

Cosgrove Parish Council

MINUTES OF COSGROVE ANNUAL OPEN MEETING

Held on 24th April 2012 at the Village Hall, Bridge Road commencing at 7.00pm

Present: Cllrs AG Hickie (in the chair), Mr A Bracey (from Min:8), Mr R Gibbs, Mrs Harbottle, Mr J Roberts, Mr D Smith, Mr C Stokes & Mrs L Welton
Also present were Mr D Everett (Clerk), PCSO James Herbert (Northants Police) and 4 members of the public

1. Apologies

Cllrs Mrs J Childs (family illness), Mr A Walker (NCC)(away) & Mrs H Howard (NCC Highways) (unable)

2. Minutes of the 2011 Annual Open Meeting (previously displayed n/b)

Previously circulated and signed as a correct record at the May 2011 meeting

3. Matter Arising

No matters arising

4. Petitioners or Questions from Electors (required in writing by 12 noon 24th April 2012)

None

5. Adoption of Accounts

The clerk (RFO) outlined budget controls and Precept levels that were agreed

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (a) To receive Audited Accounts 2010 / 2011 | } No comments and formally adopted |
| (b) Accounts for Audit 2011 / 2012 | } Approved |
| (c) Budget Proposals 2012 / 2013 | } Approved with no comments made |

* Unanimously approved and adopted

6. Chairman's Report

The Chairman thanked all the Councillors for their work done during the year and, in particular, the Clerk. He stressed the voluntary nature of the Councillors and the appreciation due to them by the village.

On an on-going monthly basis the Council attends to: budgetary and financial control; planning; the minutes and matters arising from them; issues raised by the public, District and County Council and police; street lighting and highways; general correspondence.

Of the many individual matters raised during the year which require review, comment and follow up, the Chairman particularly referenced: the development on Bridge Road; Cosgrove House development; concern with the state of the old village shop; the state of the Lodge and gates at Cosgrove Hall; matters arising at the Caravan Park; the School Safe Route and 20 mph restriction; 40 mph restriction; A508/Castlethorpe turning; Iron Trunk Aqueduct; Canal tow path; Neighbourhood Watch (particular thanks to Councillor Smith); bus services; Cosgrove Village website and Facebook (particular thanks to Councillors Roberts and Smith).

Finally, and as each year, I mention the lack of attendance by the public at the 11 monthly meetings (last Tuesday of each month except December). While the Councillors would be pleased to have more interaction we read it that this absence, indicates that Cosgrove residents are and have been happy with the work done on their behalf by the Parish Council over the past year.

7. Report by Northamptonshire Police

PCSO Herbert gave beat crime figures from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012 and spoke on operational issue

Previous Crime figures >

<i>Burglary Dwelling</i>	2 > 3	
<i>Burglary Other</i>	4 > 5	<i>(from garages and sheds etc)</i>
<i>Criminal Damage</i>	1 > 3	
<i>Drugs</i>	0 > 1	
<i>Sexual Offences</i>	1 > 1	
<i>Theft from M/V</i>	2 > 2	
<i>Theft of M/V</i>	2 > 2	
<i>Theft / Handling</i>	10 > 10	
<i>Deception / Fraud</i>	0 > 0	
<i>Violence</i>	5 > 3	

Total Crimes 30 *(an increase from 27 crimes on previous years)*

Northants Police : to report crime or for general enquiries call 101

E-mail: SCT-SouthNorthantsTowcester@northants.police.uk

Crime Stoppers (anonymous and free) 0800 555 111

With Qs on targeted crimes and the disadvantaged, the officer was thanked and he left the meeting

8. Report from District Councillor

Apologies for not being able to attend in person, but I cannot be in three places at once.

I wish to update you on what has been going on at South Northants Council since we last met.

Firstly, as you will all have got your Council Tax Bills by now you will see that SNC did freeze the tax for the second year running and I can tell you tonight that it is our intention to try to freeze it for the next two as well.

That aspiration depends heavily on the results from the government review of local government finance. This will see a raft of changes commencing in about 12 months time on 1 April 2013. These will involve the localisation of council tax benefit, localisation of business rates, opportunities to make changes to these and offer incentives, extra cash in we can keep and extra costs we may have to bear. The problem is that until the plates all stop spinning I have no idea what the pluses and minus will add up to.

