

MINUTES of WEEK ST MARY ANNUAL PARISH OPEN MEETING
held on Thursday 26th April at 7.30pm in the Methodist School Room

The Chair, Mr J Ward, opened the meeting at 7.30pm and welcomed 7 Parish Councillors, 6 parishioners and Mrs N Chopak, Cornwall Council Ward member.

1. Apologies:

Cllr Steven Cluney – holiday

Apologies were also received from Linda Cobbledick and Stephen Smith

2. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting 2017

A precis of the Minutes was given and they were then accepted as read and agreed.

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

3. Chair's report

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.

This being the 9th time I have presented the Chairman's report, 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, parking, grass cutting, transport and petty vandalism.

The Parish Council often gets thought of as important in the consideration of planning applications. We take that role seriously and offer our views responsibly but in practice we have no decision-making role. I always feel that our direct responsibilities are the most important aspect of what we do. For example, the management and upkeep of the Public Toilets. The toilets are kept in good condition and this is due mainly however to the work of Jamie Sachs who cleans and maintains it for the Council. Jamie also looks after another community resource we are responsible for, the village greens.

Whilst we are not ultimately responsible for the footpaths, Cornwall Highways are the responsible body, we do undertake the maintenance contract and we are extremely grateful to Phil Dorren who voluntarily reports on and manages the parish footpath network on behalf of the Parish Council. Also I would like to thank Linda Mason, a solicitor from Holsworthy, who is our Internal Auditor, a role she performs free of charge.

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.

The last time I gave the Chair's report in 2015, the Big Field Wind Farm had been a major issue with the Council taking legal advice on the process. More than half the Council, including me, declared interests. At the end of that section of my report in 2015 I stated: "Regrettably of course, the applicant has decided to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against Cornwall Council's decision. So the unwanted saga continues".

Three years on and the developer is still appealing. To give you a rough breakdown of the timescales. A three-week Public Hearing took place in Launceston Town Hall in April and May 2016. At the end of 2016 the Planning Inspector reported to the Secretary of State, who had called in the application for decision. On 26th July 2017, the Secretary of State upheld Cornwall Council's refusal of the application, following the Planning Inspector's recommendation. On the last day of the 60 days allowed, the developer requested a Judicial Review of the decision arguing that the Inspector and Secretary of State had given insufficient consideration in the decision of policies on the AONB and to the community benefits and community leadership of the project. They subsequently dropped the AONB ground. On the basis of paper submissions, the developer was refused permission for the Review. However, the developer appealed that and had a hearing in person before another Judge who granted permission for the Review.

A week ago tonight I was travelling back from London having attended the High Court hearing at the Royal Courts of Justice. The developer's barrister was arguing that the Secretary of State's decision should be quashed as due to Big Field being community led and the community benefits being insufficiently considered in the planning balance. It took the barrister about 3 hours to develop that position. Then the Government's barrister another 2 hours to argue why the decision shouldn't be quashed.

What was particularly pleasing, if a little surreal, was to be sat after lunch listening to the High Court Judge and the two barristers poring over the post-enquiry written response from Week St Mary Parish Council to the Secretary of State. It was taken very seriously as part of the demonstration that the project did not have community backing. As I emailed Micheline when I was on the way home, to say "It's a good job she can spell proper".

There is no way of knowing when the Judge will hand down a decision. Equally there is no way of knowing what it will be, although I am quietly confident that the decision will not be quashed. If it were to be, the Secretary of State could take a number of actions – appeal to the Supreme Court or reconsider taking into account the community aspects allegedly not considered or order a new Planning Inquiry.

Our Clerk, Kate Denton, has done a great job in supporting the Council. This has been Kate's first full year as a Parish Clerk, not having been a Clerk before and she has cope really well with the steep learning curve and the vagaries of Week St Mary Parish Council.

We should have ten Parish Councillors, we have had nine for the last session. We would love to co-opt another Councillor. It is a really interesting and important role and we have some fun doing it. Please talk to a Councillor if you would be interested.

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 volunteer and make a contribution to parish life across a wide spectrum of activities.

I do worry that rates of volunteering are declining. It feels like it is harder and harder to fill voluntary roles in groups; that rates of commitment to activities or causes are lower than before. I bet we could have written down the names of the people who we thought would be here tonight in advance and we would have been 80% accurate.

But then in the last week, I attended a meeting with mainly young parents, desperately keen to start a youth club. Last night a group of Ashbury Grove residents met and agreed to work together to tidy up the soft landscaping on the estate. The Community Shop has encouraged a significant number of new, as well as the 'usual' volunteers to ensure this vital community facility continues. Although of course the shop needs more volunteers.

And represented here tonight in the community groups offering reports, we have the volunteering core of the Parish. I would like to record thanks to all the people who contribute to the running of groups and activities. 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 prudently. The accounts are available for inspection at any time. We set a precept this year that was the same as the previous year although your council tax demands showed a 2% reduction we are not sure how that was calculated.

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.

4. Reports from Village Clubs and Organisations including:

Community Shop – attached
Village Website – attached
Parish Hall – attached
St Mary's Church – attached
Bright Sparks – attached
Methodist Church – attached
Football Club – attached
Jacobstow School – attached

Womens Institute – attached

Magazine - Dick Sowerby. This continues to thrive thanks to contributors and advertisers. The last date for inclusion of items is 22nd of each month. Particular thanks to Terry, Leslie, Len and Peter without whom the magazine wouldn't get to everyone.

Skittles – this is going well with several teams playing. Appreciation expressed to Linda Willis who provides food and does the bar, together with all the other people behind the scenes keeping everything running smoothly.

5. Report from County Councillor Nicky Chopak

Cornwall Council has had a substantial budget cut and Council Tax has been increased by 5% to protect front line services. Other things like public toilets, libraries etc do not come under this protection. Some services have been devolved to local councils.

A new machine has been purchased to help with the repair of potholes – it can repair them much more quickly and cheaply which is necessary with 800 or so reported potholes each week.

Waste collection is changing with general waste being collected fortnightly and recycling & food waste being collected weekly. It is also possible that small electrical items could be collected. This will be rolled out over the next couple of years and the Council is looking at providing wheelie bins or seagull proof sack for general waste.

The results of the Boundary Commission review are likely to take effect in 2021 with a reduction from 123 Councillors to 87 which will work out at approximately 2000 more households per Councillor. This will cause some difficulties with County Councillors having more casework.

Stratton Medical Centre has been taken over by Holsworthy Medical Centre.

CCllr Chopak thanked the Parish Council for their help and support over the past year.

6. Report from WSM Community Shop

Included in reports above

7. Community Benefit – Grants etc.

There has been a change of ownership from Primrose Solar and the Community Benefit fund receives £1250 per annum. There is a formal application process and policy against which applications are judged. The forms and policy are available on the website

8. Village Litter Pick

It was suggested that volunteers from the village could arrange a litter pick to tidy up verges and other areas. The WI are arranging a litter pick for 15th June which will either be in the village or the beach.

9. Questions & Observations from the Public

The issue of selfish parking in the village was raised as it causes difficulty in the main for tractors and lorries trying to negotiate corners and drive through the village. It was suggested that a notice could be put in the parish magazine and that notes on windscreens may bring it to the owners' notice.

The work on Week Ford Bridge has still not been completed in spite of being due for completion at the end of April. Are there any penalties for late completion? It is costing parishioners a lot of money to travel around the obstruction. Completion is now due at the end of June. This will be discussed at the next Parish Council meeting and action taken to address the issue.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9pm.

Signed.....Chairman

Date.....