

LONG ASHTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
Held in the Village Hall on Monday 22nd April 2013
Chairman – Councillor Nigel Moorcroft
The meeting was attended by 68 electors

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 23rd April 2012, copies having been circulated to those present were signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

Chairman's report

The Chairman, Cllr Nigel Moorcroft welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave his report.

“It has once again been a difficult year financially and will continue to be so. Central government has reduced financial support to local councils and this has resulted in greater burdens being placed upon parish councils to maintain even the most rudimentary services, however we seek to support where possible and this is reflected in our support of the young in our village as well as many other services and facilities we fund.

Once again massive development continues to threaten the greenbelt surrounding and insulating our village and this will now escalate with the University of Bristol seeking to develop their land to the south and Wimpey's purchase of the land to the south and east of our village. All this is green belt but they will seek to overturn this and develop this land for their, not our benefit. We will continue to resist this unreasonable threat as it will be very detrimental to this village and its already overstretched infrastructure. This year's schools intake clearly shows how stretched resources are and will become.

We are also threatened with the building of the south Bristol link road and rapid transit route both of which bring little or no benefits but will bring unprecedented amounts of traffic to our doors as well as riding roughshod over our footpath network, we shall be continuing to fight these looming threats.

On a more positive note we will take ownership of the Andree Peel sports field in the very near future and we also have the official opening of the Festival Way leisure route in May.

We constantly strive to improve the leisure facilities within the parish and will continue to seek improvement where financially possible.

We are still in the throes of finalising our neighbourhood plan and would ask that anyone wishing to assist in this very important endeavour contacts either Henny Fordham or Rod Sterland to offer their assistance or ideas. It is important that we engage as much as possible with the community we serve.

I would like to at this point thank all those who serve on the Parish Council, especially both our new clerk and previous clerk for their valiant efforts and assistance in the past three years of my chairmanship, with a special thanks to Gwyn Williams who has had to retire due to ill health and also Angela Neale who has after years of hard work for the community resigned from the council. My tenure of the

chair ends in May and I would like to thank you the electorate for this privilege. Thank you.”

Finance and General Purposes Committee Report

The Chairman, Cllr Ms Sheila Hardingham gave her report. “The Finance and General Purposes committee meets every 2 months to review the expenditure and bank accounts of the council, as well as the necessary policies to meet the council’s legal responsibilities. This year we had an additional meeting as the Dept of Communities and Local Government were unable to provide local authorities with the necessary information for budgeting in line with the usual timetable for budget setting in January. This was because of the changes to Council Tax Benefit but I am pleased to report that North Somerset Council passed on the benefit of the grant to parish councils so we had no shortfall because of the welfare reforms.

There were 2 exceptional items of expenditure this last year. The parish council left the Avon Pension Fund. Some of you will be members of that fund and will be aware that, like many other pension funds, they are carrying large deficits. The termination payment was considerably more than estimated 3 years ago but we took advice from our auditors and it was agreed to make the payment of approximately £24,000 to crystallise the council’s liability.

The second large item was the grant to the Community Association of £8,600 to enable solar panels to be installed on the sports hall roof. We hope this will not only be environmentally beneficial but also reduce the electricity bills for the community centre.

Apart from that grant, in the last year, the maintenance grant to the Community Association was £31,000 for the running of the Community Centre and it continues to be a successful facility at the heart of village life. Thanks to the members of the Community Association for their hard work and never resting on their laurels. I am sure they will also enjoy the challenge of having the extra sports pitch and amenity area that is now within their remit.

The Youth Club has survived the devastating cut in funding from North Somerset. Thanks to support from the Parish council, EPIC Youth has been able to provide a schedule of 3 or 4 sessions a week. During the last year, the council put £17,000 into the youth club and will continue this level of support during the current year. EPIC Youth has been actively fundraising and has been successful in obtaining various grants which they have used for more sports activities, cookery sessions, street dance and events in the Blackcurrant Drive area. However, they still need more funding so if any of you would like to join the 500 Club, please see Cllr Phil Jackson afterwards for an application form. This is an excellent way to put money into the youth club but still stand a chance of winning something yourself. Thanks to all involved and the youth workers for giving their time to set up this new enterprise and make it work so well.