I am attending a conference in London on this subject on Friday, so hopefully I will be better informed, after that event.

By far the biggest project at SNC at present is the joint working with Cherwell. That is moving along rapidly all appointments are made and the team is settling down and the savings are being delivered in excess of the business plan. We have also generated a lot of interest in what we are up to from other councils and this culminated in South Northants Council being awarded the 'Local Government Chronicle' Finance Team of the Year just a couple of weeks ago.

Another project which the first phase is just finishing is around the ending of the Council IT provider contract. This gives a great opportunity to get away from one provider, bring it in house, combine it with Cherwell and maybe others, then improve the service and take out cost.

Two years ago it cost over £1m a month to run SNC. Today the revenue budget is £833k per month. Less than £10m per year for the first time since 2006. It is my intention to try to hold the costs at this level if at all possible.

Planning continues to be a challenge and progress is being made on the Local Development Plan. But as I have said every year when here – it will be next year when we have something at the current projections. This tortuous process is hampered at every turn by central government and the recent pronouncements in the National Planning Policy Framework will also need to be taken into account, however, the actual NPPF is better than the draft so we think we can press ahead reasonably quickly.

In conjunction with this, we need to have a review of the village confines lines throughout the district. That means examining the existing line, considering if it is appropriate and making recommendations as necessary. In places like nearby Deanshanger where there are no confines at present we will seek to introduce them.

Within the ward I am pleased to say that at Yardley Gobion we are front runners for Neighbourhood Planning having obtained a £20,000 grant from CLG to develop a plan. Just last week there was a two day workshop in Yardley Gobion where many ideas were plotted out with the help of the Princes Foundation.

Within the parish I was pleased to see the Council take action to ensure that historic properties are not allowed fall into disrepair. This has been a bit of case work for all of the 5 years I have been a member and I shall continue to apply pressure to get the essential repairs. Because of this ward issue, I can also tell you that SNC has set up a reserve fund to help bolster their efforts in buildings at risk across the district.

Recently there have been changes to waste collection and re-cycling which I thank you all for your co-operation in making this a success.

The changes are necessary because of a change to the regulations meaning that the card can no longer be composted with the garden waste. I know that this is proving to be a little irritating to some so I shall try to set out the background and the thinking that informed the decisions.

As I said the regulations changed so that forced SNC to do something.

At the same time the leases on half the fleet of trucks expire next year so we needed to review all waste services and get the tender process underway for a new fleet. This was a good opportunity to review what was going on.

SNC also want to establish a food waste collection. We believe that this will give us better recycling rates and divert a lot of food waste out of land fill.

The waste review established that we think we can make savings and get revenues from central government and Northants County Council. This would allow a weekly food waste collection at no additional cost to now.

Council recently agreed to another change for next year where each household would have the green and black boxes taken away and replaced with one wheelie bin to collect all the dry recyclables.

So, with that in mind we did not want to issue a new box or bin for card waste that would have a 12 month life at best. At a cost of £25 – 30,000.

Across the district waste services report there is capacity in the black boxes in general, but I appreciate that this may not be the case for some individuals. So it was decided to place the card waste in the black box.

SNC will also collect it if tied up or placed in bags or left out under the box. I stress that this is an interim measure and unfortunately a lot of the background just set out is not easily explained in small leaflets.

No doubt next year I will be saying that the new waste service is starting and there will be changes necessary.

Despite what some may think we don't do this to annoy or tinker for the sake of it. There is not a Department of Silly Ideas at SNC!. There is a plan and we do want constant improvements. Whatever decisions taken now will be in place for about 7 years so it is important we get this one right.

Thank you for your help in make the recycling work as well as it does. SNC want to make the next step from 48% to 65% recycling rate and I hope you continue to play your part to make this happen.

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There were no questions to forward

9. Report by County Councillor

If last year was bad then this year has been even worse. Recession and cut backs have been the

order of the day at the County. We managed the £69M savings I mentioned last year, albeit some serious decisions had to be made to front line services. Buses, Mobile Libraries, Voluntary Organisation reforms, Crime & Prevention, not to mention the savings required in Street Lighting. This last year we conservatives decided to go for a four year plan of savings (we have to still find another £110M between now and 2015/16) therefore savings of approx £28M per year will be sought. This will definitely put underlying pressure on all our services.

