

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING FOR HACKLETON 23rd MAY 2024

The Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council Pam Heap welcomed everybody to the meeting. Apologies were received from the Chairman of the Parish Council Frances Billingham. There were 71 residents and/or stakeholders present.

Hackleton Parish Council – Chairman’s Report 2023-24

We delivered our second big project in two years – The new playground

Following the successful opening of the outdoor gym and running track in 2022 we followed this in 2023 with our fantastic new children’s playground. We now have over 50 fun activities for children 0 -12 years old supporting their developmental milestones whilst providing an amazing play facility. Many of the activities are fully inclusive and we are sure that you will agree that it is now a great place for our children to be active, strengthen their movement skills, test their own physical limits and have great outdoor fun with their friends.

The pedestrian gate into the recreation ground has also been replaced with a new metal gate. We have requested WNC improve the safety of the ditch to the right of the pedestrian gate and once this is done the perimeter fencing in that area will be replaced.

Support for the Environment

Our Wildlife, Biodiversity and Environment Working Party has become a more independent forum now known as Hackleton WEB. The public meetings have been well supported and this support is growing.

The purpose of the group is to consider ways in which the community can take action to combat climate change through the 3 Rs – Re-use, Reduce & Recycle – and to encourage awareness in others. There have been several environment-related articles in the Parish Mag, and the Parish Council distributed wild flower seed packets to every household in the Parish. We hope that you have all successfully planted your seeds. Please do share your photographs with us once the flowers are in bloom.

The latest initiative of Hackleton WEB is to reduce plastic waste and car use by having the Green Machine – a company that brings zero waste shopping to your doorstep – in the form of a van which will park in front of the chapel on Friday, June 7th, 2pm to 4pm. The group is also looking at setting up a repair café where people can get small items repaired by suitably experienced volunteers.

Other environmental works undertaken by the parish council include additional trees being planted in the cemetery and the hedging infilled in front of the Recreation Ground.

We have supported the excellent work undertaken by both the Longland Meadow Volunteer Group and the Churchyard Volunteer Group. This has included purchasing a birdbath, hedgehog house, water butt and small pond for the churchyard and additional plants for the Meadow.

Additional dog waste bins have been installed around the parish. Please use them or if they are full take your bags home and dispose of them in your black bins rather than leaving next to the bins, on the floor or indeed hung in trees!

An independent tree survey was commissioned of all trees on parish council land and trees which could impact parish council assets. Tree and hedge works have been undertaken to improve safety, visibility and the general appearance of our locality

The bank along the Cemetery Extension has been grass seeded and visually improved.

We would like to thank our local Wombles for all of their hard work litter picking around the Parish.

Health & Wellbeing

We set up a health & wellbeing working party to explore the health and wellbeing needs of the parish. Many meetings with WNC and stakeholders have taken place and in December we were awarded a grant to set up a Good Neighbour Scheme. We sent questionnaires to every household asking about what groups, facilities people attended or used in the parish and what they would like to see happen going forward. Following this a health and wellbeing launch took place in February, attended by over 35 residents.

In conjunction with Public Health Northamptonshire and WNC we have provided financial support to set up the Otago exercise classes delivered by our local Team Thomas. This program aims to prevent falls by improving balance, co-ordination and confidence and the classes are proving to be very popular.

The Good Neighbour Scheme is in its first stages of coming together and the working party would like to set up a Dementia group if grant funding gets approved, as well as a craft group and a walking football group. The working party hopes to attract more volunteers as additional schemes are set up.

Supporting local groups

- Grant funding has been provided to local organisations including the Football Club, the Pre-School, the WI, and the Village Hall
- We continue to provide financial support to the ABILITY Community Transport Scheme.
- If any local organisations would like to be added to our website to advertise services or events, please contact Alison or Clerk.

