

Minutes of Fritwell Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday, 15th May 2017 following the AGM in the Village Hall

Present: Councillors Ultsch, Foster, Rooth, Stillgoe, Barlow, District Councillor Kerford Byrnes, County Councillor Arash Fatemian and the Clerk.

Residents: Jenny Paviour, Mike Dockrey, Helen Metcalfe, Rachel Clark, Mike Buffham, Beryl Ozog, David and Gail Barnhill, Anthea Unsworth.

1. Apologies: Councillor Reeves.

2. Minutes of APM held on Monday, 16th May 2016

These were read, agreed and signed by the Chair as a true record. Proposed by Councillor Barlow and seconded by Councillor Rooth.

3. Matters Arising:

- Councillor Foster asked County Councillor Fatemian to confirm that the fencing around the pond was due to be replaced during 2019. Councillor Fatemian replied that the fencing would remain until at least 2019. He was reminded by residents and Councillors that the date originally specified was 2019.
- The precept for 2017-18 did not rise, despite warnings last year that this was a possibility. This was because OALC advised extreme caution to Parish Councils when considering picking up devolved roles and responsibilities and Fritwell heeded this advice. The Parish Council has therefore not committed to additional provision of services and spending.
- Weed killing in Church lane and other maintenance of village amenities is due for approval so that this can be arranged during the summer season. *(See later in these minutes)*

4. Financial Report and Matters

The annual accounts were presented and accepted as in the previous meeting. A £1 deviance was noted due to rounding issues.

5. Public Participation

Helen Metcalfe queried how long the **New Homes Bonus and Precept Support Grant** were likely to continue. District Councillor Kerford-Byrnes explained that the New Homes Bonus lasts for a maximum of 6 years but depends on when the property is build and this has currently been reduced to 4 years for the newest developments. There are exceptions to the building projects that contribute to this figure, such as affordable housing.

Mower Replacement: The financial implications of this were raised and Councillor Rooth provided an update; the mower is currently consuming considerably more oil than it should, although no leak has been identified. Any repairs are likely to become uneconomic in the foreseeable future. At the end of this growing season, the future of the mower will be reviewed. Consideration will need to be given to replacement versus the use of a contractor, although the size of the mown areas may make the use of a contractor uneconomic. The Church PCC may choose to go their own way on this issue (costs are currently shared with the PC). **Gail Barnhill** suggested that the Parish Council could liaise with the Village Hall committee who use a local contractor and this was accepted as worthy of consideration at the appropriate time. **Mike Dockrey** expressed the wish that the arrangement whereby the PCC currently share the mower and associated costs with the Parish Council be made publicly known. He also reminded the meeting that he provides accommodation for the mower and has recently organised replacement tyres, the administration for which has been at his own expense. He is keen that the PCC separate from this shared arrangement in due course. Councillor Foster thanked Mike on behalf of the Parish Council, for all his hard work and efforts associated with the mower and reiterated that this was greatly appreciated by all concerned. She also confirmed that the Parish Council will make the shared costs arrangement clear publically going forward for as long as this arrangement is in place.

Gail Barnhill noted that the way the accounts for 2017-18 were presented shows an apparent shortfall between anticipated income and expenditure. Councillor Barlow explained that this was because there was half the precept due to be paid in September which rectified the figures. It was noted that the format and presentation of the figures could be improved and clarified and the Parish Council will give this due consideration. It was also noted that the way the budget has been presented is over ambitious, potentially not allowing sufficient reserves at the end of the year. Caution will be necessary for the remainder of the financial year when approving expenditure and next year's budget will need to factor in a carry forward approximately equal to the precept. **Action: Clerk, Finance Councillor and Audit Councillor to consider.**

Councillor Kerford-Byrnes explained that the reserves at the end of the financial year should be approximately equal to the precept. He also recommended contacting Belinda Davies of Oxfordshire County Council Highways Department who is responsible for negotiating contracts for grass cutting. In some instances, OCC will pay Parish Councils for undertaking the grass cutting on their urban (within 30 mph zone) verges. **Action: Clerk to investigate and feedback to mower committee.**

Refurbishment of gates and benches: This biennial expenditure was approved. It was requested by various residents that the repainting of the gates be completed before the Open Gardens event on 25th June 2017. **Action: Clerk to make arrangements.**

Posters on the fencing around the pond: Concern has been raised by letter from Sheila Delahunt. The posters on this fence are proliferating and some are attached by

screws and bolts, making them semi-permanent. It was also noted that some of these are for events outside Fritwell. County Councillor Fatemian explained that the Parish Council has no legal powers to prevent this. The street furniture used to display signs (the fence in question, telegraph poles etc) are the property of OCC and they have the power to remove signs that are inappropriate. This power can be delegated to the Parish Council who could create a formal policy, stipulating guidelines for acceptable signage. This could be sent to organisations displaying signs with a warning that the signs will be removed if they do not comply.

It was agreed that such action is not required yet but may be considered in the future. In the meantime, the Speedwatch banner will be relocated and the Clerk will place an entry in Three Parishes magazine, explaining that temporary fixing of signs for a short period of time will be permitted, providing they are for village events and do not damage the fence. **Action: Clerk.**

5. Any Other Business:

Helen Metcalfe and **Anthea Unsworth** expressed thanks to the Parish Council for all their hard work and to Councillor Ultsch in particular for all her years of dedicated service as Chair. This was unanimously agreed. Helen, as previous Clerk, together with the current Clerk, emphasised their gratitude and appreciation for all the support and encouragement given to them by Councillor Ultsch over very many years.

Thanks were also expressed to the Footpath Team for their hard work in making Fritwell's footpaths accessible and clear.

Councillor Foster reminded everyone about the **MCNP Forum Open Meeting** to be held on Wednesday 17th May in Steeple Aston Village Hall at 7.30pm and encouraged all those who are interested to attend and question the Forum members as the recent 'Health Check' on the Plan has raised some key issues, in particular those related to the loosening of settlement boundaries and street lighting.

Dates of Next Meeting:

Parish Council: Monday, 3rd July 2017 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.