

THE PARISH MEETING OF WHISSENDINE 2015

This was held in the C of E Primary School, Main Street, Whissendine on Wednesday, 18th March. It commenced at 8.07pm.

Present: Mr Will Farr (Chairman)
Mrs Linda Arnold, Mr Rob Comber Mr David Hatton, Mr Tim Edmunds, Mrs Pat Lake,
and Mrs Cynthia Moss (Parish Councillors)
Mrs Jen Lacey (Parish Clerk, taking minutes)
30 other local government electors, and 1 community police officer were in attendance for all or part of the meeting.
Apologies were given on behalf of Mrs Alex Mould (Parish Councillor) and Mr Sam Asplin (Ward Councillor.)

1. Welcome

The Chairman thanked residents for coming along to attend the meeting. He apologised for the late start, due to circumstances beyond the Council's control, and promised to conduct the business briskly, while still giving all who wished to an opportunity to make their point, as it was a community meeting.

2. Minutes of the 2014 Annual Parish Meeting.

These had been available in advance from the website and paper copies were at the meeting. They were accepted on the proposal of Dr A Moyce and signed by the Chairman.

3. Police Comments

Steve Houghton introduced himself as Whissendine's Police Community Support Officer. He was one of a team of three who covered the twenty eight villages in the north east of Rutland.

He first mentioned Whissendine's crime statistics, as it had been another extremely good year. Only six incidents had been recorded, and they were minor except for the robbery at the Three Horseshoes, which was exceptional for the area. No one responsible for this had been apprehended and it was now unlikely that they would be.

Most of the information given concerned the recent police reorganisation. PCSO Houghton believed that rural villages benefited from this. The community teams were now dedicated to police work in their neighbourhood. They would no longer be called away to deal with incidents in other localities. There were response officers allocated that role. Three of these were located at sites in Rutland so they could respond quickly to call outs and response times had improved. The PCSO was pleased he now had the opportunity to patrol on foot and be visible within the village at times. He also valued the opportunity to attend meetings and events to show a police presence.

He assured the meeting there would still be a police station in Oakham. It was on the same site as the previous one, but would be smaller and so much more cost effective to run. The 'front desk' would remain at RCC's offices at Catmose, as it was accessible to the public.

PCSO Houghton then discussed street parking in the village as he acknowledged it was one of the most contentious issues. He gave his priority as getting yellow lines around Bishops Corner as large vehicles had difficulty getting around the bend, in addition to driver visibility being restricted and children and parents crossing the road on foot at school times. There was plenty of support for this, and forms were distributed so that those who wished to could sign to demonstrate it was a major concern for Whissendine.

Other bends in the village were mentioned as was the issue of parking on the pavement. The instruction was that if there if there was an actual obstruction so that pedestrians, and those with wheelchairs, pushchairs or other mobility aids just could not get past, then the procedure was to call 101 for the matter to be dealt with. It was agreed this information should be published. PCSO Houghton left the meeting at 8.27pm.

4. Chairman's report of the work of the Parish Council

The main points of Mr Farr's report were:

a) All comment received on the Melton Road speed reactor had been favourable, and it seemed to be having the desired impact on traffic speed in Melton Road most of the time. Therefore the PC had agreed that a second should be installed on Ashwell Road, and a site meeting with RCC Highways had taken place with agreement on a suitable location where it would be visible, and power could be provided from a parish owned street lamp if required. The Chairman said he expected installation during the summer, certainly before the meeting next year. The only delay would be while a grant application for funding for this project was assessed by RCC. If unsuccessful the PC would be responsible for the total funding.

b) In response to resident request an additional grit bin had been bought, as these proved useful. The Chairman commented that the PC would be very willing to consider any other site put forward.

c) New Christmas lights had been purchased for the Village Green tree, and had made a big difference.

d) During the year the entrance to the village's recreational land had been improved in both The Nook and Cow Lane, providing better access. A small cycle rack had been installed by RCC to discourage youngsters from leaving bikes blocking the lane causing inconvenience to residents. New signage was planned for both entrances, giving a little history of the area, a map of the village public footpaths as well as the usual requests to respect others when using the area.

