

North Newnton Parish Extraordinary Council Meeting

Friday 11th March 2022 at 6.30p.m.

Minutes

Present: Cllr Tom Ellen (TE) (Vice-Chair), Cllr Tony Mulliken (TM), Cllr David Brisker (DB) (Vice-Chair). In attendance: Rosie Charnock (Parish Clerk), Wiltshire Cllr (Pewsey Vale) Paul Oatway QPM and 15 Parishioners.

The meeting started at 6.30pm

1 minute silence held in respect for all those caught up in the war in Ukraine.

1 Matters of the Council

Resignations of Cllr Mac McLean (MM), Cllr Olivia Campbell (OCS) and Marcus Stoneham (MS). MS had been chairman of NNPC. PC thanked all three for their service and wished them well.

Meeting Chair. PC turned for advice to PO who clarified that according to the Local Government Act 1972 Section 15 a new chair should be elected at the PC Annual Meeting in May. In the meantime, unless a Chair is elected, a meeting chair will be elected by the councillors at the beginning of each meeting. **TM nominated TE, seconded by DB, carried unanimously.**

Absence apologies and Declaration of interests. Apologies: None. Members are bound by the provisions of the Code of Conduct and are required to declare either personal or prejudicial interests: None declared.

Welcome of new parish clerk. TE introduced Rosie Charnock and welcomed her to the parish council.

Parish Notice. TM thanked everyone for their comments on statement (3rd March 2022) that was put through parishioners' doors.

2 **Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting 21st February 2022** were duly approved by all Councillors present and signed by the Meeting Chair as a true record.

3 **'A motion that the North Newnton Parish Council provide a contribution of £12,800 from NNPC Investment Account funds towards Pewsey CATG Issue 6915 (request for Phase 2B of Footway project – to link Phase 2A to a point by the former Reeder's Garage), thereby reinstating the original funding stream.'**

The Meeting Chair spoke to the Motion: I am a resident of North Newnton, I live on Upavon Rd, I've been a parish councillor for 3½ years and I wish to speak in support of the Motion. Two fearsomely busy roads, Rushall Rd and Upavon Rd join at the Woodbridge Roundabout. The Park Rd junction adds extra danger to Rushall Rd; there are no legacy footways to speak of; both roadways are narrow and visibility is severely restricted in parts. Access to the bus-stops on Upavon Rd is fraught with danger. The cumulative effect is massive risk to pedestrians, riders, cyclists and road users. I am sure we have all experienced or witnessed a 'near-miss' on these roads. I certainly have, and a show of hands indicates most of you have, too. The North Newnton Footway Project is intended to mitigate some of this risk and enhance road safety in this part of the Parish. There is a lot of history to this complicated and complex project, which involves multiple road crossings, restrictions due to buried and overhead utilities, land and land ownership constraints and limited funds from multiple funding sources. The Project cannot be done by the PC or a wealthy individual – by law and regulation it must be done via Wilts Council Highways and to their standards. The gatekeepers are the Pewsey Area Board and the Transportation Group. They meet every 3 months and require funding guarantees. We need to restore our funding guarantee by passing this Motion. Opaque minutes, complex agreements and conflicting documentation make it hard to get an accurate shared understanding. COVID has also had a severe impact and much activity, including this project, pretty much ground to a halt for nigh on two years.

But, on the plus side there are lots of willing advocates for the project, many of them here today. There is strong local community support from North Newnton and from the rest of the Parish as well. Acorn Construction, whose Woodbridge Close Developer Deposit/Section 106 money of £19,865 is

an essential part of the overall project funding, is a willing supporter. And we have received sound advice and major assistance from Wilts Council. Our particular thanks go to Wiltshire Councillor for Pewsey Vale, Cllr Paul Oatway QPM, who has been instrumental in helping us navigate our way to a resolution. NNPC has always been in favour of the footway scheme. Our aim has been to balance multiple competing Parish commitments with a very small disposable annual income of approximately £10,000, in which value for money is our uppermost thought. Perhaps with hindsight we could have engaged differently with key stakeholders. But we are where we are. I am sad to see unnecessary misunderstanding arise between good people and we need to fix this now. The PC are your servants, and we have listened to local views, clarified a number of points with Wilts Council (principally the application of Parish Funds and S106 Funds from Acorn Construction) and taken Cllr Oatway's advice on how best to get this back on track. Having employed a new Clerk last Friday we called an Extraordinary Meeting on Monday – at the shortest notice legally possible – to show how important this matter is and how seriously NNPC views it. **I therefore commend this Motion to the Parish Council and give it my full support.**

(The Motion was passed Unanimously. £12,800 is now earmarked in the NNPC Investment Account for the North Newnton Footway Project. When contributions are needed, Wiltshire Council will advise the PC who will approve by formal Motion each time as required)

4 **Update from Wiltshire Councillor Paul Oatway QPM.** Following the Motion, PO clarified funding for phases of the footway project. Next phase from existing footpath to new houses (Phase 2B) will be built from Section 106 and grant money (will not need NNPC money at this point). The S106 money left over will go towards Upavon Rd from the roundabout heading to the bus-stop to Pewsey and Marlborough (Phase 3). If there is not enough money then funds from the NNPC £12,800 will be requested to supplement this. At this point it will then be decided which part of the footpath is built next – either Rushall Rd south from Park Rd (Phase 1) or Upavon Rd running north to connect with the bus-stops (Phase 4). PO asked for NNPC agreement and TE, TM and DB all indicated they were in favour. PO asked the parishioners present to acknowledge that they understood what he had explained, all present signified agreement.

