

STANWICK PARISH MEETING

Date: 24th April 2014

Venue: Village Hall, Stanwick

Time: 7.15pm

Councillor Amanda Michel, Chairman of Stanwick Parish Council, was in the chair

5 members of the public were in attendance

1. Welcome and introductions

Councillor Michel opened the meeting and welcomed those present.

2. Minutes for the Parish Meeting of 18th April 2013

Subject to a correction to a typographical error regarding the date shown on item 2, the Minutes were agreed to be an accurate record of the previous meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

3. Police Community Support Officer Ward

PCSO Ward discussed the changes in the level of reported crime over the past twelve months compared to the preceding twelve months. She discussed the issue of parking on double yellow lines and on pavements, detailing what action the police can take, and steps she has taken locally.

4. County Councillor Dudley Hughes

Councillor Hughes gave the report that is shown in the Appendix to these minutes.

5. ‘Stanwick Neighbourhood Plan’

Councillor Michel outlines the steps that had already been taken and invited people to get involved.

6. ‘Stanwick Outdoors’ project

The Parish Clerk outlined the background to the Stanwick Outdoors project.

7. Vacancy on Stanwick Parish Council

The meeting was advised that is a vacancy and interested parties invited to put themselves forward for co-option.

8. Parish Council Financial Report

Councillor Michel gave the report that is shown in the Appendix to this Minute.

With no further business, the meeting was closed at 7.45 p.m.

Chairman

Report by Cllr Dudley Hughes

Highways Maintenance Initiative

Many of you will have noticed the deterioration of our road network over the winter months. It is a constant battle, especially with the unusually high levels of rainfall over the past two seasons. Our highways staff is working hard to repair our network, now that the good weather is back. We have been rolling out a more pro-active system to repair our network called the Highways Maintenance Initiative that sees fewer patch and dash repairs and more permanent solutions.

Our Highways Maintenance Initiative has been hailed as a success and gained national recognition for its approach. Over fifteen authorities have adopted our approach. Pothole related claims against the Council have seen a decrease over this same period and the amount of 'right first time' permanent repairs has improved dramatically by over 50% (from 45% to 97%).

In addition, in the first two years of this initiative efficiency savings of £126k through reduced fuel usage were reinvested into the Service and on average over 30% increase in preventative road treatments were carried out. NHMI has proven that the 'right first time' and preventative approach makes good use of resources directed at highway maintenance. This said, there are no miracle cures to the blight of potholes, but we have had some recent welcome news.

March 2014 saw Northamptonshire County Council being allocated an extra £1.5 million from a national pot of £140 million to repair our roads and party due to the persistent efforts and campaign of Northampton North MP, Michael Ellis, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a further £200 million fund for local authorities to bid from. Our County Council will be bidding strongly from this fund.

New Generation Superfast Broadband

At the beginning of February, Culture, Media and Sport Minister, Ed Vaisey came to Towcester to officially launch our County's New Generation Superfast Broadband Project. We are the first in the Country to begin works on this type of project. Families and businesses in and around Towcester can now avail of broadband speeds of up to 30mbs. This development represents a key technological and infrastructural foundation for the future economic wellbeing of our county where 90% of our county, especially rural areas, will feel the benefits of this exciting infrastructural programme by the end of next year. We have already secured £300,000 from Broadband Delivery UK in support of superfast broadband deployment in the Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone and the indicative allocation of £3.4 million from the BDU Superfast Extension programme from 2015.

Libraries

The County Council has launched a new free Wi-Fi service across all 36 libraries. As well as libraries, it is also available at Brixworth Country Park and the Record Office in Northampton. Getting our libraries connected is particularly useful during our Job Clubs, Enterprise Hubs events and other careers and business start-up activities.

Library Enterprise Hubs

In April 2012, in association with Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership, we launched a number of enterprise hubs in our libraries to help people who were thinking about taking the plunge and setting up their own business. Since then we have helped over 700 new entrepreneurs on their way to starting a business. Over 70 are already up and officially trading. That's more than one new business launched from our libraries in the order of one every two weeks.