In the last year, the council awarded grants locally to various groups who provide services enjoyed by residents in Long Ashton such as Nailsea Community Transport, North Somerset Citizens Advice Bureau, Nailsea Disability Initiative; also a grant was made to the Junior Football Club, which is thriving with over 160 players and a real success story for the village. These small local grants are often known as the community chest and can be a valuable way of supporting local clubs.

The parish council is funded from the precept which is part of the council tax that we all pay. For the new financial year starting a few weeks ago, the parish council increased the precept by 4.9%. This is higher than in recent years but for a Band D property, it means a total of £54.94 for the year to fund all the activities and staff of the parish council. This is an increase of 5p a week over last year. We believe this is extremely good value for all that is achieved in the village.

We all know the financial constraints that have been imposed on NS and other district councils. As they cut services, parish councils have to decide what they can afford to maintain at parish level. Somerset County council has cut funding to all their libraries; NS have to review every part of their funding. Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, has issued a statement in December in each of the last 2 years saying that there will be no cap on increases in parish council precepts in the following April. It was anticipated that parish council precepts would be restricted this year but they have not been. Once they are, we will no doubt have to restrict the funds we put aside for future projects so that may have a major impact on what we can achieve by way of localism in any event.

A year ago I reported on the retirement of Marilyn Addis after I think 30 years as parish clerk and I would like to thank her for her help in seeing through the accounts for the previous year. I am sure she is enjoying her retirement! With some trepidation, we awaited our new clerk, Dr Janet Turp, to see what a new broom would bring. But I am pleased to say that Janet has risen to the challenge; we knew it would be a steep learning curve on both sides, but Janet has coped admirably with all that has been thrown at her. I want to thank her for her help as the RFO, the Responsible Financial Officer for the council and for steering F&GP efficiently through the mass of accounts, policies and codes that have come before us in the last year.

A copy of the audited accounts is available by the door.”

Highways and Burial Ground Committee Report

The Chairman, Cllr Mrs Jean Pullin gave her report. “This is a committee that deals with a diverse range of subjects as the title suggest. I will begin with the burial ground where ongoing maintenance of headstones has continued. Damage to trees caused by high winds has been dealt with, and grass cutting carried out as for the last 20+ years by Jason Collins. Cllr Harry Williams has a look around almost weekly and attends to any odd jobs that he notices, including putting a preservative on the many wooden seats after the village orderlies had scrubbed them.

A site meeting followed a presentation from Transitions on how the currently unused part of the Burial Ground could be improved visually and made more productive. An agreed area, now named Heaven Scent by Transitions, has been marked out and work has commence to make it suitable for wild flowers and some fruit trees to be planted.

The subject of woodland burials was discussed and although we do appear to have a large amount of spare ground it is not enough to use for woodland burials which require more space than conventional burials.

Linked to the burial ground is the diversion order for footpath 12/12A which has been granted and the path will now follow the inside of the Churchyard / Burial Ground wall, where the bottom wall will be breached and a kissing gate installed. This will

then link to the Festival Way. A kissing gate is the preferred option by both the Parish Council and All Saints Church since it denies access to motor cyclists.

Turning to footpath – we are grateful to a working party organised by Tony Hibbitt which carried out some clearance work during the year. Some committee members had talks with the Golf Club regarding re-routing a path across the course which would have given better views from the high point as well as improving safety for both walkers and golfers. A route was agreed in principle and the Golf Club were happy to apply for a diversion order when public consultation would take place.

