

MIDDLETON PARISH COUNCIL

The Annual Meeting of the Parish was held on Tuesday 19th April 2016 at 9.15 pm in the Village Hall Annexe, Cottingham.

The Council **agreed** to defer this meeting until after the April Parish Council meeting as there were no electors present.

Present: Cllrs Brant (Chair), Cole, Cross, Bradshaw, Freeman and Hicks and Mrs Medwell (Clerk).

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence: Cllr Thomas.

2. Minutes of 2015 Meeting: These had previously been unanimously approved and signed by the Chair.

3. Chair's Annual Report 2015-2016 – The following report was presented by Cllr Brant and circulated to all Councillors prior to the meeting.

“I am pleased to report that following the local elections in May last year and the resignation of Cllr Skipworth; two more Councillors have been co-opted bringing the Council once more to its full complement. All Councillors have given generously of their time and expertise to ensure that the Parish Council discharges its responsibilities on behalf of its residents. I would like to thank all of my colleagues for their hard work in the last year and of course the Parish Clerk, without whose very professional support the Council could not operate.

Planning

During the year the Council presented its views to the Planning Inspector allocated to review the North Northants Joint Core Strategy. This includes plans for the urban development of Corby to the west, an area which falls within the Parish of Middleton. This proposed development has significant implications for the residents of Middleton and Cottingham and the Parish Council ensured that its views regarding the importance of installing appropriate infrastructure (particularly improvement of the road network) prior to commencement of the development were fully considered. The opportunity was also taken to comment on the proposed housing allocation for rural areas within the Strategy, which developers were arguing, should be significantly increased. The Joint Core Strategy should be finalised in the near future and will form a key planning document with which more local plans will need to comply.

This year has also seen the review of the Cottingham and Middleton Conservation Area and the development by an independent consultant, of a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan. The Plan proposes the extension of the Conservation Area and re-drawing of its boundary, which the Council fully supported. The consultation process included a well attended public meeting and due to unprecedented local engagement in the process and the large number of comments on the first draft of the document, it is yet to be finally adopted by Corby Borough Council. Once adopted it will provide long overdue design advice for property owners within and adjacent to the conservation area and will inform planning decisions.

The Appeal process relating to the land behind Bury Close and Cottingham Hall continues. A reduced application for 31 houses was considered and rejected by Corby Borough Council in January following public consultation. This matter will return for consideration by the Planning Inspector in May and again the Council will be present at the Hearing and represent residents' views.

In considering other planning applications during the year the Council has aimed to support development and change which maintains and enhances the characteristics of our attractive village and the setting of the historic buildings and structures in the conservation area, 16 of which are listed.

The Street Scene

The Public Phone Box was purchased by the Council in 2012 and in the last year fund raising has taken place to support the installation of a Community Defibrillator, to be located on the box. The Council, the Rockingham Wheelers Cycling Club, Northants County Council and the Copyholders have been involved in the campaign and the target sum is now within reach.

March saw a group of 22 Middleton residents of all ages, undertake a very successful litter pick during which 50 bags of litter and 30 tyres were collected. The litter pick was part of the ‘Clean for the Queen’ initiative and was supported by Corby Borough Council which provided equipment and collected the rubbish. Thanks to everyone who took part and all those residents who are committed to keeping our village an environment that we can all be proud of.

On a more disappointing note, dog fouling remains a problem in the village and the Council is committed to identifying and reporting the culprits in order that they are fined. This is a matter that will stay on our agenda until it improves.

The volume and speed of traffic through the village also remains a concern and discussions with Northants County Council are ongoing regarding measures to address this. The Council is currently exploring the possibility of installing vehicle activated speed signs at the entrances to the village.

Open Spaces

A Task Force of volunteers spent time in the autumn clearing the bottom of the culvert in Glover Court which had become overgrown. The banks were weeded, covered with weed suppressant and bark chips and have been planted for ease of maintenance. Work on the bottom of the culvert will continue, to maintain effective water flow and improve the aesthetic of this important water course.

In December a Miller Homes’ specialist contractor excavated and removed soil in the hedge to the north of the orchard in order to eradicate knotweed which had been introduced by the contractor during the building of Glover Court. The contractor will monitor the area for re-growth and will re-seed the grass damaged in the excavation process.

The Orchard remains an attractive and tranquil space for the use of residents and last summer saw a village picnic organised by the Valley Voice Choir at which the choir and a number of local music groups performed.

Village Hall

A planning application has been submitted for the new Village Hall to be located on the Cottingham and Middleton Recreation Ground and discussions are ongoing with the Corby BC Planning Department regarding a number of details, prior to approval. It is planned that the car park of the new Village Hall will provide a space for parents and carers to drop off and collect children from the Primary School thus improving the vehicle congestion outside the School in the morning and afternoon.

Parish Website

The new Parish Website is now up and running. It ensures that the Council is compliant with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and related Transparency

Code and as such it has been lauded as an example of good practice.

The Precept

For three of the last four years the Middleton Parish Council precept has remained at the same level without increase and last year it was reduced by 11.5%. In reviewing the precept in December the Council considered the likely demands on the budget in the foreseeable future and agreed a precept level of £4,162 for the coming year. This equates to an increase of 17.27% but it is the first increase for four years. The decision to increase the precept is accompanied by a clear commitment to ensure that the resources which are the responsibility of the Parish Council are put to the best use for the benefit of all parts of our community”.

4. Presentation of Financial Statement 2015-2016 – The Clerk referred to the statement of financial accounts and reported that the balances as of 31st March 2016 totalled £65,161. This consists of £49,590 ring fenced for the new Village Hall, £1,300 for the Defibrillator and £14,270 reserves.

5. Meeting Open to the Public: There were no members of the public present.

Signed as a true record:

Chair 1904 Page 3 of 3

Clerk

Date

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