5 **Adjournment, welcome to the public, questions from parishioners in attendance (max 3 minutes per speaker, 15 minutes in total).**

Parishioner KL: Expressed concern that the money might be withdrawn again, wanted reassurance that this money will be dedicated to the footway project. TE response: £12,800 is in the investment account where it will remain, tagged for the use of the footway project. PO suggestion: put £12,800 into a separate holding area completely so that it is safe and parishioners can feel reassured. TE agreed and stated that this would be shown in the budget.

Parishioner MM: £12,800 was built up over time, there is no allowance for more funds to be added in the 2022/2023 budget, but could this funding be put back into the 2023/2024 budget in order to help with future phases of the footway project? More funding from the NNPC in the future may also help to secure future grants from Wiltshire Council. TM response: for future meeting would like to discuss the idea of dividing out the budget more equitably between Bottlesford, Hilcott and North Newnton, then the North Newnton allowance could be used in this way. DB: there would need to be an increase in the precept to raise extra funding in the future, but all three villages would need to be considered. TE: would support an increase in precept in order for a guaranteed amount per year to be designated to the footway project and also to other projects such as traffic calming measures, speed deterrence and a Parish Place, all of which would benefit the wider Parish. He recommended that at the Parish Annual Meeting on Sat 7 May the views of those parishioners attending be sought regarding an increase in the Precept, so that money might be put aside for these purposes from 2023 onwards. It might be best and more democratic if a meaningful increase in the Precept involve input from the Parish as a whole.

Parishioner: Should split be made on the size of the population of the three villages, rather than divided equally into three? TM response: details would need to be discussed and confirmed at a future NNPC meeting.

Parishioner: Progress has been made from a rough and hurtful time, would NNPC agree to resigned councillors returning? DB response: lost a lot of experience, would definitely welcome them back. TE response: Open in principle to co-opting previous councillors, especially if a balance between settlement representation on the PC could be maintained and if gender balance were improved as a result. DB was clear that, moving forward, people need to be mindful of what is being said in emails. TE suggested having more frequent, shorter meetings to reduce the need for emails. (Note, the next PC Meeting is in just over two weeks' time, and the Annual PC Meeting five weeks after that)

Parishioner RC: Would like to join the NNPC and help move things forward, supports idea of more meetings so that issues don't build up in between. Increase communication, keen to get on board and help. TM response: agree completely with RC, new blood, fresh voices bring fresh ideas. TE and DB also agreed

Parishioner Mrs M: How many members can you co-opt onto NNPC, questioned the legality of the council, do we have enough councillors to continue? TE response: we currently conform to statute and regulation, and can co-opt one PC member now, and two more at the end of the month. Cllr PO response: checked regarding a PC of three councillors and Wilts Council Legal Services indicated that PC conforms to regulations and can continue. Parishioner: Again, how many can you co-opt? DB response: 11 Mar 22 co-opt to replace one, further councillors from 23 Mar 22 unless there is a formal request from ten parishioners to Wilts Council for an election. TE response: election will cost this Parish approximately £250 (elections now require a PC contribution), or willing parishioners can volunteer to be considered for co-option, which costs the Parish nothing. Decisions on co-opting, in which the PC votes on whether to accept someone who puts themselves forward to fill a vacancy, are made by majority vote of the PC. The PC has already stated that in principle it welcomes returning Parish Councillors to be co-opted; this has happened in the past, provided that the person remained qualified and suitable.

Parishioner MM spoke a second time: Stated that regarding co-option, PC cannot have more than a third of your councillors co-opted, and at the AGM you must have at least five councillors elected. Parishioner MM informed the PC that he had written to the Wilts Council Director of Legal and Governance stating this. TE response: Parishioner MM had not provided the PC with a copy of his letter, so the PC was unable to comment until they had sight of it. However, having taken advice and studied the relevant legislation, regulations and rules, he believed that the PC was, and would continue to be, compliant.

6 Meeting closed 7.15pm

Next Parish Council Meeting: Mon 28 Mar 22, Seven Stars PH, Bottlesford, 7pm (bar closed).

Annual Parish Council Meeting: Tue 3 May 22, St James' Church, 7pm.

Annual Parish Meeting: Sat 7 May 22, St James' Church, 11am. Those involved in community initiatives including the Hilcott VH Trustees, St James' Church Wardens, NN Footpath Project, those planning neighbourhood Queens' Platinum Jubilee celebrations and those prepared to act in a speed-watch, defibrillator cleaning/checking or emergency plan/flood warden role are encouraged to attend.

Rosie Charnock, Clerk to NNPC clerk@nnpc.org.uk