

# **MINUTES of WEEK ST MARY ANNUAL PARISH OPEN MEETING**

## **held on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> April at 7.30pm in the Parish Hall**

The Chairman Mr J Ward welcomed 8 Parish Councillors, approximately 16 parishioners and Mrs N Chopak, Cornwall Council Ward member.

**Apologies:** Mr S May. Mr R Sowerby, Mrs L Cobbledick, PC S South, Rural Beat Manager, PCSO S Ross and Mrs S Russell Head, Jacobstow Primary School,

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave his report.

### **Chairman's report:**

This has been a particularly busy and difficult year for the Parish Council. Difficult in particular because we lost one of our long term, stalwart Councillors Ivor Barriball. Ivor was a Parish Councillor for more than 40 years and served for many of those years as Chairman or Vice Chairman.

The work of the Parish Council ranges from issues with fundamental, long term implications for the parish to small, day to day things that nonetheless contribute to the Parish's day to day wellbeing. For me, having completed my 8th year as Chairman, Ivor spanned both those areas so effectively, with clear views about long term policy and proper process but also he was always carrying out some small practical repairs around the village that simply needed doing. As Chairman I miss Ivor's wise counsel, deep links into the community and firm nudging if we were ever in danger of doing something contrary to good process. Ivor was a passionate believer in and advocate for the value of the Parish Council for the community.

The Parish Council would like to state its gratitude for all Ivor's service to the Parish Council and to the whole community.

Overall it has been a sad year for Week St Mary. Several other very community-minded people are no longer with us. In the context of this report I think of people who would have been at this Open Meeting, without fail, Hilda Axford and Rev David Clarke for example.

I do not propose to summarise the extent of the Parish Council activities in this report. The activities of the Parish Council are reported comprehensively in the Parish Magazine, available on the Parish Notice Board and on the village website. Rather I will pick out some key highlights

As is the case every year, Parish Council work has included activities such as lobbying about the state of the roads, the management of the playing field, the maintenance of the public toilets, dog mess, grass cutting and transport.

One of the services the Parish Council provides that I must mention are the Public Toilets. We have received several unsolicited notes and comments during the year complimenting the quality and standard of the facility, which we have continued to upgrade with the recent upgrade of the gents' urinal. The praise for the facility is due mainly however to the work of Jamie Sachs who cleans and maintains it for the Council.

A lot of people think of the Parish Council in terms of planning permissions. I don't look at it that way. We are a consultee to the planning process not a decision maker. It is right that we consider applications and make recommendations but ultimately that's all we can do. We spend hours discussing planning applications and considering responses. I tend to think of the things we actually have control over as being more important: the playing field, the greens, the toilets, the footpaths etc.

We are grateful for the continuing and close support of our County Councillor Nicky Chopak. Nicky attends virtually every Week St Mary Parish Council Meeting despite an incredibly busy schedule. She is a swift and effective communicator of our concerns to Cornwall Council, very effective at sorting stuff out and doesn't duck when thorny problems need addressing. She also keeps us advised of what's happening in Cornwall Council and its issues, mainly of late about managing an ever shrinking budget.

A persistent irritant continues to be the non-delivery of super-fast broadband to Week St Mary. The funding for the current build finished at the end of March. We have it in writing that Week St Mary will be connected very soon. Previous suggestions about completion dates spanning some three years have dimmed our sense of expectation and excitement awaiting the elusive switch on. It is very important to us though, given the slow and patchy broadband service currently available.

Another of the key issues this year, was the deciding and communicating of the Parish's Council's response to the major Big Field Wind Farm Planning application. As reported last year we received legal advice on how the Parish Council should proceed. With half the Council, including myself, declaring interests and not be able to take any part in the decision process, this left the five remaining Councillors with a difficult job to do in the glare of much public interest. I am grateful to Micheline Smith for chairing the remaining Council group and to her and the other four Councillors for their hours of work and diligence in delivering the Council's response. Often we feel Parish Council views are ignored in County Council planning decisions but in this case the views of Week St Mary and the other Parish Councils were regarded in the debate as being very important indeed, leading to the refusal of the application. I must also refer here to Nicky Chopak's tireless work in eliciting and communicating the views of her communities in this issue.

Regrettably of course, the applicant has decided to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against Cornwall Council's decision. So the unwanted saga continues.