However, in the meantime, unknown to both parties, notices appeared on the course urging people to make their views of the proposal known and the plan was abandoned. The Golf Club have carried out their usual clearance of paths and will be updating signage on the course.

At the August meeting the committee received notice that work on the cycleway link of the section from Yanley Lane to Long Ashton Road of the Festival Way would commence in the following month. Also received was the North Somerset / Sustrans plan for a cycle path on the north side of Cambridge Batch – the existing pavement side of the road. Reservations were expressed with the majority finding this plan unacceptable and North Somerset was asked to meet with the committee to discuss other options. We were dismayed at this point to find that an online petition had begun which did not have full knowledge of our discussions and was somewhat distorted. A further meeting resulted in a plan acceptable to the majority and the path is now up and running. Following discussions on that part of the cycle path were then surprised to learn that hedging and tree planting were to take place on the Yanley / Dovecote section which although in the plans had never come before the Parish Council. However we were pleased to agree to Transitions request that spare wildflower seeds be scattered near the Yanley Lane entrance to the path.

A grand opening of the whole Festival Way from Bristol to Nailsea takes place on May 6th which will no doubt bring this useful and delightful asset to the attention of many cyclists.

A meeting was held with the Environment Agency and North Somerset Flood Officer when problems were voiced and progress to repair promised.

Other meetings were held with the organisers of the Balloon Fiesta firstly in Long Ashton when parish problems concerning coning of roads, residents parking passes, car parking and litter were expressed. A second meeting followed with all parties concerned when perceived problems were addressed and arrangement for this year confirmed. The opportunity was taken to convey problems encountered with Brisfest since the same company manages both events and North Somerset Council is also taking these up with Bristol City Council.

Bristol Rapid Transport and South Bristol Link are agenda items for this committee and also topics at Planning and Full Council. The Inspector's report for BRT delayed from November is now due in May. At last year's meeting you were urged to attend the imminent consultation for the South Bristol Link. Regrettably it was not much of a consultation, more a presentation of plans and our Council Chairman wrote to complain. One of our concerns should the road be built, is that no provision has been made for footpaths which will be crossed by the road. Cllr Rod Sterland represents us at any meetings held on both the BRT and SBL and has done much work for which we thank him.

The crossing beacons at the old Northleaze School have been upgraded and despite repeated requests to North Somerset Council for removal of the railings close by, they remain in position.

Pavements on Chancellor's Park have now been adopted by the District Council and it is hoped problems caused by the bollards near the junction with Weston Road will soon be remedied together with the replacement of yellow lines at the junction of Kings Croft on the opposite side of the main road.

Relieved that Bristol Water has now completed their pipe laying we were anticipating that the delayed resurfacing of Long Ashton Road might now be considered for early attention. However when we received notice that North Somerset Council, acting as they thought in our best interests to give residents a break from road works, had asked Wales and West Utilities to delay gas main laying along the same route until 2014. They have been persuaded otherwise and work will commence this month. It seems that no money has been allocated in this year's budget for work on Long Ashton Road but we are pursuing this with the Council in the hope that funds can be obtained and we can have a decent surface as soon as possible.

Just to illustrate why patience is needed an outstanding item of the committee is the provision of a white line on Providence to give the illusion of a safe walkway. Despite many requests for this to be carried out we are still waiting after 12 years.

We purchased two planters during the year to be placed on the pavement outside the Co-op. Not only will this help to visually improve the area but will deter cars from parking on the pavement while using the cash machine. Glendale, who clear our dog and litter bins have offered to donate bedding plants to parishes and we have requested a supply to fill these planters. They should soon be in position.

Car parking on pavements and dog mess still remain problems and appeals to those concerned are ignored.

Whilst we welcome constructive help there have been a couple of occasions, already mentioned, where petitions have been set up and notices displayed which were very counter-productive to what the committee was trying to achieve and which proved to be very frustrating. If persons have a contrary view, it would be preferable to ask the clerk or a councillor for details and then to proceed with known facts instead of acting on assumptions of a matter. As an elected voluntary council we strive only to do our best for the community.

