

Merton Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting for Merton held at the Clinton Hall, on Monday 20th May 2019 at 7pm.

The annual Parish meeting is open to the public and is authorised to discuss all Parish affairs.

All members of the public present may express an opinion, make a statement or ask a question, however, only Local Government electors for the Parish will be entitled to vote on any issue raised at the Meeting. Voting on a question is done by a majority of electors present at the meeting and the decision of the person chairing the meeting as to the decision is final unless a poll is demanded LGA 1972 ss 18(2). No votes taken at this meeting are binding on the Parish Council although they may be considered at the next meeting of the Parish Council.

Present: Cllrs Papworth, Malcolm, Twomey, Stacey & Lang

Parish Clerk: Miss Alice Turner

Also in attendance: County Cllr Andrew Saywell & District Cllr Hurley.

5 members of the public & 2 Representatives from Skanska

The business transacted at the Meeting was as follows: -

1. Welcome and Chairs report – Cllr Steve Papworth

Cllr Steve Papworth opened the meeting and gave his annual report to the meeting.

The last year has been busy, with a lot happening, so here is a brief summary.

The year was overshadowed by the sudden, tragic and untimely death of Councillor Chris Laughton, and our thoughts continue to be with his family and friends.

Two of our other councillors have moved out of the Parish and have not stood again for the council. I hope you will join me in thanking both Philip Collins and Tim Horner for their many years of service.

We now welcome three new councillors: Councillor Laura Twomey, Councillor Nigel Lang (who was co-opted to the council at the end of the year), and the welcome return of Councillor Brian Stacey.

As many will have noted, we now have a footpath between Back Lane and the bottom entrance to Coldstream Gardens, which means dog walkers and other pedestrians can now walk beside the A386 in safety.

The lease on the defibrillator has come to an end, but as the unit is still serviceable and inside the manufacturer's guarantee, South West Ambulance Services Trust have kindly donated the device to the Parish Council. This does mean that SWAST will no longer maintain it, but regular checks are being made on it, and it is being kept serviceable. The Parish Council has agreed to set aside a sum of money each year, so that we have the funds to purchase a replacement when it becomes necessary.

An initiative has been started to ensure that commonly used public footpaths are appropriately registered, so that they continue to useable by the public in the future.

The two benches in the village at the top of the Beaford Road, and beside the entrance to The Clinton Hall are soon to be replaced, and the new ones will hopefully give good service in the future.

A parishioner suggested that there should be a notice board in the village where events could be advertised. In fact the Parish Council decided that we should have two, and the first one has been supplied to be erected outside the shop and Post Office. We are grateful to Jamie and Emma Hunt for allowing this. A further notice-board is proposed to be erected in the flower bed at the top of The Square, after the bed has been cleared and re-planted.

Last year saw the 100th anniversary of the armistice, and we are grateful to Paul Jennings for making the soldier silhouette, and erecting it by the Monck Stone.

There have been a number of failures to the high-speed broadband, and the Parish Council has been closely monitoring the situation. The lines that were damaged have now been re-installed, but the overhead line continues to be under threat from falling branches from the trees.

The Parish Council continues to organise grass cutting alongside the main road in the village, and I would like to thank Steve Jennings for his work as our contractor. I would also like to thank all those other people who cut grassy areas around the village. Some of these may not be as immediately noticeable as others, but they all contribute to the good appearance of the village.

Our thanks are due to Cedric and Wendy Askew who continue to look after the planted tyres at the northern end to the village, which makes a lovely entrance to our village for anyone coming from Great Torrington.

The playground committee has completed phase I of the new playground and the old play area has been cleared. Our thanks go to all those involved in the fund raising and arranging the installation, and we wish them well in their fund-raising for phase II.

Finally, on behalf of all of the parish, I would like to thank the Clinton Hall committee for running and maintaining the hall, which continues to be a terrific asset to the Village.

2. Signing of the Minutes of the last Annual Meeting – 14th May 2018

It was agreed by a show of hands that the minutes of the meeting held on the 14th of May 2018 should be signed as a true and accurate record.

3. Guest Speakers: 2 Representatives from Skanska – The new activities at the old Sawmills Site, Merton.

In April 2017 Skanska took over the maintenance of roads, they started out at a site at Gas Lane in Torrington but must return this to DCC by October 2019.

Works at the new depot in Merton at The old sawmills (Torridge gates) site is progressing with the key issue being drainage consents at the site which they hope to fix by October, this is a constraint of planning permission, They reported to the meeting that they are planning to protect tree roots during development.

