

**EAST FARNDON PARISH COUNCIL  
ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023 AT THE VILLAGE HALL COMMENCING  
AT 7.15 PM**

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**PRESENT:** Mr M Curtis (Chair), Ms M Duke, Mr P Hodgetts, Mr B Fallon, Ms E Pepler, and Mrs. C Burton (Clerk to the Parish Council)

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** WNC Councillor Parker and four residents

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### **1. Apologies**

Apologies received and accepted from Councillor Beesley, WNC Councillors Irving-Swift and Harris, Gill Kirby (Secretary to the PCC), Paul Harrison (Police Liaison Representative & Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator), David Thake (Amenity Land Committee), and Jessica Oakden & Judy Hodgetts (Tree Wardens)

### **2. West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) Councillor Reports**

WNC Councillor Parker reported as follows:

- This is a short summary of my involvement within the Brixworth Ward/West Northants.
- In terms of appointments to the Council, these are:
  - Chair - Daventry local Planning committee.
  - Assistant Cabinet Member - Finance.
  - Substitute Member - Strategic Planning.
  - Member - Scrutiny Place and Economy.
  - Member - Planning Policy.
  - Charities - Clipston Scaldwell and Brixworth.This resulted in 154 meetings (Physical/Teams) in the 11 months.
- Finance played a very important part this year with inflation causing severe problems to the Children's Trust, Adult Social Care and building costs. To ensure budget control there was a small panel formed to scrutinise and agree costs over £500 and all personnel appointments. This work along with all departments has resulted in a 1% shortfall to budget at period 10 a very credible performance.
- This year's net budget is 384M giving an average Council Tax increase of 4.99% somewhat short of inflation so we need to ensure projected savings are delivered.
- One of my main aims was to improve communications with Parishes and I am pleased the monthly newsletter is now established. In addition, the E Newsletter has been established with over 7500 Residents signing up via the App.
- I was pleased along with Cecile that Parking charges for the park run in Brixworth, and Daventry on a Saturday morning would not commence until 10.30 am. In addition, Disability parking will now be free at the Country Parks.
- I continue along with Cecile to help parishes and residents with their issues but as you will appreciate cannot disclose details.

WNC Councillor Harris had submitted the attached report, which Councillor Curtis presented.

### **3. Chair's report**

Councillor Curtis, Chair of the Parish Council, reported as follows:

- Huge thanks to our Parish Clerk, Caroline Burton, and all of our Parish Councillors, for another year of professionalism, hard work combined with some fun along the way. As a team, East Farndon Parish Council (EFPC) has

- continued to maintain good financial control, whilst managing multiple issues and improvements, the highlights being:
- The Burial Ground and Churchyard are in good shape both from a physical and organisational perspective, driven by multiple improvements over the last 2 years.
  - The Village Website (eastfarndon.org) has been further improved with links to social media and has matured into the ‘go-to’ place for village information.
  - Weekly Jubilee Foodbank collections from East Farndon are in their second year and continue to be well supported.
  - EFPC continues to focus on reducing speeding within the village, with valuable data collected from Community Speedwatch and our Speed Indication Device, allowing for further and more positive discussions on potential calming measures with the Police and WNC Highways.
  - Despite multiple Street Doctor reports and discussions with WNC / Highways, the poor state of the roads and pavements in East Farndon continues to be a major concern, with little / no real progress. Frustrating, but EFPC will keep pushing.
  - Two new additional waste bins have been installed in the village.
  - Team set up and making good progress to further research and document our village Heritage Assets, this designed to support EFPC with information, especially if there is a re-opening of the plans for a major housing development between us and Market Harborough.
  - Team set up and making good progress to raise funds to repair and improve the East Farndon War Memorial.
  - Team set up to coordinate the big Village Spring Clean, with an event planned in late March.
  - All sixteen EFPC village streetlights have been upgraded to LED and this is providing significant energy and cost savings. Between February and May, EFPC is running a trial where all streetlights are turned off between midnight and 5.30am. This will allow the village to enjoy a dark sky and generate further environmental benefits.
  - EFPC continues to work hard and in partnership with all of our village organisations, especially the Village Hall, to help our community to become more sociable and inclusive. The number and range of events continues to grow and in June 2022, East Farndon celebrated in style with a major and memorable 4 day event for the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee.

