

Cogenhoe & Whiston Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting

Held On Wednesday 24th April 2019, 7.30pm

At Cogenhoe & Whiston Village Hall, York Avenue, Cogenhoe, NN7 1NB

1. Welcome, Mr. Jon Bailey, Chairman Parish Council

Cllr Bailey welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from CCllr Michael Clarke, DCllr Carole Clarke, DCllr Steven Hollowell, Cllr Jim Biggs, Cllr Roger brown, Cllr Jez Cunnington, Lawrence Howes, Revd Eddie Smith & Terry Coles.

21 residents attended the meeting.

3. District & County Councillor's reports

-CCllr Michael Clarke, NCC, (Hackleton & Grange Park division)- read in his absence by the Clerk
The 2018/19 year has been something of a roller coaster at the County Council. I think it would be easiest to summarise events chronologically to gain an understanding of where we are at the end of the 2018/19 financial year:

- The year began with the publication of the Caller report. Mr. Caller is an experienced local Government inspector appointed by the Secretary of State to examine the reasons for the financial difficulties experienced at NCC. The report was critical of the way the Council had been managed and run. It recommended that the Minister appoint Government Commissioners to oversee a recovery programme. Part of the report dealt with the Inspector's recommendation that local government in the County should be overhauled and two new unitary Councils be set up to replace the current two-tier system.
- A new Chief Executive – Theresa Grant – was appointed in July 2018. As well as steering the recovery programme, she will oversee the County Council as it merges its services into the new unitary structure.
- A new Cabinet, led by Cllr. Matthew Golby, took over the reins in April pledged to enacting the recommendations contained in the Caller report.
- The full extent of the financial difficulties became clear later in 2018 when a brought forward loss for the 2017/18 year of £41m was agreed with auditors.
- The two Commissioners lobbied Government to allow NCC a special dispensation to access receipts from the sale of One Angel square. This major step allowed the brought forward loss to be eliminated and the Council's exhausted reserves to be replenished.
- The results of the new financial realism shown by officers and Councillors were seen in the balanced budget achieved for the immediate past financial year, with a small surplus.
- The challenge for the current year is not to be underestimated. Savings of £41m are contained in the budget.
- The overall Council Tax for 2019/20 shows an average increase of approximately 5%. Contained in the overall figure is a 10% increase in the precept for the Police & Crime Commissioner.
- Children's services remain under pressure. The Council was given an unsatisfactory OFSTED report in November 2018. That was followed by the Secretary of State's decision to appoint a third Commissioner – Mr. Newsom – to oversee the running of the Children's directorate.
- The County Council is resolved to spend the final year of its existence working to deliver services in the most efficient and cost effective way it as it works towards merging its services into the two new unitary authorities. The South Northants district will join Daventry and Northampton Borough to form the new West Northamptonshire Unitary Council. While it is intended to have the new authority going live in May 2020, with fresh elections preceding it, the necessary legislation has yet to pass through Parliament. It is anticipated that this will happen before the end of April.

Cllr. Michael Clarke (Northamptonshire County Councillor for Hackleton & Grange Park division)

-DCllr Steven Hollowell -received after the meeting

1. The past municipal year started well for South Northamptonshire Council but, due to factors outside our control, has developed into a very difficult period.

As many parishioners will know, SNC had developed a very successful partnership with Cherwell District Council in Oxfordshire. The staffing of the two councils had been combined, so that, for example, there was only CEO and one set of managers as well as many individual services being combined between the two councils.

Our troubles began in the Spring of 2018 when it became known that Northamptonshire County Council was, in effect, insolvent. Central Government was advised to send in Commissioners to help sort out the NCC finances but, they were also advised that in the long-term, the County Council and the borough and district councils be replaced in a major re-organisation by two unitary authorities.

