

FLORE PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING Held in the Millennium Hall, Flore on Tuesday 23rd April 2024 at 7.30pm

MINUTES

Tea/coffee and biscuits were offered at the start of the meeting.

Present Parish Cllrs: Mr Andy Anderson, Mr Kevin Beasley, Miss Freya Davies, Mr Geoff Fellows, Mr Tom Higginson, Mr Simon Levell. Mrs Chris Littlewood, Mr John Thomason
Unitary Cllrs Mr Phil Bignell, Mr Charles Morton
10 Members of the public

The meeting was chaired by the Vice-Chair of the Parish Council, Mrs Christine Littlewood
The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

- 1. Apologies for absence** had been received from Parish Cllrs Mrs Kathryn Baines, Mr Geoff Holden
- 2. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting on 20th April 2023.** These minutes were signed and agreed at the Parish Council's AGM in May 2023.
- 3. Any matters arising:** Nothing arising, questions were answered at meeting.
- 4. Chairman's report – Cllr Littlewood read out a report prepared by Chair Mrs Kathryn Baines.**

I would like to welcome everyone to the 2024 Flore Annual Parish Meeting.

The purpose of this meeting is to give parishioners the opportunity to hear what the Parish Council has been doing since the last Annual Meeting and the chance to raise any questions or concerns they may have about the parish and any parish business. After presenting my report on behalf of the Parish Council, and following any questions, we will then hear from our speakers this evening who are:

Flore School – Mrs Stacy Dransfield

Re – Mrs Lyndsey Shepherd-Singh

Crusader Community Boating – Mr Geoff Fellows

As I have mentioned in previous reports, the work of a Parish Council is not just to hold a meeting once a month. There are planning applications to deal with which often means having an Extraordinary meeting, meetings about traffic calming and High Street mitigation, ensuring the village remains tidy, sorting out the grass mowing contracts, seeing that all Council assets are in good order for example, benches repaired, streetlights are working, bins emptied regularly, etc. We undergo regular training sessions on planning, and different aspects of being a Parish Councillor. We also have a Councillor who attends the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner's regular meetings and feeds back to us along with Councillors attending Millennium Hall and Brodie Lodge meetings along with the various charities that provide bursaries to students in the village. Last year we discussed the traffic calming that had been put in place in the village which is doing a reasonable job in slowing down the traffic. We will shortly be investigating what other traffic calming measures we can achieve on the High Street. There has been a decrease in the number of HGV lorries coming through the village, due in part to having the village taken off the HGV driver test route.

We also have a Business Plan that we revisit on an annual basis which is published on the Parish Council website. Unfortunately, the S106 monies that were available for indoor sport ran out of their use by date due to lack of capacity to increase space for indoor sport. The Millennium Hall drew up plans to extend at the back of the hall in order that it could be used by more than one group at a time but, unfortunately, the cost of doing this was double the grant available and so wasn't viable. There was a small amount of money for outdoor play equipment and Brodie Lodge applied for this to increase play and exercise equipment on the field.

We have considered 25 planning applications over the past year. Some of these applications coming through now give us cause for concern as we start to feel the spread of Northampton coming towards us. With regards

to the solar farm application, this was submitted and approved, and work will start later this year. It will take about 6 months to build and most of the traffic during this phase will be routed through Upper Heyford. There will be annual funding that comes from us having the solar farm in our parish. We don't have the full details yet, but we are in discussion with EDF and Upper Heyford Parish Council as to how this might be used for the benefit of parishioners.

The Barwood Homes application for houses on the Brington Road that went to Appeal this time last year, was refused. We must thank our Unitary Councillors Phil Bignell and Charles Morton for the help they gave us in getting this application turned down along with the villagers who wrote excellent letters of objection. This application was outside of the Neighbourhood Plan, and it was important that the planning decision didn't go against this. It is so vital that we have a Neighbourhood Plan, which will need to be reviewed in the next few years and will need the support of the village when we come to renew it.

We have installed some new benches in the village, at the Collins Hill/Brockhall Road junction, Nether Lane and one that was donated to the Memorial Garden. We have also installed a dog bin on Nether Lane at the request of dog walkers.

We have taken on the payment for printing of the Messenger as this is an important form of communication in the village. We have also taken a new 3 year electricity contract for the street lighting. The reduction in the electricity bill since installing the new lights is helping to pay for the cost.

The beautiful flowering cherry tree that was at the bottom of Capell Rise was mysteriously cut down last year. When we enquired as to who had made the decision, we found it was Highways. They needed to remove another tree on the same verge as there were insurance issues with the roots. They noticed that the cherry was not looking particularly well, so removed it at the same time. This caused quite an upset as it still had a few years left in it - but it has now been replaced!