Highways

- We continue to report all highway and footpath issues to West Northants including potholes, blocked drains, unsafe surfacing etc. We urge you all to report issues on Northampton Street Doctor
- We have had site meetings regarding blocked drains and gullies, potholes and footpaths and continue to put pressure on Highways for remedial works despite their budget being limited
- We are in regular contact with the local Police team and the mobile speed camera is often seen in the parish
- We have purchased a second portable Speed Indicator Device and both devices are moved around various locations to try and encourage drivers to slow down
- WNC Highways have installed a post on Brafield Road from which they have been capturing speed data. From now on we can also use it as an additional location for our Speed Indicator Devices
- We have purchased a post and sign for New Hackleton which means that the Speed Indicator Devices can also be located there
- Various speed reduction signage has been purchased including our cut out Police Officers and Crossing Patrol figures which are located near to the school
- We are very grateful to our Community Speedwatch team of volunteers who were active during the year and will also be on patrol this year. They always welcome new volunteers so if you are interested or would like more details, please contact Alison.

Street Lighting

All street lights have had their electrical testing certificates renewed and all columns have been structurally tested. This resulted in two columns in Willoughby Way, Piddington having to be replaced. Unfortunately a lighting column in Regent Way Horton was also badly damaged by a vehicle and had to be removed and replaced. Several others lights have had to be repaired.

Parish Council News

I would like to thank all councillors for their continued hard work and dedication to our parish. They are all holders of public office who volunteer their time for free.

We have very recently said goodbye the James Clark who has stood down as a councillor. Grateful thanks go to James for his service to the council. We are currently recruiting for a new councillor and if you are interested, please contact Alison for more details.

We are very lucky to have Alison Benson as our Clerk, Alison works extremely hard to ensure the Council is run legally and efficiently whilst implementing and overseeing all parish council decisions and projects. She is also very much the first port of call for residents via email, telephone or her regular monthly surgeries in the Coffee Shop.

Claire Sparkes our very conscientious litter picker also has additional duties in Piddington Cemetery and on the Recreation Ground and we thank her for her commitment and hard work.

Steve Taylor our Groundsman is doing a good job looking after the Parish despite the weather being against him for most of the winter and early spring.

Our Planning Committee works diligently responding to planning consultations issued by West Northants Planning Department and ensures that the Hackleton Neighbourhood Development Plan is fully considered and adhered to.

All Parish Councillors and the Parish Clerk attend many meetings, conferences and training events which over the last 12-months have included: Planning briefings, planning training, health and wellbeing partner meetings, employment briefings, community governance briefings and much more.

The Parish Council meets monthly (except August) with all agendas, minutes and information available on our website.

Future projects

We are currently negotiating with Grand Union Housing Group to take over the open green spaces in front of The Crescent and at the top and bottom of Carey Road. This will ensure that the open spaces are better maintained and cared for.

The commemoration event to mark D-Day 80 will take place in Piddington Cemetery on Thursday 6th June from 8:30pm. We hope that many of you will be able to attend. If you would like a lift to the cemetery, please contact Alison as we have the ABILITY Community Transport Scheme available for the evening.

We await further proposals from our working parties to enable us to further their initiatives including wildlife & biodiversity, health & wellbeing and highways & road safety.

And finally, those of you present last year will recall that the parish council was delighted to grant its first honorary freedom of the parish to Godfrey Tobutt. The honorary freedom is the highest honour that a parish council can bestow and it is a huge recognition of many years of service and commitment to the parish. This year it gives me great pleasure to confirm that the honorary freedom of the parish has been bestowed on a lady who back in the 1960's set up the local pre-school which is still going strong today, this lady has devoted decades of her life to our local children and is a huge champion of our community. I would like to ask Sheila Nunn in recognition of her exceptional service to our community to accept the honorary freedom of Hackleton Parish.

Guest Speakers

Phil Larratt, Cabinet member for Highways & Transport, West Northants Council

Councillor Larratt explained that WNC has statutory duties which include keeping the highways safe. Other statutory duties include education, children's services and adult social care. Unfortunately due to budget constraints and an overspend in children's statutory services of £13m last year, community services which include highways have had to be curtailed.

