

KINGS CLIFFE PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING

The Annual Public Meeting of the Parish Council was held on Thursday 10th April 2014 at 7.30.pm. at the Kings Cliffe Village Hall.

13/210 : Welcome : The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, saying it was good to see more people than normally attended.

13/211 : Present : Chairman A. Howard, Vice-Chairman M. Day, Councillors L. Crane, G. Kingston, N. Ford, R. Brown, G. Caddick, R. Meadows C. Williams, J Atkinson and District Councillor R. Glithero. Ten members of the public attended.

13/212 : Apologies for Absence : County Councillors H. Smith and Councillor C. Leuchars

13/213 : Minutes of the Public Meeting held on 13th April 2013 : Circulated and approved

Proposed : Councillor Caddick Seconded : Councillor Ford

13/214 : Matters Arising : none

13/215 : Chairman's Annual Report

Chairman Andrew Howard welcomed the members of the public and admitted he had not prepared an official report, as usually so few members of the public came to this Annual Meeting.

He explained that the Parish Council had very limited power to influence decisions. We do not make planning decisions, we are consultees in the planning process.

Recently there had been a big change in the village, with the Sovereign Grange estate off Wood Road. Although the PC had been informed this would take up to five years, progress has been far more rapid. This has a noticeable impact on traffic within the village and surrounding roads. We were assured that the planned traffic calming measures for Wood Road and the road markings from the new estate would be in place before the building began. However, these still are not in place, despite constant reminders both to Persimmon and NCC Highways. ENC Enforcement Officers are now involved in this matter.

There is also a dispute with the developers regarding a footpath from the estate into Willow Lane; we are in discussion regarding this matter. For this cause, we are looking to obtain ownership of part of Willow Lane to allow this to be completed to give access to the Village Field and to Kings Cliffe Active from the lane.

The Village Field is adjacent to the Millennium Wood in Willow Lane; we feel this will be akin to a park, for all informal leisure activities; we are applying for a grant to bring this into use as soon as possible. As it is immediately opposite the KCA entrance, this will be a bonus to all parties.

The Horsewater, adjacent to the Churchyard, has been successfully renovated in the last few months.

Cemetery : the old part of the cemetery is virtually fully used; but there are plots and cremation plots available for purchase in the extension.

Underground Youth Club : Katy Weeks, who has made this Club so very successful is sadly leaving in August; her role will be a difficult one to fill but it is sincerely hoped this wonderful facility will continue to grow under a new manager.

The Village Plan : Councillors Atkinson and Leuchars have worked extremely hard with this. It is the third or fourth plan to be made over the last fifteen years. This will be published at the end of April and covers all aspects of the village and should provide a snapshot of where we are.

School Reorganisation : As everyone is aware, there are big changes to the schools system. There have been many meetings. The numbers at the Middle School had dropped from 240 to 113; it was inevitable there must be changes. The second part of the consultation involves the changes from a

3-tier system to a 2-tier system. The Parish Council are unanimous in their support to ensure there is a school in the village.

The Chairman closed his report saying he felt he had covered most items, but questions would be welcomed during the open forum to follow

13/216 : County Councillor Heather Smith's Annual Report

I am sorry that I cannot be with you tonight so here is my report to the Parish for 2013/14.

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 weather is improving. 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 partly 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. The introduction of Superfast to the rest of the County bringing broadband speeds of up to 30mbs is now underway. This development represents a key technological and infrastructural foundation for the future economical 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 are currently working on another bid to get funds to ensure around 98% of the county gets covered by the end of 2017

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. The start in Oundle will be 11am and Oundle Town Council are organising a number of events in the days before the 7th May. Full details can be found on their website.

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. The new year is just starting so if you have any community projects do remember to tell me about them as I may be able to help. In addition to this scheme I also administer the money coming from the Augean waste site in connection with the low level radioactive waste. Although parishes eligible to apply have to be within a 10 mile radius of the site it has been agreed that priority will be given to those parishes within a 5 mile radius. I am keen that this money be used to help support local groups to remain viable. During the past year I granted £6000 from the Augean fund to Kings Cliffe Active and Underground to help with their running costs.

Education in North East Northamptonshire

Locally a big issue has been the consultation on a possible change in the education system from 3 tier to 2 tier and the closure of the middle school in Kings Cliffe. This is the only part of the County still operating a lower, middle and upper school system. The consultation on 2/3 tier has now closed and the first decision will be made next Tuesday on the principle of change.. Certainty over what is to happen is essential for all communities affected. There are no plans to close any of the rural lower schools but the consultation was to establish if the lower schools could become full primary schools keeping children on site until the age of 11. The middle schools would then not exist anymore and the secondary school – Prince William would take the children from age 11 instead of 13.

The closure of the middle school in the village is likely to happen at the end of the summer term. We are currently in the middle of the statutory closure notice period

The education results in this part of the County at both middle schools and upper school are simply not good enough, we need a step change to improve standards with everyone working together. Currently the overall results from these schools are in the bottom 30% for the County, I want to see us in the top 30% and this is what the change is all about.

