

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting
Held on Wednesday 2nd May 2018 in the Village Church**

Present: Councillor J S F Jonik – (Chairman)
Councillor N J M Barton
Councillor M Barton
Councillor J B R Durham
Councillor K Lewcock

Officers: Mrs L A Roberts – Parish Clerk

In Attendance: Councillor R Gamble – Wiltshire Council
PCSO Sam Burnside

There were 17 members of the public present.

1/17 Welcome by Chairman of Erlestoke Parish Council

The Chairman, Councillor Jonik welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

2/17 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Frise-Morgan and Hunt-Davis.

3/17 Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 26th April 2017

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 26th April 2017 having previously been circulated were signed by the Chairman, Councillor Jonik as a correct record.

4/17 Parish Council Chairman's Report

Erlestoke Parish Council

Chairman's report 2017 - 2018

Erlestoke is a small village of some 172 people on the electoral role. Looking back over the year it always surprises me on the amount of general day to day business that is required by our councillors.

I start on a sad note with the passing of Bill Smith our Council auditor. Bill kept a close eye on our accounts offering advice and identifying discrepancies when they occurred.

A new Government Transparency policy was introduced which meant restructuring how the Council operates and displays information and how accounts are audited. Auditing Solutions from Melksham now advise us and audit our accounts.

Our new Clerk Linda Roberts has introduced new standing orders, risk assessment procedures, and financial code of conduct together with the Transparency Policy that is required.

We have introduced a speed indicating device (SID) in Erlestoke, this has been a success with lots of positive comments. We will share the SID with Worton, Marston, Cheverell and Lavington.

The council attended a meeting held at Eddington with Unitary Councillor Richard Gamble and Wiltshire Councillors Highways manager which included representatives from the community area. At that meeting the speed of vehicles using the B3098 was also discussed and it was suggested that a joint effort should be made to try and get the speed reduced from 50 mph to 40 mph.

Highways is always on our agenda and the Lower Road cross road signage and road markings where at least two serious accidents have occurred has been improved. There are still discussions on the cross road, and being muted is to install a stop sign instead of a junction warning sign to improve the danger of the junction.

The school crossing by the bus stop is a dangerous area at peak times. Many meetings and studies have taken place on the crossing. The upshot is Wiltshire Council Highways have suggested implementing slowing down signs and procedures while entering Erlestoke on the B3098 from the East and West. There is a cost to Erlestoke Parish Council which we have approved. This will be implemented this year.

The method of reporting all issues including highways issues is through the Wiltshire APP on the Erlestoke web site. We have reported street lighting issues, pot holes and signage issues, these go on a work-to-List at Wiltshire and we await for these to be attended to. You do not need to go to a Parish Council to register a complaint just go to the site APP and do this direct yourself.

We have a new Parish Steward scheme for carrying out jobs around the village this is programed for a visit once a month. This is proving very successful and the Steward will visit the Wiltshire APP to see if any jobs are required on the day of the visit. The drains are cleared and some road maintenance will be done if required.

Councillor Mrs Barton organised a defibrillator training day on Thursday 31st August in the church. The defibrillator is sited on the front wall of Turners Garage and can be used by anybody. The training day was a success with a good turnout but with none of us getting younger we would encourage more people to attend as it could be a life saver for somebody. The Training takes about one hour and it is well advertised with leaflets and flyers. A new training day is planned for this year please consider attending.

Our new PCSO covering Erlestoke is PCSO 3965 Sam BURNSIDE. The local Police are particularly interested in activities on the Plain as reporting is not as it should be. They are Interested to hear from farmers in the area especially with reports of Hare Coursing and other illegal activities. We often hear of issues at and around the prison but these don't seem to be made available to the Parish Council.

We had a number of power cuts over the Christmas period. It was thought that the sub-station in the Park was in need of an upgrade. Apparently the cuts were due to faulty power lines and units outside the village and these were upgraded accordingly.

This started the discussions over the Wayleave payment on the sub-station and we are again in discussion with Scottish Southern Electric over this Wayleave payment.

A big thank you was expressed to Jim Marshall, Liz and Bill Kemp for their assistance with the village spring clean. The Parish Council would also like to thank Mandy Heath and Jane Batt for picking up the dog waste around the woods and village. It seems that some walkers allow their dogs to foul the tracks and paths that we all like to use without any consideration for anybody else walking the paths, this can be children who are sometimes unaware of dog fouling.

