

**ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD AT 7.30 PM ON THURSDAY 27 APRIL 2017
AT ROWINGTON VILLAGE HALL**

Present

Councillor J Gaffey (in the Chair)
Councillor Mrs J Coles
Councillor G Coombs (Vice Chairman)
Councillor Mrs N Clarke
Councillor I Henderson
Councillor M North
Councillor Mrs D Weir
Councillor Mrs J Compton WCC
16 members of the public

The Chairman, Councillor John Gaffey welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked those present for taking the time out to attend and introduced the new Parish Clerk & RFO Nicola Everall.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Warwick District Councillors - Councillors P Whiting and Mrs S Gallagher.

2. To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 19 May 2016

It was proposed by Councillor G Coombs and seconded by Councillor M North that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2016 having been previously circulated, be signed as a true record.

3. Chairman's Report

The period since the last meeting has been very busy although the most activity has been in changes in personnel.

Councillors Graham and Marilyn Bull retired from active duty. The Parish Council and I personally, owe a great deal of thanks to them both for their experience and their hard work.

I would also like to welcome new Parish Councillors Ian Henderson from Pinley and Mrs Jane Coles from Lowsonford and look forward to working with them both.

This meeting is the first without Allyson Coleman, our recently retired Parish Clerk. Allyson has been an integral part of Rowington Parish Council for many years and is well known to a significant number of parishioners. Allyson's contribution has been immeasurable, and the Parish Council wishes her well in her retirement.

We have been lucky to have procured the services of Nicola Everall, who has taken over as Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. Nicola has a strong Public Sector background, is an experienced Parish Clerk and all Councillors are very much looking forward to working with her.

Planning

Planning is one of the most important issues dealt with by the Parish Council and can often produce lengthy debates on the merits of the various submissions. In the last year the Parish Council has reviewed approximately 30(38) planning applications over the course of the last 12 months.

Playing Field

The playing field continues to be inspected on a weekly basis as part of the Parish Councils public liability insurance obligation. This task is shared between Councillors and our external inspector David Connolly. Planned maintenance is regularly undertaken and reactive works are carried out when required. A number of dead trees have been removed and branches trimmed back.

The Parish Council also arranges the annual inspection by RoSPA which provides assurance that the playing field environment is in compliance with the relevant safety standards.

Local Infrastructure

The Parish Council often acts as a focal point for the reporting of local issues which might then be re-directed to those at the District or County Councils. Councillors themselves will report issues they either discover during their travels or are made aware of by parishioners. Problems constantly arise in relation to

- potholes,
- damaged verges,
- blocked gully's
- damaged signage.

If you have any issues that should be reported, contact the County Councils Highways Department or contact Nicola or one of your parish councillors.

The Parish Council also takes an overview of footpaths and bridleways throughout the Parish.

We would encourage all of those using this facility to report any issues to the County Council. The appropriate contact can be found on their website or on the website of the Parish Council.

Local Facilities

The Parish Council continues to support our two local churches – St Luke's in Lawsonford and St Laurence in Rowington, the village halls in Rowington and Lawsonford and the Parish Records with annual donations.

Parish Council also undertakes weekly inspections of the two defibrillators located in the Rowington and Lawsonford Village Halls. This is part of the requirements of the PL insurance cover that goes with the equipment. We also replace the pads on an annual basis.

The village hall is a very important facility for the people of any village. It does however need to be supported in order for it to survive. The village hall committees work very hard to ensure that the halls are maintained however they require a revenue stream to maintain their viability.

It is vital that these facilities are supported by the people of the village in terms of use and management. Without this support they will not survive.

Please contact members of the respective village hall committee's if you have a function that requires a venue, an idea that could turn into a booking, spare time to sit on the committee or just offer to help when there is some work to be done.

Parish Website

The Parish Council's website, www.rowingtonpc.org.uk is an important source of information and we encourage everyone to visit the site regularly.

This provides useful information on the Parish Council's responsibilities and is updated regularly with copies of minutes of Parish Council Meetings and the accounts when they are published. Contact details are provided for all the Councillors and more importantly for all the main community interest groups who operate within the Parish as well as many local government agencies. To date we have received 18,238 hits averaging approximately 19/day.

The website gives us opportunity to raise awareness of new issues, initiatives and events and also update parishioners on issues relevant to their locality as well as the wider District and County areas.

Any ideas gratefully received?

