

**MINUTES OF THE FARNDON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 2nd
APRIL 2024 AT 7.00PM, IN THE MEMORIAL HALL, FARNDON.**

Present: Cllr V Roberts (Chair), Cllr H Williams (Vice Chair), Cllr F Henderson, Cllr A Foster, Cllr P Amphlett, Cllr P Fish, Cllr P Roberts.

Also in attendance: Mrs C Taylor, Clerk and Borough Cllr A Waddelove.

Apologies: Cllr M Rudd, Cllr B Hillyer, Cllr D Finlay, Mrs M Jones.

35.24 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT.

The Chairman read the report to Councillors.

1. 2023 saw the Parish council elections and three of the existing councillors decided not to stand again – Lesley Morris, John Hillyer and Margot Jones. In the event, there were only 10 candidates for the 11 places, leaving one vacancy. Paul Roberts expressed an interest in joining the Council, and Margot also indicated she'd like to rejoin. So we did something never done before by our Parish council – we created the first ever Honorary Parish Councillor especially so that Margot could rejoin us and give us the benefit of her many years of knowledge and experience, and we were also able to co-opt Paul to fill the vacancy. I would like to thank both Lesley and John for their contributions to the Council and to the village as a whole over the years. Lesley was one of the moving forces behind the creation of the Remembrance Garden, and is still very much involved with its upkeep and development. And John is still involved with Farndon Community Club.
2. More recently, we have had to say farewell to Cllr Sue Rowlandson, who has resigned due to health issues after around 40 years serving the residents of Farndon as a Parish Councillor, and for some of that time also as a Councillor on Chester City Council. Sue's knowledge and wisdom will be greatly missed. Her resignation has left a vacancy which will be filled by co-option at the Parish Council meeting which follows this Annual Parish Meeting.
3. I'd also like to thank Paul Griffiths for doing various jobs around the village for the Parish Council, including putting up the small Christmas trees and lights, lighting the main Christmas tree (which was as always, donated by the Barnston Estate), some work in the Remembrance Garden and some repairs to the boardwalk. I'm sure there are other things he has done for the village too.

4. 2023 also saw Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council elections, and our new councillor Adrian Waddelove has been a regular attendee at our meetings. I'd like to thank our previous Borough Councillor for his support for the Parish Council in our deliberations and communications with the Borough Council.
5. We also owe very many thanks to Cllr Fiona Henderson for putting together our biannual newsletter, which I know is very much appreciated by the residents. It is important that we councillors all contribute to it if we can.
6. Over the past year the village has seen a fourth defibrillator installed, this one having been donated by Taylor-Wimpey. The village now has 4 defibrillators located at Aptitude Health and Fitness, at the Chemist, at the Health Centre and at Farndon Community Club and we will continue to publicise these in our biannual newsletters.
7. During the year the Parish Council was contacted by Cheshire West and Chester's Digital Sector Specialist. There is a government grant for installation of WiFi in public buildings and we were asked if any buildings in our Parish could benefit. Both Farndon Community Club and Farndon War Memorial Hall were very interested and have now had their installations completed. I am not sure if this would have happened if the Parish council had not been alerted.
8. The Parish Council continues to support the Farndon Community Club as far as we are able. The building has encountered some serious problems in the last year or so and their committee is working hard to raise the funds to resolve these problems. The Parish Council has been able to give some grants towards the costs involved, but we are aware they have a huge task ahead of them.
9. Last summer through to the autumn a Wild Camping site was established in a field near the bypass. There was a lot of communication with the lady operating it, Cheshire West and Chester Council and our Borough Councillor. There seemed to be quite a difference of understanding of what was allowed, how long it was allowed for and what actually was going on there. The composting toilet they installed was washed away in the winter floods and a lot of litter was thrown into the hedges around the site, despite the site operator making sure there were proper bins for litter disposal. Clarity about the situation was not achieved and we can now only wait to see what happens this year and whether the existing litter is cleared away.

10. Councillor Becky Hillyer's suggestion of a Give Box where people can take small household items to donate seems to be very successful. Thanks to a donated wooden tree house which Hugh Sym kindly converted into a usable shed and placed in the corner of the Memorial Hall car park, the idea has certainly taken off. Now renamed Green George, the concerns about things being scattered about so far have not materialised, although there has been a bit of an issue with unsuitable or over-large things being left. I'm sure it will all settle down as people get used to using it – what is important is that people take things from Green George as well as donate them!!

11. In the last few weeks, Cheshire West and Chester has started the consultation process for updating their Local Plan. A number of sites have been identified as possible housing sites in the future, and this has caused both councillors and residents considerable concern. However, this is the very early stage of the process, and as such, does not offer any opportunity to comment on any of these sites. It is merely a tick-box exercise. In fact, when I completed it, it struck me that it was aimed far more at land owners and developers from the way many of the questions were worded. As a resident I couldn't possibly know many of the answers so had to tick 'unsure' or 'don't know' for many of them. But I know that as things progress, we will have opportunities to comment in more detail.

12. During the year, a meeting was held with the Police and Crime Commissioner, John Dwyer, and Cllr Waddelove at the junction of Sibbersfield Lane and the A534. Cllrs Pauline Amphlett, Paul Roberts and I were present for the Parish Council. The purpose was mainly to show Mr Dwyer this dangerous junction and request his help in achieving an improvement, such as a mini-roundabout. We also pointed out the electronic safety sign which had been erected some years ago to the east of the junction, but did not appear to have been working for a long time, possibly years. Mr Dwyer undertook to write to the Director of Highways and Transportation at Cheshire West and Chester Council to express his concerns at the safety aspects of this junction. Cllr Waddelove would contact the Highways department to question whether the electronic sign was working. Mr Dwyer did eventually write to CWaC but the usual negative response was received. Meanwhile the electronic sign was found to have a faulty part which was replaced and, for a while, seemed to be working well. However, I am dubious as to whether it is still functioning properly. Sometimes it comes on and sometimes it doesn't, whether I am approaching at 40, 50 or even 60mph.