#### **4. Reports from village organisations: -**

##### **a) Parochial Church Council (PCC)**

The Clerk presented the following report submitted by Gill Kirby (Secretary to the PCC):

- After several years of Covid restrictions it was good to begin a new year feeling things were back to a virtual “near normal”, albeit with numerous viruses still around as well as the usual winter ones.
- There were the usual 4 meetings throughout the year but although Church Services are back to normal, a service on Zoom continues to be held on the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month.
- Following the Quinquennial Report, it was agreed that priority should be given to the main points highlighted in need of attention, i.e. electrical repairs and stonework on the roof. The electrical work has been put in hand and we hope to have the necessary stonework on the roof undertaken shortly.
- As the Reverend James Watson was unfortunately unavailable at Easter and the Reverend Janet Donaldson had Covid, the Churchwardens carried out and maintained the usual Easter Service.
- We had the Queen’s Jubilee Celebrations to look forward to in June 2022 and the group in charge of organisation of activities within the village did a

marvellous job despite the dismal weather. We were very grateful to receive a donation of £978 towards Church funds from this event, together with a further donation of £563.39 towards the costs of the building work required.

- Following the Harvest Festival Service in Church in September, the Village Hall Committee arranged a very enjoyable lunch in the Village Hall which everyone appreciated.
- A Memorial Service for Remembrance Day was held in Church in November followed by a short service at the village Memorial. There was also an exhibition and refreshments in the Village Hall to raise funds for the restoration of the Memorial, organised by the fund raising group.
- Now that the Parish Magazine is up and running again Mr Paul Hodgetts has taken over as Newsletter Secretary, with an increased number of helpers for distribution of this. Thank you to you all.
- The usual Christmas Services went ahead commencing with the Carol Service and Christingle held on 18 December, with donations to the Children's Society and Rainbows.
- Mr Richard Green will be standing down as Churchwarden this year and we hope that someone will feel able to step forward to replace him, and anyone else who would like to serve on the PCC would be most welcome.
- We thank the Reverend James Watson for his continuing ministry and remain grateful to all those who give of their time to help and support the Church in any way.

#### **b) Village Hall Trustees**

Jo Shaw, in attendance, presented the following report on behalf of the Village Hall Trustees:

- This was a successful year for the village hall, with Covid restrictions having been lifted, and events allowed to resume.
- In June 2022, the Village Hall sponsored the Children's Lunch as part of the Queen's Jubilee celebrations, which was attended by many village children and their friends and relations. We also provided apparatus for the staging of the evening concert.
- In August we held the annual summer barbeque, which was very well attended. Other hall-subsidised events throughout the year included the Harvest Supper, Christmas Soiree and Chinese New Year celebrations, as well as the annual Fish and Chip supper and Quiz in March 2023. The Hall also promoted a community event designed to bring villagers together, named the Twelve Days of Christmas, which involved many villagers decorating their homes on that theme.
- The monthly pop-up BYOB pub night ran throughout the winter months on the first Friday of the month. The Macmillan coffee mornings continued, and the Hall hosted two church services when the weather was too cold to use the church. The childminders' group regularly used the hall, and yoga, pilates and craft classes resumed. We have taken on a dance school on Saturday mornings for two hours, and a meditation group on Monday evenings. Quite a few private children's parties have been booked, and a children's Halloween party and a Bonfire Night post-bonfire gathering were also held in the Hall. The East Farndon War Memorial Restoration Fund held its launch at the Hall after the Remembrance ceremony in November, and several other events were held or are scheduled to be held in the hall in aid of this charity.
- The Village Hall will report a small loss for this financial year. This for the most part was due to its contribution to Queens Platinum Jubilee event and several capital purchases made to enable and enhance future activities at the Village Hall. In the absence of these expenses the Village Hall would have run to its primary objective of break even. Whilst bookings were slightly up on last year,

the running cost were also up which will be a consideration going forward into the next year.

- The committee were grateful to Mervyn Curtis who runs the village website, for promoting village events and posting minutes of the committee meetings on the site.
- The committee would also like to thank all the volunteers who gave their time and donated items for raffles and cake sales over the last year, as well as those committee members who decided to stand down at the AGM for their contributions.
- We currently have 10 members, and welcome any villagers who wish to volunteer for a role as a Hall Trustee.