I would like to welcome Steve Cluney as our new Parish Councillor. The Parish Open Meeting is his first meeting after being formally co-opted at the April Parish Council meeting. Steve is a resident of Ashbury Grove, serves on the Football Club committee, is involved with a number of community activities and is committed to helping us develop our community services. Steve is also a retired police officer, so now with three former officers on the Council, the rest of us should surely be kept on the straight and narrow! Certainly the services provided by Devon and Cornwall Constabulary to the community of Week St Mary are already being scrutinised by expert eyes as never before.

I report this every year, and really mean it every time I do. Our Clerk Bobbie Heathcote does a wonderful job in supporting the Council. Her efficiency, knowledge and calmness makes the Chairperson's job very easy. I visited several other Parish Councils last year and it was clear to me that it would be impossible to be a good council without a good clerk. And at Week St Mary we have a highly professional clerk who is also committed to working for the community.

I would also like to thank the people outside the Parish Council who have served on a voluntary basis on various Council sub-groups, particularly Phil Dorren the Footpaths Coordinator who has done sterling work. Also Linda Mason, a solicitor from Holsworthy, who acts as our Internal Auditor. Councillor Peter Coulson carried out regular financial integrity checks, a job for which the queue of volunteers was fairly short! We are grateful for his additional time and diligence in fulfilling that role.

As we can see from the various reports presented to this meeting from organisations in the parish, we are fortunate to have such a breadth of people who make a contribution to parish life across a wide spectrum of activities. On behalf of the community I would like to record thanks to all the people who contribute to the running of groups and activities within the Parish. Without the many hours of dedication and service they put in, the community would be much less vibrant and diverse.

We believe we have managed our budget for 2014-15 prudently. The accounts are published on the boards in the hall and available for inspection at any time. For 2015-16 we have increased the precept in the context of £4500 needed for specific projects in the Parish, mainly at the Playing Field.

I believe we are effective as a Parish Council and deliver valuable services to the community. Our objective continues to be to maintain our services to a high standard, to develop new facilities and invest in the future.

Once again, thank you to all the people who work to make Week St Mary a better place to live and work.

**The Clerk read a précis of the Minutes of the Meeting of 3rd April 2014.** A copy of the full minutes has been on the parish website for 12 months and a copy was on display. The Minutes were unanimously agreed and signed by the Chairman.

#### **Report on issues relating to Road Congestion and Safety in Week St Mary.**

Some councillors and Cllr N Chopak had met with CC Highways Manager, Adrian Drake to discuss the ongoing problems related to congestion in some areas in the parish caused by parked cars, excessive traffic speed and the resulting road/pedestrian safety. Unfortunately on the day of the visit, there were hardly any parked cars and very little traffic and every suggestion made by the councillors was vetoed by the CC official who quoted facts and figures to back up his case. Mr Drake advised that parked cars are considered to be a natural traffic slowing aid, 30mph signs must be a statutory distance from the last dwelling and a traffic order

to move the sign would cost £3k, an order for yellow lines would be £6k. Mr Drake also suggested that traffic was not travelling as fast as the councillors thought but agreed to have a traffic speed monitoring system installed. Councillors asked parishioners to take photographs of dangerous parking and forward them to councillors. It was also noted that the parish council highlight parking issues, if applicable when making comments on planning applications but that the planning department do not seem to take this into account when make their recommendations and decisions.

**Reports were received from the following:**

Cornwall Council Ward Member - Cllr Mrs N Chopak spoke of the impact that the massive cuts on Cornwall Council's budget is having and will continue to have on many aspects of life in Cornwall. Cornwall Council has been allocated £10 million for road repairs. Following the 128 acre solar panel installation at Maxworthy, Canworthy Water, which was signed off without any community benefits being agreed, Cllr Chopak is in consultation about benefits for 5 parish councils. The current offer is £140,000 to be shared between five parishes, but she is trying to get more and she asked for ideas on how the fund can be allocated in Week St Mary.

Jacobstow Primary School – Mrs S Russell had sent a message that she is happy to welcome anyone to school who wishes to look around.

The Parish Hall Committee – Mr L Davies thanked everyone for their continuing support and advised that they are increasing the prizes in the 100 Club. Mr Davies added that the atmosphere in the various events held in the hall is wonderful and engenders the community spirit.

Bude & Rural Beat Police Manager.

