

Cosgrove Parish Council

MINUTES OF COSGROVE ANNUAL OPEN MEETING

Held on 29th April 2008 at the Village Hall, Bridge Road commencing at 7.00pm

Present: Cllrs AG Hickie (in the chair), Mr A Bracey, Mr R Gibbs, Mrs H Harbottle, Mr J Roberts, Mr D Smith, Mr C Stokes & Mrs J Storey;
Also present were Cllr Mr I McCord (SNC), PC M Wallace (Northants Police) and 6 members of the public

1. Apologies

Cllr Mr A Walker (NCC)(NCC Cabinet Meeting)

2. Minutes of the 2007 Annual Open Meeting (previously displayed n/b)

Previously circulated and signed as a correct record at the May 2007 meeting

3. Matter Arising

No matters arising

4. Petitioners or Questions from Electors (required in writing by 12 noon 29th April)

None

5. Adoption of Accounts

The clerk (RFO) outlined budget controls

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|-----|--|------------------------------------|
| (a) | To receive Audited Accounts 2006 / 2007 | } No comments and formally adopted |
| (b) | Observation of Finance 2007 / 2008 | } Approved |
| (c) | Budget Proposals 2008 / 2009 | } Approved without comment |

6. Report by Northamptonshire Police

PC Mike Wallace spoke about the changes in the Safe Community Policing and produced the following crime statistics:

Crime figures from 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008 were as follows:

<i>Violence</i>	<i>5 > 3</i>	
<i>Burglary Dwelling</i>	<i>2 > 1</i>	
<i>Burglary Other</i>	<i>3 > 4</i>	<i>(from garages and sheds)</i>
<i>Theft from M/V</i>	<i>4 > 4</i>	
<i>Theft of M/V</i>	<i>1 > 2</i>	
<i>Veh Interference</i>	<i>0 > 0</i>	
<i>Veh Damage</i>	<i>4 > 1</i>	
<i>Criminal Damage</i>	<i>1 > 2</i>	
<i>Drugs</i>	<i>0 > 0</i>	
<i>Theft (Other)</i>	<i>8 > 6</i>	

Total Crimes 24 (a further reduction on last years 28)

It was evident that Caravan Park continued to have less impact on figures since the removal of day visitors.

Neighbourhood Watches were important

After Q & A PC Wallace was thanked for attending and left the meeting.

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7. Report / Questions for District Councillor

Cllr McCord submitted the following report:

It has been almost 12 months since I was elected as the Councillor for Cosgrove and Grafton. It is a privilege and pleasure to be a member of the council and your representative. I was rather disappointed to have been returned un-opposed. I think democracy would be healthier if there had been elections.

I find it rather sad that before a vote was cast last May, 20 seats had been filled. Where elections did occur the results gave a final figure of 35 Conservatives, 6 Independents and 1 Labour member. The Labour member now sits with the Independents so it is in effect 35 Conservatives and 7 Independents. I am one of the 35.

It has been an interesting year, one in which South Northants Council is beginning a process of change and transformation to answer the challenges that lie ahead.

Throughout the year I sat on the Social and Community Review and Development Committee and Resources Review and Development Committee. I also sit on the members Communications Panel. These committees scrutinise the work of the council and liaise with outside bodies and agencies such as the Police, County Council and NHS.

The SNC year just ending has been dominated by a few major themes. Council House Transfer, Growth Agenda, Towcester Vale Development, Moat Lane, Silverstone Development, internal Organisational Design Review.

In order to bring the housing stock up to the conditions that the government want, SNC would have been short of at least £10million to meet the minimum standards and short by £20million to meet the higher standards it wanted.

Central government rules made the transfer option the only one that would work financially.

Central government took 45% £4.5m of the rental income to be redistributed. Housing associations get to keep all the rent. Housing associations can borrow money to improve the stock, the council can't.

All these points, and more, were presented to the tenants in an offer document that resulted and postal ballot which resulted in approx 58% in favour of transfer.

The ballot result was known in July and much work was done to have a successful transfer to a newly created housing association, South Northants Homes on 17 March.

South Northants Homes are still located in the old housing department of SNC but will move off site within 12 months. It was not just 2900 properties that transferred, but over 100 staff also.

SNC now has a strategic role for housing it will no longer be a direct provider of council homes.