The budget for this year has been agreed and new ways of working are being introduced.

Everyone has to take a hit from the CXO down to the proverbial cleaner employed by the council. We as Councillors will also be reviewing our Allowance scheme to make it more equitable. Reduction in Councillor Numbers under new Boundary Commission changes from 73 Councillors to 57 Councillors will also occur. This is due to come into effect for the May elections of 2013. In essence this means each Councillor will have a bigger area to service and more residents to look after. This is being done in the name of Value for Money (which I agree with). No major changes should be made to the Deanshanger Ward except I will gain a couple of District wards. I look after 8,500 residents at present this will increase to between 9,500 and 10,000 residents.

The Council tax is again frozen this year and ways of cutting out more waste are being explored. “ I do wonder if this can be maintained for our front line staff, before services to you the public are seriously hindered “

Although a long introduction I felt it necessary to give you an overall picture of the County Councils dilemma, and the decisions I have to take on your behalf. There are those out there that say it can be done better and not so hurtful. Well they are not the ones making the decisions and it's easy to be popular by criticising without giving a true picture.

I have represented you all for some 15 years now and times have never been harder for all of us. My record goes before me as your elected County Councillor to diminish as much hardship as possible for all of you. Whether it is through Council Services or Individual assistance with taxes, benefits, lifestyles etc. I can be relied upon to give my time and energy to solving most problems.

My overall assessment is that we live in a beautiful part of the UK and as such except for the occasional hiccup we don't do too badly. Our young people do have decent schools and from my experience their Education is second to none. Us pensioners although not living the high life can and do get by and the County Council is doing all it can for people to be independent (Not being forced into Care homes against their wishes)

The vulnerable are where we continue to put money into, albeit in a different way. Don't be taken in by others **WE ARE NOT CUTTING SERVICES TO THE VUNERABLE** in this County.

We are still maintaining the program of our Care for the Elderly, whereby we enable the Elderly and Infirm to have a better quality of life, by assisting them to help themselves in their own homes. Ok those with a high income are going to have to pay more for this service but that assists those that cannot.

Fortunately the weather has been kinder this winter so our contractor May Gurney has been able to get on with road repairs.

Equally we took the decision to reduce Street lighting to make savings. In most of this ward the lights are owned by the Parish Councils (so there are savings to be made if you're prudent). Most other councils also followed suite irrespective of what political party is in power.

We are still sharing a number of back office functions with Cambridgeshire to reduce both our costs IT, HR.

Yes we stopped the £500,000 to the Police Authority for PCSO's. This was only ever a three year deal and the Police themselves are cutting officers. Through negotiations with the Police Authority and Government funding grants we (NCC) have put back £300,000 to assist with violent crime within the county. The police have matched this to spend on operational problems.....

We renegotiated Bus services to make travel more accommodating. Not everyone agreed but it was mostly by those that did not use the services and to be honest most rural routes are underused at tremendous cost. Mind you some communities actually did better.

I still have the important role of Scrutiny Champion for NCC, ex officio Cabinet member, sitting in

on cabinet briefings and advising where necessary. If anyone has been following this then this year has been more transparent than ever to see how we arrived at our Budget.

I was again elected Chair to the Local Government East Midland Scrutiny Network.

During the year I gave up my role as Chair of Governors/Governor after 11years at Elisabeth Woodville School due to a conflict of Interest as your County Councillor

There has been a reduction in the Empowering Councillors Scheme to (£7,000) I donated money to help locally: Cosgrove Village Hall, for refurbishment. Cosgrove, the Iron Trunk Bridge Aqueduct refurbishment.

My activities locally as your County Councillor have involved; In Cosgrove this has involved Local Bus services, 89/90. Road Maintenance in and around the area as well as attending as many PC meetings as possible to understand and resolve local issues.

On a brighter note it is the Queens Jubilee this year and I look forward to attending some of the activities that will be going on throughout the Ward.

My local work activity for parishioners remains high yearly mainly due to the recession and red tape. I still manage to maintain a turn around to all enquiries in 24hrs of 100%

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 areas...

I can be contacted on:-Telephone 01908 – 260302 E -Mail awalker@northamptonshire.gov.uk

There were no questions to forward

10. Any Other Business

With no other business the meeting closed at 7.45pm