

THE PARISH MEETING OF WHISSENDINE 2021

This meeting was held virtually via Zoom under the Coronavirus Act 2020 and LAPCP Regulations 2020, Whissendine on Wednesday 5th May 2021, beginning at 7:00pm.

Present:

Mr Will Farr (Chairman),

Mr Rob Comber, Mr David Hatton, Mrs Pat Lake, Mrs Linda Arnold, Mrs Gillian Wilkins and Mrs Cynthia Moss (Parish Councillors)

Dr Sue Lammin (Parish Clerk, taking minutes)

'Tai Chi Person', P.C Laurie Appleton of Leicestershire Police, Mrs Rosemary Powell (County Councillor), Mr Mike Harman, Ms. Allison Newell, Mr David Wilkins, Mrs Sarah Williams, Mr Keith Fairbrother, Mr R Edwards, 'Grace'.

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chairman thanked residents for attending this year's AGM.

No apologies were received.

2. Minutes of 2020 Village Meeting, held 11 March 2020.

These minutes had been made available in advance on the website: whissendine.net. They were accepted on the proposal of Mrs Lake (seconded by Mrs Moss) and signed by the Chairman.

3. Report from Rutland Police

PC Laurie Appleton reported there had been 19 crimes in the last 12 months: 2 burglaries of dwellings, 2 of associated buildings and one attempted burglary in the village. Ten incidents of criminal damage; six of which, and one vehicle crime, are associated with one business on the Sports Field; that issue is being addressed. There were also 4 assaults, all domestic. 'Neighbourhood link' has launched and can be found by Google search to find latest police information. The current priorities are: speeding, fraud (scams) and rural crime (inc. hare-coursing). No questions were raised.

4. Parish Council Chairman's Annual Report

Mr Will Farr thanked the Parish Councillors and the Clerk for their efforts. In this Covid-year he also thanked WGNS and other volunteers, the White Lion PH and the Village Shop for their efforts in supporting villagers during difficult times. He reported that in the last year the Parish Council has:

- Controlled the use of the play area during the first lockdown, but re-opened as soon as possible.
- Disseminated information from RCC, health authority, police and charities during 2020.
- Responded to RCC's consultation on their draft Local Plan
- Had the hedges cut back in the Banks
- Had the crossbeam replaced on the flying saucer ride.
- Managed to hold regular meetings. virtually.

- Had RCC replace a missing grit bin and asked them to review their policy so we can have more grit bins in the village.
- Grant-aided a reprint of the Craft and Produce Show booklet for 2021
- Established a Steering Group to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish which will allow more influence over future planning applications

Mr Farr went on to describe the role of the Parish Council within the village:

As a Parish Council we can only do things where a law says we can and we can only spend money on things that a law says we can spend money on. Whissendine Parish Council relies on co-opted Parish Councillors to keep going so they cannot exercise a 'general power of competence' which is a bit of the law that would reduce the restrictions on their actions in addressing the needs of the village.

Here's what can lawfully be done and who does what in Whissendine:

Parish Councils can run allotments. Whissendine is fortunate in having an allotment association and the Parish Council supports them when they need money for things like gates by using their s137 permissive powers to give grants.

Parish Councils can also run burial grounds, cemeteries, churchyards and crematoria. Whissendine doesn't have a crematorium and the churchyard and burial ground are managed by St Andrew's Parochial Church Council. The Parish Council supports the PCC by contributing to the costs of maintaining the churchyard and by sourcing and purchasing land for new burials when space is running out.

Parish Councils can buy bus shelters where they are needed. In Whissendine it is Rutland County Council who maintains the bus shelters; except that if the one on the green becomes damaged again it is the Parish Council that will have to pay for the repairs.

Parish Councils can make byelaws about the use of public baths, cycle parks, mortuaries and pleasure grounds. We don't have public baths, mortuaries or the like in the village.

Parish Councils can provide public clocks, if they maintain them. In Whissendine we are fortunate to have a clock on St Andrew's Church, maintained by the PCC.

Parish Councils can pay to repair footpaths. In Whissendine the public footpaths are maintained by Rutland County Council and defects/issues can be reported by using the map on RCC's Fix-My-Street page. Having it on a map helps the County Council's Footpaths Officer locate the problem.

Parish Councils can do very little when it comes to roads. Rutland County Council is the Highway's Authority but the Parish Council has the right to enter into discussions about new roads and road-widening and RCC must seek consent from the Parish Council before they can divert a road or stop the use of a road.

Parish Councils can acquire land. Whissendine Parish Council has a lot less land than some, only The Banks and the Village Green. We use this power to acquire land for new burials and then we give it to the PCC to manage.

Parish Councils have the power to prosecute and defend any legal proceedings in the interests of the community and the power to take part in any public enquiry. Whissendine Parish Council exercised this right in responding to RCC's consultation on their draft Local Plan, for the Planning Inspector's enquiry.

Parish Councils can provide street lighting and Whissendine Parish Council used to do this. Recently RCC have taken over the street lights; this allows them to bulk purchase the electricity and allowed an annual cost saving when the Parish Council pays for the electricity.