The local highway network needs an investment of £291m to undertake all repairs. There are currently 8477 highway cases on report which need attention of which 971 are located within Hackleton Parish. The 971 cases will cost £2.24m to repair and the total West Northants Highways budget is £24m. In the last year there have been 180 emergency repairs within the parish and 40 insurance claims have been settled.

Over the last 4/5 years Highways have not been in a position to employ sufficient highway inspectors which means that contractors have been working on the highway network without being sufficiently inspected and this has compound some of the issues.

Investments have been made in new equipment which can undertake more repairs for the same costs and the equipment is highly efficient and makes lasting and more sustainable repairs.

The Queen Eleanor junction should have been upgraded 2 years ago before the first property on the Hardingstone Sustainable Urban Extension was occupied. WNC Highways keep submitting plans to National Highways who keep changing their requirements. The scheme should be finalised this year and will result in wider lanes, more running lanes and changes to the traffic light regime.

The WNC Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy is currently out for consultation.

Central Government has delegated powers to allow local councils to enforce moving traffic offences. Five sites in and around Northampton have had cameras installed for this purpose.

The Local Transport Plan is being developed and should be out for consultation later this year.

Q & A Session

- Why had Sansome Close not been resurfaced when Lyne Walk was done as it is older and promises were made some 19 years ago but never fulfilled - Councillor Larratt took the information and will speak with his Assistant Director regarding the issue.

- Safety concerns were raised about turning right out of Waitrose onto the B526 – Councillor Larratt will take the comments on board
- If the Queen Eleanor junction should have been improved before houses were occupied why wasn't development stopped – Highway modelling is fed into any new development proposals but enforcement is costly and usually ineffective in such circumstances
- Could a park and ride service be provided for the hospital – community transport schemes are being looked at and a bus service improvement plan to support rural areas
- Can the overspend in children's services be explained – The number of children in care is very high and finding them placements is very difficult which results in additional travel costs. There is not sufficient local SEN facilities and it can cost up to £2k pw to transport children to appropriate facilities. There will be a new local centre at Tiffield which should reduce costs.

Sylvia Newnham – Wellidogs

Wellidog is a small local charity based at Grendon Lakes. It was set up 30 years ago with two rented kennels and it now has fifteen. It employs one full time member of staff and one part timer. It is a registered charity with a board of trustees. If someone agrees to take on a dog, they have to agree not to pass it on if you can't keep the dog, it must go back to Wellidog. This enables the charity to keep track of all dogs. Nine dogs have been successfully placed within Hackleton Parish. If anybody would like to volunteer to walk the dogs please get in contact. Many residents make donations from the parish and this is very much appreciated – thank you.

Judith Willoughby Charity

A letter of thanks was read out from a local resident who had benefitted from a grant from the Judith Willoughby Charity towards university costs. The Charity is desperately in need of a secretary. This is not an onerous position and if anybody could spare some time please get in contact.

Final Thoughts

West Northants Unitary Council is responsible for many local services including Highways, footpaths, refuse collection and planning. The parish council is responsible for the outdoor gym, the play equipment, street lighting, street furniture and is always looking at ways to improve our parish. What we do is funded through the precept and all expenditure is subject to extremely rigorous scrutiny. We couldn't do what we do without the people involved either directly or indirectly. We would like to thank you all for your hard work and commitment to our community. We hope that you will agree that the Parish Council provides good value for money. If there is anything that you would like to suggest to us that we could do to make our parish an even better place to live, work and play then please do contact us.

Questions were invited from the floor but there were none.

Informal Session

Residents were then invited to speak to local groups and stakeholders who were positioned around the room and included: Group 8, Coffee@Carey and the Carey Baptist Church, Hackleton WI, Just Sing! Piddington Churchyard Group, Longland Meadow Volunteer Group, Hackleton Football Club, Neighbourhood Police Team, Neighbourhood Watch, Police Liaison Representative, The Parish Council, Team Thomas, Resilience and Innovation Northants, The Fireworks Society, Hackleton Footpath Wardens, Ability community Transport, The Judith Willoughby Charity and Maureen Williams with her local history books.

Refreshments were enjoyed throughout the evening. The meeting closed at 9pm.

