

**EAST FARNDON PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 20TH MARCH 2024 AT THE VILLAGE HALL COMMENCING
AT 7.15 PM**

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

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: WNC Councillor Harris and three residents

1. Apologies

Apologies received and accepted from WNC Councillors Irving-Swift and Parker, Gill Kirby (Secretary to the PCC), David Thake (Amenity Land Committee), and Jessica Oakden & Judy Hodgetts (Tree Wardens)

2. West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) Councillor Reports

Councillor Curtis presented the following report submitted by WNC Irving-Swift:

- The Parish Council receives from WNC a monthly newsletter, all residents can download the WNC Apps which has from today a new function “report” and all consultations are advertised on our website.
- Therefore, there is little that I could add. As you know, I normally do not talk about Politics. In this case, I believe I must. I am one of your Conservative Councillors and the Conservatives have the majority on WNC. I am therefore satisfied that your Council is fully committed to deliver the manifesto on which we were elected. Of course, if you have a specific point you would like to raise with me regarding the direction of travel of your Council or a concern that the Parish has regarding our services, I am more than happy to look into it.
- I am also always available to parishioners who can contact me if they need my help or support. This is a very rewarding part of my role as Councillor and you will understand that I cannot disclose details.

WNC Councillor Harris, in attendance, presented the attached report.

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 and 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 this year being:
 - EFPC continues to stay focused on roads improvement and reducing speeding in the village. Progress is very much dependent on WNC resources, but in the year many parts of our road surfaces have been repaired, although there is still more to do. Our Community Speedwatch took place in summer last year and we continue to be supported by multiple visits from the Police speed control van. We will keep pushing WNC for more action, including the possible introduction of further speed control measures in 2024/2025.
 - The team set up to further research and document our village heritage assets is making good progress, this seen as a valuable resource to help us to respond to any major housing developments that could impact the village. Both WNC and HDC have recently launched the creation of new local plans and EFPC will stay closely involved in these processes and comment/take action as necessary.

- The community group set up to raise funds to renovate the village War Memorial has been a major success, with the work completed in time for Remembrance Sunday 2023.
- The team set up to focus on village spring clean/ongoing maintenance has been well supported and very successful. In addition, the Lealand bench has been repaired and a new oak bench placed outside the Village Hall.
- EFPC has created a team to work on the creation of a climate action & biodiversity plan for the village.
- The Burial Ground and Churchyard, maintained by EFPC, continues to be kept in good order from both a physical and management perspective.
- The Footpath and Tree Wardens continue their good work in managing these important areas for the village.
- Weekly Jubilee Foodbank collections from East Farndon are in their third year and continue to be well supported.
- The Village Website (eastfarndon.org) & Facebook Page have matured into the trusted places to go for a wide range of village information.
- EFPC will continue to work hard and in partnership with all of our village organisations to help our community to become more sociable and inclusive.

4. Reports from village organisations: -

a) Parochial Church Council (PCC)

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

- There were the usual meetings throughout the year with a slight reduction in Services and the Evensong Services being cancelled during the Winter months.
- A portion of the money raised for the restoration of the War Memorial was kindly donated for the restoration of the Church gates and a new lantern over the gates was erected in memory of the late wife of Mr Robin Hancock. A donation of £100 was received from the Parish Council from the proceeds of the sale of the Jubilee booklet.
- In the Vicar's absence through illness, the Harvest Festival Service was conducted by the Churchwardens and followed by light refreshments in Church.
- As we were unable to hold a fete during the Summer it was decided to arrange a Prize Draw towards the end of the year which was successful in raising £760 towards Church funds.
- The usual Christingle & Christmas Services took place and were well attended.
- We are currently in the process of obtaining quotations for a number of problems regarding plaster work and painting in need of repair to improve the condition of the inside of the Church and are hopeful that a fundraising team may be formed to assist with raising the money to carry out the work required.
- We are grateful to the Rev Janet Donaldson, a number of visiting clergy and the Churchwardens who were able to help with Services during the Rev James Watson's illness.
- We were delighted to welcome Mrs Julia Prew onto the PCC and would welcome anyone else who would like to serve on the PCC.
- We thank all those who give of their time to help and support the Church in any way and thank the Rev James Watson for his ministry and pray that his health will continue to improve during the coming months.

b) Village Hall Trustees

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

- This year marks the centenary of East Farndon Village hall, and aptly, it marks the end of a busy year for the hall, with events continuing to be well attended.