To end I should like to thank the many people who support the work of the committee:- our 2 village orderlies, Liz Price and Tara Broad who not only keep the litter in check but maintain Arch Close Bank and carry out other tasks as directed. Harry Williams for work in the burial ground. Tony Hibbitt and the footpath working party. Our footpath walks leaders, Anne Simmons, Mary Magro, Maureen Johnson and Keith Yeates who valiantly turn out whatever the weather to lead these monthly walks. Can I re-iterate the appeal and ask that anyone who enjoys these walks or just enjoys walking consider leading 1 or 2 walks during the year so lightening the load for those already engaged.

Finally to Janet our clerk, Liz our minute secretary and to the committee members who sit almost patiently through our long sessions. Thank you to you all."

Planning Committee report

The Chairman, Cllr Miss Mary Uppington gave her report. "The Planning Committee has had another busy year. Requests for extensions to existing properties have dominated the number of applications received. The Committee has commented on every application and in the vast majority of cases NS have agreed with our recommendation – where they have differed they have given us their reasons for doing so.

During the year, Ashton Court have improved their facilities at their pavilion and extended their car parking area and I imagine golfers and other visitors to these areas must be very pleased with these improvements.

The 12 new retirement dwellings, for those over 65 are nearing completion at 9 Warren Lane and are being marketed quite widely.

Clifton Suspension Bridge Trust have been given permission to build a new Heritage and Learning Centre on the NS side of the bridge and it is anticipated this will prove to be a very popular attraction, particularly for visitors to the area.

There are a number of listed buildings in our parish and it is always a pleasure to see they are being well looked after – so it is good to see 165 Long Ashton Road (last housing in village before junction with Clarken Coombe) is being renovated.

Durnford Quarry have asked for an extension in the time allowed for the extraction of minerals and have indicated they are prepared to assist in improve the junction at the top of Providence where it meets the Clevedon Road and Longwood Lane. This cross roads has given many problems over the years – including fatal accidents – and the Parish Council have suggested the Quarry owners should work with NS so that improvements can be made on all sides of the junction.

Following approval of the Localism Bill there have been many planning documents produced – in fact it has often been difficult to keep pace with what's going on!

However, one which particularly concerned us, last October was the change which would allow homeowners to build a single story extension up to a maximum of 26 feet on a detached property and 30 feet on a semi-detached without needing planning permission. This would be doubling the distance already permitted and immediately rang alarm bells as we could see this would create disputes between neighbours and take away the right to object.

There has been a great deal of opposition to this proposal so it was pleasing to read last week that it has been considered again by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

As I understand it, an amendment has been made and homeowners will still have to notify their local council, neighbours will be consulted and the applications will only be approved if there are no objections within 21 days. If there are any contested cases these will be decided by a full Council Planning Committee. People's opinions appear to have been listened to and it is important that neighbours will have a right to object.

There are now two items which Charles Cave, my Planning Vice –Chairman is going to report on as he has been closely involved and has the very latest information. Firstly the position with Taylor Wimpey over the play area and sports pitch – and secondly the Core Strategy where a number of confusing comments have been made.

“Regarding Taylor Wimpey – today the parish council have taken over the amenity areas to the north and the play area on Chancellors Park. This has been a long process as it has been very important to get it right and ensure that the PC was paid the correct amount of funds to enable the Parish Council to maintain the areas over the next 15 years. Cllr Scoones has provided expert advice on groundsmanship to ensure that Taylor Wimpey handed over the sites in decent condition and to ensure the attenuation pond was appropriately constructed. Long Ashton Football Club has expressed their disgust at the delays and Taylor Wimpey may sponsor the club next year in compensation.

