

PRIORS HARDWICK VILLAGE MEETING
Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 29th April 2021
At 7.30.pm by Zoom

Present

Candy Kelly (CK), Chairman
Margaret Clarke (MC), Secretary
Carolyn Bath (CB), Treasurer
District Councillor Nigel Rock (NR)

Christopher Bull; Richard Cutt; Isabel Davies; John Eustace; Jamie Gibson; Barbara Harvey; Tonia Hicks; Paul and Rosemary Hobday; Christopher and Gabrielle Hodgson; Stuart Hyde; Libby Jameson; Alan and Gill Kinnear; James Mayne; Ian Mercer; Noreen Nichols; Graham Olver; Lucie Penruddock; Miriam Price; Joy Redfern; Alan Towler; Thierry and Lorraine Stortenbeker; Alan Smith; Sue Talbot; Eddie & Ann Ukleja; Carol Wareham; Ros White

In attendance John Acres, on behalf of John Taylor

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Christopher Hodgson (CJH) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

CJH reminded the meeting that Mrs Kelly had announced, at the last meeting, her resignation as Chairman to take effect from the beginning of the current meeting.

Mrs Kelly had served as Chairman for seven years and Mr Hodgson reminded the meeting that this was a commitment not only of meetings and village business but of personal availability "24/7" for village matters. This, Mrs Kelly had carried out very successfully and with a high degree of diplomacy, dignity and decency. During the seven years Mrs Kelly had liaised consistently with our local councillors, had organised, at a very advantageous cost, SmartWater security marking for every household; the 30mph speed restriction through the village; negotiations regarding (i) HS2, (ii) the status of No Man's Land, and (iii) the conveyance to the village of Lino's land opposite the Village Green and to the west of the Lych Gate; and latterly Mrs Kelly had organised Village Meetings by Zoom.

Election of Officers

1. Chair

There had been one nomination: Stuart Hyde (SH) had been nominated by Joy Redfern (JR) and seconded by Rosemary Hobday (RH) and declared himself happy to stand.

The meeting agreed unanimously that Stuart be elected.

2. Treasurer It is the prerogative of the Chairman to invite a Treasurer. SH had invited Carolyn Bath (CB) to continue as Treasurer and she had agreed.

3. Secretary There had been no nominations and Margaret Clarke (MC) declared herself happy to stand.

It was proposed by CJH, seconded by SH and agreed unanimously that MC should continue as Secretary.

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SH wished to add his thanks to CK in addition to those of CJH. For people who perhaps had not yet met him SH introduced himself as having lived in the village, at Rose Cottage for six years, and had been made very welcome since his arrival. By way of personal trivia his favourite colour is orange, favourite cities are Sydney, where he met his partner, Tonia and Mumbai, and his favourite restaurant is Moro, a Spanish restaurant in London.

1. Apologies were received from:

Mr and Mrs Hugh Darbshire; Mrs and Mrs Simon Darbshire, Diarmaid Kelly; Sylvia Sutherland.

2. The Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 21st January 2021, having been circulated were taken as read. It was proposed by CJH, seconded by CK and agreed nem.con that these were a correct record of the meeting.

3. Matters Arising There were no matters arising which would not be covered in items already on the agenda.

4. Finance – Annual Internal Audit Report

Mrs Bath presented the areas covered by the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year 2020/2021.

4.1 The Annual Internal Audit Report was reviewed and noted. There were no issues raised and the Internal Auditor concluded that all internal control objectives were achieved.

4.2 The internal control measures in place were described and reviewed by the meeting. These include the exercise of electors' rights to inspect the books during a given period. This year the inspection period will be from 01/07/21 to 11/08/21.

4.3 The internal controls were deemed effective and approval of The Annual Governance Statement was proposed by CJH, seconded by JR and agreed by the meeting.

4.4 The Statement of Accounts was presented and CB highlighted the key features. With total income of £3,762 and total expenditure of £1,800, a surplus of £1,962 was generated in the year. £1,000 was transferred to reserves, as planned, to provide for possible future legal fees. Reserves now total £5,500, including the £4,500 contribution to the Community Area. The year-end balance in the current account was £2,410.

There is likely to be a reduction in income in current and future years because the Council intends to take litter clearance back within their control, meaning the Services Allowance of £647 paid for this work will no longer be received. The Village Meeting can carry this loss of income in the current year but precepts in future will need to be increased to cover this amount.

