

Cosgrove Parish Council

MINUTES OF COSGROVE ANNUAL OPEN MEETING

Held on 30th April 2013 at the Village Hall, Bridge Road commencing at 7.00pm

Present: Cllrs AG Hickie (in the chair), Mr A Bracey, Mrs F Childs, Mrs H Harbottle, Mr P Roberts, Mr D Smith, Mr C Stokes & Mrs L Welton
Also present were Mr D Everett (Clerk), Cllrs Mr I McCord (SNC), Mr A Walker (NCC) and 3 members of the public

1. Apologies

Mrs H Howard (NCC Highways) unable & PCSO James Herbert (Northants Police) duty commitments

2. Minutes of the 2012 Annual Open Meeting (previously displayed n/b)

Previously circulated and signed as a correct record at the May 2012 meeting

3. Matter Arising

No matters arising

4. Petitioners or Questions from Electors (required in writing by 12 noon 30th April 2013)

None

5. Adoption of Accounts

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

- | | | |
|-----|---|----------------------------------|
| (a) | To receive Audited Accounts 2011 / 2012 | } No comments |
| (b) | Accounts for Audit 2012 / 2013 | } Approved |
| (c) | Budget Proposals 2013 / 2014 | } 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, stressing their voluntary nature and, in particular, the Clerk.

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

Of the many individual matters raised during the year which required review, comment and follow up, the Chairman made particular reference to the:

- Development on Bridge Road and, specifically, the drainage and refuse concerns
- Cosgrove House development, now approved
- Old village shop development, now approved
- Lodge, largely restored, and gates at Cosgrove Hall
- School Safe Route and 20 mph restriction, now implemented
- 40 mph restriction on Stratford Road, now implemented, which has resulted in a slowing of much, but not all, traffic
- A508/Castlethorpe turning
- Canal tow path
- On-going Neighbourhood Watch
- Bus service
- Cosgrove Village website and Facebook

Finally, and as each year, he mentioned 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 I read it that this absence indicates that the residents have been happy with the work done on their behalf by the Parish Council over the past year.

7. Report by Northamptonshire Police

The clerk read out PCSO Herbert's report and beat crime figures from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013 and advised on operational issues, School talks; Visits to the Caravan Park (ongoing); interactions on Manor Close and Main Street.

Previous Crime figures >

<i>Burglary Dwelling</i>	<i>3 > 0</i>	
<i>Burglary Other</i>	<i>5 > 0</i>	<i>(from garages and sheds etc)</i>
<i>Criminal Damage</i>	<i>3 > 1</i>	
<i>Drugs</i>	<i>1 > 0</i>	
<i>Sexual Offences</i>	<i>2 > 1</i>	
<i>Theft from M/V</i>	<i>2 > 1</i>	
<i>Theft of M/V</i>	<i>2 > 0</i>	
<i>Theft / Handling</i>	<i>10 > 9</i>	
<i>Deception / Fraud / Other</i>	<i>0 > 1</i>	
<i>Violence</i>	<i>3 > 2</i>	
Total Crimes	15	<i>(an reduction from 31 crimes on previous year)</i>

There were also a number of ASB reports on the whole of the ward showing an increase from 44 > 51 but not specific to Cosgrove. The report was well received showing a reduction in crime

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

8. Report from District Councillor

Thank you once again for your support throughout the past year.

For SNC this was a particularly challenging year as we needed to prepare for and implement many changes. Our Joint Working with Cherwell continues and savings are being delivered in excess of the initial business case. We have now moved on to sharing other teams in Finance, Legal and Democratic, Building Control and Information Technology and procurement. We are also looking now toward other Human Resources as the next joint two way service and are working closely with Stratford upon Avon on areas of mutual interest. The year began with an award as the Finance Team of the Year for SNC, and I note recently SNC / Cherwell joint Procurement team were runners up in the GO Procurement Awards. While it is nice to have your success highlighted, I do so more to reassure that while we are working jointly with Cherwell the standard and quality of what we are doing is not suffering and this is acknowledged nationally. On the subject of awards it was also heartening to learn that SNC is one of best to pay suppliers with an average time to pay an invoice of 4.3 days. This year saw a fundamental review of local government finance that has just started on 1st April. This has swept away Council Tax benefit and replaced it with a Council Tax Reduction Scheme administered locally. The Business Rates have been changed so local councils can keep some of the business rate growth in the area. This could provide SNC with a potential area of new income in future years. These finance changes are important as the background will be further reductions in the grant central government sends to local government in the next years. The budget was concluded with an 11% cut in the grant but we found the necessary savings and are preparing for the 15% cut due next year.

New Homes bonus too is another area where to date SNC has not touched the funds but it is consulting on the use of these funds in the future where the proposal is to return to the community 30% of the New Homes bonus generated to be spent on any project within the parish.

On Planning, SNC have made significant progress toward getting a Core Strategy and Local Plan, this project has been on going for years but I feel we are now making progress. The examination in public has just finished its first phase where those who wished to complain had have their chance to try to knock down the draft plan. The Government has at long last revoked the Region Spatial Strategy that dictated thousands of new houses for this area, these have been replaced with reduced numbers for our housing need. Assuming that the Inspector returns a report that leaves the draft Core Strategy relatively unscathed, and it cleared the first hurdle there, the Core Strategy will be on for adoption towards the end of this year. **We can carry on** with the process of adoption and get a local plan to hang on this. The Local Plan is now underway but must say one step behind the Core Strategy. Separate to this is the Review of Conservation Areas and again progress has been made with Cosgrove Conservation Area being reviewed and that process continues. Shortly a draft report will come forward suggesting any changes and then it will be formally consulted on any changes made then adopted.

