



"Not for self"

Minutes of the

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

of the Parish of Oswestry Rural
held at 7 pm on Thursday 23 May 2024
at Trefonen Village Hall

Present

Chairman, Oswestry Rural Parish Council, Cllr Martin Bennett
7 Parish Councillors
Cllr Joyce Barrow
Approximately 9 members of the public

In attendance:

Kathryn Lloyd, The Clerk Oswestry Rural Parish Council

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the annual meeting for electors .

2. Minute of meeting

The minutes from the Annual Parish Meeting held on 13 April 2023 were considered for approval.
It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED that the minutes be signed and ADOPTED as a true record. Two Councillors abstained.

3. Annual Report

The Chairman, Cllr Martin Bennett gave the following Annual Report of Oswestry Rural Parish Council.

"May I begin by thanking the Deputy Chair – Cllr. Richards, for standing in for me for January to March when my health was giving me cause for concern and that of my mother even more cause for concern.

While the usual monthly meetings of the Council were planned for, with a recess in August, the June meeting was postponed to the 6th of July, and the December meeting was cancelled, as it was felt that there was too little time between the November meeting and the one scheduled for the 14th December.

Twelve months ago, at the previous Annual Parish Meeting, Councillor Martin Jones commented in his report that the Council had seen many changes and challenges, and been very busy, and this year has been just as challenging and busy trying to deal with the range and increasing complexity of the issues the Council is increasingly being called upon to consider on behalf of the local residents.

He also commented that public attendance at our meetings remained low, and that has also continued. Minutes of our meetings reflect that while there may be a few members of the public who may come to raise a matter – from the labyrinthine complexity of the Place Plan to the number of defibrillators in the Parish, there were also 2 the 8 meetings where nothing was raised at the public participation Agenda Item.

However, as a small example of public participation, in July a resident asked for permission for flower planters to be put on a green area of land owned by the Parish Council, opposite the Royal Oak. The matter was brought to the next meeting of the Council for a decision when Members were told that funds were available to buy planters and plants, and a group of volunteers to look after them. Permission was readily granted.

I commend to all residents, a reading of the minutes of all the Council meetings as an indication of the work the Council has done and is doing, through its Councillors and our hard-working clerk Kathryn.

The Parish is divided into 5 areas/wards and there should be a total of 15 Councillors: During this year we two Members resigned, Councillor John Davies in October 2023 and Roger Jones in February 2024. We also feel the absence of Councillor Iain Campbell who was injured recently.

We currently have vacancies for the Morda and Sweeney Ward, Trefonen and Sychtyn Wards: perhaps after tonight that will have been reduced to just two. The Council's motto is 'Not For Self' and Councillors contribute by responding to the needs and views of the community, suggesting ideas and commenting on various consultations/ proposals to try to ensure the best outcomes, taking part in debates, and of course, voting – so the Council can make decisions- which then the Clerk has to action with the help of members.

The Council aims to deliver cost effective and efficient local services getting best value for your council tax money and is responsible for maintenance/management of a number of areas of land/green spaces: including Trefarclawdd cemetery, the cliff face at Rhydygroesau, Trefonen and Maesbury War Memorials, the hand pump at Aston, 5 bus shelters, and several streetlights throughout the parish. As a body, the Council, together with its Personnel, and Finance Committees, and the Trefarclawdd Cemetery, Road Safety and Environment Working groups which meet as and when necessary, reporting back to the full Council, try to fulfil this aim, supporting the local economy, and the work of voluntary groups and organisations wherever possible.

The Environmental Working Group has been very active over the last year continuing its monitoring of water pollution. In July 2023, testing kits were obtained from Peter Jeffrey Water Treatment Services at a cost of £3,150. Six testing spots were identified with a further two more for in-depth tests done by volunteers, at Candy Woods, the dip at the bottom of Main Road Oswestry, The Mill, Weston, and the sewage works. The stream directly from Trefarclawdd Farm was also to be monitored. The tests being assessed against swimming water quality which assumes it is not swallowed.

In February 2024 it was reported that tests conducted within set parameters to ensure traceability throughout the process, and using official laboratories, showed that while there had been slight improvements at Candy Lane and Croeswylan Lane, the results for Trefarclawdd Farm and the

Sewage works were poor and that Morda Brook had been recategorized as Morda River and assessed as being one of the most polluted rivers in the UK.

Helen Morgan MP has been in contact, having heard about the water testing. She had recently visited the sewage works and noted the overflow was clear. Cllr Campbell showed pictures of the overflow during testing, which was black.

Again, I commend the minutes of the meetings for a full record of the work done by this group of committed and active Councillors.