Johnny Amos has been looking for help with the Commonwealth Flag project for some time. The flags flying is a lovely welcome to the village, but it does take a bit of work to have the commonwealth flags flying on appropriate national days and at other times of the year. Fortunately, volunteers have now come forward so that it can continue for now.

I would like to thank the team of Parish Councillors for their continuing support as I will be standing down as Chair having done my 4 year term. Each councillor has a job to do on the Council, but I would just like to mention a few:

Tom Higginson and Andy Anderson for their expertise with responses to planning applications; John Thomason for his work on the flooding issues and drainage systems in the village, he has had a lot to do this year with the heavy rains that we have had over the past few months.

Geoff Fellows who attend the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's meetings, he is also the Police Liaison Officer, keeps the website up to date and, with his wife Lindsay, tirelessly keeps the village free of litter.

A special thanks to Chris Littlewood who has again stood in for me during the year whilst I have been travelling.

A particular mention needs to go to our Unitary Councillors, Phil Bignell and Charles Morton who have given us great support with some of our more challenging planning applications and other issues.

But it would be difficult for us as a Parish Council to do what we do without the knowledge and expertise of our super Clerk, Sue Halkett, who makes sure we keep within guidelines and legislation.

That concludes my report for this year.

Comments (C) / Questions (Q) from the floor

C. A resident thanked the Council for doing a great job and all their hard work that they put in.

C. A resident thanked the Council for also adopting the biodiversity policy.

C. The Council were reminded that Brodie Lodge had to contribute towards the play equipment, along with the S106 money.

5. Presentation: Flore School – Mrs Stacey Dransfield was welcomed to the meeting

Mrs Dransfield is a governor at Flore School. She advised that currently there were 62 pupils enrolled in the school which has been on a journey for the last 3 years following the Ofsted report received back then when they 'required improvement'. The current report has not been released yet but they are extremely hopeful that it is a big turnaround which they will let people know soon,

The school has a new motto: The 3 Cs - Courage, Compassion and Community and the pupils are working towards. Their achievements are second to none, especially in sport, being the county champions at 'Botcha'

(a type of indoor curling) along with champions in other sports. They are also undertaking the 128th May Day celebrations this year to which the community is invited.

For the near future, the school is looking into setting up a pre-school on the site.

Q. Could it possibly be an Eco School? Yes, Year 6 have a School Council and are pushing this forward to obtain the badge to be classified as this.

C. Thanks were expressed to the school for all their help with the Afghan families.

Q. Is the school roll of 62, good or bad? The school roll is usually on the lower side but with the bad Ofsted report a few years ago, it dropped but is slowly rising. Maximum capacity is around 125.

Mrs Dransfield was thanked for her presentation.

Presentation: Re – Mrs Lyndsey Shepherd-Singh was welcomed to the meeting

Mrs Shepherd-Singh is the owner the zero waste shop Re, in Flore. She advised that her original goal, about 5 years ago, was a shop for coffee/cakes/chat, selling high quality products, fairtrade, organic and we don't create landfill. The ethos they work to is to reduce, re-use, and recycle. Their aim is to not use land fill, as much as they can. All their large food/goods containers are reused after being cleaned and refilled. Residents are encouraged to bring along their own containers and fill from the products. People coming for coffee to bring their own mugs but there are many that can be used in the shop. Re's black bin (general waste) for a three week cycle is less than a third, recycling bin is usually just cardboard. All this is achieving their goals to be a great village shop that doesn't impact the environment.

Q. This is a brilliant business and great for the village. Have you worked with the schools to get the children involved? Yes, we are looking into this. Young children come in and use the equipment and know exactly what they are doing, having done it with their parents for such a long time.

Q. We are proud to have you in the village. Has the clientele increased in the time you have been open? Yes, first aim was to get residents in the village using the shop which happened, these people can come back five times a week for the odd product. We also have people coming from longer distances that do monthly shops.

Q. Why do bigger stores not do this? Re doesn't have any shareholders that take profits, we use a shorter supply chain and use as much ethically based products as we can, all this not cost effective for larger stores.

Mrs Shepherd-Singh was thanked for her presentation.

Presentation: Crusader Community Boating – Mr Geoff Fellows was welcomed to the meeting

Mr Fellows is a volunteer with the Crusader Community Boating team. In 1994 a boat was built by St Johns Ambulance to get people out on the water. From there the group had two boats, one based on the river Nene, the other on the Grand Union Canal. The group is now a registered charity.

The Mountbatten Crusader was a 60ft boat which took groups of people on trips showing them the canals, flora and fauna along the Nene and canal. The groups could be residents of care homes, people with disabilities both mental health and physical as well as groups of carers who also need a bit of relaxation.

