

LONG ASHTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held in the Village Hall on Monday 19th April 2010

Chairman - Councillor Charles Cave

The meeting was attended by approximately 60 electors

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 20th April 2009, copies having been circulated to those present were signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

Planning Committee Report

The Chairman, Cllr. Miss Mary Uppington said "What a year we have had!"

We have been bombarded by four major planning applications which, if approved, will have a disastrous effect on our village and the surrounding areas.

The first for a new Bristol City Football stadium came in August with the proposed access shown to be in our parish. Then, in October, an application for 500 dwellings on land at Failand and at the same time the Land Trust scheme for 9500 dwellings on land adjoining and to the North and South of the A370 and North and South of the A38 – Bridgwater Road. The beginning of 2010 brought yet another request, from Bristol University, for 1000 dwellings on land to the East of Wild Country Lane.

All the applications are for development on land which is currently in the Green Belt. The Parish Council has opposed all of them, most strongly, giving many reasons why we consider they should be refused and we shall continue to speak out against these unreasonable and unacceptable proposals.

It is interesting to note that, in the last 60 years, Long Ashton has had 1556 new dwellings built in the village and we consider we have more than taken our fair share of new development!

In addition to these plans, Bristol Airport are wishing to expand, and it seems likely some residential development will be asked for on the Barrow Hospital site.

If all, or any, of these applications are permitted we realise only too well what a catastrophic effect there will be on traffic movements. Little concern seems to be shown for the acute problems which will come from such a great increase in the number of vehicles on our roads. With only one main access to Bristol, at Cumberland Basin, roads are bound to become gridlocked far more frequently.

A public inquiry has already been held because FLP appealed against non-determination and eventual refusal by NS, for development on the land at Failand. This lasted for 10 days – six of which took place here in the village.

Although this land is in our Parish, on the North West boundary, it is adjacent to Failand who would be greatly affected if development took place. Our Council spoke against these proposals and Failand residents and Council did a tremendous amount of hard work to put forward their opposition to the scheme. The Inspector will submit her report to the Secretary of State for his consideration and we understand a decision will be issued on or before 16th August.

This time last year we were close to a Public Inquiry against North Somerset's refusal for 18 dwellings at the eastern end of the Research Station site – immediately behind Fenshurst Gardens and facing houses in Perry Road. It was since 2002 that the Parish Council and neighbours had requested it should be single storey properties on this land so we were most disappointed when, in June, we heard the Inspector had allowed the appeal and so the development is now nearing completion.

This last month we received plans for the 2-storey extension at Birdwell Primary School and the erection of a Children's Centre adjoining the Nursery.

Together with many families the Parish Council has been most anxious for steps to be taken which will see our 4 and 5 year olds able to commence their education at our village schools so we are pleased that North Somerset has taken early action to help resolve the situation. Temporary classrooms will be provided to cope with the number in the first instance, and it is planned that building the extension will commence in August this year. There are also plans for North Somerset to acquire more land to the east for school use.

Throughout all the consultations the Parish Council has willingly co-operated and is prepared to allow the use of its Birdwell Recreation Field, during the construction period, if this is needed.

The planning committee has also considered a number of smaller applications and, once again, around a third have been for extensions, in one form or another, to existing properties.

In Leigh Woods, which is such a lovely area of our parish, there has been fewer new building applications but many requests have been made for attention to trees. However, it is good to see work is being done to refurbish Bracken Hill House in North Road and other approved work for this site will no doubt follow.

After such a prolonged cold winter it is only now that trees and hedges are producing their yearly growth. Once again, we hope residents will take action to ensure pavements and footpaths are not obstructed by overgrown foliage and branches.

If particular work has to be done on trees, application must be made to North Somerset who will publish details so that comments can be made if it is considered appropriate.

District Councillors, Bob Cook and Howard Roberts who are also Parish Councillors have, as usual, worked hard on our behalf, given us helpful advice and been ready to “call in” to the Central Area Planning Committee any contentious applications. They are always willing to listen and talk to any resident who has a concern about planning matters and their support is very much appreciated.

Our third District Councillor is Carl Francis-Pester who covers the Leigh Woods part of our parish and is a member of the North Area Planning Committee. Thanks go to all of them for the time they give to matters which concern our parish.

Our Planning Committee has endured some long meetings and their advice in dealing with the range of applications we receive has been greatly appreciated and has resulted in suitable comments being sent to North Somerset.

Thanks also go to those who have minuted our meetings – particularly Liz Smith and Tamzin Heath, who is currently covering Liz’s maternity leave – and, of course, to our clerk Marilyn for all that she does to see our planning system runs smoothly. This help is always appreciated together with that given by her husband Dave who provides so much valuable assistance.

This concludes my report for 2009-2010 with the hope that the coming year will bring some encouraging decisions on the major applications.

Highways and Burial Ground Committee Report.