Quite early on, Cherwell District Council decided to pull out of their partnership with SNC and seek a new partner authority elsewhere. This has meant that the past 6 – 8 months have been spent unpicking the SNC/CDC partnership and making preparations for the dissolution of South Northamptonshire Council and the formation of a new, West Northamptonshire Council to replace SNC, Northampton Borough Council, Daventry District council and, part of Northamptonshire County Council. Elections for May 2019 have been cancelled but no new dates have been set. As yet, the secretary of state has not approved the plans for the new authorities and so it is unlikely that they can be created before May 2021.

For many of us, this has been a very discouraging period. South Northamptonshire Council has been both innovative and efficient and a model authority to other Councils across the Country.

2. The new Local Plan, against which all planning applications will be measured will shortly be tested at public inquiry. The adoption of this plan is essential in order to, amongst other things, protect the open countryside from undesirable development.
3. The most recent planning application to re-develop the former garage site in Station Road was refused on several grounds and is currently subject to appeal. An Inspector has been appointed and he will base his decision either on the basis of written representations (letters), a public hearing or a public inquiry.
4. Finally, please accept my apology on behalf of the officers and members responsible for dispatching incorrect Council Tax bills this year. Until the split from CDC, this work was undertaken by a large finance team on behalf of both Councils. As soon as the mistake became apparent, replacement invoices were drawn up and dispatched. There has been an internal inquiry into this error with a view to avoiding the same mistake next year.

If there are any other questions or issues concerning Cogenhoe or Whiston, parishioners should not hesitate to contact me.

Cllr Steven Hollowell

4. Signing of Minutes of last Parish Meeting 21.5.18

The **minutes** of the meeting held on 21st May 2018 were **signed**.

5. Matters arising

-Further defibrillator training

The Clerk reported that East Midlands Ambulance Service had recommended this be left for a year, it will be looked into again.

-Bus service is vital to the village – see Chairman’s report for comment

6. Police Report - Towcester Neighbourhood Team, no attendance.

7.Chairman's report

Changes for Parish Council

None.

Village Hopper

The highlight of the year has to be the setting up of the not for profit Village Hopper service starting on the 23rd July 2018. As soon as the NCC had announced the withdrawal of subsidies (in April) our Clerk (Deborah) started work on looking at various options to replace the W8 service. After much work and a steep learning curve we decided to setup up a timetabled bus service running to a similar timetable as the W8 and similar fares starting the Monday after the W8 finished. Initially we had great help from John Ellerby at Northants Highways and Wellie Bus and indeed Shire Services (who run the Wellie bus) took over the licence for our service and employed the drivers. On 1st October we took over the complete running of the service. We hold the operators licence and employ the drivers ourselves.

9 months on we continue to run 5 return journeys a day during the week from Wollaston to Northampton and 4 on a Saturday from Wellingborough to Northampton. We have revised the timetable twice since the start. Feedback has generally been very good and indeed the council was nominated by the association of local councils as council of the year (out of 11,000) for our bus service. We did not win but were very pleased to be a runner up. As a matter of interest 70% of our passengers have concessionary passes and they continue to be carried free. We get money from NCC to help pay for the cost carrying these people.

We did swap the original white bus for a red one. Apparently some people were flagging down a 'white van' by mistake so this should avoid this issue !

After some (understatement) concerns about the finances we are now solvent. We had some initial funds from the local parish councils and we have had a start up grant of £5,000 from South Northants and a very generous revenue grant (17% of the costs) from them as well. We have also had a £10,000 grant from the Big Lottery. We now run at cost and with no extra money we can run until March 2021. We have no plans to stop at that date I hasten to add.

I could talk at length but at the end if you have any questions relating to the service please shout up.

November 11th Commemoration of Centenary of ending of WW1

The second highlight of the year was the weekend events over the 10/11th November centred on the Village Hall. After a suggestion from Parish Councillor Iris Sher the parish council paid £2,227 for a memorial stone and oak tree to be installed in the village hall playing fields. Over the weekend Steven and Robert Hollowell (with help of the Cogenhoe and Whiston Heritage Society) put on a splendid display of WW1 memorabilia in the hall which was attended by many people. On the Sunday after the usual Remembrance Day service at the church the Cogenhoe Sea Scouts marched up to the hall and following splendid singing from the school choir and poems read by 4 pupils of the school the commemoration stone was unveiled along with its very clever poppies display round the base constructed by Tony Loader. The evening was marked by the lighting of a beacon by the village hall and the playing of the last post and the sounding of the church bells.