Miscellaneous

Parish Design Statement – Report by Councillor North

We also managed to manoeuvre through the Government's pension's auto enrolment initiative and have fulfilled our obligations as an employer, albeit with 1 employee.

Just a final word about the council meetings. They are held every month except January and August and attendance is open to members of the public. The schedule of meetings is published on the website so if you have something to say or are just curious to see what we do, please come along.

If you are interested in participating and becoming a parish councillor, the only pre-requisites are time and enthusiasm

Thank you.
John Gaffey
Chairman

4. Councillor M North – Parish Design Statement (PDS)

Councillor M North gave an overview on the PDS and was asked to contact Warwick District Council to obtain an update and a timetable.

5. Councillor Mrs J Compton - Warwickshire County Council

Warwickshire County Council in common with most councils find themselves in financial difficulties, especially with the budget for Adult Social Care. Hence the council tax for 2017/18 will incorporate 2% extra for this service plus 1.99% general increase. The Police Budget will not increase as improvements to the service will be taken from Reserves.

Notwithstanding this WCC envisages employing an extra 40 Social Workers to cope with the assessment of the 750 looked after children. No reduction in the services for gritting routes, Fire & Rescue Service, Highway Budget, the delegated Transport Budget for Councillors or Safer routes to School.

Several Capital Schemes locally are proceeding – Kenilworth Railway Station and Stanks Island. Warwick Museum has re-opened after a refit funded by the Heritage Lottery along with WCC funding. £1 million will be used for LED lighting across the County. Broadband coverage will improve as we strive to reach the rural areas in 95% of the County. More funding has been announced for Rural Industries which includes farming. The programme for Extra Care Housing for enable people to live independently but with help on hand will continue as strive to support our most vulnerable residents and people with Learning Difficulties. We are working with the Health Service to address the issues raised under the Sustainability & Transformation Plans which is causing so much concern as the provision of specialist services and remodelling of other services has not as yet gone out for public consultation.

On the plus side, Warwickshire County Council has received an award for being in the top 100 in England for employing Apprentices. On the down side we envisage losing a further 300 staff to cope with the Budget cuts from the Government of £67 million on top of the £95 cut from the previous four years.

Warwick Rural West Community Forum has met three times during the past year and has allocated all its' grant funding to parish schemes.

We are not sure about the format of the next Forum as with Boundary Changes to WCC funding rules may change however as we look back the Forum has provided a very useful way of Parishes coming together with members of the public to hear reports from the Police, Warwick District Council, Warwickshire County Council and the setting of Police priorities.

I have always attended Parish Council meetings during my time as your County councillor and thank the Councillors and Clerk for their help and co-operation in dealing with parish concerns.

6. Councillors Mrs S Gallagher & Peter Whiting - Warwick District Council Arden Ward

Following the elections to the newly-formed Arden ward in June 2015, we are now roughly half-way through our term - perhaps not surprisingly, therefore, much of our report concerns work in progress.

The Local Plan is almost certainly the most significant single item with which we have been grappling as a council. Last year we reported the concerns of the Inspector primarily concerning the treatment of Coventry's unmet need in our initial submission. These led to a period of suspension, followed by a revised plan being submitted. Current indications are that the modifications that we have made have satisfied the vast majority of the Inspector's reservations, with any remaining changes capable of being handled through the final consultation process. We are therefore hopeful of having an approved Plan in place (with all the associated benefits, in terms of planning certainty and availability of CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) funds) later this year.

The second ongoing challenge, of relevance to Peter given his Finance portfolio, is the management of the District's finances against a background of sharply reduced government funding. Our Revenue Support Grant (the amount received from Central government) has fallen from c£4 million to less than £1 million over the past 5 years, and we expect it to be eliminated in the 2019/20 fiscal year. Despite this, we have maintained (and in many instances improved) the vast majority of the services that are provided by WDC. This is becoming ever more challenging, with any clear efficiency savings having long since been made.

One example of the type of approach that we are adopting is provided by our Leisure services. Sue played a major role in instigating the proposed outsourcing of the management of our leisure facilities in Kenilworth, Leamington Spa and Warwick. While the contract has yet to be signed, early indications are good that the move will not only cover the interest cost of the ongoing significant investments (some £15 million) that we are making in improving our facilities, but also deliver more than the hoped-for level of savings to council taxpayers.

The proposed relocation of the council's offices from Riverside House to the Covent Garden site in Leamington is another example of a major investment designed to save money (at least £300,000 per annum) over the long term.