The TDV environmental protection officer has given advice on noise prevention which will be considered and lighting on the site will be sympathetic to wildlife.

Target occupation on the site is September 2019 with movement on site in the next 3 – 4 months.

Skanska reported that the depot will not be a winter service depot and that any salting/gritting will come from other pre-existing sites. Soil, sand storage bays will be on site, as well as machines and signage will be stored on site.

Planning is for 24hr operation but more likely to be 7am-4pm with little movement in the evening.

Q: What type of security lighting will be used on site:

A: Security lighting will be on a PIR system.

Q: What number of vehicles and staff will be at the site.

A: 8-10 staff per day in the office and about 15 operatives (7-8 trucks) who will be arriving morning and load up for day and back at end of day.

The Chair thanked Skanska for attending.

4. Reports

• County Councillor – Andrew Saywell

Main issues: County has come in on Budget for 2018 / 19 even though Children's services will have overspent by some £9-10millions, other departments have underspent, and the payment of some work that has been done has been rescheduled as Capital spend instead of Revenue, and we have had a relatively mild winter.

Locally here in Merton the main issues I've been working on have been Highway related, from potholes to blocked drains. Merton Mill was highlighted to me as an area in need of attention and was pleased that through the Pothole Action Fund, we got this done, A386 in Huish was also resurfaced.

Looking ahead for this financial year... There will be nearly £1.4m spent on Highways in Torrington Rural this financial year – 300K more than last year. This includes patching works on the A386 by Pretty Top Cottage. Last two years has been a lot of attention to the A3124, will ask for more attention to be paid to the A386 for the next two years as sections between Merton and Torrington now beginning to deteriorate.

News just in..... Torrington Rural will be part of a pilot for identifying future highways works this means our Neighbourhood Highways Officer has been seconded, announcement on a replacement soon as it is still early days it may mean some delays on getting Highways Enquiries sorted.

On a different note, will have £10K Locality Budget for this financial year – would like to see a grant for Merton if possible....

Meanwhile County Wide, DCC are making plans to look after the Old, Young and Vulnerable within the County whatever happens. Devon is a big County with about 800,000 residents it is worth remembering.

There are over 105,000 young people in the 360+ Devon schools. Over 22,000 of these young people have some sort of School transport.

Nearly 9,000 of these young people are being supported in some way by DCC staff. This must and will continue.

Our Adult Services department are looking after over 19,000 Adults. Again DCC are planning to continue support these people. Over the last 12 months over 24,000 clients have received either an Assessment or Service within the Adult care service

Our Trading Standards and emergency teams have been strengthened. We are expecting to be asked to support other organisations in the short to medium term.

I would like to thank the Parish Council for all the work that they do – formally place my thanks to them for support over last two years and I look forward to working with the 'new' Council following the elections.

Country Cllr Saywell asked that thanks to former Cllrs Tim Horner and Philip Collins be recorded and congratulations to District Cllrs David Hurley and Richard Wiseman also be noted.

- **Annual Crime report – The report covers the period from 1-6-2018 to 9-5-2019.**

Offence	Recorded Crime 01/06/2018 to 09/05/2019	Recorded Crime 01/06/2017 to 09/05/2018	Recorded Crime % Difference
Violence with Injury	0	1	-100.0%
Violence without Injury	1	2	-50.0%
Other Theft	1	1	0.0%
Criminal Damage	1	3	-66.7%
Public Order Offences	0	1	-100.0%
Total	3	8	-62.5%

Members requested that the Clerk ask the Police for future reports to be more detailed.

- **Football Club**

We stayed in current league and put a team out for every game this season. There were several injured players who may not be returning next year. 11 players out of the 14 this season were from Merton, Peters Marland and Petrockstowe.

Awards have been won this season and the club is doing well.

- **Play Equipment Committee**

The last year has been a difficult year for the committee. We only have a small committee and are having trouble recruiting help.

The hearty breakfast has been a success, at the time of writing this we have held five breakfasts, raising approx. £750.00. We have also had a quiz evening which raised £272.00.

Unfortunately, these amounts do not get us much nearer our target of approx. £35,000 to £40,000. If the new houses are built and we get the section 106 money promised we will be in a position to apply for grants.

We have an AGM on Tuesday, perhaps we will be inundated with offers of help!

- **Church report**

The Church in the village is the church for the village. No more is that seen to be so than in services marking particular occasions in people's lives. Looking back over the last year that was especially the case for the funerals of Graham Heaman and Chris Laughton. Chris was Tower Captain for many years, and his enthusiasm for ringing will be missed. Of course, though it is not just funerals, but more joyous times such as baptisms and weddings too. It is a privilege to be involved in these events.