I am confident that after the Easter break discussions will commence on building a new 4-11 school in Kings Cliffe on the middle school site. I am exploring another option for that site too but need the decision next week before I can go any further.

Cllr Heather Smith

13/217 : District Councillor Roger Glithero's Annual Report

District Councillor Glithero congratulated the Parish Council on everything they had achieved in the way of facilities for the community.

For the fifth year in succession there had been no increase in Council tax in the district. This has been achieved by the sharing of services with other districts and a considerable reduction in staff numbers.

There has been a noticeable reduction in landfill charges due to sensible use of the recycling bins and facilities; also a great reduction in the amount of food waste; it is felt that the use of separate food waste bins has made people much more aware of the amount of food which was being wasted and this is a big plus for everyone. ENC are in the top 25% councils in the country for their management of recycling and landfill charges reduction.

The Court of Appeal has upheld the previous decision of the High Court to quash a Planning Inspector's approval for a wind turbine development close to Lyveden New Bield. A similar pre-application for Apethorpe has also been refused.

Sovereign Grange is now creating money which can be applied for under the Communities Fund.

Schools : Councillor Glithero felt this issue was in hand and the Chairman had covered this in his report.

High Speed Broadband : NCC are hopefully bringing forward the dates for larger villages to receive this; Brigstock should profit from this and it is hoped that we may also benefit; no actual date is confirmed but he hopes to hear fairly soon.

Everyone may not be aware of a pre-proposal for seventy six holiday homes in Fineshade Forest. This may or may not happen; there are many concerns from local villages and leisure groups; it is also felt this could create many traffic problems. If it comes to a full proposal, all Parish Councils will be fully consulted.

He had given a percentage of his DC Empowerment Funds to projects in Kings Cliffe.

Kings Cliffe Heritage has received £7,000 with from a grant towards the opening of the new Heritage Centre in the old school house in Bridge Street.

Councillor Glithero said he is a great fan of the Parish Gazette and congratulated all the volunteers in the various parishes who work so hard to produce this free publication every month, thus keeping everyone up to date with local news.

The Chairman thanked him for his report

13/218 : Open Forum

The Chairman invited question from the audience.

The first query referred back to the fencing of the Park play area, suggesting that if this was fenced, it would stop dog fouling and possibly misuse by youngsters on motor-bikes. The Chairman replied that to date, there had been no problem with motor-bikes and felt it was unlikely; fencing the area would eventually result in expensive maintenance costs, but agreed that some boundary delineation was essential. However, until the handover happened, apart from asking Persimmon to carry out the work, there was little we could do.

Katy Wilshaw raised various queries regarding more new houses in the village, the future of the schools etc., saying that there were many rumours circulating within the Ex-Servicemen's Club and residents were very worried; should she start a petition against this? The Chairman explained there were no current plans for more new homes, therefore it was not possible to start a petition about something which had not been officially proposed. He suggested that many of the items queried would be within the Village Plan and suggested the lady should read this once it is published. This also applied to objecting to the cabins, discussed by Councillor Glithero in the Forest. No proposal has yet been received.

The question was raised about traffic problems within the village - parking traffic, speeding, congestion etc. The Chairman pointed out that these were perennial problems, which have been discussed time and time again and there really is no answer. We are constantly asking for flashing speeding signs, etc., to aid traffic calming; the speeding sign which was in the area for the month of November was hailed as very successful – we would like to have these permanently – but it would appear that NCC Highways rarely install traffic calming measures, unless the Casualty Officer deems it necessary for public safety.

As far as congestion is concerned, obviously the new estate has exacerbated congestion problems, although this had been anticipated, there was no answer to this. The speeding on Wood Road should be hopefully curtailed when the chicanes are erected adjacent to the entrance to Oak Lane. The fact that there is access to Park Street via Royce's Lane, Coleman's Lane and Forest Approach are helpful to pedestrians going to the shops. Sadly, there are no pedestrian walk-ways into West Street; none of the old footpaths are accessible and it is unlikely anyone will allow precious land to be used to create one. This could reduce vehicle movements from Sovereign Grange to the Village Shopper, but again, is unlikely to happen.

Simon Fairhall, admittedly not a resident, but a trustee of KCA, felt that the Village Field could conflict with the aims of the Sports Area. The Chairman said that the Parish Council intended the Village Field to compliment, not work against KCA. The Field could be used for events for which KCA does not have the enough space and create more parking space and room for larger events which might need marquees or the like. Mr. Fairhall also felt that the last paragraph in CC Heather Smiths report was rather unhelpful.

Charles Tomalin from Park Street asked if it was possible for the village map in Hall Yard to be updated. David Hellard replied to this question, saying it was in hand.

The question of the very slow broadband speed in the village was raised. Both County and District Councillors had mentioned this in their respective reports; it is hoped that the service could be brought to larger villages such as Brigstock and Kings Cliffe earlier than the dates given NCC for the connections.

There were no further questions; the Chairman thanked all those attending and invited them to stay for the monthly meeting if they so wished.