In 2020 Princess Anne attended the official inauguration of the charity's new boat which was built to their specifications. The Community Spirit is currently on the river Nene. This boat can be privately hired. The website for the charity is www.crusaderboatingcommunitiy.org.uk.

Q. If you privately hire the boat, do you steer it yourself? No, it would come with a boat master, helmsman and usually two crew members, due to the number of locks.

Q. How far do you travel per trip? If on the canal could be from Blisworth Marina to Heyford Marina, even poking heads in the Blisworth tunnel as the boat cannot go through without Canal & River Trust permission as the tunnel would need to be closed to other traffic due to the width of this boat. If on the Nene we could go to Billing Aquadrome or even upstream to where the canal arm joins the Nene.

Mr Fellows was thanked for his presentation.

6. Report by Northants Police. Cllr Fellows gave a summary of the Police's annual report, including changes within the Daventry Neighbourhood team, visibility in the community, responding to incidents, and working at raising their profile in communities by holding beat busses and enforcement days.

Q. Who do we report stuff to as they don't answer the 101 number? Advised to always call 999 in emergencies and 101 for other stuff but be aware they might take time to answer this. If no luck, email Cllr Fellows who could contact the PCSOs to report issues.

7. Report by Unitary Councillors – Unitary Cllr Bignell gave West Northants Council’s report

During this civic year we have had numerous successes in solving issues from our residents. Planning which seems to generate most problems but inevitably potholes, which is a national problem, has overtaken all others.

Despite financial pressures we worked hard to set a balanced budget for 2024/25. With high inflation rates driving up running costs and an increase in demand for services, particularly around supporting children in care and vulnerable adults. 62p in every pound of Council Tax is spent on Adult and Childcare, something there is no control as it is a statutory duty. The increase of 4.99% for 24/25 remains below current inflation.

The Boundary Commission decided that there would be 76 Wards made up of one, two and three Member Wards. In the current set up Flore is in the Long Buckby Ward but likely moving to the Bugbrooke Ward and become a two-member ward from May 2025 when elections take place. At WNC we have acquired new machinery to address the pothole problem including the JCB Pothole Pro which has completed over 12,500 m² worth of road since its roll out in August 2023. The Local Plan is currently out for consultation. The Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) is now in force.

The Council is prioritising the environment and considering the carbon cost of decision-making, working hard towards sustainability goals – from improving energy efficiency, reducing waste, and achieving net zero emissions by 2030.

We would all like to thank our Parish Council members and other community volunteers for their ongoing commitment to our wonderful villages.

C. Many thanks for the help you both gave to the village on the proposed Brington Road development.

Q. Ward arrangements, how many new ward members will there be – likely to be two in the Bugbrooke Ward but confirmation still awaited, it is a wait and see moment!

Q. How much input on new boundaries did the Commission listen to? It is felt, not a lot, they don’t believe they were listened to.

Unitary Cllr Phil Bignell was thanked for his presentation.

8. Reports by Village Charities

The Flore Charity. This Charity is made up of the merged Muscott & Sears Town Close Charity and the Flore Widows (Cartwright & Curtis) Charity. The current Trustees are Hazel Labraham, John Boast, Chris Littlewood, Revd Stephen Burrow, Lis Nye, and Wendy Pittman. The income for the Charity derives from investments and the leasing of two areas of agricultural land in Flore. In 2023/24 donations were given out totalling £400 consisting of 1 application for a student grant

Richard Capell Educational Foundation. The income from this Charity derives from investments made through the Charities Office Investment Fund. The Capital comes from the sale, many years ago, of land and property in the Parish. The grants paid out are limited to improving education and the beneficiaries include the school and the two church youth programmes. For 2023/24 the grants totalled £2,000. The current Trustees are Mike Penn, Hazel Labraham, Sue Raven, The Revd Stephen Burrow, and County Councillor Dan Lister.

9. Financial Report. The Clerk informed the meeting that the Council had received £42,079 income (£39,520 Precept) and spent £36,898. Money in the bank totalled, at the year end, £37,655.44. Bank Statement was here if anyone wished to view it.

10. Issues raised:

Resident: Thanked the Parish Council for the continued mowing of the Brodie Lodge playing field, it is most welcome.

Resident: Thanks to the volunteers who came forward with offers of help to keep the flags flying in the Commonwealth Flag Project. Thanks also to the Parish Council for their continued support.

Cllr Thomason: Thanks to Andrea who took over the editorship of the Messenger.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.05pm.

The Chair thanked all for attending.

Signed: Chair
14th May 2024