Regarding the Core Strategy the Inspector last year approved the number of houses which were included. Bristol University however challenged the Core Strategy on three grounds and succeeded in one – it queried the reasons for justifying the 14,000 houses and this now has to be re-inspected. There are three possible outcomes:

1. The Inspector was correct in agreeing to the 14,000 houses
2. The Inspector was incorrect and the numbers will have to be increased moderately which will not result in intrusion into the green belt.
3. The numbers will have to be increased to a number which will require intrusion into the green belt.

This process will cost North Somerset a lot of money which it doesn't have during these austere times. The University is being used as a stalking horse for other developers. Ashton Park Ltd went into liquidation and Taylor Wimpey bought and now owns the land.

In due course the Parish Council will be faced with fighting large scale development. It is vital that the Parish Council puts aside sums of money to fight this and it has been doing so over recent years. This work is not inexpensive however is in the interests of the parish.”

Questions followed:

David Neale Q: Is the link road between the A38 and A370 a pre-requisite for urban extension?

A: No I don't believe so.

Angela Neale Q: Now the PC has the funds from Taylor Wimpey is the funds for the public art being chased?

A: The PC has been cautious to chase this money which may have jeopardise what has been achieved so far but it will not be forgotten.

Mrs Mackwood Q: Are the house numbers purely for NS or are some for Bristol?

A: North Somerset only. There is a need to liaise with neighbouring councils however.

Cllr Miss Uppington continued her report “Many requests have been made for work to be done on trees and in this area we have received very helpful support from our NS Tree Officer. We appreciate that a number of residents have undertaken work to keep hedges under control and we hope that this will continue so that pavements and footpaths are not obstructed with overgrown foliage.

Thanks are due to our District Councillors Bob Cook and Charles Cave who are also Parish Councillors, have continued to give us valuable advice and pursue any problem issues with the NS Planning Officers. Residents who have any concerns or

queries can always contact them and the support they give to the community is very much appreciated.

The Planning Committee have met monthly and sometimes endured some long meetings, but their thoughts have enabled constructive comments to be sent to NS. To Charles Cave who has been a very supportive Vice-Chairman, to Liz who has minuted our meetings and to Janet, our clerk who help and guidance I have so much appreciated. This concludes my report for 2012/13 and we look forward to another interesting year.”

Neighbourhood Development Plan Update

Cllr Mrs Fordham gave a presentation – attached.

Questions followed:

Q: The photo you showed of the Co-op, is that set in stone?

A: No it is purely a mock up.

David Neale Q: Will the NDP team be looking at control of car parking e.g. pay and display or yellow lines?

A: The Plan can look at those ideas. The team has a transport planner involved to help with those policies. Any ideas can be proposed please put them forward.

Q: Is there a minimum number turnout to make the referendum legally binding?

A: No I don't think so. It is the same as a local election these parameters can be set if required.

Q: Can times for meetings be put up in the local library?

A: Yes.

Q: Should the NDP just use the PC website?

A: The team was advised to have its own website.

Q: Regarding the improved health centre, are the doctors in favour?

A: The Practice Manger has expressed that the doctors do not want to develop this at this current time.

Cllr Cave expressed that the Neighbourhood Plan is extremely important as it carries the same weight as NS Core Strategy.

Parochial Charity Accounts

The accounts of the trustees to the Parochial Charity for 2011-12 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.

Proposed by Mr John Ives:

“That this meeting resolved to ask the PC to consult the electorate as to how it should allocate and spend money on general and earmarked reserves and published a definitive policy. This review to consider alternative methods of managing and funding earmarked reserves.”

Mr John Ives spoke about his resolution.

The Parish Council

PCs are elected once every 4 years with all Councillors being unpaid volunteers. They are the tier of Local Government who are closest to the people. They make decisions on behalf of the local community through a series of powers but have very few duties. You can attend Council meetings but cannot take part in any debate. You can if you wish make a 3 minute statement at a Council meeting. This lack of access to the decision making process I believe contributes to an apathy which leads many people to give up trying to communicate with the Council. Trying to make your views known in such circumstances can be frustrating and mind numbingly slow. In practice on most issues a ‘councillors know best’ outcome prevails. Exceptions to this are the recent Parish Plan and Neighbourhood Development plan for which the PCs were mandated to consult.

