 3 weeks and each volunteer gives a few hours a week. We are in need of volunteers. If you are able to assist please see the Clerk.

There being no other business to discuss the Meeting closed at 8.50 pm.