

Hopton Wafers Parish Council

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held at 7 pm on Monday 23rd May 2022
at Doddington Village Hall

Present: Cllr Sue Turner, Cllr Barry Buffery, Cllr Maria Cook, Cllr Tim Evans, Mrs Celia Gibb (Doddington Church); Mrs Sonia Pearsall (Doddington); Mr Ted Wilkes and Miss Sheila Webb (Hopton Bank Methodist Chapel); Unitary Cllrs Gwilym Butler and Simon Harris; Mr S Evans and the Parish Clerk: Mrs D McBride.

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Parish Council Vice-Chair Sue Turner welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited everyone to introduce themselves.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Mark Humpage, Cllr Linda Clayton and Cllr Derek Bytheway.

3. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 20th May 2019

Copies were available for those present and everyone was satisfied they were correct - signed by Chair.

4. Hopton Wafers Parish Council Report

Parish Council Vice-Chair, Cllr Sue Turner read the Parish Council Annual Report which had been prepared by the Clerk (attached with Minutes).

5. Hopton Wafers Village Hall Report

There was no report.

6. Hopton Wafers Church Report

There was no report.

7. Doddington Church Report

Mrs Celia Gibb gave the following report:

The church is made up of the people who worship together, and we worship in and have responsibility for the building that is there for the whole community. It is good to report that, after the long pause caused by Covid-19, St John's feels reinvigorated by a few new people with enthusiasm and energy. This is partly due to new residents at Meadow View joining us as well as old friends returning, and also to the completion of the newly accessible path that has given us hope for the future. We had a wet but joyful opening by the Archdeacon, with flowers, bunting and dancers, and it was encouraging to be able to welcome several residents from Doddington Lodge and their families. The path means we can hold activities, services and events at the church and advertise them as open to all. We do still have the restriction of not having running water or a toilet, but a drop-in event like our Jubilee Exhibition is something that we can do and we are grateful to the Parish Council for providing funding – we hope that people will want to come along and see it. We will continue to hold events at the Village Hall to serve the community as well as raise funds, and the curate and I have started visiting Doddington Lodge regularly to lead prayers and hymns. Our responsibility for the church building means that we continue to seek to repair and improve it. Grants from 3 Trusts now allow us to repair 2 of the 8 cast-iron windows this year, and one of those Trust Funds has encouraged us to apply for more funding to decorate the porch and perhaps do other things as well. In addition we have been given a grant by the National Lottery Heritage Fund to employ a professional to develop a robust business plan and get us to the point of applying for funding again for the main body of the work we hope to do. Meanwhile, we continue to do our best to maintain the churchyard and the building with all the routine associated underlying costs; we estimate that it costs around £500 a month to do that. We are very grateful to our regular donors, but with our still small congregation, that donor income is under that £500 per month level, so we have to continue to work to fundraise, and we encourage the community to continue to support us as we in turn do our best to serve the community.

8. Hopton Bank Methodist Chapel Report

Mr Ted Wilkes reported that the Chapel is holding weekly services again and meet monthly with Melville Chapel. Mr Wilkes apologised for the number of vehicles parked by members accessing the Chapel at times but was pleased that the numbers attending are almost back to the pre-pandemic level. They have held a successful table top sale at Farlow and Oreton Village Hall and hope to arrange another event this summer. The building is structurally sound although had a few tiles dislodged in the winter storms. The driveway into the premises needs some work but they are mindful that Severn Trent may be considering a mains drainage project nearby. The congregation try to keep the grounds neat and tidy but grounds maintenance as well as the heating costs continue to rise.

9. Unitary Councillors' Reports

Unitary Councillors Simon Harris and Gwilym Butler had sent in their written report – (copy attached with these Minutes). Cllr Butler added that following a meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner last week, all parish councils can expect a police representative at their meetings at least once a quarter. Children applying to attend school in this area were successful and should receive their offer letter soon. Post-Brexit, all money previously sent to the EU is now in the Shared Prosperity Fund for communities with more than 500,000 people to apply for so Shropshire will need to work together with perhaps Telford and Wrekin to apply for funding. Shropshire Council had put in a 2% rise in their budget for salaries but the increase is likely to be more than 5% which will need to be found, either from reserves or savings in other areas. The £150 Council Tax rebate is being distributed. If this is not received, please contact Shropshire Council. The Boundary Review is underway at the parliamentary constituency level. Next year, the unitary council's ward areas will be reviewed, then it will be the town and parish council areas from October 2023.

Cllr Harris is following up for a response from the police on recent break-ins. The Library Consultation is currently underway and people are encouraged to respond. Families are starting to arrive from Ukraine into our area but the process is slow to get started. Hereford Diocese is also trying to match refugees to volunteer families. The costs involved with children in residential care is currently £5,000 per week and those with serious medical conditions can cost around £60,000 per week. The number of vacancies at schools may be due to the demographics of the population but also some of the older Victorian buildings are not as desirable as more modern buildings.

10. Parish Matters and Questions

Cllr Buffery raised concerns about the length of time the main road was closed for recently when only a few patches were done. Cllr Butler commented that the repairs are of good quality and the whole road will be surface-dressed when all such repairs are completed. He added the main road through Cleobury Mortimer will be resurfaced from the Medical Centre to Newbridge this summer, followed by surface-dressing the road out to the county boundary at Lem Brook. Cllr Buffery asked that the cattle grid at Doddington through to Hopton Wafers should also be done followed by full reinstatement of white lines and cats' eyes. Cllr Butler confirmed this is in the programme.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.05pm.

It was agreed at the Annual Parish Council Meeting (Minute Ref 2023/03) that these minutes are a true record of the meeting, subject to the following corrections:-

Signed.....Chairman

Date.....