4.5 Approval of the Accounting Statements was proposed by Tonia Hicks (TH), seconded by Libby Jameson (LJ) and agreed by the meeting.

4.6 CB explained that Village Meeting meets the qualifying criteria to exempt itself from External Review, having both income and expenditure less than £25,000, having been in existence for more than four years and having had no issues raised by an external auditor in previous years. To certify ourselves exempt from External Review was proposed by Gill Kinnear (GK), seconded by Eddie Ukleja (EU) and agreed by the meeting.

5. The Fessey Charity

CB outlined the history and purpose of this charitable fund, established many years ago by donation from two village families to help the 'deserving poor' of the Parish, with focus on the elderly and infirm. (There are 38 recorded burials in 24 recorded graves of members of the Fessey family, between 1703 and 1927, in the churchyard, with occasional visits in recent years from members of the family.)

Current trustees are Ivan Harvey (IH), CB and the serving vicar is a de facto trustee. It currently produces an income of around £60 per annum and in recent years this has been paid out in £20 lots to three or four elderly residents. As recipients have sadly passed away and times have changed, IH and CB have been considering refocusing the charity towards the young, to help fund books or equipment etc associated with education or training, along the lines of the Keys Charity in Priors Marston and still meeting the 'deserving poor' principle of the Trust. The meeting was asked for their views. Concerns were expressed about whether the repositioning would contravene the Trust Deed or the intentions of the original donors. An idea was raised of widening the scope to include anyone in need, either using the Fessey Charity or by establishing a second small charity, and seeking further gift aided donations. Richard Cutt (RC) offered to follow up with CB and the trustees would report back at a future meeting.

6. Report from District Councillor Nigel Rock

NR wished to add his thanks to CK in addition to those of CJH.

Most of what NR had to report could be found in the May edition of the Parish News available to all residents.

The District Council business in recent weeks had been dominated by preparations for the Elections due on 6th May for County Councillors and a Police and Crime and Commissioner.

Covid numbers had been dropping well, and currently, although with a slow start the South Warwickshire area was currently one of the best in the county. People were no longer turning up at the two Test Centres and sporting facilities were beginning to open. Council Offices were now open, but people were still being seriously warned to take care.

An anomaly currently occurred in that remote meetings (eg. Zoom) would not be permitted after 12th May, but until 17th May people would not be able to meet indoors in groups any larger than 6. Thus with social distancing very large buildings would be required for larger meetings.

HS2

The extended closure of the A452 between Southam and Ufton and failure of HS2 to provide a relief road was still a matter of serious concern. Councillors were doing all they could including meetings with Jeremy Wright MP, to improve the situation. The current aim was to secure from HS2 compensation for businesses which were financially affected by the closure which was now expected to last for up to a year.

Police Farm Watch

There had recently been an attempted theft of large machinery from a farm in Stockton. This had been similar to that which had preceded the serious break-in at the Co-op in Fenny Compton in the recent past, and Police feared that it could be a precursor to another break-in. People were asked to look out for a dark brown 4x4 vehicle.

7. Community Area and HS2 Support

CJH reviewed the history of this project and, sadly, the unwillingness of English Heritage to grant approval for siting the Community Area at the NE end of the field central to the village, known as The Ancient Monument – the site of the original village settlement. CJH offered his thanks to RC and Miriam Price (MP) for all their patience, generosity, and efforts in this matter. Currently £46,750 was either in hand or had been promised for this project.

However, CJH had now received an offer from Ben Nichols of part of a field at the top of Hollow Meadow Lane adjacent to Doe Bank, and subject to Planning Approval and on a 20-year lease.

CJH sought from the meeting confirmation of its support for the site and the 20-year lease; confirmation of maintenance and insurance of the site as agreed for the previous meeting; and for planning approval to be sought. A copy of CJH's proposal is kept with these minutes.

CJH reported that some younger members of the village had agreed to take on this project once the basic requirements had been satisfied.

CJH also noted that negotiations were currently under way to re-order the church building to make it more accessible and useful for village activities/events in general.

In the discussion that followed the following points were raised:

- The provision for an outdoor activity area for children and adults would add value to the village.
- It would detract from the amenity value of properties on the opposite in the immediate vicinity.
- The area is too small and not easily/safely accessible.
- The proposed car parking area might encourage use by walkers etc from outside the village
- A 20-year lease is not long enough relative to the cost of the installation, if the lease was not renewed.
- Access by car and on foot both include an element of danger due to the road and footpaths.
- One mother commented that she would not allow her junior school aged children to undertake the walk there from the village alone.
- There were other sites within the village which might be investigated.

