

## MINUTES of ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

Monday 9th May 2016

The meeting commenced at 7.40pm

- 1) **Apologies:** None
- 2) **Present at Meeting:** Mike Blakeman, Trevor Gill, Martyn Heard, Darrell Muffitt, Councillor Chris Williams, Clerk (Helen Hide-Wright).  
**Public:** Alastair Whetstone.
- 3) **Acceptance of minutes of last meeting held on 13 May 2015.** The minutes were accepted as a true record. Proposed: Mike Blakeman, Seconded: Trevor Gill.
- 4) **Chair's report:** Trevor Gill

The year ended 31 March 2016 has seen some significant changes in the way that we operate. Central Government has issued a new Transparency Code and more recently a new Governance and Accountability Guide. We have fully implemented these new requirements. In both cases we were well placed as we were already complying or were able to do so without major changes to the way we operate.

At a more local level the Stratford District Council Core Strategy is progressing well and this should give Avon Dassett protection from a planning perspective going forward against unwanted or inappropriate development in the village.

By very careful financial management we have been able to improve our financial position and we are very grateful to the Avon Dassett Fete Committee who have given us significant financial support during the last financial year.

### The Avon

After many months of uncertainty The Avon was taken into private ownership in the second half of last year and is now once again open for business. A considerable amount of work has gone into refurbishment and this has considerably improved the surroundings. I hope that Steve, Katie and their family feel that their efforts have been worth while and that local residents will support them in the future.

I also feel that it is appropriate now that the sale of The Avon has been completed to record thanks to all residents who gave of their time and expertise to investigate the possibility of taking The Avon into Community ownership. Special thanks should be recorded to Anna Prosser and John Anderson who were instrumental in starting the discussions and then to Darrell Muffitt and Mike Blakeman who helped and added their considerable expertise.

I think that there is general agreement that a private sale was always the preferred option but thanks to the efforts of all concerned we were able to consider the community ownership option.

### The Reading Room

An order has been placed to replace the windows in The Reading Room. Thanks to Martyn Heard for arranging this. It was hoped that this work would have been started by now but hopefully it will be started in the very near future. Once this work has been completed then we will consider what steps can be taken to improve The Reading Room for future use.

### The Green Areas

The appearance of the village has improved over the last 12 months. Thanks to funding from The Avon Dassett Fete Committee we have been able to replace the existing tubs in the village. We are also very grateful to Dave Hicks for supplying the plants for the tubs and also for his hard work in making the pots look so attractive.

There has been a significant amount of tidying done in the village particularly in the area near the bus stop. There is still some more work to be done in this area and this should be done during the next 2 or 3 months. I would like to thank all residents who helped with this work and also to record thanks the many residents who might pick up and odd item of litter, clear a drain when needed or generally help to keep the village in good order.

### Planning

Stratford District Council Core Strategy is progressing well and this should give Avon Dassett protection from a planning perspective going forward against unwanted or inappropriate development in the village. We are also very lucky as a village to have Mike Blakeman looking at planning matters when applications are submitted for our consideration. Mike's input is invaluable. Thank you Mike.

### Fund Raising

I am personally always amazed as to how much money is raised in Avon Dassett for local charities and also to fund local clubs, societies and also the general needs of the village.

Last year in excess of £9,000 was raised by the Soap Box Derby, Open Gardens, the Dassett Country Show and the Tea and Coffee events organised in the village. This is a tremendous achievement for such a small country village. Having worked closely with those of us who help to organise The Dassett Country Show, I have been able to experience the amount of hard work and dedication that is needed to make these events such a success and everyone who is associated with these events should be very proud of what they achieve.

It is sometimes unfair to mention particular people who help to make village events such a success. But I feel that I should give a particular mention to

Natalie Heath who resigned as Chair Of The Avon Dassett Fete Committee at the end of last year. 3 years ago there was a real possibility that the village fete would cease to exist. Natalie together with considerable help from her fellow committee members worked tirelessly to ensure that not only did the fete survive but it has gone from strength to strength whilst she was Chair. Natalie, a big thank you for all of your efforts and hard work.