My resolution

Tonight I will be talking about a recent controversial decision viz the funding of the Bristol City stadium judicial review. I will explain how your precept is raised, allocated and give details of how that money is spent. In summary I believe this decision was so controversial and potentially expensive that some form of consultation would have been undertaken. My resolutions asked that the Council reflects on that decision and reviews its processes ongoing and also examines alternative ways of raising money. Detailed on the back of this page are monies held by the PC as ‘earmarked reserves’ over recent years.

Tonight’s meeting

Tonight is the Annual Parish meeting at which the Council delivers its progress report for the previous year. It is not a Council meeting and all Councillors attend as members of the electorate and can vote as such. Whilst this in theory means my resolutions could start off at minus 20 votes, even if it is passed the Council has no legal obligation to take any notice of it i.e. it is as described by the clerk as persuasive only and the Parish Council may legally disregard it and leave the electors to their remedy at the next election.” Local residents do have rights to insist on a Parish Poll but I will not be going down that route tonight.

Referenda

PCs have various powers to carry out local surveys and the notes on the most recent legislation talked of ‘Modern local government...in touch with the people’, and that it wished to see ‘...consultation and participation embedded into the culture of all councils.’ Referendums are said to be ideal for ‘such issues as major local developments or matters of particular controversy.’ Recently a neighbouring Parish carried out a referendum on an issue of major expenditure and set itself a target of a 75% return and 60% yes vote.

The outcome

Win, lose or draw I trust tonight’s debate will encourage residents to become more interested in what your Council does on your behalf and perhaps persuade a few

individuals to consider putting themselves forward as candidates at the next election 2015.

Councillors have the power to raise money as necessary to run parish council business. It has three pots of money:

1. Cost running the parish - £130,000.
2. Working capital reserves.
3. Further income – special projects. Earmarked reserves a further £100,000.

The parish council has s137 power which allows Councillors to spend money for the benefit of the community. Currently the PC has handed over £10,000 of £20,000 total however none of this money has been returned. The PC does not have powers to spend money in this way. The money came from working capital pot I can only speculate whether funding increase has covered this.

I suggest that there is the establishment of a village charity which could spend funds on behalf of the parish however would not be controlled by the PC.

Cllr Ms Hardingham responded. "I want to thank John for all the time and effort he has put in on the village footpaths. He has also taken time on various occasions to address the council on issues of concern to him. John has raised his general concerns about the PC reserves before now and full details have been given to him. We offered to meet him to discuss this further but he did not take up that offer.

John refers to apathy but this is something that I just don't recognise in Long Ashton. Where John sees apathy I see a lot of people putting their time into the good of the community.

I am pleased to be able to talk more about PC finances: it's something that concerns us all as council taxpayers. John has highlighted one particular decision but the meeting is being asked to vote on the resolution before you and that is about **all** the reserves and their management, so that is what I'm going to address now.

When faced by a resolution like this, it's easy to get defensive but I know the parish council is not perfect and of course we get things wrong. But of all the things one might choose to have a pop at the council about, reserves is not one of them. They have been very sensibly managed for the undoubted benefit of the village.

General reserves are in part to provide working capital and to smooth cash-flow; there will also be fluctuations as the budgeted figures have varying degrees of accuracy. For example, we had budgeted for taking over all the TW areas in the last year, but this has not happened. But we did put funds towards the solar panels in the sports hall which we had not budgeted for.

The bible on such matters is "Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – A Practitioners' Guide" published by The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) + CILPCA etc. The Practitioners' Guide states that general reserves are to be between 3 – 12 months of annual expenditure and we are certainly within that band. We estimate the figure at March 2013 for General Reserves at £68,000 with annual expenditure of £150,000, so equivalent to 5 ½ months. So we are not even near the top of the range of 12 months expenditure.

