

# **PARISH OF WARBOYS**

Minutes of the **Annual Parish Meeting** for the **Parish of Warboys** held on 26th May 2021 at the Parish Centre, Warboys.

## **PRESENT**

Councillor Dr S C Withams, Chairman of the Parish Council in the Chair.

Seven Members and the Clerk of the Parish Council  
2 members of the public.

## **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors R A Payne and P S Potts and District Councillor G J Bull.

## **MINUTES**

Upon being moved and seconded, the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 17th April 2019 were approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

## **MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising from the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 17th April 2019.

## **REPLACEMENT PARISH CENTRE**

The Chairman drew attention to the fact that an exhibition of the plans for the replacement of the Parish Centre had been held earlier in the month which had been attended by in excess of 100 people. Users of the existing building and other village organisations also had been invited to comment on the design and the comments received would be considered by the Council before an application was submitted for planning permission.

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Chairman explained that, due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government had issued regulations cancelling annual parish meetings until 7th May 2021 which had meant that a meeting had not taken place in the previous year. The Local Government Act required a parish meeting of a parish to assemble annually between 1st March and 1st June each year but as the regulations permitting meetings to be remotely had expired on 7th May and Government guidance prevented meetings being held indoors until 17th May, there had been a short window of opportunity for the Annual Parish Meeting to be held before the end of May to comply with the legislative requirement.

The Chairman therefore welcomed those who had attended the meeting and mentioned how privileged she was to be the Chairman of the Parish Council. However she stressed that the Council was very much a team operation and she extended her appreciation to all Members and employees for their support and time in what had been an extremely challenging year due to the impact of the pandemic.

A written report had been circulated summarising activities in Warboys over the past year and the Chairman highlighted various matters from her report.

The pandemic had affected all aspects of life in Warboys including Council business since the first lockdown in March 2020. Meetings of the Council had been suspended temporarily, had resumed on a face-to-face basis and then had been held remotely from November to April inclusive. The Parish Centre had been closed for most of the period until it could be re-opened with reduced attendance levels earlier in May. The playgrounds had been closed from the first lockdown in March until they could be re-opened again in the summer, after which they had been exceptionally well used given the restrictions on travel and holidays.

The Chairman extended her appreciation to everyone who had helped in trying to maintain normal life and services in the community during that time. Volunteers had formed Warboys Unites which had co-ordinated help and assistance for the vulnerable during the pandemic, distributing food and parcels, collecting prescriptions, shopping, etc. Others had arranged a newspaper delivery service temporarily following the closure of Davies' newsagents at Easter 2020, the foodbank service had continued, members of the public had volunteered to litter pick and cut highway verges and councillors had emptied litter bins during the first lockdown. Thanks were extended to the Moat House Surgery and the chemists and their staff who had continued to provide a high standard of care throughout, with the chemists recently having started to administer Covid-19 vaccinations.

The Chairman explained that it had not been considered appropriate to include the usual reports by County and District Councillors at the meeting. Former County Councillor T Rogers had decided not to stand again for election and following the death of District and Parish Councillor Mrs J Tavener in February, Messrs S Corney and M Haines had been elected to the County and District Councils respectively in May, only a few weeks prior to the meeting. Mrs C Sproats had been co-opted to the Parish Council to fill the vacancy that had arisen. Thanks were extended to Councillor Rogers and also to District Councillor G Bull for their efforts on behalf of the community over the past 2 years since the previous meeting.

The Chairman reported that Warboys had continued to grow in size, with the new developments being undertaken by David Wilson Homes and Bellway now nearing completion. Planning permission had been granted for a further 24 dwellings west of Ramsey Road and 8 dwellings south of New Road but allocations in the Huntingdonshire Local Plan for a further 70 to 80 dwellings had yet to come forward. Many people had been working from home or been furloughed since the first lockdown but there had been few additional employment opportunities created locally to accommodate the growth in population. There had been no news about the commencement of the combined heat and power and waste water treatment plants at the Landfill Site but site work had started for two units at Church Road under a planning permission that had been granted previously.

The Chairman also drew attention to the impact of the pandemic on village organisations and events, with many groups being unable to meet. A range of activities had had to be cancelled including Feast Week, VE Day 75, Fireworks Display, Christmas Lights switch-on, Remembrance Sunday service, fetes and bazaars. Churches had been unable to hold services, although some had continued by Zoom, the Library had been closed for most of the past year and sports fixtures severely curtailed. Throughout that time, the Warboys Diary had continued to be published, more frequently than usual in the first months of lockdown, to ensure the community remained aware of the latest news and the Chairman expressed her appreciation to the editors and volunteers who delivered copies to all households.