- A celebration of King Charles III's Coronation was held in the hall on Monday 8th May 2023. It was an indoor picnic, with cakes and alcohol sales and was enjoyed by villagers of all ages. It followed an inaugural Beer Festival (not a village hall event) on 7th May, held to raise funds for the War Memorial Restoration.
- In August we held the annual summer barbeque, which was again very well attended. Unfortunately the Harvest Supper was cancelled this year due to illness and expected sparse attendance. Other Hall events throughout the year included the Curry and Bingo Night in November, Christmas Soiree and Chinese New Year celebration. The Hall also promoted a themed Christmas house and village decorating event during December titled "Snowflakes and Stars".
- In addition to the regular events, the hall hosted a pilot film series bi-monthly on Wednesday nights, organised in conjunction with Marston Trussell Village Hall. Regular hall users included the childminders' group, yoga, pilates, arts and craft classes, wine friendship group and Macmillan coffee mornings, as well as the Saturday childrens' dance classes, which have now extended their hours. There were many booking for private parties, and a village Halloween children's party, shared with Clipston. The hall was also opened for refreshments after the War Memorial Remembrance ceremony in November.
- New additions to the hall this year include a dishwasher, and solar panels with battery storage.
- The village hall will report a loss for this financial year. The overriding reason for this is the expenditure undertaken on installing the solar panels onto the roof of the hall which hopefully will provide benefits in future years in the form of lower electricity bills as well as demonstrating a commitment to the environment. Without this expenditure, the village hall would have reported a small profit demonstrating that income (mainly from hall hire and village events) is able to fund ongoing regular spend. Despite this loss, the village hall continues to retain positive reserves.
- The committee extends its thanks again to Mervyn Curtis who runs the village website, for promoting village events and posting minutes of the committee meetings on the site, and to Tony White who volunteered to do repairs to the Hall throughout the year.
- The committee would also like to thank all the volunteers who gave their time to help organise village events this year.
- We currently have 12 members, and welcome any villagers who wish to volunteer to help at any events.

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.
- 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 1 Birth grant, 9 educational grants, 2 burial grants, and 25 winter fuel grants awarded.
- The trustees have endeavoured during the year to achieve more equilibrium of the charities income, between the younger and older members of the community,

and have actively encouraged parents to apply for school and further education grants, this resulted in a rise of educational grants from 2 in 2022 to 9 in 2023.

- To celebrate the Coronation in May, book tokens (value £20.00 each) were given to 49 village children aged up to 18 years.
- The annual figures for 2023 were sent to the Charity Commission on 12 February 2024.
- Annual Accounts are available for inspection by written request to the clerk of the charity.

Summary - Annual Charity Accounts 2023

	<u>INCOME</u>	<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	
DIVIDENDS	£8440.79	CHARITABLE GIVING	£9783.95
RENT	£92.00	BANK CHARGES	85.20
TOTAL	£8532.79	TOTAL	£9869.15

Deficit over income = £1336.36

- 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

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

- Governance & Membership – the Burial Ground Committee (BGC) is a sub-committee of the Parish Council. During the year the Terms of Reference for the Burial Ground Committee were reviewed and it was agreed no changes were necessary. The current members are Councillor Hodgetts, Russell Burton, and Chris Pepler, with Councillor Hodgetts as Chair.
- Administration & Finance – this responsibility, including plot purchases and record-keeping, is undertaken by the Clerk on behalf of the BGC with finances managed through the Parish Council bank account. The Burial Ground is owned by the Parish Council.
- Revenue – over the last year there have been no plot purchases and no other income has been received, e.g. for erection of memorials. The list of charges is available on the village website, along with further BGC information.
- Burials – there have been two burials in the last year: Dr Mark Biggin in September and Marlene Hook in January.
- 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 in the last year, both in the Burial Ground and the Churchyard. 'No Mow May' was trialled in 2023, but the feedback from the contractor suggests this will not happen again.
- Extension – a recent calculation of the current capacity of the Burial Ground and rate of burials suggests that it will be many years before the Extension will be needed. So, in the spirit of No Mow May and also the Parish Council's Biodiversity Policy it is intended to manage the Extension in a way that will encourage plants and wildlife. Led by Councillor Hodgetts this work is scheduled for March/April.
- Path – the path to the Burial Ground, particularly thorough the Churchyard would benefit from the provision of fresh gravel with meshing underneath. Funds are available to buy materials in the Parish Council's Burial Ground/Churchyard Maintenance Work Reserve. It is intended to get a working party of volunteers together to undertake this work in May/June.
- Bulbs – apart from a few clumps of snowdrops there are no bulbs planted in the Burial Ground. It has been suggested that daffodils and/or other bulbs could be

planted in front of the western and northern hedges. This should take place in September/October.

e) Police Liaison Representative (PLR) & Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) – no report. Councillor Fallon reported that PC Chris Bates had advised that there have been no crimes, or activity in our area and nothing in the wider area that we should be concerned about. Additionally, PC Bates will be stepping back from front-line duty and will advise who his replacement is in due course.

f) Footpath Warden

The Footpath Warden, Jonny Dargie, in attendance, reported:

- ROW Warden transition: During 2023 Alan Langley handed over the role of ROW Warden to Jonny Dargie, with a comprehensive and detailed overview of all tasks.
- Alan has been ROW Warden for the village for many years and has given a huge amount of time and effort to maintaining the network throughout that time. A massive thank you to Alan for all his hard work.
- Council contractors – Kier: in October 2023 a new member of the Kier team took over responsibility for Rights of Way for the North Northamptonshire county area including East Farndon. As a result, there has been a really positive improvement in the response to and delivery of remedial activity to resolve several ongoing issues – see March 2024 report for a detailed list of resolved and ongoing matters.
- Main structural issues – Village Hall path: the March report noted above provides detail on specific issues. The largest of which is the state of the path behind the village hall which is overgrown, very slippery in wet weather, has obstructions from garden fences and at times is inaccessible. A number of conversations have been held with Kier and they have confirmed that assessments and surveys are being undertaken – verbally it has been suggested that work could be carried out in the Spring time assuming the various land owners involved can be coordinated.
- Objectives for 2024/2025: the proposed objectives for the coming 12 months are as follows:
 - Maintain the access and signage across all Rights of Way and Bridleways in the East Farndon parish: this will be done by ongoing monitoring of the network and the prompt reporting of issues to Kier, the council contractors.
 - Promote awareness of the East Farndon ROW network across the village: it is proposed that this should be done by ensuring that all in the village are aware of the wonderful countryside available to us via the ROW network. To this end, I would like to add an article to the next village newsletter.

g) Amenity Land Committee

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

- It is now nearly 15 years since we purchased and developed the overgrown land, which is known as Marriott Green by the church. This was with the financial help of villagers, and also help from local farmers, especially Robert Gowling.
- Trees were pruned or cut down, grass seeded, and the land was fenced.
- The view of the church was also greatly improved.
- Now some of the trees and bushes will shortly need to be cut back again.
- We are spending about £400 per year on mowing charges, and also £300 on insurance, our main costs (Total £700).
- This year we were pleased to receive £345 in donations (£100 from Jubilee booklet, £85 from the village coffee morning, and £160 from Alan Langley talk).

- Therefore we had a deficit of £355.
- We have sufficient reserves for next year only, and we would dearly appreciate a nice donation from the parish council this year.

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.
- Outstanding Issues:
 - 2 Rectory Court (T4): Replanting of felled oak. Michael Venton (WNC Tree Officer) spoke to the home owner on 5th October 2023 regarding the replanting (he has previously suggested a Field Maple). The homeowner has asked to deal with Michael directly, and the tree wardens will ask him for an update next time they have contact with him.
 - Ash tree in the field opposite The Manor (DA 38 T1): Replanting of fallen ash tree. Michael Venton emailed the homeowner on 11th September 2023 to once again chase up the replanting. The tree fell in August 2021 and there is a legal obligation to replant within 4 years. The tree wardens will ask Michael for an update when they next have contact.
 - Ash tree next to Farrer Cottages (T2): An application has been submitted to WNC to have this tree felled due to decay (as evidenced and reported by a qualified arborist). An application has also been made to manage T1 (Ash) at the side of T2, to keep it healthy. The PC and the tree wardens need to monitor to ensure WNC stipulates the replanting of another tree.

5. Finance

Clerk reported that the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023 were successfully audited both internally and externally. Accounts are in good order and the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 will be finalised and will be brought before the Parish Council at the May meeting for approval.

6. Any Other Business/Public Participation

WNC Councillor Harris was asked whether WNC were looking at the future of churches in small parishes; he advised that he was not aware of any such work, but would raise this issue.

A resident asked whether horse and cart traffic signs could be erected in East Farndon. Councillor Fallon agreed to look into this.

Date of next meeting – 19 March 2025 - 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 8.25pm.

Signed that the Minutes are a true and accurate record

Chairman _____

Dated _____

Annual Councillor Report

Jonathan Harris - Liberal Democrat Councillor - Brixworth Ward March 2024

Background

2023 - 2024 has been another extremely busy year. As well as my casework across the Brixworth ward, I have held the following roles at council:

Corporate Scrutiny - Committee Member

Democracy and Standards - Committee Member

Planning Policy - Committee Member

Strategic Planning - Substitute committee member

Children, Education and Housing Overview and Scrutiny - Substitute committee member

Health and wellbeing - Local Area Partnership - Ward member for Rural North LAP

I am also a representative on the cross party Bus Enhanced Partnership Group and cross party Sustainability Group.