Considerable amounts of preparation work have already been undertaken, with planning applications likely to be the next public step in this major development.

While many of the projects in which we are engaged have little direct impact on Arden Ward, the problem of fly tipping, recently the subject of much press comment, does sadly feature from time to time. A complex problem, Sue and I have seen it presented as a purely urban phenomenon, frequently arising from badly-managed student accommodation. We will ensure that WDC's proposals to tackle the issue address the rural, as well as the urban perspective.

Finally, despite the financial challenges faced by the Council, we are delighted to announce that the RUCIS (Rural and Urban Capital Improvement Scheme) grants will remain in place in the new fiscal year. Many of our parishes have benefited from this scheme, and we would continue to urge you to look for suitable beneficiaries.

As ever, thanks to all of our Parish Councils for their help and support - we both look forward to further progress in the coming year.

All best wishes,

7. Stephen Williams, Chairman - Rowington Village Hall

The financial situation at the village hall remains quite healthy. The revenue from lettings has been running at a similar level to last year and the various social events put on by the committee have made a very useful contribution to funds.

On the maintenance front, the major item was the refurbishment of the ladies' cloakroom, completed earlier this year. The committee are very grateful to the Jane Ryland Charity which made a substantial grant towards the cost of this work. In September, a working party of committee members spent a day redecorating parts of the hall and spring cleaning. In addition, as reported, Robert Blyth and Graham Bull have dealt with many other items of maintenance and repair required in the course of the year and I am grateful to them both for their valuable contribution to the operation of the hall.

The hall has been well used over the past year by regular hirers such as the computer groups, the Women's Institute, the Bridge Club, Inland Waterways, Brownie packs, dance classes and also private individuals and societies organising parties and other events. As usual, Anne Pitt has dealt with enquiries and bookings in a most efficient way. Again, my thanks go to her.

The social committee have put on several successful events, including two Simple Supper evenings, the Winter Ball and a cabaret evening. There have been large attendances at these events which have attracted several of the newer residents of the village as well as the usual supporters.

Robert Blyth will be leaving the committee in June having contributed greatly to the maintenance of the hall over a number of years. We shall miss him and would like to find a new member to replace him. Diane Weir has been nominated by the Parish Council and will be joining in June. Otherwise there have been no changes in the membership of the committee.

The hall now has its own website - www.rowingtonvillagehall.co.uk and this will be most useful in advertising the hall and the events to be organised. I am grateful to John Hale for making the arrangements and for producing a new advertisement for the Ferncumbe News. The hall also features on Facebook.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all of the members of the Management Committee for their support and unfailing enthusiasm over the past year; we are fortunate to have such a good team looking after the hall.

8. Allotments Association

I am pleased to report another successful year for Rowington Allotments. All our plots are taken and well looked after and we are all happy to welcome our newest member Garry Cramps who has already done wonders with plot 4 which was not previously being properly cultivated.

Gary has also been more than willing to muck in with any jobs needing attention and proved to be a great help on our autumn working day. It has been great to note this year that members have been willing to help out when others have needed a little assistance.

We continue to hold two working days each year, one in spring and one in autumn. This allows us to ensure the upkeep and continual improvement of the allotment grounds. Our autumn clear up day is always hard work putting the allotments to bed for the winter and I am glad to report a very good attendance again this year with everyone really working hard to get everything done on the day. The ditch was cleared of brambles and other undergrowth and it was dug out to the full length of our land.

Both our hedges were cut back with the help of our new multi-purpose tool that was purchased with a grant from the Jane Ryland Charity for which we are most grateful. We continue to run a rota for grass cutting and I am pleased to say that all the communal grass that we are responsible for was well maintained over the whole year. There are always a few weeks when it is too wet to cut but it was never left to get out of hand. The rest of the grass i.e. allotment main paths and plot divisions are the responsibility of each individual allotment holder. Whilst these are not necessarily cut each week we do ask our members to regularly maintain them.

We did look into the possibility of extending our Keder polytunnel but the cost was prohibitive, so unfortunately members will have to share the space available or invest in a small greenhouse on their own plots.

As always our grateful thanks go to Lionel and Harold for continuing to do many of the day to day jobs around the ground and for generally keeping an eye on the place. Special thanks this year to Freda who took on the task of digging over, weeding and mucking our wild flower strip in front of the polytunnel. We should now all help to keep this planted and maintained in future for the benefit of our bees, butterflies and other wild life.