Grants Made/agreed

The new Station Road bus shelter (near Glebe Road) including provision of a 'perch' seat was recently installed paid for by a grant of over £7,000 from the SNC New Home Bonus fund. We will now investigate the possibility of replacing the other bus shelter.

Two of the Parish Council notice boards were replaced at a cost of £3,000 using monies from the CIL fund.

£400 towards to cost of a compere and sound system for the 2019 Party in the Park to be held on 13th July 2019.

£180 for cost of village Xmas tree.

£548 to repaint the phone box in Whiston and to install shelving to provide a book exchange.

£430 was granted to Whiston Church to replace their floodlights.

The Village map will shortly be installed near the junction of Station Road and The Piece.

Other achievements

The street lights were placed over a short period last autumn. All the orange bulbs were replaced with low energy white ones. We took out a £13,300 loan which we will pay back over 5 years using the costs savings from the electricity usage. These amount to approximately £2,500 per year (50%). We have had very little adverse feedback.

Planning

Bus Garage

Application for 10 houses. Application was refused by SNC planning but the developer has put in appeal.

Sports and Social Club

SNC Planning gave approval for an extension for the bowls club to enable to club to eventually move to this site.

The Caravan Site applied to extend their operating period. This was refused by SNC.

Other Items

We have changed our grass cutter due to a potential cost increase. The new one has carried out the first cut and despite a couple of minor complaints we are very happy with their new work.

Speed repeater signs have now been installed (paid for by the parish council) on the road out of the village towards Whiston.

NCC have now started work gathering evidence residents for the definitive map to be modified to reflect the unrecorded public right of way that passes between the old bus garage and the sports and social club from Station Road and York Road

Finances 2018/9

Parish Council

This year's precept will be £24,000 an increase from £22,000 last year.

Income (less VAT)	£41,454 (including £12,300 for light replacement)
Expenditure (less VAT)	£48,914
Overall	-£7,460

Current balance £28,178

Much of the 'loss' can be attributed to the unbudgeted cost of the commemoration memorial

Village Hopper

Income	£53,025
Expenditure	£37,621

Current balance £15,404

To come

We await the results of the work on the creation of the two unitary authorities in Northamptonshire, but the main impact is the fact that currently the next local elections are planned to be held in May 2020 rather than next month.

We are planning a fire protection and safety event one Monday evening likely in May. We expect this to be attended by police and fire service to provide guidance on safety in the home. All residents will be invited.

Reminder

All meeting minutes are published on website and all council meetings are public. Anyone is welcome to attend to address the meeting or simply to listen.

Comment ;

Robert was also thanked for his efforts with providing the music for the Remembrance event.

8. Reports from Village Organisations

Neighbourhood Watch – Lawrence Howes emailed report

Please accept my apologies that I am unable to be here tonight.

The past year has been extremely successful for the village scheme. It has continued to grow in size. Over the last two years we have gone from 41 members to 137 currently. This is very positive as villages with large schemes are proven to have a lower crime rate.

Volunteers from Neighbourhood Watch continue to pick litter from within the village boundaries and over the past year have filled hundreds of bags with rubbish. This is done on an informal basis and I would like to thank all those who give time for this. Some do it on a very regular basis and it has made Cogenhoe much tidier. Please feel free to join us: all you need is a picker and a bag. Even if you just do your street it makes a difference.

Unfortunately, we have seen a rise in crime nationally which has been reflected here. The Police continue to send out lots of messages to our members relating to Northamptonshire as a whole. I still send out to members solely about any problems that arise in our village and its surrounds. For this reason, I suggest that members may switch off police messages unless they are keen to know what is happening countywide. You will still hear about village issues.