### c) East Farndon United Charities

Nigel Haynes, in attendance, presented the following report on behalf of the East Farndon United Charities:

- The trustees meet on a twice yearly basis with other informal meetings as required.
- Grants are available for new babies, for funeral expenses, when starting primary, secondary school and higher education, for the purchase of books, equipment and educational trips. The amounts of the grants have been increased this year.
- Other discretionary grants can be awarded as the need arises.
- There is a two year residency requirement before grants are given.
- At all times the Trustees must adhere to the original terms of the Charities Governing Document before grants are made.
- During the year there were 2 educational grants, 1 burial grant, and 25 winter fuel grants awarded.
- To celebrate the platinum jubilee in June, book tokens (value £20.00 each) were given to village children aged up to 18 years.
- The annual figures for 2022 were sent to the Charity Commission on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2023.
- Annual Accounts are available for inspection by written request to the clerk of the charity.

#### Summary-Annual Charity Accounts 2022

	<u>INCOME</u>	<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	
DIVIDENDS	£8149.37	CHARITABLE GIVING	£8238.95
RENT	£92.00	BANK CHARGES	87.40
TOTAL	£8241.37	TOTAL	£8326.35

Deficit over income = £84.98

- The present trustees are: Nigel Haynes (Chairperson) Adrian Hill, Richard West and Caroline Burton. The Clerk is Pamela Haynes, The Haybarn, New House Farm, East Farndon, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, LE16 9SG.

### d) Burial Ground Committee

Russell Burton, in attendance, presented the following report on behalf of the Burial Ground Committee (BGC):

- Membership - the BGC consists of Councillor Hodgetts as Chair plus two members, Russell Burton and Chris Pepler. Its Terms of Reference, previously agreed by the Parish Council, is posted on the village website. The main function of the BGC is to ensure the Burial Ground is well-maintained and safe, and that regulations, also available on the village website, and posted on the Burial Ground noticeboard, are being adhered to.

- Administration & Finance - this responsibility is undertaken by the Clerk on behalf of the BGC with finances managed through the Parish Council bank account. Income of £590 has been received during the year from plot purchases and memorial approvals which has helped to offset ongoing maintenance costs. The Clerk has now resolved the issue of ownership of the Burial Ground: it is owned by the Parish Council.
- Maintenance - the Burial Ground is in good order with regular mowing and hedge-cutting being carried out. The BGC has periodically levelled graves when needed. Push tests have been carried out twice over the last year, both in the Burial Ground and the Churchyard resulting in the laying of an unstable cross in the Churchyard and liaison with family members to secure two memorials in the Burial Ground.

#### **e) Police Liaison Representative (PLR) & Neighbourhood Watch (NHW)**

The Clerk presented the following report submitted by Paul Harrison as the Parish's PLR & NHW Co-ordinator:

- Nothing major to report on the PLR. I have had a look through the emails for crime trends and there are none to report. The last report of a door-to-door scam was passed onto residents via social media. No recent reports suggest that the culprits have probably left the area.
- I will look to meet with the Police over my leave in April and report back.
- NHW is all quiet at the moment.

#### **f) Footpath Warden**

The Footpath Warden, Alan Langley, in attendance, reported:

- Since the award of the new Highways and Rights of Way contract last year, reports of problems made on FixMyStreet have been receiving prompter investigation than before. Last month I reported eight problems, all of which have been replied to. However, the replies contain phrases like 'within 28 days' 'within six months' or even 'within twelve months'. So there is no point in expecting problems to be solved immediately and whether they will be solved even within the time stated remains problematic, based on previous experience. In many cases the landowner is responsible and the contractors can only request that the job be carried out.
- Two problems I reported in December were not investigated because of 'the festive season' and I have heard nothing more on either of those.
- The Parish Path Warden scheme which saw a revival last year, with Zoom training for Wardens, has not been heard of since the new contract began. There has been no contact with Wardens since then.
- None of the problems I have reported prevent the paths being used. They are mainly about wobbly stiles and wood rotting or splitting. Ideally suspect wood will be replaced and the stiles more firmly anchored. But with care, you can use all these points on the paths. I hope people will make good use of the path network and even make their own reports on FixMyStreet, if they feel improvements are needed.

Mr Langley also reported that he intends to retire as Footpath Warden.

#### **g) Amenity Land Committee**

The Clerk presented the following report submitted by David Thake on behalf of the Amenity Land Committee:

- We have been pleased to appoint 2 new trustees this year, we thank you both for volunteering.
- And once again, a big thank you to our volunteers for their gardening and tidying up skills this year.

- The only addition this year has been the small tree, which was planted by Richard Everard, as part of the late Queens Canopy Project, and thank you for the help given for this.
- Our two big costs continue to be the summer mowing cost, and the third party insurance premium (totalling £631).
- You very kindly helped with a contribution last year, and once again we would be pleased if the Parish Council could contribute to our main overhead.