As a result of this and other initiatives within SNC an internal re-organisation has been taking place. The aim of this is twofold. To provide more capacity within the council, especially at senior level, and be more efficient.

Without direct housing the structure of the council needed to be addressed, so an Organisational Design Review has been completed. This has resulted in the creation of 2 new directors. It is anticipated that these positions will be in place by the end of the summer with the heads of service complete by early autumn.

The purpose is to give the Council more capacity to influence the decisions that are being taken by others, central government, county council, WNDC, Government Office of East Midlands, etc.

There will also be a greater emphasis on policy creation and implementation. Given all the building and planning plans for this area there is a need to ensure that the polices are in place to support the expansion.

Efficiency too will be improved by the creation of a Customer Contact Centre. This has been around in embryonic form for a while, but shortly will become much bigger.

Being more efficient is a key aim of the Customer Contact Centre, for example if you advise of a change of address this record has been changed in each department. Council Tax, housing, benefits, planning etc. With CCC, we hope this will be done once.

As you all know this is a growth area as designated by the Government. We have to build 62,125 homes in West Northants in a 25 year time period from 2001.

South Northamptonshire's share of that is 8250. Of which 1600 have been provided in the first 5 years. There were planning permissions for almost 700 more leaving a shortfall of almost 6000. The Persimmon Bloor development will see up to 3000 homes on the southern part of Towcester. This scheme has been panned by Commission Architecture and Built Environment CABE and the consultation has just finished at the end of March. The Highways Agency too were unimpressed and issued a directive to WNDC not to determine the application for an indefinite period. There are a number of traffic surveys that must be done before they will be satisfied that will take quite a while.

We here the villages need to be aware of the effects of the developments. They will ripple out across the district.

What will be the effects on the A508 as people out commute to work?

- Will your doctor's surgery be swamped?
- Will village schools get filled with pupils from the new developments if there is not sufficient capacity in the town?
- Is the much heralded bypass a bypass at all?

These are the issues that affect us all and we need to be aware of them and raise them early.

Many of you may have seen my name associated with the Silverstone debate recently.

I got involved in this because the ward member, Dermot Bambridge has a prejudicial interest, given the proximity of the development to his home.

I support all those things that will keep the area at the top of motor sport and will develop the track, but cannot support the housing development.

This appears to me to be a cunning wheeze to turn agricultural land into a crock of gold. At the same time almost holding the Council and Community to ransom by saying we'll all be responsible for the loss of the Grand Prix if we don't agree.

When the matter came back to Cabinet on 14 April, they did not change their original decision but much information has come out in the process. Silverstone has not yet made the case about the enabling development for the houses and other things. It will be interesting to see if this case is ever made.

I also got involved with the Post Offices debate earlier in the year. In June Alastair Darling, announced that the Post Office were to close up to 2500 branches across the country. I proposed a motion to Council condemning this and Council unanimously passed this.

We set up a working party, of which I was a member, to engage with the Post Office and prepare for the process. We surveyed the area to know where all the post offices were and briefed Post Office and Postwatch.

All of this was behind the scenes and away from the glare of publicity.

Result – well we will never know if we managed to change minds or not, but when compared to our neighbours I think we had some success. SNC had 3 closures. Old Stratford, Chacombe and Milton Malsor. This was 8.5% of the local post office network. Nationally the figure is 17%.

Daventry and Northampton Borough appeared to have suffered a higher rate of closure than SNC. My ward work for the three villages is relatively light as I am blessed by having three efficient parish councils. I would like to thank all those who work on the parish councils as their work is of great value to the community.

What case work I have had is very interesting and it is satisfying when you get results for your constituents. On planning appeals so far I have 100% success. (2 from 2) Those that I asked the Inspector to allow, he did, and those that I asked to be dismissed he did also. I am sure that is just beginners luck!!

The year ahead seems interesting as there is a lot of consolidation to be done. SNC must make the new relationship with South Northants Homes work. There may be a determination of the Persimmon Bloor Towcester Vale development by WNDC. The new look council will need bedding in also.