### Communications

As a part of the Avon Dassett Parish Plan the need to improve communications with residents was identified. Since this document was published information has been posted on the Avon Dassett Community website and on Notice Boards in the village. A summary of activities is also reported monthly, in the Compton Chronicle. However, recently many residents have told us that they would prefer more direct communication, via email.

Avon Dassett Parish Council has implemented a secure mailing list that we will use as the basis for communications and distribution.

This facility circulates information on behalf of Avon Dassett Parish Council. It will also upon receipt of a specific request circulate information on behalf of local clubs societies and fund raisers.

Darrell thank you for your hard work in establishing this facility. It is receiving a very positive response from residents and also from organisations who ask us distribute information on their behalf.

### Thank You

Lastly can I thank my fellow Avon Dassett councillors, our district councillor and county councillor for all of their hard work and support during the last year. Without your help we would not have been able to achieve what we have during the last 12 months.

A special mention must go to Alastair Whetstone who is leaving us after many years of valuable service on the Parish Council. He first joined at a very difficult time and has always strived to serve to the best of his considerable ability. Alastair, thank you and happy retirement!

Last but not least we must say a big thank you to Helen for the way that she always supports us, guides us and generally ensures that the workings of the Parish Council run smoothly. Helen, thank you.

#### 5) County Councillor's Report: Chris Williams

During the past year the County Council has continued with its policy of implementing a savings regime which will produce a final figure of some £92 million of direct savings by the year 2017. It will come as no surprise that the largest single expenditure for the County Council is Adult Social Care followed by Children's Social Services. These two services account for nearly a £200 million spend out of a budget of £400 million.

The introduction of the Care Act put an onus on local authorities. Warwickshire County Council fully subscribes to the principles of the Care Act which ensures that respect is given to the frail and sick at all times. The County's ambition is to ensure that a full care service is available to all aged that are awaiting discharge from hospital. Some years ago, the County concentrated on improving the efficiency of Care Homes under our control and this has proved most useful with implementing the Care Act.

As part of our cost saving exercises throughout the year, the County revised its School Transport policy. One example is the decision made that any new students choosing to go to grammar schools will have to fund the cost of transport. Warwickshire was one of only a handful of counties in the country who provided free school transport to grammar school students. All other transport for school education is funded by the County Council.

The relatively mild winter has dropped the demand for road gritting and as a consequence it has been possible for the Road Gritting Teams to be transferred to Road Maintenance with particular attention to attending to potholes. One only has to drive into adjacent counties to see the success of this decision compared with other adjacent counties.

We now have a very successful Flood Prevention Team based in Shire Hall and the Team is currently taking steps to ensure that the flooding experienced in Cumbria and Somerset does not occur in Warwickshire.

Last December we started preparing the Budget for this year. As in previous years certain assumptions were made as to how much Grant Support we will be receiving from Central Government. When the figures were revealed they were significantly lower than we had anticipated. This made setting the Budget extremely difficult. However, there were some concessions. We appealed to central government to reconsider their Grant Support and fortunately the government, as a result of lobbying by the Conservative administration at Shire Hall, agreed to increase our allocation by some £6 million over the next two years. They also allowed us to increase the amount the Council Tax was raised by ensuring that the rise was ring fenced. This year the Council Tax increase is 3.99% of which 2% is ring fenced to cover Adult Social Care whilst the remainder covers the increased cost of administering the Council. For example, increased cost of insurance, staff salaries etc. Central government has indicated that over the next five years the amount of Grant Support will be reduced and local authorities will have to raise the funds from other sources, such as Business Rates that are currently given to the government. Whilst this sounds attractive Warwickshire, being a mainly rural area, does not attract the same amount of Business Rates as other authorities.

As far as Unitary Authorities are concerned, this could be an interesting proposal especially since it is believed that the savings could amount annually to at least £20 million. Unfortunately, there is opposition to this proposal, a preference being to create two Unitary Authorities for Warwickshire, one in the north and one in the south. Government

guidance does not support this proposal since the population for each area proposed would be significantly lower than the half-million required.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking Trevor Gill, as Chair, and the rest of the Parish Council for the diligent way in which they handle their responsibilities.

6) **District Councillor's Report:** Cllr Bart Dalla Mura, Red Horse Ward, Stratford District Council

The District council has operated had a challenging but productive year. The Core Strategy has been finalised and submitted and is now in the process of being examined by the inspector. This has been a long process, the key challenge being the agreement of the housing numbers.