We continue to hold regular meetings throughout the year to ensure that we maintain a vibrant association where all members are encouraged to air their views and to take any relevant decisions. After paying all our expenses for the year our subscriptions leave us with a small surplus. We are in credit at the bank but this would soon be eroded without our mid-year top up.

We are very keen to ensure that the allotments, that we have all worked so hard to improve over the last 9 years, continue to be well maintained and that they remain an important asset for Rowington and the surrounding area.

We will of course be encouraging all our members to ensure they have plenty of produce to enter in the annual village Flower and Vegetable Show.

For any further information or to be added to the waiting list please contact either John or Sue on 01564 784352.

9. Mrs A White - Lawsonford W.I.

I have taken over from Gill Carlyle, who has moved away, having done so much over the years for the club.

Sue Baker is now our new Treasurer, Carol Knight has stood down also having done so much work over the years.

We have had a very successful year, mainly due to the arrival of the Anthony Gormley structure arriving in Lawsonford for one year.

Our charity for the year was the ABC Club connected to the Aylesbury Unit, at Warwick Hospital for the patients and carers bowel cancer.

The total for the arrival and departure of the sculpture, was a wonderful £854.00, so a very worthwhile effort.

The coffee morning raised £381.40 a record, and attendance was up which was very satisfying as all the members put in so much effort.

In July, it was sadly decided not to continue with our connection with Castle Froma, who the Women's Club had invited some of the patients to attend afternoon tea, for many years. Due to other commitments. A phone call, and a letter of explanation was sent with all our very best wishes.

We had a Tea & Cakes afternoon in September when we raised £212.00. We held no raffle, so that was a good result.

The main event of the year was the Christmas Faye. For the first time for many years, we had a Father Christmas, which proved successful and we hope to continue this in the future.

Again, attendance was up, so that was very gratifying after all the hard work everyone had put in.

At the end of the year we were able to send the ABC Club a cheque for £1500.00. We received two letters of thanks.

So, ended a successful money raising year and we look forward to our Charity for 2017 when we continue to try and keep it to a local and smaller cause.

10. Mr B Taylor - Rowington Cricket Club

The Cricket Club is in good health. Last year our 1st team finished 5th in Division 1 of the Cotswolds Hills League and the 2nd team ended up 8th out of 10 in the 5th division. Last year I reported that Sundays had been difficult so we only started Sunday fixtures in the 2nd week of June when University students and exam takers were becoming available. This worked better but we can always do with new players

Our season was celebrated at our awards dinner in Rowington Village Hall in September.

We had a strong junior section last year and we again used a professional coaching organisation to supplement our own coaches. Coaching this year will start on 24th April for school years 1 to 6 and school years 7 onwards will be coached on a Wednesday. We offered Lapworth School some taster sessions to encourage more youngsters to join our junior coaching and this went well.

As always we are grateful for financial help from the community, advertisers and our sponsors and we will hold a "Friends of Rowington Cricket Club" day on Sunday 9th July when they and all villagers are welcome. We are 130 years old this year, possibly the oldest organisation in the village and it would be good to see a good turnout. Our end of season dinner is fixed for Friday 8th September.

Last year we redecorated the outside of the pavilion and this year we have already put down new carpet and have bought more comfortable chairs and will shortly have new tables.

As I write the ground is in good order and we look forward to the start of the season when tradition has it, it will rain!!

11. Michael Male Chairman - Rowington Tennis Club

The 2016 season found our newly surfaced courts in fine fettle and we look forward to the coming playing season.

The juniors will continue to benefit from training with our coaching partners Coolsportz.

Membership remains steady at about fifty, which given our LTA membership, awards us two Wimbledon tickets a year, drawn by lot.

Our subs remain the same for the new season at a modest £50 per adult, less for juniors. This entitles members to unlimited play.

Those wishing to join should contact our membership secretary Mrs Joan Shepherd.

We encourage participation from players of all abilities and ages. The club is very informal and we encourage members to utilise the facilities we now have in an excellent location.

With help from the Jane Ryland Trust the club hut has been refurbished and in addition the Village Hall is available to members. We are grateful to both these organisations for their continued support over the years.

12. John Hale – Royal British Legion, Rowington & Lapworth Branch

In recent months the branch has undergone some major changes. Following a review at Head Office the Women's Section is to be amalgamated with the men in order to mirror the equal status of men and women in the Armed Forces. Over many years our Women's Section has done a great deal locally to support women in the Services but the now to be strengthened membership of the branch as a whole will enable it to increase its support for all members of the Services and their families.

