

GREAT CASTERTON PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Parish Meeting

15th. May 2024

The Annual Parish Meeting was held on Wednesday 15th. May 2024 in the Church Hall at 7.20pm

Councillors Alasdair Ryder (AR), Jo Milnes (JM), Ben Shelbourn (BS), Paul Douglass (PD) and Derek Patience, Parish Clerk, were present. In addition, County Councillors David Wilby (DW) and Kevin Corby (KC) attended, together with 7 members of the public.

A24.001 Election of Chairman

Alasdair Ryder indicated his willingness to continue in the post, and was elected Chairman, proposed by JM, seconded BS, all in favour.

A24.002 Election of Vice Chairman

As in recent years, no Vice Chairman was elected

A24.003 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Steve Barker

A24.004 Police Report

No report in the absence of a police representative.

A24.005 Public Questions and comments

None

A24.006 Declarations of Interest

None

A24.007 Chairman's Report

The Chairman's report is appended to these minutes.

A24.008 Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 17th. May 2023

These had been approved at the Parish Council Meeting held on 12th. July 2023. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

A24.009 Review and Adoption of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

There had been no alterations to these documents during the year, and they were adopted on the proposal of JM, seconded BS, all in favour.

A24.010. Review of Inventory of Assets

The Inventory of Assets has not changed since last year, and was adopted on the proposal of JM, seconded PD, all in favour. Total Assets currently £15,797.65

A24.011. Review and confirmation of Insurance Cover for all insured risks

The Clerk reported that we had completed the 3rd. and final year of the 3-year agreement entered into with Zurich Municipal, at which point he would normally obtain new quotes from three separate insurers. However, with the ongoing personal injury claim still being handled by Zurich, he felt it would be prudent to continue with Zurich until the claim is settled. The meeting agreed with this approach and agreed to continue with Zurich on the proposal of AR, seconded JM, all in favour.

Cover remained at last year's figures (£12m Public Liability, Officials Indemnity £12m, £50k personal Accident), with inflation increases on Office Equipment and Street Furniture. Renewal Premium this year £390.91, an increase of £13 on last year's.

PD enquired whether our cover would extend to the proposed Play Area, and the Clerk confirmed that he would need to arrange appropriate cover when it is handed over.

A24.012. Review of the Council's memberships of other bodies

1. Leicestershire and Rutland Local Councils (Annual Sub £327.29). Restructuring of the subscription levels had resulted in a large increase in this year's sub (from £239.33 in 2023), but the Clerk felt this was still good value for the services they provide.
2. Council for Preservation of Rural England – Annual donation £20

It was agreed to continue these memberships

A24.013. Finance – Approval of Certificate of exemption, Annual Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement

Copies of these documents were circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting, and the accounts had been subjected to the internal audit procedure by Katherine Ayton.

(a). Certificate of Exemption: The Council agreed to adopt this Certificate, on proposal of JM, seconded AR, all agreed

(b) Annual Governance Statement: approved on the proposal of JM, seconded AR, all in favour.

(c). Annual Statement of Accounts: approved on proposal of JM, seconded AR, all in favour.

A24.014. Review of Parish Council's policy for dealing with the press/media

There had been no change in this policy, which follows the format in para. 26 of Standing Orders.

A24.015. Review of Parish Council's Risk Assessment & Management

A copy of this document was circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting. It needed a minor amendment relating to the operation of the bank account, which was adopted, and it was agreed that the risk assessments and management thereof were adequate.

A24.016 County Councillors' Reports

DW commented on ongoing issues relating to Great Casterton, in particular the concerns expressed concerning the Water Lane crossroads, and the highways issues relating to the Mallard Pass Solar farm. It was important to keep on top of these concerns, given the current shortage of engineers within the Highways Dept. He also stressed that flood precautions following the winter's excessive rains, and it would be

a good idea to appoint a Flood warden to keep an eye on this. He reported that RCC had received Levelling-up funds, and have made promises on the use of these funds, but we will need to watch what is being spent. He complimented the PC and the many residents involved in the resistance to the College Close planning application which had resulted in its refusal by the Planning Committee, with the appeal period now passed. The PC should continue to support smaller developments such as that at the rear of the Osteopathy Clinic.

KC had now completed his first year as a County Councillor, and was settling into the role. He endorsed DW's comments, but he had experienced many frustrations, especially relating to Highways. Both DW and he were on the Planning Committee and were able to keep up to date on planning matters.

A24.017 Police Report

There was no report in the Absence of a Police representative. It was reported that there had been a change in the North Rutland Beat Officer.

There being no other business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.45pm

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The year began with us wishing thanks to Steve Rowell for his time as a Parish Councillor and also our thanks to Mark Bush, for his long service as Chair and Councillor. Our thoughts and condolences are with Mark, Gill and their family following the recent passing of their daughter, Nicola. The PC is arranging for flowers and a card to be delivered.

We also welcomed a new ward councillor in Kevin Corby and two new Parish Councillors, Paul Douglass and Ben Shelbourn. All are welcome additions, and we thank them for their time.

In most respects the year has followed the pattern of previous years with concerns relating to planning and highways occupying the agenda.

After a largely successful Coronation Fete, the summer months were largely occupied with continued campaigning against the proposed development in College Close. There was broad objection to the development from residents and a concerted campaign led by residents of College Close. It was fulfilling to see this group also exploit the presence of the Parish Council to strengthen their voice. Welcome assistance and advice was also provided, where possible, by our Ward Councillors, for which we are grateful. Ultimately the campaign assisted in highlighting deficiencies in the proposal, which was refused, and the appeal period has now passed.

A new notice board has been erected outside the church and dedicated to John Sylvester. This was in consultation with John Sylvesters sister, Mandy, and kindly supported by donations arising from his funeral.

Efforts from all councillors, and input from parishioners, in responding to consultation on North Stamford development, Regulation 18 review of the proposed Local Plan, Mallard Pass and the Oakwood Homes development are most welcome, and we encourage further participation from residents in PC affairs.

A recent spate of accidents at the Water Lane / B1081 crossroads has alarmed residents. Continued appeals to RCC for constructive engagement on the matter are met with lack lustre responses bemoaning the (accepted) lack of highways engineers.

The PC's concerns have been raised at multiple forums and our MP is aware of our frustration.

In the year ahead the PC will continue its collaboration with other parishes in relation to an automatic speed watch initiative. Additionally, it will seek to canvas opinion from residents on the matter of a Neighbourhood Plan.

Personally, I am hopeful that as councillors we can begin to find the time to focus on more proactive matters, rather than reactive. It is clear that we have a great community spirit and I am hopeful that we can work to develop our somewhat meagre amenity space to further improve the village feel.

Alasdair Ryder, 14th May 2024