e) The PC was extremely pleased that the new village website was being officially launched at the meeting. Mr Tatham and Mr Miles had provided Whissendine with a facility that was going to be a useful source of information and support all the village organisations.

f) Mrs Moss and Mr Edmunds had both been co-opted onto the PC during the course of the year, after offering their services. and it had proved beneficial to have new people with fresh ideas. Mr Farr observed that it was an election year and Councillors would stand down in May, with those who wished to do so offering themselves for re-election. He hoped that Whissendine would once again have its full complement of nine Councillors. It was an opportunity for anyone who wanted to get involved to do so.

g) The Chairman concluded by encouraging village organisations to apply for funding to support their projects. Any written requests for grants would always be considered favourably if the money was to be used to enhance village facilities.

h) He also thanked the Parish Clerk for her work, making sure that PC project plans were actioned and managing the daily business of the Council.

5. Ward Councillor Brian Montgomery remembered

Mrs Lake remembered back to the turn of the millennium when she had been Chair of the parish Council, with a new clerk, and a lot of new legislation for the operation of PCs to be put into practice. WC Montgomery had been particularly supportive then, clarifying the new financial regulations in particular. This was typical of the way he gave support to Whissendine, looking after small detail as well as with liaising with Rutland County Council over larger matters and he had been very much respected for the commitment to the village as well the service and support to individuals. One particular success had been the putting the links into place so that there were connections in Oakham between the Nottingham and Peterborough bus services, removing long waiting times. He had also been determined to preserve quality of life in the village and had been a passionate supporter of restricting heavy vehicles and traffic speeds. Brian Montgomery was someone who was much missed, by his family, the village and the Parish Council.

6. Sam Asplin: a report from Whissendine's new Ward Councillor

Mr Asplin was unfortunately unable to attend due to illness. he had sent a report which was read by the Clerk, and is attached as an addendum to this meeting record.

7. Community Action: reports from village organisations

a) The Village Hall

Mr Dickinson said that funding had continued to be sought for the ongoing complete renovation of the hall to ensure it remained fit for use by a variety of village organisations. This year he was grateful to both the Parish Council and Feast Week Committees for financial assistance to supplement the fundraising events of the hall committee. 2014 had brought further refurbishment of the interior, an entrance porch, an upgraded walkway to the rear and improvements to the front area to make it look better and easy to maintain. A new heating system had been installed, and although that had been giving some problems he hoped they had now been dealt with.

The letting fees had increased modestly for the first time since 2008, and letting remained good. The hall was viable on a day to day basis.

The major work planned for 2015 was to modify the basement area to make dressing room facilities. Professional entertainers could then be booked to come to the village.

Mr Dickinson concluded by thanking those who had made the website operational. It was proving an asset to the hall as the calendar was accessed frequently and bookings had been made easy.

b) The Sports Club

Mr Kettle introduced himself as the Chairman of the Sports Club for the past two months, and stressed that the club was not in competition with other village facilities, but was there to complement them, with the main aim being to encourage participation in recreational activity. There were problems, with a loss of about £1000 in the previous financial year, and the deterioration of the fabric of the club building. The plan had been to stabilise the the finances and it was hoped that this year there would be a slight profit. Grants would be sought, and it was hoped to establish a core of four fund raising events.

He was pleased to report that there had been some increased use. The goal posts bough with PC financial assistance had attracted frequent use by youngsters, and there was now a gym trail being installed which should prove popular across age groups.

All efforts needed the support of the village if the club was to be viable.

c) Whissendine Good Neighbour Scheme

Mrs Penny reported that it was the nearing the fifth anniversary of the Good Neighbour Scheme which had proved so successful. During the past year there had been 355 assignments, many within the village, but there had been need to get people to their doctor, a hospital, and in one case to a vet. Because of the success of the scheme the committee was in demand by others in the surrounding counties for support and advice. It had eventually proved difficult to make the visits requested, and those requiring assistance were now asked to come to Whissendine.