We now have 36 members and of course, we would welcome any local person who would like to join us. It is not necessary to have served in the Forces to be a member of the Legion but just to be an adult in sympathy with the aims and objects of the Legion. I would always be happy to provide more information about membership. Please contact me at the address below.

We are planning to hold a number of social events later in the year so that members can easily keep in touch and we also aim to publicise the activities of the Legion as widely as we can amongst the local population.

Our annual Poppy Appeal is always well supported and since November 2016 we have raised just over £6000 – a marvellous result again. The appeal has been organised for some years now by Mrs. Carol Regan. Carol is now looking to retire from the position and it looks very likely that her successor has already been identified – this is wonderful news as the appeal is so important if the Legion is to be able to continue its good work.

13. Mr S Williams - The Jane Ryland Charity

During the course of the past 12 months the Charity has made grants to Rowington Cricket Club, Rowington Village Hall, the Allotments Association, Rowington Tennis Club, Rowington Parish Records and Lapworth School to assist with various projects. In addition, many residents of the parish have been assisted with grants for essential home improvements, chiropody, travelling expenses, heating costs etc.

As usual, the Charity sent Christmas payments to those residents considered to be in need of some financial help.

We have made an effort to remind everyone of the existence of the Charity and to explain how we are able to assist, by placing adverts on notice boards. We hope that these will bring those in need of help to our attention.

There have been changes in the board of trustees: John Hale has retired after 30 years, many of them as chairman, and Marilyn Bull and Jane Grove have been recruited. The other trustees are Alison Caldwell, Brian Taylor and Stephen Williams, who has taken over as chairman.

14. Mrs S Lowe – Rowington WI

We are 50 strong in this, our 50th year and I hope to make it 51.

Delightedly, in November we retained our Committee Officers ensuring continuity and in support of a new President.

The festive celebration – Carols & Good Company at Rowington Church, with invited Sister WI's, was a traditional fun evening heralding some strong male and female voices, led by a brave WI stand in member, when the organiser failed to show and the Christmas Dinner, never less than successful, with Sue Dalby catering, and a full membership attending. Home spun entertainment concluded with Jerusalem and The Queen for a colourful evening together.

A bit of inventive thinking evolved a Tart & Mousse Evening, a touch of tartan, shared supper, an attempt at Scottish Dancing and silly contact games prompted fun and much laughter.

Speakers have been varied, engaging and well received offering experiences, anecdotes and knowledge.

At the March Indulgence Day, we indulged ourselves with bottomless pots of coffee, warm croissants and homemade jams then a Local Keep Active Group demonstrated how to shake and dance the extra pounds away.

Our Garden Meeting in June was rained off. Undaunted to plan B, we regrouped at the Village Hall, smiled at the showers and with a generous hostess we are trying again this year with shared supper and Barbers Shop Quartet, hopefully rain will not stop play.

With 30 members attending a local hostelry for supper and skittles, 5 self-named teams bowled their way through a good evening of tight competitive enjoyment, no injuries, resulting in the presentation of a silver cup shared for 12 months by the winning team.

We do not underestimate the value of our Resolutions and nationally WI is proud to have made a difference annually debating member raised issues resulting in Government support. The years 'ocean soup' and relieving loneliness to the elderly are the issues for debate in May.

Having supported that Cakes 4 Casualties with proceeds from a bucket donation in December, Kath Ryan will join us at that Resolution Meeting explaining how she began making and distributing cakes to injured troops in hospital home from foreign conflicts.

I am pleased to report excellent support from our Group Leader Julia and from numerous Trustees who accept invites to our events so we have support from the 'Management'.

Never intending to reduce our enthusiasm for enjoyment and annotation, cruising together for a day in late May up the Trent 'without a paddle' providing a coach and wet suits.

So, we are laughing dancing and sailing our way through each successful year and intend to keep the momentum going for the benefit of a membership of varied taste.

We shall be represented at the Village Show this year with a sales table, and proudly displaying some crafts and past activities. You will be greeted by smiling lady's and hope to see you.

15. Public Forum

Discussions took place regarding the lack of information which was readily available within the villages and the Clerk assured residents that she would update the notice boards, place items on the website and include an article in the Ferncumbe News on a regular basis.

The Clerk was asked to contact Peter Hallam at Warwickshire County Council regarding the dirty road signs.

The formal meeting closed at 8.45 pm. and was followed by light refreshments

Signed.....DesignationDate.....