There were no questions

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8. Report by County Councillor

Cllr Walker submitted the following report in his absence:

This being the third year of our Administration lots of things has been happening to improve the lifestyles of Northamptonshire People that I represent. Believe it or not Crime & Disorder has decreased in the County. A lot of this is to do with the restructuring of Rural Policing. As a County we have had to review all our Service plans to make them smarter for people to understand. The Departure of Peter Gould and recruitment of Catherine Kershaw our new CXO coming on board, has made a marked difference in attitudes at the Council. We also will be saying good bye to Four Head of Services. You might say Catherine is a new broom sweeping out the old. A more business like approach is now being adopted. With a complete restructure this has not been easy on staff but they have carried on regardless. Sometimes they do not get the credit they deserve. I for one as a Councillor have never had a problem trying to find out information regarding this Ward.

You will also be aware that from April Aitkin's will no longer be our preferred road contractor. A company called MAYGURNY have been employed with a much tighter contract.

We set a Council tax of 4.2% and managed a balanced budget. Without cutting services! and by just making services more efficient, will put us well on the way to a neutral budget for next year. This has not been easy especially as the Government grant was below inflation

I am still chair of the Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee that deals with such things as Policing, Northamptonshire Fire Services, Waste Management, Trading Standards, Registration Services, LAA (Local Area Agreement) targets set by government and Community Cohesion.

As well as being appointed a Director of East Midlands Fire Service Control Centre.

I also sit on the Scrutiny Board that has been instrumental in the restructuring of Scrutiny and Democracy for Councillors at NCC

I also champion Trading Standards Nationally for NCC

Some of the Scrutiny issue highlights I have overseen as SCSC Chair this year are:-

Budget Working group monthly to ensure my portfolio budget comes in on line;

Procurement of Waste Management solutions in conjunction with MK joint partnership working;

Polycarbonate glasses for Northampton Leisure Zone in Partnership with Northampton University;

Alcohol Awareness working group establishing the health impact of drink on people in Northants;

Voluntary Services (Third Sector) working group to establish Value for Money;

CDRP working group to establish Value for Money; and

Crime & Disorder Partnerships (rational) County wide

Scrutiny of the Empowering Councillors County wide scheme, where each councillor has

(£10,000.00) to assist local organisations and how it's spent

Under this Scheme I have made the following awards to Organisations in my ward:-

Deanshanger Colts, Deanie Tots (Deanshanger), 2nd Deanshanger Scout Group, Wicken Village Hall, Old Stratford PC Web Site, John Chettle Cross Potterspury, Yardley Gobion Primary School, Yardley Gobion Recreation Centre with a few more in the pipeline for 2008/9

I also represent Deanshanger Ward as a District Councillor for and I am Chair of the Resources Scrutiny Committee with responsibility of Finance.

I am vice Chair of Kingsbrook Business College governing body. I chair the Behaviour Group which oversees Anti Bullying & Behaviour within the school.

Activities Locally as your County Councillor

Deanshanger - Road surfacing, The Old Lab Public Enquiry. New Community Centre Library, Drainage in Glebe Rd, Flooding and PCSO issues

Cosgrove - Pot holes & Footpaths

Old Stratford - Traffic issues, Passenham lane, PO Closure

Potterspury - Resurfacing roads & Footpaths, School Transport, Youth Crime

Wicken - Roads & Village Hall

Whittlebury - Sewage, Silverstone Planning brief

Yardley Gobion - Road & Footpath repairs.

My local work activity for parishioner enquires was over 80 with a turn around response in 24hrs of

100% and a satisfaction level of some 98.5%

Again a big thank you to your Clerk and you Councillors for your professionalism and indulgence whilst I have been dealing with matters in your area...

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9. Any Other Business

(a) Parking Main Street A resident raised the matters reported at the February PC meeting stating that steps had not been taken to properly address the issues

* Police had been advised and had attended. The clerk had spoken to the author of an E-mail and advised that reports in the Old Mail were always 6 weeks late due to meetings held on the last Tuesday of the month, and, on the difference of opinion on the Road Traffic issues raised. The resident was seeking assistance with the problem and accepted the PC's position and the clerk's comments. He had a proposal that he would put forward at the May PC meeting

(b) The Stocks Development Permission having been delayed, the condition of the site in the CA was disappointing

Chairman's Address The Chairman thanked members of the council for their hard work and support over the past year and the clerk for his diligence and advice. He also thanked those members of the public attending and hoped that the low numbers were an indication that Cosgrove residents were generally supportive of the PC and its efforts over the year

With no other business the meeting closed at 8pm