Mid-2018 we had a problem with large steel balls being fired through house windows. Neighbourhood Watch designed a flyer appealing for information, the PC generously funded the printing and we placed one through almost every door in the village. It seemed effective: once we had distributed them the attacks ceased.

Cogenhoe continues to be a low crime rate area. You can help it remain that way by taking sensible precautions and by being in Neighbourhood Watch. If you are not already a member it is easy to join up online though do make sure you select the Cogenhoe scheme. Alternatively, you may give your details to the Parish Clerk and I will contact you.

I would like to thank all the Neighbourhood Watch members for continuing to be part of village life and I especially thank the Parish Council for their constant and invaluable support.

St Peters Church – no report

St Mary the Virgin Church – Whiston

Diana Shakeshaft thanked the parish Council for the recent grant to replace the church floodlights, everyone agreed the Church looks fabulous when lit in December.

Village Hall & Playing Field Management Committee

Thanks

Myself	Chairman
Tessa D'arby	Vice Chairman
Jean Grubb	Secretary
Elizabeth Packer	Treasurer and Booking Secretary.

Thank you to our pre-school rep Bogi Enyedi-Lourity who has left us and has now been replaced by Matthew (Matt) King. Thanks also to the Discussion Group rep Iris Sher who has left after many years after her group finished meeting.

Finances

Last year we made a profit of about £3K in the year to end of September 2018. This year we expect to roughly break even this financial year. Reserves are over £29K.

Village Hall Development

We now have planning approval for our extension. We have had a number of indicative quotes for the work but much detailed work is needed before we can place a contract. The next major effort is (of course) to raise the funds. We are now actively working on making grant applications.

Caretaker

We have recently taken on a caretaker to help run the hall day to day.

Football pitch

Our existing football team Manfield Rangers folded but we now have a new team AFC Pioneers who are playing regularly on a Sunday morning.

Play Area

With help from a resident (Victoria Venkatasamy) we now have three quotes for new equipment. We will shortly be starting the process of applying for grants.

Other points

Rural Cinema continues to run monthly on last Wednesday of the month at 4pm. Average attendance is about 25 with a maximum of 40. Depending on grants we expect to continue this over the next year.

The memorial and oak tree to mark the 100 years of the ending of WW1 was put in the playing fields and paid for by the parish council. This was unveiled on the 11th November.

Picnic in the Park held in 14th July. A Party in the Park to be held this year on the 13th July with a slightly different format hence the change of name.

A tree blew down blocking the road and damaging a street light. Thanks to Sean Foster for swiftly removing the tree. Parish Council was reimbursed for the cost of repairing their light. The cost of removal of the tree (£1000) was covered by our insurance.

Maintenance

New fridge, hand dryer, curtain cleaned, York Room and Kitchen ceilings painted, outside towards school repainted, further strip of the car park was tarmacked, football pitch remarked and goal posts repainted, skip hired to get rid of rubbish, cleaning company taken on to clean the hall regularly, fire doors readjusted and repaired and car park light repaired.

Asbestos

We have a proper asbestos review of the building. No actions are required but we now know where there is asbestos and we will continue to monitor the state of those areas and carry out regular reviews.

Fire Risk Assessment

We have also had a proper fire risk assessment. We have a number of actions mostly minor but the major one is to work out how to replace the curtains in the main hall with blinds.

Youth Group

Cllr Bailey reported that numbers have fallen at the group and its viability is now in question.

Pre-School – no report

Village Hall development committee

See Village Hall Management committee report

Pocket Park

We have been holding regular work parties with 2 students working towards their Duke of Edinburgh awards. Recent activities have been coppicing, digging some trenches to dry out the paths, clearing the bridges, litter picks and adding steps by the pond.

Footpath warden – Terry Coles emailed report

All footpaths in the Cogenhoe and Whiston Parish are in good condition following the recent period of fine weather which seems to have slowed the growth of vegetation.