The churchyard too is there as a service for the parish as a whole. It is managed through a joint committee from the Church Council and the Parish Council, although it does remain in the end the church's responsibility. We are very grateful to Philip Collins over many years for facilitating that committee and balancing the various expectations of how long or not the grass is cut.

We are very grateful for all the support there is from many in the village. The active congregation is often small, and finances are tight to be able to maintain the building and surrounds and to be able to support ministry – this is in essence the cost of clergy. Without the donations received we would not have been able to do what we have. We continue to run without churchwardens.

There is of course a church school in the village, and we are glad for its improving situation. Regular contact is maintained between church and school, the most visible outworking of which, was the school hosting the Remembrance Service, following a wartime-style lunch. We have recently started a monthly Family Service, and while we want to see it grow, it is generally the best attended service. The next one is out on the farm on June 23rd at Pinkhill. Do come – not just families – as we celebrate and bless farming life.

We want the church to be here for the village as a whole – not just as a building, but as a spiritual presence, seeking to share God's love to us in Jesus. The building is open for any to use at any time for personal prayer and reflection - and folk do use it in that way. We will be running a survey soon to find out a bit more about how church and village can relate better. We are glad of support from Exeter Diocese, of which we are part, to help us do that. Thank you, in advance, to the Merton Monthly for helping with the distribution. Please do make sure that you feedback your ideas and thoughts. May God bless Merton.

- **Churchyard committee**

The committee met in March 2019 the balance at the end of January 2019 £2222.23. Low expenses due to hot weather resulted in less grass cutting which is carried out by Steve Jennings at a very reasonable rate, which the committee is very grateful for.

The outgoing treasurer is looking for a replacement, and reported that it is a fairly easy task.

- **Village Hall Management Committee**

The outgoing Chair for the committee reported that at the A.G.M the accounts showed a profit and as a result the committee have been able to return savings in bonds to approximately £15k. Thanks to Merton Parish Council for its support for Merton Monthly magazine.

- **Merton Monks Committee**

Merton Monks held a VINTAGE & CLASSIC VEHICLE RALLY on SUNDAY 6TH MAY 2018. A grand total of £8,000 was raised and once again clubs & groups within Merton, Petrockstowe and Peters Marland were invited to apply for a share, if they were in need of some financial support.

We had 15 requests in total and all the following clubs/groups received a share of the monies:

- 1) FRIENDS OF ALL SAINTS CHURCH, MERTON
- 2) ST PETROC'S CHURCH, PETROCKSTOWE

- 3) MERTON & HUISH WILDLIFE GROUP
- 4) PETROCKSTOWE PLAY PARK
- 5) THE CLINTON HALL, MERTON
- 6) LADIES GROUP, PETROCKSTOWE
- 7) THE FRIENDSHIP GROUP, MERTON
- 8) PETROCKSTOWE GARDENING CLUB
- 9) MERTON FOOTBALL CLUB
- 10) PETROCKSTOWE ART GROUP
- 11) MERTON PLAYGROUND COMMITTEE
- 12) PETROCKSTOWE METHODIST CHURCH
- 13) THE FRIENDS OF THE CLINTON SCHOOL
- 14) PETROCKSTOWE SPORTS CLUB (CRICKET)
- 15) MERTON CYCOPATHS (CYCLING CLUB)

- **Merton & Huish Wildlife Group - It continues but no report received**
- **Merton & Petrockstowe Heritage Group - It continues but no report received**
- **Parish Council Annual Finance report**

The Council began the 2018-19 financial year with a balance of £16,697.89 during the year the council received £7,697.69 and made payments of £8,880.27 resulting in a closing balance of £15,515.31.

5. Open Forum

- **To receive questions and comments from the public concerning matters over which the Parish Council has control or some influence.**

Q: The Parish Council agreed to cut strip of verge above Clinton gardens and leave strip for wildflowers. But it has been cut, why?

A: The Chair reported that Mr Jennings have been asked to cut this and that the Council have already agreed to discuss the matter at the July meeting. No more cuts to be made until the council has reviewed the situation.

Comment: Ask Skanska if, as good will gesture they will to fill in pot holes in Merton.

Comment: Watch water runoff from Skanska site.

There being no further business the Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.50pm.

SIGNED AS A TRUE RECORD: Steve Papworth (Chair)

NAME: Cllr Steve Papworth DATE: 11th April 2022