Following the receipt of over 120 e-mails and letters, the Council had decided to purchase over 6 acres of land adjoining the A141 opposite Wilthorne to ensure that it was retained for public use. The current owner had permitted public access to the land for many years but had decided to sell. Many people had expressed a desire for the land to be maintained for informal public access, stressing how important this had been for their physical and mental well-being during the pandemic lockdowns when travel had been restricted. The transaction was currently in the hands of the Council's solicitors.

The Chairman explained that the Council had had little involvement with the sports clubs in the village in the past as they played their matches at the Sports Field which was in private ownership. Following an approach from the clubs for closer liaison with the Council, a representative had been co-opted to the Leisure Areas Committee whose remit had been broadened to include sports provision and activities.

There had been widespread recognition of the adverse effects of the pandemic on young people due to lockdowns and school closures. The visits by the Connections Bus Project on Friday evenings had had to be suspended with effect from March 2020 and although some outreach work had been funded by the Council for young people in the previous summer holidays, this had had not been well attended as Government guidance prevented the visits by youth workers from being advertised. Until such time as visits by the Connections Bus itself could resume, staff from the Project had recently begun visits to Adams Lyons playground on Friday evenings to provide youth activities, advice and support for young people.

The Chairman reported that complaints had continued to be received from many residents about traffic in the village, including speeding, farm vehicles and heavy lorries. Speedwatch activities could not be undertaken and the Parish Council had been criticised for not doing enough to resolve residents' complaints, even though the Council had very limited highway powers. Nevertheless, traffic calming had been implemented in Fenton Road which the Parish Council had successfully bid for and part funded. A 40 mph buffer zone in Ramsey Road for which the Parish Council had similarly bid had been approved but had yet to be implemented by the County Council. A bid for further traffic calming in Ramsey Road had been unsuccessful. Discussions had been taking place with highway officers about the possibility of improving the crossings of the A141 and Church Road and, following the formation of a Traffic Working Party which included several members of the public, volunteers had been attracted to re-form the local Speedwatch team.

Finally, the Chairman reiterated her appreciation to Members, the Clerk and employees for all their help and support over the past 2 years.

## **FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

The Clerk presented the provisional financial statement for the Parish Council for 2020/21, a copy of which had been circulated with the agenda.

As at the preparation of the report, the Clerk reported that the balances were as follows:-

Earmarked reserves	£580,033
General Fund	£104,734

with the earmarked reserves comprising –

Landfill site fees	£ 12,694
Replacement Parish Centre	£110,000
Capital receipts allocated	£105,039
To replacement Parish Centre	
CIL	£349,300
Vehicle Replacement	£ 3,000

The Clerk pointed out that income in 2020/21 had been supplemented again by Community Infrastructure Levy receipts which had amounted to £120,024 from the David Wilson Homes development at Station Road and the Bellway development south of Farriers Way. The income could only be used for infrastructure improvements as defined in the CIL Regulations and could not be used to subsidise revenue expenditure.

Although the Parish Centre had been closed for much of the past 12 months, the Clerk reported that Government grants for business premises had been received which had amounted to almost £20,000 in 2020/21.

As a result of the growth in the village, the Council Tax Base had risen which provided additional revenue for the same level of precept. Having regard to the major schemes to replace the Parish Centre and purchase land for open space, the Parish Council had decided to increase the council tax precept by 2% for 2021/22 to £81.60 for a Band D property. This remained one of the lowest levels of precept of the larger towns and parishes in Huntingdonshire and was less than half that of the neighbouring parish of similar size at Somersham.

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman then invited those present to raise any matters for consideration. Mention was made of the commendable work of the Warboys Day Centre which had relocated to the Parish Centre and had been able to operate for most of the year as they were supporting vulnerable adults.

Thanks were expressed to the editors of the Warboys Diary for their enthusiasm and work in increasing the number of editions and providing such a valuable source of local information. Similar thanks were extended to the persons who maintained the Council's website and Facebook presence which had contained up-to-date information about Council and village activities.

As litter had accumulated in The Weir, Councillor Green undertook to arrange a working party from the Council to arrange for its clearance.

In answer to a question about the future of the paintings in the hall at the Parish Centre by artists from the Let's Paint Group which had been donated to commemorate the millennium, the Chairman confirmed that they would be relocated in the replacement building when this was completed.

#### **NEXT ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

The Chairman thanked those present for attending and informed everyone that the next Annual Parish Meeting would be held on 20th April 2022.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed.

**Chairman.**