

Great Budworth

MINUTES of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING for GREAT BUDWORTH held at the Parish Hall on Monday 13th May at 7pm

1. Attendance

Present: 17 electors of the Parish of Great Budworth (incl. 7 Parish Councillors); 2 District Councillors; Parish Clerk.

2. Election of Chairman

Cllr Jenny Bowman was elected as Chair of the meeting

3. Minutes of the last Annual Meeting

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 14th May 2018 were agreed as an accurate record

4. Report by the Parish Council on its business over the past year

Annual Report of Vice-Chairman

It has been a challenging year

- We had a Parish Councillor resignation;
- The Parish Clerk resigned;
- Without a doubt the most difficult time has been the illness and death of the Chair Hilary Brudenell who is sadly missed.

Projects delivered / achievements

- The War of the Worlds filming which has resulted in a healthy financial position for the Parish Council;
- Following long delays and constant chasing of Cheshire East the completion of the work to repair the damage to Westage Lane;
- The website has been updated which is an improvement in terms of layout and content
- The completion of the initial phase of tree work to the Avenue;
- The re-surfacing of the two sections of the Avenue, which has significantly improved access to the school and helped with school-time parking as parents can now access via the Farthings;
- Dog fouling signs have helped with, but not eradicated, problems with dog fouling;
- We have had to update all documentation with regard to GDPR;
- Work to replace the Lime Trees outside Noah's Ark;
- Scoping work and tenders for remedial work to the Lower Pump House;
- The new Parish Council post box on the Parish Hall;
- The update to the Parish Assets report;
- The recruitments of the Parish Clerk, Gill Ayres, who has hit the ground running and picked up a lot of key issues

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Projects for 2019/20

- Continue to try and find a solution to the parking issues in the village;
- Finalise the installation of the mirror at the junction of Farthings Lane and Heath Lane
- Completion of the work to the Lower Pump House;
- Update Lease Agreements for Parish Assets
- Continue to work with CW&C Highways to resolve safety issues at the A559 junction and the unsafe bus stops;
- Options for safe walking routes to neighbouring villages.

Parish Clerk's Report

I only took over the job of Parish Clerk in January. I was a Town Planner before I retired so that part of the job is straightforward for me, and I was a Civil Servant, so the admin side of things is second nature. But it's still been a pretty steep learning curve and I'm grateful to the Parish Councillors for their support, and to Rachel, the previous Clerk for the hand-over she gave me.

I've already learned a lot, from that first evening when I was handed a laptop and printer and had to set them up and get them talking to each other, to more recently when I've been submerged in the Election and Internal and External Audits of Parish Council finances. I've learned how to upload material to a website, how to do PAYE submissions, how to get trees lopped, source no parking signs, how to negotiate with Nat West Bank, the Land Registry and film studios. And above all I've learned that I can't just invite Parish Councillors to a meeting, I have to officially summons them!

I confess that I'm still finding it difficult to cram all this into the six hours a week I'm contracted for, but in a village so rich in history with a strong sense of community and a unique environment, it certainly feels very worthwhile.

Projects that the Parish Council has done over the last year have been covered in the Vice-Chairman's report, so I'm going to focus on the finances. We started the year with a balance of £9800 which virtually matched our precept from Cheshire West and was swelled by £27,500 from the filming of War of the Worlds. I'm rather sorry that I missed the excitement of all that, although I hear the weather was dreadful.

As with other small Councils most of our outgoings over the year are accounted for by administration costs – about £6700 last year, covering things like the Clerk's salary, membership of Local Council Organisations, insurance of our assets, computer software and security, audits, the website refresh and stationery.

Maintenance work to trees and footpaths accounted for about £7700 while Parish Projects took up about £11,803 – much of that being spent on the improvements to the Avenue.

We allocated £1000 for grants to local organisations but only £350 was taken up, and that was by the Budworth Bulletin.

Anyway, all of this means that we go into 2019 with a very healthy reserve of about £23,500 which is earmarked for:

- restoration works to the Lower Pumphouse;

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- signage and parking improvements and a traffic mirror;
- the final stage of planned works to the Avenue; and
- improvements to the Parish Field.

It will be a busy year and I'm very much looking forward to working with the new Parish Council to bring these projects to fruition.

5. Public Forum

Electors of the Parish were given the opportunity to raise issues and the following matters were discussed, which will be considered by the Parish Council.

- An important aspect of the village environment is the presence of large trees which contribute very positively to its unique character. These are getting old and the Council was asked to consider adopting a tree replacement policy to ensure sustainability;
- The restoration of the Lower Pumphouse was welcomed but, rather than funding it all themselves, the Parish Council was urged to look at grant funding from organisations such as the Heritage Lottery;
- It was remarked that some years ago the village had put a lot of energy into the preparation of a Village Plan. Support is now available through the Centre for Sustainable Energy for neighbourhood planning and the Council was asked to consider revisiting this possibility to make the local area more resilient in the face of challenges to the environment;
- Council reserves are strong due to the income from filming War of the Worlds but many residents had experienced considerable disruption during the process and, in recognition of this, the Council was asked to consider using some of the reserves to fund a village social event, perhaps to coincide with the screening of the film;
- It was suggested that, if cars were stopped from parking in the centre of the village, it would present the opportunity to properly plan the space, perhaps along the lines of a village square, and improve the overall village environment.
- Parking in the village was one of the main issues discussed but with no agreement on how to tackle it. Some favoured yellow lines, whilst others were against this, which they saw as a move towards urbanisation. Issues of road safety and access for emergency vehicles were raised as well as environmental quality. The plethora of traffic cones is considered an eyesore by some but a necessity by others. It was also felt that prohibiting parking in the centre would only displace the problem to other parts of the village such as Westage Lane. The Parish Field and effective marshalling of events were seen as having key roles to play in tackling the problem.

The meeting finished at 7.25pm