

Minutes of the Thorverton Annual Parish Meeting of Wednesday 25th April 2018 held at

Thorverton Memorial Hall, starting at 7.30pm

Present: 45 members of the public, including Parish Councillors.

Apologies for absence: received from Ms H Lawson, Mrs A Marshall and Mr S Rendell.

Minutes of the 2017/18 Annual Parish Meeting: this meeting was held on Wednesday 3rd May 2017. The minutes were available to attendees and a summary of them was read out by the Parish Council Chairman, Cllr Bright. It was proposed by Mr I Stoye and seconded by Mr J Hodge that they be signed as a correct record of the meeting.

Matters arising from the Minutes: There were no matters arising.

Chairman's report: The Chairman reported that the current Parish Council has full membership and consists of 10 Councillors: Cllr Nick Bright as Chairman, Cllr Stuart Crang as Vice Chairman and then Cllrs John Hodge, Neville Lane, Hilary Lawson, David Reygate, Graham Sims, John Spivey, Robert Turner and David Waldron.

The Parish Council held 11 meetings over the past year and one extraordinary meeting to discuss the proposed reinstatement of a gateway along School Lane. The Council was ably assisted by its qualified clerk, Alison Marshall.

Cllr Sims is our snow warden. He had been busy this year and the Chairman felt certain that residents of Thorverton were very grateful for his work in clearing the snow and gritting the vulnerable areas. The Chairman also thanked others who had helped Graham or who had done things off their own backs to make the roads and pavements safer; something which was not a pleasant task in the chilly conditions.

The Chairman noted that, following a very well attended AGM in 2017 where the discussion centred around a new cemetery, the Council voted to continue with the establishment of a new cemetery. The £30,000, ring-fenced for this project from the precept over several years, would be used in this respect. The Chairman confirmed that the proposed site, previously identified as the area to the west of Dark Lane on the opposite side of the road to the current Churchyard, was the preferred first choice for the new Cemetery.

During discussions with the MDDC planning authority it had been deemed necessary to carry out an archaeological survey before any work could begin. Therefore, prior to any expenditure on land acquisitions the Parish Council commissioned a firm of Archaeologists to proceed with the necessary survey work and a series of trial pits were dug. Evidence of archaeological activity was found, dating to the Middle Neolithic and the Early Bronze Age, and perhaps even the Iron Age. The Middle Neolithic activity (c. 3300 - 2900 BC) comprises a series of ditches and pits likely to represent evidence for settlement of this date. Associated finds recovered from the features consist of Peterborough style pottery, worked flints, and deposits of charred material which include hazelnut shells and cereal grains. Apparently this is a very rare find and there is probably only one other like this in the county.

Because of the significance of the find, the planning authority required a more detailed and thorough survey to be carried out and the Parish Council, through the archaeologists, is seeking a 100% grant from the Heritage Lottery fund to cover the costs. The Council anticipated that this dig would involve the wider community, including the school, and that people would get involved on site in searching for any artefacts.

The Chairman explained that the Council had at last secured agreement between MDDC and DCH for an amendment to the Section 106 agreement covering the Court Barton Close development which would ensure that people with a local connection would always have first refusal for the social and affordable housing on the development.

The Chairman explained why a section of the wall between Dark Lane and the Car Park had been taken down. The wall had been in a dangerous state, due to subsidence, and the Parish Council was advised to demolish the affected section. A structural engineer has been commissioned to inspect the foundations and substructure of the wall and to advise of a foundation design so that the wall can be reconstructed. The wall is within the conservation area and the MDDC conservation officer has said that it should be re-built to look the same as it did before. We are anticipating that this could be an expensive job but are hopeful that grant funding will be available to mitigate some of the cost.