This is not to say that the Personnel and Finance Committee and the Road Safety and Cemetery Working Groups have not been working equally as hard, although given the sensitive nature of their remits, it is much harder to refer to individual items considered by members, such as the issue of oversized American-style coffins.

Another aim is listening to, and working closely with, local communities, and together with partners and stakeholders, find ways to make life better. The Road Safety Working Group issued a leaflet to Coed Y Go residents asking for their thoughts on speed restriction proposals. 25 responses out of 27 were received all of which supported the proposals which were passed on to Shropshire Council with a 40 mph start as far back as possible and at the junction of Oswestry and Coed y Go Road.

Morda residents were and are increasingly concerned by speeding and anti-social driving in the area, particularly on the B5069, Weston Road and Trefonen Road. The Council agreed to write to Shropshire Council asking what practical measures, such as traffic calming and signage, could be introduced to improve road safety in the area, especially in light of the two serious accidents that have occurred in last two years, and to support the call by local residents for safety barriers to be installed between the pedestrian footway and road at the junction of Trefonen Road and the B5069 by the village shop. The recent response from Shropshire has not been encouraging, but at a Police & Crime Commissioners and Safer Neighbourhood team talk held at Kinnerley, John Campion stated he would actively support traffic calming measures and speed reduction areas. This is also one of his top priorities for North Shropshire and he has a fund to improve road safety.

These might be described at the 'bread and butter' items, but there are others where an opinion, which may or may not have any weight, is sought from the Council to the various and seemingly many consultations which are churned out by different agencies. We are a consultee to Planning Applications, but the actual decisions taken by Shropshire Council can be puzzling in the light of our (hopefully informed and local) response.

The Oswestry Place Plan has also occupied our thoughts this last year, and even tonight there is the Shropshire Local Plan Examination and consultation on the following 5 documents:

The future of its Empty Homes function - 24 April 2024 until 26 May 2024.

Proposed draft policy on Housing Provision for Older People and those with Disabilities and Special Needs.

Updated Additional Sustainability Appraisal of the Draft Shropshire Local Plan Report.

Updated Housing and Employment Topic Paper.

Update Green Belt Topic Paper.

The Place Plan will be critical to what and where development happens – and needs to respond to the needs of the population for housing, employment and services – especially responding to changes in the age ranges which may mean in some places fewer school places but more need for older persons accommodation, and for this Council, given that the proposed Innovation Park is in our area,

we should and must give more attention to how this will develop – for the benefit of the parish and the wider area of North Shropshire.

And of course, we have discussed and responded to the consultation on the proposals from Shropshire Council about their financial position – or perhaps lack of it. The concern at Parish and Town Council level is that suggestions of passing over responsibilities to Parishes or that Parishes may increase THEIR taxation levels to keep services would seem to fragment services. Yet when Shropshire was created, and the former 6 Districts abolished, it was to save money and make services more ‘joined up’ and efficient.

Are all parishes equipped to take on some services which may require some expertise? While all parishes can raise their precepts to pay for services, will they? And will the consequence of bring in – then increasing - charges for say, garden waste be more roadside dumping of said waste?

But that is for the future – my remit was to try to give a hint of the huge amount of work put in by Councillors and the Clerk over the last year. Reading through the minutes as I have done, there are so many more matters I could have mentioned, but we haven’t ordered breakfast!

4. Open Forum

The Chairman invited members of the public to speak and raise matters of concern.

Off Road Motorbike events

A resident from Sychtyn Ward raised concern regarding off- Road Motor bike events being held on land off Wern Ddu Lane . Concerns included the frequency of the event, number of motorbikes and noise levels. He has discussed this with the landowner / organiser of the event. A report has been received from Cllr Joyce Barrow concerning this matter, which she read. Cllr Barrow advised there have been many conversations regarding this and the Leader of Shropshire Council will speak with the counterparty in Powis to take the matter forward.

The resident advised his concerns were multifaceted with safety issues for walkers using local footpaths, horse riders using local roads and bridle pathways and the impact on the nature reserve. Llansiln was noted as an area of beauty. Cllr Joyce Barrow requested further details from the resident. Cllr Peter Richardson suggested complaining vigorously to Highways and the Police and Cllr Bo Kimber suggest contacting the Shropshire Wildlife Group.

Hope House

Louise Sachdave from Hope House thanked the Parish Council for the donation towards a postural charge. The Hospice had received a legacy from the parents of child from Trefonen a number of years ago and this with this the item could be purchased. Cllr Peter Ricardson advised that the charity could make another application for funding toward the end of the financial year should grant funding still be available .

The Chairman thanked all those present and declared the meeting closed at 19:23 pm.

Signed: _____

Chairman