

MINUTES OF CHARLTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
Held on Saturday 3 April 2023 at 11am in Charlton Village Hall

Present: Cllr Tom Blanden (Chairman), M Bromley Gardner (Clerk); Wilts Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall; and 24 members of the public.

1. Apologies. Parish Cllr Jenny Walker; Anne Holland.
2. Police. PCSO Juliet Evans of the Community Policing Team was unable to attend the meeting.
3. Footpaths/Rights of Way. Stephen Carroll of Lea Parish's Footpaths Improvement Group spoke about how his Group go about things in Lea Parish.
4. Minutes of Last Annual Parish Meeting. The Minutes of the 2022 Annual Parish Meeting had been available at the back of the Village Hall for members of the public to read before the meeting started; they were proposed, seconded and signed.
5. Chairman's Report. Cllr Tom Blanden reported on behalf of the Parish Council.
 - PC met 7 times in past year, every other month as usual (though the September meeting was delayed into October after the death of Queen Elizabeth), but with an additional meeting in April to consider the Wilts Council Community Governance Review proposal that Charlton should take on Milbourne/Filands etc.
 - We lost Anne Hodgkins from the PC in May – she had been a cllr for 9 years and Chair for the last 3. We were able to co-opt Christian Olejnik within a couple of months and have been at full strength since July.
 - 16 planning applications in 2022. These have included:
 - 3 more Battery sites – Battery Energy Storage Systems – at land off Pond Lane, at Somerford Farm and a further one just south of the Upper Stonehill electricity sub-station
 - And recently an application by National Grid to expand the sub-station itself.
 - That means there are now 12 BESS sites around the sub-station either operational, permitted but not yet built, or applied for but not yet decided. There are rumours of a further 2 applications in the pipeline. These are all intended to feed into the Upper Stonehill sub-station even from up to 5kms away.
 - The PC objected to the 3 additional BESS sites but had no objection to the National Grid expansion application because so far as we can tell it is needed to cope with the increase in house building in Cirencester and Malmesbury, even though we also suspect that it could make the sub-station capable of accommodating even more BESS sites.
 - Minety Solar Farm was approved by Wilts Council during the year; work is expected to start in Q2/2024. 'Five Lanes' 50MW solar farm on Charlton Park Estate land, the 2nd solar farm in the area, is still undecided by Wilts Council.
 - At this point we ought to acknowledge that we receive over £1000 per year, increasing in line with inflation, from the first 2 BESS sites immediately south of the sub-station, and will get more when other sites in the same land ownership are built (I should say not all site landowners and applications offer this); and we will receive £60,000 from the Minety Solar Farm as soon as they start to build it. We will have 40 years in which to spend this solar farm money, after which we have to return anything unspent.

Chairman – signature and date

- Finally on Planning, the PC didn't feel the need to object to any other planning applications this year, other than the BESSs that I've mentioned.
- Precept for 2023/24 – the PC set the precept for this coming year at a reduced level of £9500, which combined with a favourable tax base means a reduction in householder bills of 6.6% - but only on the Parish element of Council Tax..
- Obviously 2 main events that affected us all last year were the death of Queen Elizabeth and that of Lord Suffolk. Lord Suffolk had been a great supporter of the village – we only need to look at this Village Hall and the playing field out there and to reflect that it is Charlton Estate land on a peppercorn rent.
- Another main event of the past year was Wilts Council's Community Governance Review of Malmesbury Town that recommended that we should expand to take on Milbourne and Filands and the land between. The PC objected and the idea was dropped.
- Now to more immediately local PC activity in the past year:
 - Book Exchange – had intended to finish the repaint before this meeting but rain delayed work. Hope to finish before May.
 - The PC has been keen to improve the walking routes – and this has been achieved in 2 ways:
 - going east down the B4040 from the pub – and with the very welcome active support of the pub management – we have widened the usable part of the footpath there making it much more usable.
 - And going west down the B4040 we have cut back the vegetation blocking the verge on the south side between Pikefield Crescent and the lane to Noahs Ark and Lea, so this is now usable.
 - And the point about all this is to encourage walking by opening up these circular routes, which could also start and finish at the pub thus improving the chances of the village keeping its pub.
- In the Best Kept Village competition the village won the North Wilts Small Villages class – it's not our fault that only 2 villages entered last year! We will enter again this year, and we plan a village clean-up on Mon 8 May tying in with the encouragement to Volunteer on that day.
- The CSW team continue to do an excellent job – our thanks to all members and to Anne Hodgkins who coordinates the team.
- The Community Hub Facebook page has completed its first year – well-used – and now has 400 members.
- Looking ahead – an important piece of work for this year is to see if we can do anything about the dangers at the junction B4040/Tetbury Lane/Park Street. Our Wilts Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall, who is here, has taken an interest to help us and has viewed the problem area, as has the Highways Engineer who advises the Malmesbury Area Highways group – named the Local Highways and Footpaths Improvement Group. Our case comes up at the LHFIG next week.
- The defibrillator – there's a development – the Activation Radius has increased from 200 metres to 400 metres.

6. Finances. Cllr Marion Adkins, the RFO, handed out and explained details on a detailed summary of the 2022/23 accounts. She forecast an end-of-year balance of £12,800 of which £800 was in the Community Fund.

7. Short Report from Wiltshire Council. Wilts Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall gave a brief report from Wiltshire Council. Wiltshire Council had been short-listed for Local Authority of the Year.

Chairman – signature and date

8. Recreation Centre Report. Dorian James, Chairman of the Recreation Centre Committee, reported.

- After the AGM in January the Committee was stable.
- Village Hall well-used, daily events also birthdays, anniversaries, weddings.
- Good finances, operating profit of £2,000, £14,000 in the bank.
- Upcoming work – improve the flooring, oven cleaning.
- Future hopes – possible hearing loop, PA system, lighting system. Intent to future-proof the Hall.
- Playground improvement – anything meaningful could cost £50K-£70K. Need Project Management help from any experienced resident.
- Cricket Club raises money for the Hall, please join if interested.

9. Any Other Business. Points were raised as follows:

- Noisy manhole covers outside Yew Tree Cottage.
 - One of the covers was repaired by Wessex Water some months later.
- Footpath under water between pub and Yew Tree Cottage.
- PC asked to take a view on not welcoming the hunt into the area.
 - The PC considered and rejected this point at the July PC meeting.
- After the item on Footpaths, what will we do about it?
 - Rights of Way Group now formed.
- Impact of SID?
 - Provides info on speeding which is fed to police. Speeds approaching front (can see the display) are lower than speeds approaching rear (cannot see display) – proving that it works.
- In honour of Coronation, paint the crown on the book exchange.
 - Has been done.
 - Bell ringing – almost too late, but not quite, to train new ringers in time for Coronation – new ringers invited.

The Annual Parish Meeting closed at 12.28pm.

Chairman – signature and date