The Chairman, Councillor Dr. Phil Jackson said “Let me start with the **Churchyard and Burial Ground**. The approach of turning an area of the churchyard back to nature and wildflowers through a bio-diversity project appears to have worked well. I believe this has been a good initiative, which was agreed for a two year period. With the end of that period now approaching I look forward to Jill Watkins and the Parochial Church Council proposals for taking this programme forward.

The clockstones continue to weather in the burial ground, and it becoming more important this coming year that we consider how best to replace these stones to maintain this important feature.

Turning to **Footpaths**

Regarding accessibility of footpaths for all, we have continued the plan this last year to remove the old fashion stile and replace with kissing gates which provide easier access to all. Our footpath network is a good one. I am conscious though that with the wet winter, we do have a number of areas where water collects and footpaths have become muddy. This is an area where we need to take action this coming year in conjunction with North Somerset Council.

Regarding the monthly footpath walks, I would like to publically thank Harry Williams for all the years that he has lead these walks, Thank you Harry on behalf on all those who supported the many and varied walks over the years.

Turning to **Highways**

The past year continues to be a focus on the issues including traffic speed, parking, alterations to junctions, new roads together with continuing to address the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.

We had a hard winter this year with several prolonged periods of snow and ice on our local roads. I was generally content that North Somerset responded well to gritting of highways together with keeping the grit bins filled up for residents use on the minor roads. Beyond that, however, the icy weather has taken its toll on some of our roads and opened up a number of potholes that are a potential hazard to cyclists and motorcyclists in particular.

On speeding, we continue to make use of the speed warning sign on both Long Ashton Road and Glebe Road. This continues to be a valuable tool in reducing speed in these two areas. Providence Lane continues to be a concern for both residents and Parish Council alike. This has been a long ongoing issue, North Somerset have recently said that they will not support a 20 mph speed restriction, a possible way forward to ease the concern is to paint a white line down one side of the road to give the appearance of a narrowed highway; this is now being explored.

We have continued to assess where double yellow lines would ease the parking problem, particularly where this could create a safety problem. We have put together a number of targeted double yellow lines which we are in discussion with North Somerset to progress. The development of Ashton Vale for the new Bristol City football club stadium is a concern, not least due to the impact this will have on cars parking for match days and for other events. This looks like a nightmare about to happen, we hope that some measures can be taken to reduce the impact of the new stadium and its impact on our village.

On the local roads, the most contentious road schemes for years has been the changing of the junction of the B3218 as it goes up past the Dovecote and joins the Bypass. North Somerset has finally decided that the A370/B3128 junction realignment will be made permanent, with wider lanes going into Bristol on the bypass and an attempt to reduce speed of traffic on the bypass. We believe that the decision is wrong, and are unhappy that the Parish Council has had no part in the decision and the views of local residents have not been taken into account.

The South Bristol ringroad could also have a significant impact on this area. The Link Road, the red route, is seen by Bristol as the answer to the regeneration of South Bristol and finds support with North Somerset. We are concerned that it will further add to the congestion of the Cumberland Basin system and Plimsol Bridge. It of course possible, that this project cannot be funded by the incoming Government in the next few years.

The preparations and plans for the Festival Way continue to be developed, and we continue to pay attention to the detail of this programme as it proceeds to provide a cycle and footpath through the village.

I would like to thank all the Committee members in working through a busy year of business for the Highways Committee, and in particular to our Clerk Marilyn Addis for her tireless

effort for the Committee. I would also like to thank Roy Thomas, Jason Collins, Dave Addis and John Hewer for their work around the village and continuing to ensure it remains a tidy and well kept village.”

Finance and General Purposes Committee Report.

The Chairman, Mr Jonathan Skeeles said the Committee met in December to propose a budget which was subsequently approved by the full Council in the January meeting.

The agreed precept enabled the Council to meet all its statutory obligations and carry out all necessary work at the Burial Ground and also to cover administration and village orderly costs, dog bin emptying and the like. A number of grants were made to local organisations, again the main one being to the Community Association to help them with the running costs of this centre.

The Committee met on several occasions during the year and reviewed legislation relating to Parish Councils.

As I mentioned earlier, the main grant was to the Community Association and I am pleased to say that in this current year, we have been able to continue our support for this vital village facility. However, I would like to bring your attention this evening, two particular problems facing the Association.

The first one being vandalism. I know I have mentioned this before in previous reports but it does continue to be a problem resulting in significant costs to the running of this facility.

The second problem is their “own success”. For the more bookings that are taken for the utilisation of these facilities, the greater the footfall and thus greater the wear and tear. This obviously results in more upkeep costs to maintain the expected standard of decoration and cleanliness. To this end, the Community Association have produced a future plan to cover all eventualities thus enabling a tighter control of future expenses.