Parish Councils can comment on planning applications and Whissendine Parish Council trawls the applications on RCC's Planning Portal and if there is any proposal that may be detrimental to the village or some neighbouring homes they will advise the planners the reasons for their opinion.

Parish Councils can also receive funds from the Planning Authority to spend on infrastructure, Whissendine Parish Council haven't received much in the past: less than £20 in 2019, less than £200 in 2020; and these sums were spent on the new Play Equipment. However, this year we have already received over £9000. We have 5 years to spend it on infrastructure to benefit the village so the Parish Council will be asking for people's views.

Parish Councils can provide and maintain public toilets. We don't have any in the village.

Parish Councils can provide open spaces, village greens, etc. Whissendine Parish Council maintains The Banks and the play equipment up there and the Village green and the stream-bank and chestnut trees adjacent.

Parish Councils can provide seats. In Whissendine the Parish Council has two benches on the Village Green, a bench in the little children's play area and the Teen Shelter on The Banks.

Parish Councils can maintain War Memorials. In Whissendine the Memorial Gates are the gates to St Andrew's Church and are maintained by the PCC.

Parish Councils can also use s137 powers. This law allows them to spend some money on things not listed in other laws that are for general benefit to the community. Whissendine PC can only spend £8844.16 a year with this permissive money and usually gives money to the Village Hall for repairs, the Sports Club towards running costs, and to meet special requests from groups like Rainbows, The Craft and Produce Show, etc. This year it has also been used towards replacing a grit bin at the bottom of Mill Grove.

QUESTIONS:

Mr Comber sought confirmation that the village website outlined the PC's role

Mrs Lake asked if the details could be disseminated via The Grapevine.

5. The Parish Clerk's report on the Long Clawson Charity Activity in 2020

Sue Lammin reported that: The Poor's Land (Clawson Gift) known as the Long Clawson Land Charity was active in 2020. The income from the land in Long Clawson yielded £2130.00, less management costs of £191.72. The Church of St Andrew, Whissendine also donated £168 of their charity funds. Grants were given in December 2020; 25 requests for support were received and 24 were accepted as within the terms of the charity. The gifts made in 2020 amounted to £2400. The charity currently (31/3/21) holds funds on deposit of £4560.71 (£4852.13 on 1 April 2020) and income is expected during the coming year.

6. Questions on any topic from the floor.

1. Mr Harman asked about the role of the Parish Council's Tree Champion. He suggested more effort should be expended on consultation and communication with residents in relation to any issues or plans involving trees.

A: The Chairman accepted that communications between land owners, the Parish Council and RCC as Planning Authority should be improved.

A2: Mrs Moss (Tree Champion) explained that as Tree Champion she had no legal powers, she liaised with other Tree Champions in Rutland parishes and RCC's Tree Warden by meeting c4 times a year. She was also about to undertake training about planting trees.

A survey of prominent trees in the village had been on-going for months. It had been publicised in the Grapevine and had attracted 7 villagers who contributed information to the process. The purpose of the survey was an audit of significant trees in the village. The need for an audit of trees in the village arose because TPO's have been applied since 1947 but a recent scan of the records suggests that some trees are no longer present. It seems there has been no ongoing monitoring of protected trees and RCC do not have capacity to undertake a county-wide survey. It was considered that without a survey of significant trees in Whissendine it was not possible to provide a bench-mark that could be used to track change.

The survey is a visual survey looking at trees in the street-scene and the way in which trees, many in private gardens, contribute to the 'green' character of the village. The survey included young trees/saplings: those planted on The Banks and at the Sports Club in the last 3 years.

2. Mr Edwards was concerned that some photographs of trees may have been taken 'covertly' and may be published while containing elements such as vehicles/buildings that could render the location of an associated residence identifiable.

3. Mrs Williams had recently been affected by an interim TPO. She was concerned about lack of consultation and that the Interim Notice was served by posting on a pole outside her home.

A: The Chairman accepted that being surprised by a notice was less than ideal and he indicated the Parish Council would approach RCC to ask that, where a TPO was to be served, the Parish Council may be notified ahead of service; in order that they are afforded the opportunity to alert the landowner and establish communications between those persons potentially affected and a representative from the Planning Authority.

4. Ms. Newell had recently moved to the village and been affected by an interim TPO. She was concerned about lack of consultation prior to service of a notice.

5. Mr Fairbrother cited a case where a TPO was to be served on a Monday and a developer chose to fell the affected trees over the preceding weekend; as an example where delayed service of a TPO proved undesirable.

6. Mr Harman indicated that the nature of the tree survey in the village was not well understood; and a perception of secrecy was emerging.

7. Mr Fairbrother alluded to the recent Parish Council meeting where the possibility of planting 100 new trees was raised. He asked if they could be planted in private gardens.

A. The Chairman indicated more detail was still needed in relation to the offer to cover the cost of 100 trees; about 'how' and 'where'. As the idea was received favourably an item was going on the next Parish Council agenda to allow further discussions and planning.

8. Rutland County Councillor. Mrs Powell thanked the Parish Council for their efforts during the recent Covid-pandemic, for community action and facilitating communications. She reflected that it had been a challenging year for all.

Meeting closed at 19.51 hrs.