



## Minutes from the Annual Parish Assembly held at Oveston Parish Hall, Tockington, on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2018 at 7.30 p.m.

**Present:** Mr John Hughes (Chairman), Mr Richard Panes, Mr Tony Williams, Mr Martin Gibson, Mrs Catherine Offer, Mrs Pat Savage, Mrs Nina Lewis-Leaver, Mr Adrian Baxter, Mr Robert Harris, Mr Matthew Riddle (District Councillor) + > 55 parishioners

### Apologies for Absence – Mr & Mrs R Newley

Parishioners were welcomed by John Hughes, who gave a brief safety presentation before introducing the other eight Councillors. Mr Hughes noted that a copy of the evenings presentations would subsequently be available on the Parish Council website ([www.olvostonparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.olvostonparishcouncil.gov.uk)). The meeting was then introduced to Richard Lewis and Anna Perry of the Great Western Air Ambulance Service who gave a talk on this important service based in Filton, and then Anna Perry unveiled the Tree Charter hung at the back of the Parish Hall.

Richard Rogers the Parish Clerk, reviewing the 2017/18 finances began with the need to maintain an adequate level of reserves of £20k. This covers a contingency of £15,000 in the event of an unforeseen event or if the District Council fails to provide the precept payment on time. Money is also kept to fund the costs of a contested election, and some money still remains from Parishioner donations to specifically maintain the defibrillators. The Parish Council when setting the budget each year plans to maintain existing standards, to look at ways of improving the local environment, and to start looking proactively at what could be passed down from South Glos Council under Localism.

The Parish Council's main income is the Precept. Although it does also charge peppercorn rents to several clubs & societies, it is the Parish Council's long held belief that the clubs & societies using its facilities are done for the benefit of local parishioners so it is wrong to charge more than a nominal rent. The 'Community Infrastructure Levy' promised from Building Projects this year has not been confirmed but is unlikely to be more than the £52 received last year. The Parish has not this year pursued external grants or other potential sources of income, but did receive donations totalling £750.

The Parish Council does have access to its reserves to fund work, and £10k of reserves was spent in 2016/17. Although acceptable in one year, this is unsustainable in the longer term so the Precept was significantly increased last year to just over £50k, in anticipation of future Localism charges and the pressing need to maintain further parts of the Parish's infrastructure, (This was in line with many other Parish & Town Councils). The Precept has been fixed for 2018/19. 'The other Income' the Parish Council received in 2017/18 included £3,700 of reclaimed VAT from works done in the previous year.

As can be seen, expenditure continues to rise with more works taken on, the hours worked by the Clerk measurably increased and money also set aside for long term projects including Biodiversity and others.

**Bank Reconciliation** – Although Reserves are higher than necessary, a controlled reduction is difficult to manage. Governmental comments about also capping Parish & Town Councils to 2% annual increases are also disturbing, as this would mean a local poll costing in the region of £4,000 if the Precept needed to rise by more than £1,000!

**Receipts** – Confirms the historical reliance on the Precept. Grants & Donations can be sought for ‘significant projects’ but they are difficult to obtain to support ongoing costs that are an increasing part of Parish spend. The Parish Council is able to reclaim the VAT it is charged one year in arrears – depending on the materials and suppliers it uses.

**Expenditure** – The regular grass cutting contracts are gradually increasing as the Parish Council takes on more responsibility. The Parish also supported repair work in the Allotments for which it has responsibility and the re-fencing of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tennis Court outside this Hall, and this year replaced the play surfaces at the Vicarage Lane play area. Although Project funding appears to have been significantly increased this year, in reality this is the normally budgeted figure, predominantly funded from reserves and progress dependant on a number of factors. Indeed several works undertaken on the play areas in recent years could have been identified on these accounts as projects rather than ongoing costs. General administration costs in the coming year include provision for GDPR, potential legal support for renewing leases & licences and ongoing costs with Data Management. The money allocated to Building maintenance is also in line with the normal budgeted figure, and confirms the Councils intention to improve the maintenance of Parish buildings.

Mr Pearce from the floor asked why there was a leap in the actual expenditure in 2017/18 of £50,814 to an anticipated expenditure of £65,445. Mr Rogers replied by noting that the anticipated expenditure did include potential expenditure on an election and money set for projects that may not occur, however there was a planned increase in expenditure for grass cutting contracts being taken over from South Glos Council and especially the potential cost of implementing GDPR identified in the General Administration costs.

Mr Panes reviewed the work of the Recreation & Leisure Committee which maintains the existing infrastructure focusing on the need to create 25 year Leases, to allow Lease holders to seek external funding for development projects. Mrs Lewis-Leaver then introduced the projects being undertaken by the Parish Council, particularly the redevelopment of the Old Down Play Area which is now well beyond its working life. A team of local residents are identifying what is now needed for their children and grandchildren (and grandparents!!), before seeking funding sources. The Parish Council have undertaken support and the obligation to maintain the equipment for as long as practical.

Mr Williams noted the number of planning applications considered by the Parish Council and the fact that the Parish can only recommend, and have no recourse against eventual decisions by the District Council. It is hoped that following the recent Housing Needs Survey and subsequent work on the Joint Spatial Plan that the Parish Council will get the Village Design Statement incorporated into the SGC planning process, and that SGC will adopt the findings of the Housing Needs Survey.