My thanks to all the Community Association Members for all their hard work, ensuring the successful running of this village centre. The cost of providing this amenity to the village is approximately £11.00 a household, which I am sure you will agree with me, represents excellent value for money.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the members of the F and GP Committee for giving up their time to attend our meetings and for their interest in the well being of our Community.

My particular thanks to our Clerk, Mrs Marilyn Addis, we all value her knowledge, guidance and support relating to the workings of this Committee.

A copy of the audited accounts, for the year ending 31st March 2009 were on the notice board at the back of the room.

Chairman’s Report

The Chairman, Cllr Charles Cave said “it has been a privilege to have been elected chairman of LAPC for the last three years. I shall step down in May reflecting on an interesting time.

The period has been unprecedented in terms of the threat to our community by large planning applications. I am grateful to Michael Reep for once again agreeing to update us on North Somerset’s stance and take on the future.

Quality Council

Your Parish Council renewed its quality council status during the past year. To do so has imposed extra requirements upon the council members and Marilyn our clerk, without frankly any great benefit, although a great deal was promised by the Government. The one thing

however that it does achieve is to demonstrate to the community that this council complies with the highest standard.

Primary school places

We were all shocked to learn of the death of the Headmaster of Birdwell School.

On a brighter and positive note however, I am pleased to report that with the planned development of the school and temporary classrooms in the interim, that the shortage of places has been solved

Junction alignment of the A370 B3128

As Phil Jackson has reported, we have not been able to prevent the permanent realignment of this junction, but have achieved the widening of lanes in going and the speed restrictions on the bypass.

Providence B3128 junction

New signage was installed at this dangerous junction last year following repeated requests from the P. C. and we trust this will prevent another serious accident.

Parish Plan

The results are recorded and the result is now in print. Copies are available for anyone who would like. Thanks for bring this to fruition are due in particular to Sheila Hardingham.

Sportsfield

This area has now been levelled and is being landscaped. We are concerned at the time it is taking and we are constantly pushing for progress.

Development

Two years ago the prognosis regarding massive development was bad and it seemed probable that an application for 9,000 houses would by now have been approved either by North Somerset or on appeal. It has long been our aim to delay matters until the election and thanks to people power this has been achieved. There has been country wide and cross party opposition to the RSS in general and in the SW the volume of objections by the public and Councils overwhelmed the Govt Office for the South West with over 35,000 objections and contributed to delay.

So here we are with an election imminent. Whatever your politics it is a fact that a great deal rests on the result nationally. If the present Govt is returned we will without doubt be inflicted with this massive development; should the shadow party form a government the RSS will be scrapped and decisions will be formulated locally. If however there is a hung Parliament, which seems very possible, there will be uncertainty.

Failand

Both Long Ashton and Wraxall and Failand were represented at the appeal. We now know that the inspector will make her submission to the Secretary of State on June the 11th and that the SOS will make the decision on or before the 16th of August 2010. If any sense prevails the appeal will not succeed, however I would not put money on it.

Airport

The airport expansion comes before the P. and R. this month. This has traffic implications for Long Ashton.

Barrow Hospital

There is currently permission for 24,000 sq ft of office accommodation, however demand for office accommodation is very low and it is therefore unlikely the further money will be invested in that direction at present. There are however interesting plans to go forward on the site, which will become available shortly. At first sight what is envisaged seems to tick all the boxes.

Stadium

We must thank the Central Planning Committee of North Somerset for refusing the application for access; it has ensured that the Stadium is taking seriously the concerns that we expressed at the start. Access is at the heart of the problem and we shall fight the application. This will now go before the P and R Committee of North Somerset on the 26th of May.

University

This application we will fight tooth and nail, it is a dreadful scheme. The P.C. has strongly opposed it, as I know have many of you personally.

Land Trust

North Somerset's Core Strategy does not include 9,000 Bristol Urban Extension I am pleased to say. However Land Trust will not go away and it is my belief that development of some sort is inevitable in their area. No doubt Michael Reep will enlighten us with his thoughts. Finally I would like to add my thanks to those already expressed to all Councillors for their support over the past year, three years. In particular thanks are due to the Chairmen of committees Phil Jackson, Jonathan Skeeles and Mary Uppington. Mary in particular for she invests a great deal of time in preparation for our monthly planning meetings.

Thanks to our district Councillors Howard Roberts, Bob Cook and Carl Francis Pester, who represent our interest at North Somerset

Last but not least thanks to Marilyn Addis and Dave Addis

Parochial Charity Accounts.

The accounts of the trustees to the Parochial Charity for 2009 were displayed on the notice board at the end of the room.

Resolutions of which written notice has been given to the Clerk of the Parish Council

None received.

North Somerset Officer, Michael Reep, gave a presentation on the threats to Long Ashton from proposed developments at the South West Bristol Urban fringe, Failand development, University land at Wild Country Lane and the Barrow Hospital site.

Coffee and Biscuits were then served.