Concern was voiced about the use of the site at the end of the lease. NR suggested that advice might be sought from the Planning Officer and RC also offered to seek relevant opinions – or possibly seek further conditions relevant to extending the lease.

Summing up, SH concluded that there was little support for this site for the Community Area and CJH agreed to revisit the matter in view of the comments offered.

8. Website and Village Digital Communications role

A copy of AT's report is attached with the minutes.

9. Planning at Doe Bank Manor

Jamie Gibson (JG) presented this application for the change of use of land to extend the residential curtilage, proposed erection of oak framed car port and retention of a tree house (retrospective). JG explained the application as follows:

- The extension of the curtilage is required to access the treehouse and the carport
- The tree house had been erected in ignorance that permission was required but the tree had in no way changed by the construction of the treehouse. The path which led to the tree house would require an extension of the garden area to include some agricultural land and clarified there was no plan to landscape the path and that it would be remain unchanged from its present appearance.
- The additional carport would be required since the existing garage was either too narrow or too short to accommodate either of the family's two cars. The proposal is that it would be located close to the main property

JG explained that they were very aware of how the house stands on the ridge and that the view of the property will be softened with planting, some of which has already been undertaken. JG invited anyone who so wished to visit the site.

JG then left for the meeting to consider the application. In the discussion there was some support voiced for and concern expressed about the application with the following points raised:

- Reaction to the tree house was mixed and there was concern about another piece of land being changed from agricultural use.
- The land had always been farmland but the planting of the trees that had been undertaken was a good job and had made an improvement.
- There was concern that another large building on this site would detract from the views of the village from the canal and have a material impact on the landscape.
- It was questioned whether the significant earthworks currently under way were works to do with the plan proposals. SH confirmed that he had been for a site visit and had been advised by JG that they were not works to do with the plan proposals in the application and that they were for the removal of the existing ha-ha.

SH summed up by pointing out that planning approval was required as a single decision and to consider the application on that basis. The meeting was invited by show of hands as to the response to the application, with the results of voting as follows:

No objections – 11; Objections – 9; Abstentions – 14.

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10. Highways

It was reported that in spite of this matter having been discussed at the previous meeting, some residents had persisted in placing large stones on the grass verges outside their houses. CK stated again that this practice was not legal and that the property owner could be held responsible for damage caused by the stones to any vehicle.

The deep rut outside Bramleys at Lower End had been partly filled but was still a matter for concern.

11. Church Services

MC reported that services would be re starting as follows: 23rd May a Service for Families at 9.00am; 30th May at 9.00am - Holy Communion for all 6 parishes. In June the normal pattern of services would follow: 1st Sunday 9.00am Morning Worship; 2nd Sunday Evensong at 5.00pm; 3rd Sunday – Holy Communion at 9.00am. There is no service here on the 4th Sunday but morning worship is held at Wormleighton and Priors Marston at 10.30am.

CJH added that discussions are ongoing relating to the best way to re-order the interior of the church in order to make it more fitting for a wider variety of village activities.

12. Speeding

The restrictions had now been in place for four months, but traffic was still using excessive speed especially between the Boddington cross roads and the bus shelter. NR offered to consult the Police on this matter with the possibility of the use of a speed gun, for which 6 volunteers would be required.

13. HS2

NR and SH would shortly be making a visit to the local site and would report back after the event. In the meantime the video seminar about the new bridge is still available – and viewing was recommended.

14. AOB

14.1 Weavers Cottage. Richard Cutt (RC) briefed the meeting about their intention to apply for planning to make adaptations to the property, including the addition of a swimming pool, for their daughter Ava who has a rare condition. RC advised that he is keen share with the village details of the plans as they go through the engagement and planning processes, including the offer for those to be in person if people were keen to see details when available.

14.2 Building Plot St Mary's Close. Although only intending to join in a listening brief John Acres (JA), on behalf of John Taylor (JT), provided an update on the latest position in respect of the plot of land. The current approval lapses at the end of May '21 and JT intends to submit the originally approved 3-bedroom plan as a new application. Graham Olver (GO) asked whether JT intended to live in the property. JA advised that he could not confirm this at this time.

15. The Date of the Next Meeting would be Thursday 22nd July at 7.30pm in the Church

There being no further business the meeting closed at 10.15pm