



Clerk to the Council – Carlton Evans

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Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 20 April 2022 at Astbury Village Hall

Present: Councillor G Bell who chaired the meeting. Because this was the Annual Parish Meeting Councillor G Bell, Councillor R Crookes, Councillor P Crompton and Councillor G Derbyshire attended in their capacity as members of the public. Ward Councillor John Wray and the Clerk Carlton Evans also attended.

Public: approximately 20 members of the public were present.

Welcome from the Chairman:

The Chairman welcomed members of the public and emphasised that although the meeting would summarise the activity of the Council over the past twelve months this was primarily an opportunity for parishioners to raise any matters they wished to.

Minutes: The Chairman read through the minutes of the meeting on 19 April 2021 and these were signed as a true and accurate record.

Community Governance Review: The Chairman reported that the Council was rather shocked that the original proposal from Cheshire East was to abolish Somerford Parish. The Council had put forward counter arguments which had the overwhelming support of residents and which Cheshire East accepted. Rather than abolish the parish, Cheshire East's final proposal was to assimilate the new Turnstone Grange Miller Homes development and increase the number of councillors from seven to ten. They did not accept the proposal to take on several houses from Brereton Council to make the parish boundary clearer and more logical along the A54. The proposals will go to a full meeting of Cheshire East Council for its decision.

Rhead's Meadows: The Chairman reported on the success of the takeover from the RSPB and the landscaping and planting at Rhead's Meadows. This had avoided the development of about 10 acres of farmland and the addition of around 200 new houses.

There were some concerns from residents, mostly about dog fouling and dog control. The Chairman felt that the majority of dogs were kept under control. Some could be a nuisance



but the Parish Council itself couldn't police the Meadows in any realistic way. The Council encourages good behaviour often through signage and newsletters etc.

Some residents reiterated their concerns that when additional houses adjacent to Rhead's Meadows were built the problem of dogs would only get worse, and they suggested that additional restrictive measures should be taken. Chairman Bell reminded the meeting that the intention was always to make Rhead's Meadows free and open and the Council had previously decided against obliging dog owners to keep their animals on leads. He did however say that the Council had agreed additional hedging at the rear of several properties to provide a natural screen.

Dog Fouling and anti-social behaviour: Some residents raised the fact that dog fouling was not limited to Rhead's Meadows but was happening in and around the new housing developments and one parishioner suggested additional dog bins by the DWH site. Others reported instances of anti-social behaviour by dog owners at the edge of their properties and intimidation on social media. This had been raised both with DWH and the PCSO but the problem persists. Cllr Crompton clarified that while the developments themselves were still private property the Council itself couldn't place bins on site, but the Council will continue to raise this with the PCSO and at future meetings with the PCC and encouraged residents to continue to raise these problems with DWH.

Maintenance Plans: One resident asked about maintenance plans for Rhead's Meadows. Chairman Bell explained that we had been trying to engage contractors for both mowing and spot spraying weeds but it was proving difficult to obtain quotes for this. Blackfirs Wood was a bigger problem as we had taken over a very neglected site where the problem of Himalayan balsam etc. was quite considerable.

Highways: Some residents regretted that **Blackfirs Lane** had become a cut-through for traffic which would only get worse and endanger e.g. young people walking to school. It was already having a knock-on effect on Yew Crescent where speeding vehicles around an unsuitable road layout was also a danger. The Chairman encouraged all residents to make their views known forcefully to Cheshire East. The possibility of a 'litter pick' along Blackfirs Lane was discussed, which has been done in the past, and may be advertised in the Newsletter.

One resident complained about the inappropriate speed limits on **Radnor Bank** which were encouraging dangerous driving. Similar concerns were raised about the **CLR**. The Council hopes that in time there would be mitigating measures implemented such as average speed cameras and/or noise cameras to tackle reckless driving but this was unlikely to be soon. The Chairman noted that there have been occasions when police vehicles have been seen parked



at the various safety areas along the CLR. Meetings with neighbouring parishes such as Somerford Booths are held from time to time in order to share ideas and information. Residents were encouraged to complete the police 'Residents' Voice' survey which would be advertised on the Parish Council social media and website, to make their views known.

One resident mentioned that money for a SID could be available from Cheshire East under the s106 agreement with Bellway. The Council will discuss this further.

Chairman G Bell highlighted the fact that **the Parish Council** had one vacancy already and would soon have two. These should be filled as a matter of urgency and all present were encouraged to put forward candidates. As mentioned previously, after the May 2023 elections the number of councillors would increase to ten as a consequence of the Community Governance Review. Representation across the parish would be preferable, including the new housing developments.

Parishioners discussed **Somerford Chapel** and the poor state of the road accessing it and whether the Parish Council could put pressure on landowners to improve it. However it is a private road - except for access to church services – and the cost of permanent repairs would be prohibitive for the Council itself especially as it was used by heavy good vehicles too and would need significant strengthening. There was not universal agreement by interested parties on the right solution. The Chairman reiterated that the Chapel is an important and unique resource in the parish and it is already a stated Parish Council position to support its upkeep and access to it, within the financial and other restrictions placed on the Parish Council. The Parish Council also advertises Chapel services etc. through its website, Facebook and parish notice boards when relevant information is available.

The Meeting closed at 2110 hrs