Mrs Savage reviewed the help given by many parishioners across the Community in a variety of roles. Mrs Buckley from the floor took the opportunity to explain to the Annual Parish Assembly that the Old Down

Telephone Box (that she has maintained) was recently destroyed in a car accident, and asked for names of people prepared to support its replacement. Mrs Savage also noted the new project to tackle loneliness that didn't just affect the elderly but people across the age range.

Mrs Offer reviewed the siting of defibrillators around the Parish, the development of 'save-a-life' days to develop awareness of their use, and the practical aspects of life saving, before reviewing the new Biodiversity project that is leading the way in the South Gloucestershire District.

Mr Baxter updated the Assembly with the different ways that the Parish Council tries to communicate with parishioners, the value of the Computer Clinic, and the Speed Watch Group which has 14 volunteers of which 7 have now completed their training to undertake Speed Monitoring exercises. A resident from the floor then took the opportunity to ask when the Parish Council website is being updated, the Clerk noted that several sets of minutes have not been published, partly because they have not yet been approved by the Parish Council and in one instance have not yet been written up by the Clerk for the Council to approve.

Mr Gibson led the Questions from the Floor –

Mr Rod Williams asked 'whether the Parish Council is unreservedly against the Advertising Boards & Dug Out shelters, if it needs to support Olveston United AFC and needs to be aware of parishioner views'. Mr Hughes noted that the Advertising and the shelters were two different issues. Mr Lazell then pointed out that as a previous Councillor he had agreed with the football club to only bring out the hoardings on Match Days and asked what had changed. He noted the level of feeling amongst local parishioners and asked what had changed and questioned whether there were other ways that the football club could raise sufficient finances.

Mr Tim Pearce then asked why the Football Club had been allowed planning permission to extend the QAMP on the Village Green, Mr Hughes responded that Planning Approval is the responsibility of South Glos Council, but at the time the Parish Council were not aware of the specific requirements embodied in the historical Village Green legislation. The Parish Council is aware of one aspect that harm must not be done to the surface of the Village Green and Mr Hughes went onto to describe his understanding of harm that is digging into the surface unless the resultant work is of betterment to parishioners. The Parish Council has now undertaken actions to understand 'harm', 'betterment' and in particular the consequences to facilities in place prior to the 1969 classification, and Mr Hughes suggested that once this exercise is completed a public meeting was required to air both sides of the argument, as a level of understanding was needed.

Mrs Louise Powell asked the Council to clarify who the three landowners were who had objected to Open Spaces Status and why.

PC Ross Cardwell introduced himself as the Severnside Beat Officer, noting that Kelly Dimery was retiring as the local Community Support Officer at the end of May, and offered to have his details added to the Parish website. Mrs Grindal noted that each year questions were raised about the Police presence in the Parish and in particular providing details of the number of crimes attended by the Police in the Parish each year and the number of Crimes that had been resolved - unfortunately PC Cardwell was unable to provide this.

Mr Eric Garrett then raised the issue of space within the existing Cemetery. Mr Mike Wright on behalf of the PCC noted that St Mary's are looking at how to make the best use of the existing space before talking to other nearby churches about potential space that might be considered. Mr Garrett responded by informing

the meeting that in 1960 the Thornbury Rural Council had condemned the existing burial ground, and that in June 1969 the Parish Council had adopted the Burial Act and despite considering its position in 1978, had the responsibility to provide this land – it now had to move forward and secure land.

Mr Richard Lloyd presented the work undertaken by SG Planning Consultation Review Group on behalf of the parish in response to the new 'West Of England Unitary Authority' Joint Spatial Plan.

Mr Hughes summary indicated that 2018/19 will be equally hard for the Parish Council, in that it needs to resolve the consequences of the Village Green Status on the Old Down Recreation Ground and its effect not only on the football club but the implementation of the Play Area, the renovation of the Scout Hut, potential access and development of QAMP to provide suitable changing rooms for all age groups and users; to resolve the Old Down Telephone Box; the shocking state of roads in the South Glos District; supporting the Community; and the continual improvement as to how the Council communicates with the Parish, reminding all parishioners of the regular surgery held every third Saturday at the Methodist Coffee Morning.

Mr Hughes concluded by thanking the 35 parishioners who have been helping with parish council business, but asked for extra help from Surveyors, Lawyers and those who will search the internet for grants. In particular Mr Hughes thanked Mrs Julie Grindal and Mr Richard Lloyd for their help in reviewing SGC Consultations on a wide variety of topics.

Mr Riddle drew the meeting to a close, firstly by thanking the Parish Council on behalf of residents for the work that it does, reminding the meeting that Parish Council doesn't just 'prod' the District Council, but in certain areas actually 'Leads' Council development. Mr Riddle noted that he does try and attend as many Parish Council meetings as he can, and thanked parishioners who also attended the meetings and helped to question the Parish Council, congratulating the parish on the calibre of its residents such as Mr Richard Lloyd.

In conclusion Mr Riddle wished the parish well for the future, and specifically mentioned two other parishioners – congratulating June Robbins who has been the much loved Verger for 43 years and who on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> March received the Royal Maundy money, and Mrs June Lyons who was the Parish Council Chairman for over 25 years and who will be attending a Royal Garden Party on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2018.