The Council employs a handyman, Colin Marshall, who is responsible for keeping the village and surrounding areas of the parish tidy. Colin mostly deals with maintenance issues such as grass cutting, and minor potholes, but can be tasked with any job of maintenance around parish. Some of these tasks are jobs which DCC and MDDC would have carried out in the past but due to stringent budget cuts Town and Parish councils now have to sort these things out themselves and pay for them too. We were also now able to hire Colin out to other Parishes, at a small profit, which brings in money to our account. There had been many comments regarding how tidy and presentable the village is now looking and the Council was grateful to Colin for his conscientious and hard work.

The Chairman commented that there was always other ongoing work to be done throughout the village and the Parish Council had organised a village tidy-up day in July which had attracted a lot of people to help in such things as weed clearing, sign cleaning, litter picking and general tidying and polishing. Colin gave an H&S briefing and supplied us with fluorescent jackets from DCC stores (a lot of them did, however, say "snow warden"). The next village tidy up day would be on 7th July.

The Council was in the process of installing a new mower store on the Recreation Ground to house the ride on mower which is used to cut the grass and football field regularly. The Council was grateful to Jack Andrews who had stored the mower on his premises for many years and who had keenly mowed the Rec and football pitch. The Council was hopeful that this would be able to continue in the future.

The Parish Council agrees annual budgets each year. The precept had not been raised from last year. Within the budget the Council had set aside a sum in order to be able to give grants to local organisations which benefit people in the parish. Over the past year grants were given to the Hulk Lane project, Thorverton School, Thorverton AFC, the Memorial Hall and the Tiverton and District Community Transport Association (Ring and Ride).

Due to the new development at Court Barton the Parish Council had been allocated what is called Section 106 money which has to be spent on the provision for the improvement of public open space and recreational facilities. The Council should have about £17,000 in total by the end of this year.

The Chairman explained that the sort of projects which might be eligible were:

- New provision of public open space such as parks, village greens, public gardens, play areas
- The expansion of an existing public open space and recreation facilities such as park and recreation grounds
- Improvement of existing public open space and recreational facilities

- Installation of new play equipment or the replacement of existing play equipment
- New sports pitches (grass and artificial) and associated paraphernalia including lighting, changing rooms, access, goal posts, nets
- Allotments and associated paraphernalia such as sheds, water supply, lighting, gates and fences
- Street sport areas such as Multi-Use Games Area, skate parks, scooter areas, BMX tracks, trim trails, outdoor gyms and other teenage facilities
- Provision of or replacement of open space furniture such as benches and bins.

The Chairman said that the Parish Council had already received several suggestions from the public and he invited attendees to visit the Council’s table to write down any further suggestions that they might have for the spending of these funds. Alternatively the Chairman suggested that people could write or email Alison Marshall, our clerk, with suggestions. The Council proposed to go through the suggestions at its next meeting on 8th May and to investigate further those that might be taken further.

The Chairman listed some suggestions that had been received already:

- A) Purchase of the Sheep Dip / tidying up of the Sheep Dip
- B) A tennis court
- C) A skate park/scooter park
- D) Purchase of some land opposite Court Barton for a nature reserve and/or future play area
- E) More benches around the village
- F) Millennium Field footpaths
- G) Basketball hoop
- H) Table tennis floor covering/matting at the Rec
- I) Trim trail around the Rec
- J) A car park / increased village parking
- K) Exercise frame

Finally, the Chairman said that the Council still has some “Smart Water” kits available for purchase at £10. These are forensic marking kits with a unique DNA type code for each household. After purchase you are given a unique code by our clerk and then register with the company to obtain your kit. If any items are stolen and then recovered the owner can be traced through the DNA. A lot of churches use this system on leadwork on their roofs. You can use it on small household appliances such as laptops or garden equipment. The kits were on the Parish Council table this evening. The Chairman invited anyone interested in buying a kit to let a Parish Councillor have their name so that the Clerk can set it up.

Matters arising from the Chairman’s Report: None.

Other matters raised by those present: In the context of options for using the Section 106 funds, Mr Spivey said that a condition of grant when the Millennium Green was purchased was that the area should not be used for a skate park or similar. That did not, of course, exclude the possibility of a skate park elsewhere in the village.

End.

Signed Chairman.

Date