For the last full audited accounts (2011-2012), the general reserve figure was just over 6 months expenditure.

The general reserves are also to cover any problems in the unlikely event of the precept not being paid or being delayed (if Eric Pickles does another U turn and

decides he's had enough of localism!). West Somerset Council failed late last year, so it is not unknown for a council to have major financial problems. So these are all the risks which we have to take into account.

John asks for a reserves policy but we have a policy and that is to comply with the Practitioners' Guide.

The parish council accounts are audited twice each year as required by statute, the internal audit by a local firm in Bristol and then the external audit by a regional firm appointed by central government. They have never made any adverse comment on the reserves.

The earmarked reserves are for future designated expenditure to enable the council to set funds aside for specific purposes and to build up savings for future projects. These must be realistic and again that is in the Practitioners Guide.

As John has listed, apart from the s106 funds, as at Feb 2013, the council made provision for Earmarked Reserves of £106,537 (so less than one year's budgeted annual expenditure – and not quite the millions that were deposited by some local authorities in Icelandic banks a few years ago: Long Ashton can only dream of those figures).

I won't go through each item but they are on the PC's website; you can check the F&GP minutes at any time.

The major item is indeed for the Planning contingency. Charles has already spoken of the threat to the Green Belt as of crucial importance to the village. The battleground is going to be in Planning Inquiries and the Courts. So the council must be realistic to provide for professional fees for planning consultants, lawyers and transport consultants.

John has referred to the Stadium JR costs and his fear that Long Ashton's £10,000 will be put towards the Inspector's Inquiry later in the year. But those costs have already been incurred and successfully so. That is why Bristol City Council backed down and accepted that the Inspector had to consider the new evidence.

The resolution asks for consultation. It's difficult for a democratic body to reject consultation but I believe it is neither practical nor sensible.

We are in the middle of a major consultation for the NDP with a referendum on that in the next 12 months. That will provide a blueprint for our strategy for funding for the future. This is on the back of the Parish Plan a few years ago. That showed the priorities of the residents, such as 99.9% wanted to keep the green belt, so please do not get the idea that the PC prepares the budget in a vacuum.

I've already mentioned the likelihood of a freeze on the precept soon, so we will no doubt have to restrict the funds we put aside for future projects which may have a major impact on what we can achieve by way of localism in any event.

John refers to alternative methods of funding reserves. Active and essential fundraising is ongoing in the village for the Youth Club, the Junior Football club, the school PTAs, and the Community Association. Such fundraising is effectively done by specific groups so I do not think it is wise for the Parish council to compete with them. When grants are available only to Parish councils, we apply for them such as the grant for the preparation of the NDP.

We councillors are democratically elected every 4 years to run the council and we are accountable to you in that very direct way. So I believe that we are elected as councillors to get on with the decisions for 4 years.

I repeat what I said in my main report that the PC precept for a Band D property in Long Ashton comes to just under £55 a year. The funds from the precept are managed reasonably and realistically in order to obtain the best outcome for the village. The council is not hoarding money for a rainy day: we make a careful assessment taking into account the risks which the council and the village face.

The parish council must always be open to suggestions for improvement and I appreciate that John is very concerned about the village being run in an open and transparent way but of all the challenges facing the council, I do not think that this resolution is the way to go forward. I disagree with the resolution and ask that it is rejected by this meeting.

Questions followed:

ClIr Cave Q: Can Mr Ives explain what he meant by a neighbouring parish raising funds?

A: Chris Ambrose advised me when his council was forced to raise funds as their PC did not have sufficient funds.

ClIr Cook Q: If anyone wants to object to PC decisions they can but there has been little objection. The PC is open and transparent and is elected by the electorate.

