

HICKLING  
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING  
Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2016

The meeting was Chaired by Cllr. Peter Greenwood, Chair of the Parish Council and commenced at 7pm in the Village Hall. There were nine members of the public, of which 5 were parish councillors. The Clerk – Jo Cartmell was also in attendance.

Apologies: Cllr. Salt.

Acceptance of minutes of last year's Annual Parish Meeting: Cllr. Smith proposed that the minutes be accepted as a true record of the meeting; this was seconded by Cllr. McOuat and passed.

Matter's Arising: The Clerk was asked to update the parish council at its next meeting about the information relating to hiring a handyman.

Parish Council Chairman's report:

Since I was here a year ago the political map changed a little after the elections. The results shocked the pollsters and set the scene for the European referendum which promises to dominate the news for the next couple of months. With turmoil in Europe involving terrorism and refugees I hope by this time next year whatever the outcome of the referendum that we are all safer and more secure as a result.

In our own small neck of the woods we have had a mixed year with some successes and some frustrations. I trust that we on the Parish Council have dealt with these to the overall benefit of our community and I will now touch upon the most important ones.

Probably the most frustrating item has been our dealings with Rushcliffe Borough Council Planning Department. We, together with Rushcliffe Cllr Tina Combellack, have been campaigning for the proper notification of planning matters to those who are most affected by the planning applications that are made. There have been instances where neighbours to an application site have not been notified and even one where the Parish wasn't notified and only heard about it on the grapevine! This is unacceptable and we hope as a result of our efforts that this will improve.

Another of our grievances with the Planners is that the Parish Council as representatives of the community is consulted about Planning Applications and yet the Planner's take little or no notice of what we have to say. This actually means that you as parishioners have little influence in matters that affect where you live because the Planning Officer will make the decision regardless. I need to explain that although they do take into account comments, if a particular item has already been mentioned it does not add any additional weight. So if 1,000 people object to say overlooking of a neighbour's garden from a proposed extension it counts as one objection and if the Planner doesn't agree that's just too bad. This just isn't democracy and we are working to change this by taking our complaint about the worst example over the last year to the Local Government Ombudsman.

On a much more positive note there is an incentive to promote the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan which is being supported by the Parish Council. This is a legal document prepared with grant funding in which the community works together to decide how development in their immediate location can take place so that it will more accurately reflect their needs and preferences. This would have as much weight as the Local Plan and could mean that we are given much more say in what happens here, where we live. We have already held an informal "cheese and wine" gathering to discuss this and in the coming months there will be more action and meetings. However, and I need to stress this, it will come to nothing unless there is substantial support for it in the Parish so I urge everyone, if you care, please become involved!

The Parish Council continued liaising with the Village Hall Committee throughout the year with various Council members attending their meetings which are always a jolly affair as good wine is frequently supplied by Tim although purely for medicinal purposes. The toilet block refurbishment and disabled access facilities are now complete and I myself worked with the builder to help ensure its success since my firm and in particular Kate Greenwood was the Architect for the project. After the initial work we worked without fees as our contribution to the project as indeed many others did too devoting their time and efforts to make the project a success which I hope you agree is a great improvement to the Hall.

One of the more exciting events this year was the celebration in July of Fred Maltby's birthday in the Village Hall which was attended by the deputy Mayor of Rushcliffe, the leader of Rushcliffe Council Cllr Neil Clark, our own Cllr Tina Combellack and many others including the History Group and the WI. It was an excellent fun occasion with a flag presented from the WI which I gratefully received on behalf of the Parish, to fly above the Village Hall as the old one was becoming tattered. We even flew the Stars and Stripes on the day in honour of the event.

For those who don't know, Fred Maltby was a son of this village and left with his family to go to the USA and became the Governor of Michigan. Since our birthday party the City of Farmington, Fred's adopted hometown, has made a resolution to further the friendship between our two communities and we have reciprocated. It is anticipated that this might promote some interesting opportunities over the coming years.

The special arrangement for the HGV's in the village seems to continue successfully with the businesses and farms in the area being properly serviced without inconvenience. However, the through traffic that shouldn't come through our area is prevented from using the village as a short cut. Altogether a good result!

The new bus service has much improved thanks to the hard work that Cllr Bill Oldham puts in to the negotiations with NCC. Last year I wrote that I hoped that our representations and recommendations would bear fruit over the coming year and I can happy report that this was the case.

Cllr Jo McOuat continued her work with Farm Watch as a complement to the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme which is obviously very appropriate and worthwhile in our countryside location. Two of us also attended the Rushcliffe Parish Forum meeting so as to keep up with current topics to help us all get the most from our Council. Some of you may not know but the Parish Council is also responsible for maintenance and safety checks of the heart defibrillators, Walkers Green playground, the Cemetery and all of these facilities need this work to continue to be useful and safe. This is largely dealt with by Jo our Parish Clerk and Martin Smith and my thanks, on your behalf, go to them for looking after this for important work for us all. Martin also kindly laid a wreath on Remembrance Sunday on behalf of the Parish Council.

Work on the restoration of the Lengthman's Hut by the canal still continues under the direction of Cllr Combellack with the support of the Parish Council.

Also a memorable year since the Village officially joined the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with the arrival of fibre optic cable and this has made a great deal of difference as the stop gap fix company who supplied broadband via dishes had become so well subscribed that the service had become slower and less useful as a result.

Finally, on behalf of the Parish Council I would like to thank Cllrs John Cottee and Tina Combellack for the continuing support they give to Hickling and its parishioners. It is very much appreciated. As Chair of the Parish Council, I would like thank my fellow councillors for the work they have done this year on the behalf of the parishioners of Hickling. Last but certainly not least, many thanks to our excellent Clerk, Jo Cartmell, who works very hard indeed for all of us.

Open Public session (including group representations): Cllr. McOuat wished to note that she felt there was insufficient reference to Hickling Pastures in the Chair's report and also during parish council proceedings in general. The Chair assured Cllr. McOuat that when he referred to the parish of Hickling, the reference included Hickling Pastures. He noted that the parish council would try to be sensitive to this in future.

No further business: meeting closed 7.20pm