There were currently 30 volunteers, but more were always welcome. The next venture was to working in co-operation with the WI to establish a support group of 'dementia friends'. A meeting was planned for June and details would be in the Grapevine and on the website.

d) Whissendine Environmental Group

Dr Moyce explained that the purpose of the group was to look after the village environment, trying to ensure it was sustained and improvements were made where this was possible. He was pleased to report the near completion of a major project. The pathway between the old chapel in Ashwell Road and Foxhill had been bordered by a neglected piece of no man's land. This had been cleared and planting was about to take place. It would provide an opportunity to learn the craft of hedge laying. The group was grateful to the Cory Trust that had funded work.

They hoped that 2015 would see some collaboration with the Parish Council to improve land at The Banks outside the play areas, for the enjoyment of all.

e) Neighbourhood Watch

The new NW leader, Bryan Penny, was unable to attend so Brian Maunders was welcomed back to make the report. He explained he had resigned as leader in October after running Whissendine NW for twelve years, as he considered it time for ideas to be refreshed, but was still part of the group. The priority now was to enhance communication and contact with the village. It was planned that those in the team should be contacted to see if they were still keen to continue, and then there should be campaign to get an exchange of views, to meet people and discover what their needs were.

Recent discussions with the police had covered safety lighting, security, and the problem of door to door salesmen. With the recent police reorganisation there should be the opportunity for closer liaison with the PCSOs.

8. Phil Tatham & Colin Miles: a presentation of the new Whissendine website

Mr Tatham explained that when he moved into the village he realised that that the website wasn't functioning as it should, as the information wasn't up to date and there was no site management. The Parish Council was in difficulties as no member had the expertise to do this. Although not a professional web builder he was sure he could do better and it presented a challenge to construct a new site and reach out to the many groups that had a connection with the village. Mr Miles had joined him later in the project as he had additional technical expertise to offer support. The aims were to:

- * provide information for Whissendine residents
- * support the village institutions and groups
- * enable the Parish Council to fulfil its legal obligations
- * promote the village to those who were seeking information on Whissendine from outside

Mr Tatham gave a practical guide to the website, showing how much of the information was interlinked so that if a subject was found and further detail was wanted it was a simple matter to navigate to it.

He also promoted the photograph competition that provided an opportunity to gather village scenes that could be used to enhance the site.

For the future it was hoped to develop the trade area of the site, to promote businesses in the village and allow classified advertising, with each advert having a limited period.

With two people operating it the burden of site management was shared, and there was continuity in periods when one was busy or away from home.

Both webmasters were thanked by the Chairman and applauded by residents.

9. The Long Clawson Charity Report

The Clerk reported that 18 people in Whissendine had received £80 at Christmas following an application and declaration as published in the Grapevine. This was given in the form of vouchers for the village shop and the total £1440 had been spent. This was just over half what had been received as the rent for the land. The balance was held to enable participation in a scheme entitled 'Financial Crisis Provision' organised by RCC Social Services Dept. This enabled Social Services to ask for a contribution on behalf of any Whissendine resident they considered needed urgent financial assistance. The transaction would be made via RCC SS. The resident(s) would not be made known to the Parish Council. As it was relief of poverty it was acceptable to the Charity Commissioners as this was the designated function of the charity.

10. Public question time.

The following issues for the Parish council to discuss:

1. There should be a 20mph speed restriction throughout Whissendine , as operated in some other Rutland villages
2. There were problems on Pickwell Lane. In the past few years it had changed from a quiet country lane used by dog walkers and families to a rat run used as a convenience. The verges had been destroyed and there was a lot of litter. It was thought discussion on this should take place with RCC Highways and one consideration should be that the lane was included in the 30mph restriction
3. It was noted that dog fouling in the village had increased. Mention had been made in the April Grapevine, but thought had to be given to a campaign to raise awareness. Dogs had been observed in the area for small children on The Banks.
4. There was concern that land around footpath stiles had been churned up over the winter, particularly on the path entered from alongside the Village Hall. Advice was needed from the RCC Footpaths Officer.
5. The Parish Council was thanked for its objections to the five home development proposed for land at Whissendine Cottage. It was agreed that it was logical to assume that run off from additional buildings and roads in that location would exacerbate the problems with sporadic flash flooding.

The meeting closed at 9.47 pm