West Northants Council

As at period 10 financial reporting (end of January - the most recent figures on council performance at the time of writing), the council saw further pressure primarily within Adult Social Care with the overall forecast overspend at year end (31st March 24) increasing to £4.2m. Parliament's cross-party local government select committee's report, released this year, found "systemic underfunding of local councils in England" and a £4bn hole in council funding for 2024/25. They also report a real terms reduction of 25% since 2016. At its current 'run rate', West Northants is showing a funding gap of some £80 million within the next four years. This is clearly an unsustainable situation for the long term. In 2024/2025, West Northamptonshire Council will receive approximately £419.4 million (excluding the dedicated schools grant) to deliver the day to day running of its services. The money received from council tax makes up around two-thirds of this total income, with the remainder coming from sources including government grants and part of the national business rates.

The council's budgeted spend for 2024/2025 is as follows:

Adults, Communities and Wellbeing (34%)

Children's Services (23.3%)

Education Services (1.3%)

Corporate Services (4.2%)

Chief Executive Services (0.7%)

Communities and Opportunities (3.2%)

Place and Economy (22.9%)

Central Resources and Financing (10.4%)

Photo ID for elections

All elections now require photo ID for those voting in person. A full list of suitable photo IDs can be found here: www.electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID Those without any form of voter ID can obtain a 'voter authority certificate' (for free) by contacting the council at: www.westnorthants.gov.uk/VoterID

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Election - 2 May 2024

Elections will take place on 2 May for Northamptonshire's Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

2025 Elections and boundary changes The new ward boundaries will take effect from the May 2025 West Northants Council elections, with the current Brixworth ward being split into three and with some additional villages being incorporated into them. The wards will be named as follows:

- Brixworth
- Rural North East
- Naseby

Current Brixworth Ward **Community Larder**

Within the Brixworth ward, I continue to support and be a co-ordinator for the Brixworth Community larder which has now been operating for around eighteen months. The larder does not just serve Brixworth residents but within the wider ward and in some instances beyond. The larder has been focussed on helping people through the cost of living crisis. The larder serves an average of 68 people per week with an average reach of 45 children and 120 adults.

59/60 bus

Following the successful Lib Dem budget amendment last year (February 2023) to prevent a budget cut in order to provide ongoing support for this bus route and 5 other routes across the area, at the end of 2023 we were confronted with a different challenge. The bus operator (UNO) decided that it was no longer going to operate any of its bus routes in West Northamptonshire. We worked closely with officers to ensure that the route was tendered for and were pleased that last month it was announced that the route would continue with a new operator - Stagecoach. Stagecoach took over on the 11th March without a break in service and now have a 12 month contract with an option for an extension of a further 12 months. Our plan is to work with the operator to explore how the route can be grown in terms of passenger journey numbers and to explore if there are any additional connections that could be made.

Allotments

For the past six months, I and the Focus Team have been supporting a campaign to protect some allotments in Brixworth that are under threat of loss by the land owners for the development of housing. The proposed houses are speculative in nature. The campaign has received widespread publicity (BBC and ITV) and a petition of 1134 signatories has been presented to West Northamptonshire Council asking for their support to protect them.

Road condition/surfaces & fly tips

Road conditions have continued to deteriorate, a culmination of underfunding at a national level as well as the woes of Northamptonshire County Council's section 114 (bankruptcy notice) meaning that spend was designated for essential services only. Getting this fixed is a big challenge and will require significant investment. It has been estimated that it will require £200 million to bring roads back to a stable and satisfactory standard.

Parish liaison and Support I continue to support and work with parishes within the Brixworth ward. In its current configuration, the Brixworth ward consists of 13 parishes (and therefore 13 parish councils) and 8 parish meetings. My contact details are: E: jonathan.Harris@westnorthants.gov.uk T: 07759 977981

Brixworth Climate Action Group

For the past 12 months, I have been supporting and working with the Brixworth Climate Action Group, This group, working in partnership with the parish council, has been developing a 'green' framework for the parish so that it can reference all decisions against it, carried out hedgerow and community orchard planting and is now in the process of formulating a health and well being garden/area within one of the existing green space local parks.

Further News and Updates

UK 100 Leadership Academy

I was the council's representative at the UK100 Climate Leadership Academy. A series of three weekend workshops with 20 councillor attendees across the country, coming together to fully understand the "Powers In Place" that councils of all tiers have to drive and shape the nature and climate agenda within their councils. The powers cover five key areas; Waste, Nature, Energy, Buildings and Transport. Working with the cross-party Sustainability Group, I have been focussed on supporting the development of a Climate Strategy which sits now as an officer's responsibility to draft before wider council and public engagement. A core element has been encouraging the Planning Policy Team to incorporate aspects of this approach into the development of the new draft combined local plan.

Combined Local Plan

The Draft Combined Local Plan (subject to approval at full council on the 21st March) will go forward for six weeks of public consultation shortly after Easter. The draft document and proposed site allocations are now in the public domain and they are available on the council's website under item 15 of the council papers for the meeting of 21st March.