Magazine – Thanks were expressed to Messrs Sowerby and Edwards for all their hard work and for letting the parish council place their news and items of interest in the magazine as it is a great way for letting everyone know.

Week St Mary Parish Church.

Methodist Church – Mr J Ward advised that Sunday morning worship has become less formal, incorporates various musical contributions and a guest speaker. Café Church takes place at 6.30pm on the first Sunday monthly which is a very informal session. The Methodist church support CRY – Care and Relief for the Young. In August there will be Sausage and Song event during which routines from Joseph and his Technicolour Dreamcoat will be held and they are hoping many people and children will volunteer to take part.

Football Club – Mr S Smith spoke of the tremendous support for the youth players and how pleasing it is to see them debut into the adult team when they reach 16 years old. The club are fortunate to have good coaching which enables youngsters to take part without the need to travel further afield and they all get a chance to play. Mr Smith praised the support the club is given and the great atmosphere during matches and training.

Women's Institute.

Footpaths Co-ordinator – Mr P Dorren thanked Mr J Sachs for maintaining the gold and silver paths. Mr Dorren has sent in articles for the magazine as and when necessary about issues relating to walkers with dogs using footpaths and about game shooting close to footpaths. There have been fewer complaints about dog mess and Mr Dorren hopes this trend will continue. Mr Dorren invited anyone with any footpath questions to contact him.

Skittles Club – There was no report but Mr Jewell was present and confirmed that skittles is continuing but that they struggle to get players. There are 4 teams but only 3 players from Week St Mary. He thinks the number of teams in their division will be reduced next season.

Village Website – Mr J Ward expressed thanks to Mr Martin and Mrs Cobbledick for providing such a good service and for allowing the parish council to place their reports, agenda and information on the site.

Police Community Support Officer – No report

Transport Representative – Mr W Pearce confirmed that the service is still running, that Summercourt Travel and Cornwall Travel are the same company and have a 2 year contract.

Community Parish Office – Mrs M Smith thanked Mr P Coulson for providing training and reminded everyone that the offer of training still exists.

Neighbourhood Watch – No report

Week St Mary Walking Group – Mr S Smith confirmed that they meet on the second and fourth Tuesday monthly at 9.30am in the Square and between 4 – 8 people take part and enjoy some varied and interesting walks.

Week St Mary Playgroup – No report and no one present but it was confirmed that the group which was previously known as the Coffee Pot meet regularly and they have a Facebook page.

Week St Mary Public Conveniences – Mrs M Smith confirmed the facilities are much used and appreciated by many and that notes of praise have been left. Mr J Sachs was thanked for his good work keeping them so clean. A urinal has recently been added.

Also on display:

Friends of Week St Mary Finance reports from Sue Dyer on behalf of the for the Church Fabric Account and the Church Graveyard Account.

The Parish Council end of year receipts and payments record

The Chairman's report.

**Election of the Parish Hall Committee** – The following are seeking re-election: Mr L Davies, Mr M Caesar-Gordon, Mr J Roberts, Mr P Coulson, Mrs M Johns, Mr P Sachs, Mrs M Cunningham and Mrs E Cartwright. The committee were unanimously elected en bloc. Mr L Davies added that they are able to co-opt during the year if anyone is interested. Mr J Ward thanked them for their hard work in all matters relating to the fundraising, repairs and maintenance.

**Other Parish Matters & Question Time**

Concern was expressed about the clearing of vegetation around Tree Tops, where vegetation including hedges and trees have been cleared and there have been bonfires which have been burning for long periods sometimes emitting black smoke. One resident, with health problems was very concerned that it was affecting her badly. Cllr N Chopak confirmed that she has been speaking to officers from Cornwall Council and that pre-planning advice had been sought by the owner of Treetops but it was unsure if the work he was undertaking was in line with the advice. Follow up by CC Enforcement can take up to 13 weeks but Cllr Chopak confirmed that an officer has been allocated the case and it is hoped that checks will be undertaken by the following week. Other departments who have become involved are Environmental Protection re the bonfires and the County Tree Officer. Cllr Chopak stressed that no one had given the owner permission to undertake the work but that landowners are permitted to undertake work of this nature provided it is not in a Conservation Area and there are no trees with Preservation Orders affected. It was noted that the owner of Treetops has booked the Parish Hall on 20.06.15 to enable the plans to be seen.

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 8.45pm

Signed.....Chairman

Date.....