I am pleased to report that our long running saga of the Gate Lodge has paid off and while we can carry on to get all work done, together we can be proud that we have prevented a historic cottage from disappearing. Other enforcement work continues within the parish and the ward to ensure that the Planning Regulations are adhered to. Changes are also afoot in the waste services. Here in Cosgrove you have recently switched from Friday to Wednesday collection day. This is the first phase of a new improved waste collection service for the district. Starting from June and phased in till about September, SNC will be introducing a new food waste weekly collection and a blue wheeled bin to replace the green and black boxes. All recyclables will go in the blue bin. Things that are not taken at present like Tetra packs can go in the blue bin. Food will be collected each week. You will get a small caddy for inside and a larger one for outside. These caddies can be lined with newspaper or a bio degradable bag. SNC will provide a roll to start. Yes it will mean a third wheeled bin, but it should be easier, green for garden waste, blue for all dry recyclables, food in the food waste caddy and black for what's left. The intention is to get the black waste down to very little as this will be land filled attracting landfill tax charges which escalate each year. Our, or rather, YOUR, recycling rate is very good at 50% but SNC want to get this 63% with these changes. The changes cost £2 million but we did attract a grant of £1.1 million from central government and are getting other funds from the County Council and Northamptonshire Waste Partnership. There will be a lot more publicity shortly to ensure this is smooth and as trouble free as possible. As for the green box and black box, SNC will transfer ownership of these to the householders. If you cannot find a use for them SNC will make collection points available and get them recycled. Looking ahead there is still a lot do, earlier this month, demolition and archaeological work began on the Moat Lane site in Towcester. This project is finally in its build phase and real progress should happen this year. The effects of the changes in benefits will continue, we have invested extra cash in the housing team to prepare for this and added more cash to the discretionary housing budget to help those most affected.

Finally I wish to place on record my thanks to the Chairman AG Hickey and all the members of the Council and to Derek Everett your clerk for all your help, understanding and support last year and every year since I have been the member for Cosgrove and Grafton Ward.

Having a functioning Parish Council is invaluable although your work is not recognised fully by anyone.

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.

Telephone 01327 359315 Mobile 07740 067378 E – Mail snc@ianmccord.com

There were no questions

9. Report by County Councillor

We (the Conservative Administration at NCC) introduced a four year plan last year whereby £28M had to be saved, year on year and as of to date we are on course to do this. We managed to have a neutral budget this year and continue with a 0% increase in Council Tax. This year it has been all

about consolidating that plan, so no further front line services are affected. Yes reorganisation of Buses and Mobile Libraries, as well as switching off strategic Street Lights to achieve this has had to occur. Voluntary Organisation reforms and savings in Preventative services have also helped us to achieve this. We have also entered into a Local Government Services agreement with Cambridgeshire, which has saved in duplication of staff. We as Councillors reviewed our Allowance scheme to make it more equitable, (I mentioned this in my report last year) with a reduction of some £100,000+. Scrutiny (which I control as Scrutiny Champion) made the larger share of this by some £44,000. The reduction in Councillor Numbers under new Boundary Commission reducing from 73 Councillors to 57 Councillors will account for further savings of some £96,000. This is due to come into effect after the May elections. "Would you believe I have been your County Councillor for the last sixteen years"? In essence this means each Councillor will have a bigger area to service and more residents to look after. No major changes will be made to the Deanshanger Ward except I will gain Alderton, Ashton, Grafton Regis & Paulerspury. I represent at present some 8,500 residents this will increase to around 9,950 residents. I think I have served this community well over the years and hopefully you will agree.....Things have never been harder for all of us. We are now living in austere times. No matter who was in power due to lack of new money towards local government funding, they would be in the same position, and most of you were around to see what happened before.

We do live in a beautiful part of the UK and as such except for the occasional hiccup we don't do to badly. Our young people do have pretty good schools in this area and from my experience (as a previous Chair of Governors at Elizabeth Woodville School) their Education is second to none. NCC 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, in fact we have put an extra £3M into the budget for Social Services alone this year. Unfortunately the weather has not been kind again this winter so our contractor May Gurney has been out and about doing extra road repairs. Road gritting on the major roads has been successful and "NO WE ARE NOT SHORT OF GRIT either" "Although some may try to convince you otherwise" the bad weather over the last few years has been exceptionally well planned for..... 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 the only effect you will see is on the "A" roads. If you drive around outside of Northamptonshire you will see all other councils have followed suite irrespective of what political party is in power. We have a new Crime Commissioner and his budget for the police force did not increase. We have our own LEP called Northampton Local Enterprise Partnership. This has brought in over 1000 extra jobs, with 3000 more in the pipeline. We are considered to be the most enterprising place in Great Britain. We have transformed services within the County and have other Councils now looking at our innovative ways of working. Just look at who is flourishing... Carlsberg, Mercedes AMG and Silverstone to name but a few. None of this would have happened without this administrations forethought over the last seven years. I still have the important role of Scrutiny Champion for NCC, ex officio Cabinet member, sitting in on cabinet briefings and advising and helping to make decisions 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 overview Four Scrutiny Committees that in their own right, look after, Health & Social Services, Customer & Communities, Environment & Transport and Finance & Performance. I was again elected Chair to the Local Government East Midland Scrutiny Network. I attend regular meetings in London with Parliamentarians on Scrutiny within the UK

There has been a reduction in the Empowering Councillors Scheme to (£6,000). My activities locally as your County Councillor have involved; Advising on Transport the 89 & 90 bus routes Neighbourhood Planning (which Yardley Gobion is a pilot for SNC) Deanshanger Planning App (278 agreement) dispute, Road resurfacing, Housing, Benefits, Libraries Social Services and Education. Also Care for the Elderly in the Community.

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

10. Any Other Business

With no other business the meeting closed at 7.45pm