### **i) Tree Wardens**

The Clerk presented the following report submitted by the Tree Wardens, Jessica Oakden and Judy Hodgetts:

- Quarterly inspections have been carried out during the past 12 months, and the Tree Wardens also monitor the trees when walking around the village.
- There are approximately 30 trees with Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) on them (some are in groups under one TPO). All the trees were photographed in October 2019 and the state of them noted for use as comparison.
- All homeowners with trees on their land under a TPO were advised in writing by East Farndon PC in November 2019, and a guide to tree preservation procedures was included with this. This guide plus a TPO map and list are both available on the village website.
- In October 2022, the Tree Wardens spotted a dead tree (non-TPO) and a large dead branch on another non-TPO tree in the garden of Zairs Acre, Clipston Road. Should these have fallen, they would have been hazardous to drivers coming round the bend. It was pointed out to the homeowners, who had the branch and tree taken down quickly.
- To celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the village took advantage of the Queen's Green Canopy Initiative, and a Crab Apple (malus) called Comtesse de Paris was planted on Marriott Green in November 2022. The tree continues to thrive and the tree wardens will water and mulch if necessary.
- Outstanding Issues:
  - 2 Rectory Court: two Oak trees were felled many years ago without permission (T4 and T5). Michael Venton (WNC Tree Office) spoke to the homeowner on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2022 and has suggested that the oaks are replaced with just one tree, possibly a Field Maple. The Tree Wardens will monitor the replanting.
  - Ash tree in the field opposite The Manor (DA 38 T1): Due to the dry weather conditions in August 2021 and the general state of the tree, several large branches became rotten and fell, leaving little left of the tree. The landowner contacted Michael Venton at WNC, who agreed that the tree could be felled, with replanting to take place in autumn 2021. The landowner has confirmed he will replant (there is a 4-year time frame allowed for replanting), although this will not be an Ash tree due to current concerns about Ash Dieback. Tree wardens continue to monitor.
  - Horse Chestnut in the churchyard/boundary with 4 Rectory Court (T9): Mr and Mrs Hodgetts (owners of 4 Rectory Court) have concerns about the safety of this tree as it sits on a steep bank adjacent to their house. They have previously paid for a survey of the tree's health and considerable pruning of the tree. Following last year's hot summer, they had the tree tested again by BHA Trees Ltd. This test showed some further decay, although BHA Trees Ltd cannot give a time frame for the tree's deterioration. Their recommendation is that the height be reduced by 3m and the lateral branches by 3-4 m. They also recommend that the tree is retested in 2 years' time. Due to the cost of the test and pruning every couple of years, would the PC

consider it sensible to consult with Michael Venton to see if the tree could be felled?

**5. Finance**

Clerk reported that the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2022 were successfully audited both internally and externally. Accounts are in good order and the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023 will be finalised and will be brought before the Parish Council at the May meeting for approval.

**6. Any Other Business/Public Participation - None**

**Date of next meeting** – 20 March 2024 - Annual Meeting of the Parish (provisional date)

Councillor Curtis thanked everyone for sending their reports to the Parish Council. He also thanked everyone for giving their time and support to the village.

Meeting closed at 8.10pm.

**Signed that the Minutes are a true and accurate record**

**Chairman** \_\_\_\_\_

**Dated** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Councillors Report - prepared for East Farndon Parish Meeting**

Jonathan Harris - Brixworth Ward

March 2023

### **Council Finances**

The council continues to face service cost pressures coupled with the impact of high inflation. As at period 10 of the current financial year (period 11 figures were not available at time of writing), the council is forecasting a deficit of £2.9 million. This will need to be addressed before year end as of course it is a legal requirement for the council to have a balanced budget at year end. What isn't yet clear is how the council will do this. If the position is the same at the end of period 12, then the balance would need to come from General Reserves. There are ongoing pressures from statutory services (children's care and adult social services). These are both demand led and The Children's Trust in particular is looking likely to require a total of around £7 million over and above their original 22/23 budget (this is split between North and West Northants councils). £5 million of contingency has already been factored into these figures to help arrive at a balanced budget. It is also worthy of note that some £50 million from various reserve pots have been used during the current financial year.

Council taxes will rise by the maximum allowed, being set at an average of 4.99%. For Daventry, it will be 6.1%. This is the third and final year of harmonisation which means that from budget year 23/24 the rate will be the same across the board.