The short path at the top of Mill Lane suffers from overhanging bushes at head-height which are the responsibility of the householder to reduce.

At the beginning of this calendar year I was informed that work on the bridge at Whiston Lock would be taking place and that some of the paths around the lock would be closed for 6 months beginning in January. So far, I have seen no activity around the lock and no footpaths have been closed.

The Nene Way Permissive Path is still being considered for inclusion in the Definitive Map as far as I am aware. If approved, it would be designated KF31.

Cogenhoe Walking for Health Group Report

The Walking for Health group meets on alternate Thursday mornings at 10 am at the Scout Hut. We walk most of the paths in the Cogenhoe and Whiston Parish and often take in Brafield and Little Houghton as well. Generally, we walk for between sixty and ninety minutes covering up to 3 miles and then return to the Scout Hut for tea and coffee. It provides for social interaction as well as a health benefit.

The group continues to expand – if we all turned up on the same day, there would be a group of more than forty people wandering the fields around the village. Our reputation is such that we have members from outside our parish.

On the intervening Thursdays there is the Saunter Group, led by Elizabeth Packer, which meets at the Village Hall at 10 am and strolls around the village for up to half an hour before returning to the Village Hall for tea and coffee. Again, this group provides social interaction together with the health benefit of walking in the fresh air.

WI

We meet monthly on the first Wednesday at 7.45 pm in the York Room at the Village Hall.

Our evening group re- formed fifteen years ago in December 2003 and we now have 22 members. Each month a different speaker entertains us on a variety of topics. We have an annual croquet evening in the grounds of St. Andrews Hospital when members of the Northampton Croquet Club look after us and give helpful tips. At our December meetings we have special entertainment for Christmas, last year a magician entertained and in the past hand bell ringers and a folk singer. From time to time we have invited members from other WIs to join us for cookery demonstrations and a fashion show. We also have summer days out.

The WI is a national organisation and each year a resolution is passed at the national AGM and taken to government. Members are encouraged to promote these resolutions and to lobby MPs. Examples from the past are: Mental Health Matters, Plastic Soup: Keep micro plastics out of our oceans, Avoid Food Waste and Increasing Organ Donation. Often these are ahead of the game!

The Northamptonshire Federation is based at WI House in Moulton. They organise courses, activities and visits for members who wish to take part. A monthly newsletter is published for members.

We always welcome visitors to our meetings and the evening end with social time and refreshments.

Ladies Fellowship

Jean Grubb reported that there are 20-30 members who meet at the St Peter's Centre, it is a friendly group, and everyone is welcome (including men). Details of meetings are published on the Parish Council community page.

Cogenhoe Discussion group – no report

Heritage Society – read by Dr J Grubb

Throughout last year the Society held Open Meetings on the second Wednesday of every month. Guest speakers including some who used songs of the era gave presentations on local and world History and the same format will continue this year.

The Society completed the Green Plaque project with an unveiling ceremony on the 7th June. A total of 12 plaques are in place on various properties in the village with one more plaque to be installed. There is also a 'Green Plaque Trail' leaflet showing where the plaques are which has proved extremely successful.

During the Armistice weekend in November, the Society was present displaying photographs of the men from Cogenhoe who gave their lives in the Great War and these were complemented by our book 'Cogenhoses Fallen heroes' with Steven Hollowells fine display of World War 1 artefacts. It was a poignant display which attracted a lot of interest.

Currently, the Society has an ongoing project called 'the Cogenhoe Map Project' and Ted Barnes will be giving us a talk about what he has found later this year. It will be very interesting.

Finally, we always welcome new members, so why not join us and enjoy a wide variety of talks on Historical subjects. Tea and coffee are served afterwards.

Cllr Packer reminded everyone that there is table tennis in the Village Hall every Tuesday evening, all abilities welcomed.

9. Open forum

Q Where can residents view the Village Hall redevelopment plans?

A They are available on the South Northants Council website (planning section).

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.30pm