13. Additionally, Parish Council requests to reduce the speed limit to 50mph on the stretch of the A534 around Sibbersfield Lane have also been rejected yet again.
14. The lighted bollard at the junction of Sibbersfield Lane and the A534 was knocked down many months ago – probably well over a year by now. It has been reported to Cheshire West and Chester Council on many occasions and by many people, not least our previous Borough Councillor, our current Borough Councillor and myself. We were, towards the end of last year, promised it would be reinstated during February. Well, February has come and gone and the bollard has still not been fixed, so I (and I hope others) have restarted reporting it on the Council's Highways website. Once more, I have been told it will be included in the repair schedule, though not when. This is a dangerous junction and the bollard provides a small area of safety. It is important that it is functioning properly for the safety of people who use this junction in the dark. Unless of course the Council actually plans to do some serious safety improvements here in the near future.
15. Another lighting issue is the street lamp in the grounds of the Farndon Community Club, situated between the Club's entrance and the old Toll Bar kennels. This light has not functioned for several years and, as it is not on the highway, Cheshire West and Chester Council will not undertake any repair. This is a dark spot when people are walking to the Club and the Parish Council has decided that the only way ahead is to get it reinstated ourselves. We don't know how much this will cost, so we have put a sum of money into the budget but if it is going to cost much more than we have budgeted, it may need to wait another year so that the additional funds can be found. Meanwhile, we are searching for someone to do the job.
16. A representative of The Environment Agency has attended two of our meetings to explain their position regarding the fishing pegs. The fishing pegs were fenced off ahead of the open fishing season last year as they were considered dangerous. The EA wants to bring them back to a usable standard, but wanted to know if the Parish council would take on the maintenance responsibilities once each one was improved. Unfortunately the EA has a very limited budget and will only be able to bring one or two back into use each year, but they say that an improved design will mean they are self-cleaning following the inevitable winter floods. The Parish Council has agreed in principle to help with the maintenance and has started to build a fund in the annual budget towards this for the future. Currently, ownership of the fishing

pegs is likely to remain with the EA, but that may be reviewed in the future too.

17. We have been promised over the years that Farndon would be connected to full fibre broadband, thus improving internet download speeds quite considerably. Promised, yes – action, no. One company gave a presentation a few years ago, but they have since disappeared without trace. However, last autumn, Cheshire West and Chester's Digital Sector Specialist told us that Open Reach would include Farndon in their commercial rollout, probably towards October 2024, and that all properties in Farndon would be built to. Whether this includes places like Crewe-by-Farndon, Sibbersfield Lane, Kings Marsh, is unclear. We can only wait and see.
18. We have been able to use the services of the Community Payback Team to help keep the hedges around our burial ground cut back. They have no means of removing the sizeable amount of cuttings so it was agreed that they could put them in the fenced-off area over the deep sewer in the Remembrance Garden. However, this did upset some people who have loved ones buried in the Remembrance Garden. The problem is that this is a large amount of cuttings to dispose of with no obvious alternative as to where they could be stored. A few weeks ago a working party of volunteers spent a couple of hours cutting back the hedges and removing all the above-mentioned cuttings, putting them into large sacks, which were then kindly disposed of without charge (on this occasion). Unless anyone can come up with a better solution, a once-a-year clear-up may be the only answer.
19. The number 5 bus service has seen an improvement to the timetable, thanks to a suggestion from some young people over 18 months ago, supported by a lot of residents in response to an online question by Paul Roberts when he was our Borough Councillor. Cheshire West and Chester Council have been able to access some funding for a 6 month trial which started at the beginning of March, extending the service to two additional buses in and out of Chester on Friday and Saturday evenings. It is very much a case of "use it or lose it", so I really hope this is a success.
20. Farndon Parish Council owns allotments and there is a metered water supply. The meter was put in by Severn Trent, but in recent years they have said they could not access their own meter to read it, suggesting our Clerk read it and send them the readings! In the meantime, we have been paying estimated bills and have no idea what the actual

usage or cost is. After a protracted correspondence, they finally agreed to install a digital meter which could be read remotely, and after more correspondence, they have finally done so. Hopefully no more estimated bills should be sent. I say 'should' because I don't know if the new system has settled in yet, but I really hope it has. This has caused far too much hassle for our Clerk.

21. The blue pipe across the bridge, installed as a temporary measure by Severn Trent about 2 years ago, is still very much there. Promised dates for its removal and replacement with a pipe across the river bed have come and gone. I believe the latest offering is that it might happen later this year, but frankly I will believe it when I see it. Meanwhile, I think we should keep reminding them at least once a year that it is still there to be done and it is an unsightly addition to our bridge, which I believe is a scheduled ancient monument and is not enhanced by a pipe of any colour.
22. Reverend David Scurr has recently retired but will be staying in the village. It always takes some time before a successor is appointed, so we wait to hear. I am sure we all wish David and his wife Claire a long and happy retirement. Meanwhile I believe that Clive Mason, the Churchwarden, will be our point of contact for the time being.
23. Last but not least, I want to say a huge thank you to our two employees, Claire our Clerk, and George our street cleaner. Both continue to provide an exemplary service to the village and its residents despite both of them having had some considerable health issues to contend with in the last year. Neither has let their problems cause anything but the most minor blip in the service they provide.

Resolved: Noted.

36.24 OPEN FORUM

No members of the public attended.

The meeting finished at 7.30 pm and was followed by the April Parish Council meeting.