For 2023/2024, the base budget has been increased by some £50 million. However, nearly £19 million of this is to pay for inflationary costs linked to contractual services and won't provide any additional services. There were cuts proposed to subsidised bus services to the tune of £215,000, which would have impacted the 59/60 which runs through parts of the Brixworth ward. Following a campaign, a petition of nearly 400 signatories, representation by parish chairs at council and a budget amendment proposal by the Liberal Democrat group, the bus has been protected for a further year. There is a bus review taking place, which will potentially result in alternative proposals for bus services, but at time of writing these are not known.

An additional £1 million has been set aside for machinery to tackle potholes. This is welcome, however it should be noted that in 2019, the then Northamptonshire County Council estimated that some £464 million would be needed to address all highways maintenance issues across the county.

### **West Northants Committees/other commitments**

I continue as Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat group with specific focus on Finance and Climate/Environmental issues. In addition to my duties to attend Full Council, I am a member of the following committees:

- Strategic Planning
- Planning Policy
- Democracy and Standards

I also substitute for:

- Daventry Area Planning Committee
- Corporate Scrutiny

I am also a member of the following working/oversight groups:

- sustainability
- strategic bus review group



## **Local Plan**

The council is working on a revised Local Plan, which will be one version, replacing the existing Joint Core Strategy and Local Plan Part 2s and will be designed to last until 2041. The effect of this means the reduction of housing needs (the original proposal was to run to 2050), so it could be argued that it is to some extent kicking the can down the road. The government are consulting on the relaxation of the need for councils to provide a five year housing supply due to pressure within Conservative MP ranks. This again could potentially cause issues in the long term.

## **Local Activity/Areas of Focus**

As well as working with parishes and continued individual casework, the focus of my work locally has been on:

- the establishment of a local community based Shopper Hopper mini bus service, reconnecting villages with no form of public transport and designed to enable people to get to supermarkets for a once a week shop. Places like Cottesbrooke, Haselbech, Cold Ashby are now connected to Brixworth and a wider supermarket network. In addition there are two other monthly trips to garden centres and other places of interest.
- a new service called the Haddon Hopper has now been added, connecting the Haddons and running to Daventry, which currently runs once every two weeks
- we are looking at how this service could be widened even further to villages such as East Farndon, which clearly look to Market Harborough, but this will require some ground work with the MH Borough Council which has yet to be started.
- as mentioned earlier, we successfully campaigned to keep the 59/60 bus running for a further year, subject to the ongoing bus review. This ensures that Clipston, Sibbertoft and Marston Trussell keep a service at least twice a week
- the establishment of a food larder based in Brixworth, which taps into the Fair Share network and benefits from the support of the Northampton Hope centre and has an average of 80 customers per week. The larder provides a wide range of foods, chilled, fresh and staples, with customers paying an annual membership fee of £10 and either a £5 weekly shop (of 10 items) or £10 (for 22 items), which includes complementary fresh fruit and vegetables as available. The larder helps people with the cost of living crisis by making their food spend go further. It doesn't just serve Brixworth; it is open to all surrounding villages both in and outside of the Brixworth ward.

## **Local Government Boundary Review**

Councillors and residents will be aware that the Local Government Boundary Review Commission have now published their recommendations for the revised boundaries for elected representation for West Northamptonshire Council. These will take effect from the May 2025 elections should they be formally agreed. At this stage, they are still at proposal stage and seeking consultation from residents, the closing date for which is the 15th May.

In summary, the proposals outline: - 35 wards (increasing from 31 currently) - 76 councillors (reducing from the current number of 93) - 7 one councillor wards - 15 two councillor wards - 13 three councillor wards In effect, these proposals mean that the current Brixworth ward boundary (based on the old Northamptonshire County Council), will disappear and three new wards covering a similar territory, with some parts of the current Long Buckby ward and Moulton ward being included. East Farndon would be become part of a new ward, named East Farndon & Walgrave and would be represented by one elected councillor. Under the proposal Brixworth Parish becomes a ward in its own right, and the remainder of the 'old' Brixworth ward becoming part of a new Naseby ward.

**East Farndon Activity (ongoing)**

Following a joint visit with the Director of Place, I continue to work with East Farndon parish and the highways/place team to try and resolve the following issues:

- drainage
- roads/road surfaces
- ownership of the land adjacent to the spring
- speeding and speed measures