

MIDDLETON PARISH COUNCIL

The Annual Meeting of the Parish was held on Tuesday 21st May 2019 at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall Annexe, Cottingham.

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

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed all who attended

2. Chair's Annual Report 2018-19 – The following report was presented by Cllr Brant and circulated to all Councillors.

“I am pleased to report that the Council has again had a full complement of Councillors for the last year and I'd like to record my thanks to all of them and our Parish Clerk for their time and energy in supporting the work of the Council. In particular I would like to acknowledge the work of Cllr Kate Cross who stood down in February after four years of sterling service and to welcome Cllr Alison Freestone, who has been co-opted in her place.

Local Government Reform

Following the dire financial situation that Northamptonshire County Council found itself in last year and the issuing of a Section 114 notice severely constraining its expenditure, the Government has consulted on the proposal that local government in Northamptonshire should be re-structured into two unitary authorities. In early May the Secretary of State announced that, 'in the best interests of the residents of Northamptonshire' two brand new unitary Councils will be created on 1 April 2021 and Northamptonshire County Council and the existing district and borough councils will be abolished. The North Northamptonshire unitary authority will cover Corby, East Northants, Kettering and Wellingborough.

As a result of these changes district and parish council elections due in May 2019 have been postponed until May 2020.

Parliamentary Orders will follow later this year and there will be elections to shadow authorities in May 2020. Shadow Executives for the two unitary authorities will then be selected and will determine the structure, budget and service delivery models. Services currently divided between district borough and county councils such as bin collections, waste disposal, planning and roads will be brought together under each of the two unitary councils.

This is undoubtedly the most fundamental change to local government in this area in decades and will no doubt bring a period of turbulence before a judgement can be made on whether there are any benefits of the change. We await with interest and will continue to represent the views of the residents of Middleton at every opportunity.

Corby's Part II Local Plan

As part of the strategic planning process and following the agreement in 2016 of the Joint Core Strategy for North Northamptonshire 2011-2031, Corby BC commenced consultation on its Part II Local Plan this year. The Council discussed the emerging draft options in Corby's Part II Local Plan and responded, commenting on the sections on rural housing, local green spaces, public transport and water treatment sewage works. We have since heard that as requested, the Middleton Community Orchard will be

designated in the plan as a 'Local Green Space' and as such will be given appropriate protection.

West Corby extension

After many months of silence, the developers of the West Corby extension and Council representatives agreed to our request for a meeting in October with Middleton, Cottingham, Rockingham and East Carlton Parish Councillors, regarding their latest proposals. It was matter of considerable concern to us that there were no hard copies of the detailed proposals given that this is such a large development and that the on line copies of documents were fragmented to the point of being unreadable.

Notwithstanding this, a response was compiled which detailed again our concerns regarding the very significant lack of infrastructure to support this large development. The Corby BC Development Control meeting to consider the development was postponed and has not yet been re-scheduled. The latest information was that Corby BC was 'still working its way through issues relating to Highways and flood risk.' No meeting is yet planned to consider proposals for approval.

Local Bus Services

In April last year it became apparent that the subsidy for the local bus service was about to end and the service from Corby to Market Harborough would therefore cease to operate. Parish Councils along the route met, coordinated by Wilbarston PC, and decided to form a consortium to subsidise a twice weekly bus service as a pilot project. Kettering and Corby Borough Councils were invited to contribute to the subsidy and eventually contributed £3,000 each to the project. Consequently a 16 seater bus service has been running twice weekly through Middleton, stopping on Main Street, since November 2018. As a scheduled service it accepts bus passes and it has proved an important life line for those without transport who would otherwise not be able to get to Market Harborough or Corby each week. This has been a good example of local Parish Councils working closely together to ensure that vital services are kept running. As a consortium we will be lobbying the new unitary authority regarding the matter of rural bus services and their importance to our community.

Street Scene

In the course of the year we were notified by Northamptonshire County Council that it was reducing its winter gritting regime due to budget constraints and reducing the number of grit bins for which it would be responsible in future. As a consequence, the Council agreed to take on responsibility for the maintenance and filling of the grit bin on School Lane halfway between Middleton Lane and the top of the School Hill incline and to seek a second hand bin to replace the one that is inoperative, on the bend of School Hill.

Also on School Hill the Council has been in discussion with residents and Northamptonshire County Council about a number of incidents caused by large vehicles attempting (and failing) to negotiate the sharp bend of School Hill which is compounded by the steep gradient of the road at that point. Northants County Council is responsible for signage on Highways but is not currently able to fund new signs currently due to its financial situation. The Council has therefore agreed to meet the cost of signs at the entrance to School Hill which advise motorists that the road is not suitable for heavy vehicles.

Allied to the completion of the Lambert Close development on Ashley Road, the Council negotiated with Hereward Homes that it would renew the village boundary and install a solar powered vehicle activated speed sign on entry to the village from the Ashley Road and this is now in operation.

Rights of Way and Footpaths

Following disruption to pedestrians caused by horse riding along the Jurassic Way footpath from The Hill to East Carlton (and following consultation with Northamptonshire County Council), the Council has purchased and installed 'No Horse Riding' signs along the footpath.

The Community Orchard

The Community Orchard was once again used for a successful music concert in the summer and the walking nativity at Christmas and is popular throughout the year with residents of all ages. The benches have all been varnished again this year to ensure that they provide an attractive resting place for Orchard users. Despite the extremely warm and dry weather last year the grass in the Orchard has made an impressive recovery with the help of our lawn maintenance contractor.

Village Hall/Community Hub

A Planning application was finally presented to Corby Borough Council in 14th August 2018 where after a short discussion it was unanimously approved. The proposal is to site the new Cottingham and Middleton Community Hub, to be called The Mill, on Mill Road at the eastern edge of the recreation field. The Council has two representatives on the Charitable Trust charged with building the Community Hub and the section 106 monies held by the Council and hypothecated for the purpose of building a village hall, will be handed to the Trust. Fund raising for the building has now started in earnest.

Financial matters

In setting the Precept at £7,000 in December the Council was mindful of the removal of the Parish Grant by Corby Borough Council and the reduced level of support from the County Council towards street scene maintenance such as signs, verge maintenance and the cutting of vegetation from footpaths.

3. Presentation of Financial Statement 2018-2019 – The Clerk presented a statement of financial accounts and reported that the balances as of 31st March 2019 totalled £46,775.44. This consists of £35,991 ring fenced for the new Village Hall and £10,785 reserves.

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

The meeting closed at 7.44pm

Signed as a true record:

Chair

Clerk

Date

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