The Chairman asked for a seconder to the resolution – Peter Steward seconded.

Q: A previous Chairman Alan Levitt at one annual meeting asked electorate about how much should be held in earmarked reserves.

A: This is self-defeating. The PC is voted in to represent the electorate. No negative feedback has been received as we assume the electorate is happy with decision making.

Tony Butcher Q: The minimum cost for a referendum is £4,000.

Q: I represented the parish over 20 years as an independent. Cllrs go week after week to meetings, they are well known and anyone can get in touch. This would be going backwards on democracy. The PC needs support.

The Chairman held a vote. No one was in favour, 8 abstentions, 60 were against.

Question and Answer session

Margaret Crowson Q: I hold a coffee morning on a Friday morning in the club room, however, it is proposed to run a commercial café there including Friday morning. Do you have an update?

A: There is investigation into someone to run a commercial café. LACA is trying to find a solution however a decision has not been taken.

Q: The Charity Commission need to be consulted as commercial ventures cannot be run from this site.

A: The PC will investigate.

Q: There is a huge amount of dynamism in the village with lots of groups and organisations with no central information which is confusing.

A: There are lots of groups going on. The groups try to communicate and work together when appropriate.

Q: Is there an update regarding Barrow Hospital?

A: There is planning permission for 43 homes and a care home. The care home has issues around funding and the developers want to proceed with house building without care home. The PC is monitoring.

Q: Any idea when road surface of Birdwell Estate will be resurfaced?

A: None. Stafford Gundry Q: When will the clock at Northleaze School be working again?

A: Knightstone Housing have promised to update. PC to chase.

Presentation by Andy Coombes regarding a Long Ashton Community Orchard

Presentation notes attached.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and coffee and biscuits were then served.

Long Ashton Neighbourhood Development Plan



Localism Act and NDP

- What are our local needs? What do we need to develop, protect or provide to help create a positive and successful future for the community?
- Is there a housing need here – if so what type and how much is required and how should this be delivered?
- Is there anything we can do to encourage business and employment in Long Ashton?
- How do our services and facilities need to adapt to cope with our future needs?

What has happened over the last year

- Consultations
- Schools
- Presence at village market
- Advertising and articles posters and leaflets
- Wider stakeholder engagement

You've told us you want to see:

- the creation of a larger health care centre
- the development of a village centre
- more local shops and employment opportunities
- less cars parking on the road
- improved youth facilities



What is happening now: agreed five themes now working out policies:

- Services and facilities
- Transport
- Economy
- Environment
- Housing



What happens next

- Finalise policies
- Send to all households
- Hold referendum

LONG ASHTON COMMUNITY ORCHARD?



- What are benefits of a community orchard?

Community Orchards in the Bristol area

- Blagdon
- Rickford
- Pill
- Horfield
- Redland

Sources information; *Common Ground, DEFRA*

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY ORCHARD?



- This is an area of land used for growing fruit that is managed and used by a group of local (volunteers) people.

A source of locally produced fresh fruit



Developing new skills in growing and processing food



Social and educational events and activities



A focus for community events



Maintaining and celebrating local heritage



Establish a new wildlife habitat



Where to establish a community orchard?

- Private land (lease agreement)
- Manage an established (old) orchard
- Plant a new orchard on community owned or managed land
e.g. *green space around buildings or community facilities*

How could a community orchard be managed?

- Orchard membership, i.e. *individuals, local schools and groups*
- Commitment to work days, e.g. *pruning, weeding*
- Share of the harvest
- Could also be used by other groups, e.g. *Chicken Co-op, Bee Group?*

Issues to consider.....

- Land ownership – 20-30 year lease?
- Establishment and maintenance costs, e.g. *sponsorship, grants, etc*
- Public liability insurance
- Management of orchard work and distribution of produce, e.g. *pruning, grass cutting*
- Choice and size of fruit trees
- Security?

Long Ashton Community Orchard?