In the same period, we've helped 10,000 people with advice, organised 3,400 activities under our Families & Futures programme, reaching out and engaging with 84,000 children and young people. 600 volunteers have contributed more than 23,000 hours of their time and 20 people have found paid jobs, directly as a result of volunteering in libraries.

Our Economy

Economic recovery has really taken hold both nationally and regionally. Northamptonshire businesses continue to show confidence in both turnover and profitability over the next 12 months, with strong performances from those in the service sector. The survey shows 98% (up from 95% previous quarter) of respondents expect turnover to improve or stay the same over the next 12 months and 74% (up from 62%) expect profitability to improve over the same period. Within the service sector, 95% of respondents expect turnover and 90% expect profitability to improve or remain the same in 2014 (a respective one point and three point improvement on the last quarter). Youth unemployment (18-24 year olds) has reduced from 7.2%, (Jan 2013) to 4.9%, (Jan 2014). Experian, the business and credit reference agency, undertook a significant piece of research and concluded that our County Town, Northampton as the best place in the country to set up or to do business.

International Women's Cycling Tour

As the National Women's Cycle tour race date on 7th May nears, the itinerary has already been organised. This prestigious and elite sporting event including Olympic and world champion cyclists will be going through quite a number of Northamptonshire villages. The competition will be in five stages. The first stage of the race will be launched on 7th May from Oundle and go through villages such as Lower Benefield, Brigstock, Grafton Underwood, Boughton House, Geddington, Rushton, Desborough, Harrington, Lamport, Brixworth, Spratton, Chapel Brampton, Church Brampton, Althorp House, Great Brington, Little Brington, Nobottle, Kisslingbury, Rothersthorpe, Milton Malsor, East Hunsbury, Wooton, Great Houghton and ending in Northampton. The second stage on 8th May will go through Welford, Naseby, Cottesbrook, Brixworth, Holcot, Sywell, Mears Ashby, and Wilby, Great Doddington, Wollaston before finishing off in Bedford. Northamptonshire is a beautiful place to live and a county that we can be proud of. This is an opportunity for our County to be showcased and an opportunity to engage and enthuse young people, especially girls, to take up a sport such as cycling.

Empowering Councillors Scheme

Our Empowering Councillors scheme is as popular as ever. Countywide we have funded well over 2000 community projects to the tune of over £2million. In my district I made sure my money has made a positive difference by funding a **variety of community** activities including youth groups such as the two scout groups and the guides in Raunds, the Library, road safety sign in Stanwick, a new garden at a home for the elderly, Stanwick Lakes, Stanwick church and MIND which provides facilities and has clients from across the division. I do have funds available and would welcome applications from groups in my division for facilities and activities which would improve the life of the residents. In conclusion I have enjoyed visiting the Parish and Town Councils and being part of the communities.

Financial Report for Parish Meeting 24th April 2014 by Cllr Michel

I am pleased to report that the Parish Council's Accounts for the financial year 2012/13 have been audited by BDO LLP who completed the audit on behalf of the Audit Commission and that they did not identify any issues of concern. The audited accounts are available to view of the Council website. If you would like a hard copy, please contact the Parish Clerk.

The accounts for 2013/14 are yet to be finalised. The Accounts will be available for inspection in June and submitted for audit by the end of that month.

It is expected that the accounts will show expenditure for the past 12 months to be in the region of £68,000 which is an increase on the previous year. This is primarily due to the purchase of open space at Mallows Grange

Other expenditures include an increase in training for councillors and the clerk, a significant amount of tree surgery (largely thanks to the gales), an increase in clerical hours and the purchase of a speed indication device.

The difference between the precept received and the expenditure has been met from the Councils reserves (savings).

The Council gave careful consideration to the budget for 2014/15. Having kept our precept (local tax the parish council raises) unchanged in the previous year, it was decided that there should be an increase of 2.91% this year. Whilst this is largely due to the increased amount of grounds maintenance costs at Mallows Grange, the council has sought to keep the impact of this to a minimum through carefully planning of the grounds maintenance regime itself and by trimming other budgets.