This has now been agreed and although it is in the upper limit (724 houses per annum) of estimations for the requirement to meet the needs for the projected economic growth of the region. It does mean that the numbers of houses being imposed on our villages and towns has an upper limit and the number of speculative large developments threatening our rural communities should diminish (in the short term at least).

The District Council has also had its first year with the reduced number of Councillors from 54 to 36. The cost saving has been welcome but it has resulted in quite a few more miles for the more rural districts. The Council has also re-structured the senior management team to split the role of Chief Executive. This will lead to cost savings in the future and it is believed to a more democratic way of operating the Council. The membership of the WMCA (West Midlands Combined Authority ) was initially rejected but in a new motion in January it was agreed to join as a non-constituent member. The costs of joining are clear, the benefits quite unclear.

The coming year sees a modest increase in the Council tax but it will be a challenging time as our support from central government continues to be squeezed. The Council is committed to finding costs savings and more efficient ways of working so that we continue to provide a good but cost effective service to our community

Finally I'd like to thank the Chairman and all members of the Parish Council for their commitment and service to their communities.

7) Annual Accounts**FINANCIAL REPORT 2015/16**

Bank Balance @ 31 March 2015:	£11,375.04
Precept for 2015/16:	£10,480.00
Receipts during 2015/16:	<u>£2,547.87</u>
	£24,402.91

Payments during 2015/16:	£8,909.00
Cheque uncleared (1364 £8.45, 1365 £7.41)	+ £15.86*
Minus Chq 1301	- £9.18

Balance carried forward @ 31 March 2016: **£15,500.59**

End of Year bank balances:

Lloyds TSB A/c No 00023602 @ 31 March 2016	£6,495.67
Lloyds TSB A/C No 00140954 @ 31 March 2016 (Note 3)	£9,004.92

**£15,500.59**

**Balance** carried forward for external audit **£15,500.59**

Note 3: This figure represents ring fenced funds for ADPC including any interest received into the account.

**New Balances for Ring Fenced Funds:**

Neighbourhood Watch	£	185.00
<b>St John's Steps appeal Funds</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>359.13</b>
Community Grant Fund (Laptop)	£	10.43
Interest Received	£	0.36
Play area lease grant from AD Fete Committee	£	200.00
RR Maintenance (From Fete Committee)	£	1,000.00
Playground (from fete committee)	£	250.00
Ring fenced RR Maintenance	£	5,000.00
Ring fenced Parish Plan/RR Refurbishment	£	2,000.00
Total	£	9,004.92

Please see Appendix 1 for previous financial year.

8) **Parish Matters:** None.

9) **Open Forum:** No matters were brought to the attention of the PC from members of the public.

The meeting closed at 7.55pm. This was followed by ADPC's Ordinary meeting.

**Appendix 1. FINANCIAL REPORT 2014/15 (Previous Financial Year).**

Bank Balance @ 31 March 2014:	£ 8,086.20
Precept for 2013/14:	£ 9,363.00
Receipts during 2013/14:	<u>£ 1,916.88</u>
	£ 19,366.08

Payments during 2013/14:	<u>£ 8,000.22</u>
Cheque uncleared (1310 £9.18 J. Sherriff)	+ £9.18

Balance carried forward @ 31 March 2015: **£11,375.04**

End of Year bank balances:

Lloyds TSB A/c No 00023602 @ 31 March 2015	£ 4,624.32
Lloyds TSB A/C No 00140954 @ 31 March 2015 (Note 3)	<u>£ 6,750.72</u>
	<b><u>£ 11,375.04</u></b>

Balance carried forward for external audit £11,375.04

Note 3: This figure represents ring fenced funds for ADPC including any interest received into the account.

Neighbourhood Watch	£ 185.00
<b>St John's Steps appeal Funds</b>	<b>£ 359.13</b>
Community Grant Fund (Laptop)	£ 6.59
Play area lease grant from AD Fete Committee	£ 200.00
Tubs (From Fete Committee)	£ 500.00
RR Maintenance (From Fete Committee)	£ 500.00
Ring fenced RR Maintenance	£ 5,000.00
Total	£ 6,750.72