The Wellhead Lake project has started and the MOD have completed a very comprehensive study on the area and started clearing trees and rubbish to allow access to the Dam. This study can be seen on the web site www.erlestoke.org More data has to be analysed this year before construction work can start. The depth of water in the lake is very low and springs seem to have low pressure, we are looking into this at the same time.

We are aware the Water House on the High Street is in a bad state and need of repair. We are looking into this before the building completely falls down.

The tree felling in the woods has changed the whole aspect when out walking, we are waiting for the brash to be cleaned up and the next phase of re-planting to start.

Fibre Broadband will soon be here, well apparently it is here now. The cabling the telegraph posts and the sales providers are on our doorsteps but we are not sure if the upload and down load speed has arrived yet, some say it has and others say it has not but it must be close. We are still not sure if the fibre speed will reach those further down Lower Road. We have many pages of night time reading on this and many thanks to Councillor Lewcock who has done a lot of work keeping us up to date.

On a lighter note Councillor Natasha Barton reported that she had recently met Rod Coverly and his wife Sandy who you will remember ran the George and Dragon a while back. The ex-pub landlords have kindly donated a photograph to the parish council of the Erlestoke steam train, nobody had heard of this and we are going to frame the photograph for all to see.

This year we approved a budget and set a Precept of £6805.00. This represents a charge of £74.51 on a Band D property and a slight decrease of 0.05% on last year.

A new website has been designed and built it is the same address:

www.erlestoke.org

I would like to thank all our councillors including Richard Gamble and Linda Roberts our Clerk for all their help and advice throughout the year.

Stan Jonik

Chairman
Erlestoke Parish Council

5/17 Reports

5/17.1 Wiltshire Council – Councillor Richard Gamble

Councillor Gamble advised the meeting that every year Baroness Scott produces an annual report for town and parish councils which details the activities of Wiltshire Council. The report is available on Wiltshire Council's website.

Councillor Gamble explained that the financial pressures faced by Wiltshire Council were relentless, however the Council had tried to minimise impact on services. There are some pressures relating to maintenance with the outdoor education centre in Braeside Devizes, where it is likely that the facility will close, he advised there will be changes in the boarding arrangements for children with special needs attending Rowdeford School.

Free parking is going to cease in the Market Place Devizes and there will be a change to waste collection services which will improve kerbside recycling services. Further details will be announced soon.

Councillor Gamble reported that the Parish Steward scheme continues to be successful.

Councillor Gamble advised that he was now the portfolio holder for Art, Museums and Culture and added that there is a very good provision of culture in Wiltshire. He reported that he had been involved with the tunnel project at Stonehenge and the storage of discovered archaeology. He had also been involved with the Salisbury poisoning incident.

Councillor Gamble is a member of the Eastern Area Planning Committee and currently there were no contentious planning issues in Erlestoke. He reported that there will be a review of the basic strategic planning policy, part of the Core Strategy.

Councillor Gamble was delighted to report that there had been no reduction in the amount of grant funding available through the Devizes Area Board. He added that the Devizes Area Board can also offer some revenue funding for young people's projects. He went on to report that the Community Area Transport Group is also very active and addressing some highways issues which are reported from the parishes.

Councillor Gamble stated that Lower Road is due to close for 12 days from 18th May. He was not entirely clear what needed to be addressed but acknowledged that it would be a significant inconvenience. It was suggested by a member of the public that there was a leak in a pipe which needed attention.

Further transport news was the effort to try and get a railway station at Lime Way. He reported that some progress had been made, however it would not be delivered until the mid-2020's. He also advised that there will be no changes to the bus service. There are

plans to get a railway north and south, with Westbury linking to Swindon and extending the service from Salisbury to Southampton Airport.

Councillor Gamble concluded by saying that it had been a pleasure working with Erlestoke Parish Council over the past year and was grateful for the support shown by the Parish Council at Area Board Meetings. He advised that the next Devizes Area Board meeting would be held on Monday 14th May in the Hub Library, Devizes.

5/17.2 Great Cheverell School

It was reported that the Chair of Governors, a resident of Erlestoke, in attendance at the meeting had been a vast contributor to the school's success and that he is an outstanding Chair of Governors. The representative from the school went on to report that there were strong numbers on the electoral roll and they had received 36 applicants for 20 places. There are 5 classes with seven teachers, administrative support and an apprentice teaching assistant. Most of the staff are from local villages.

The school is at full capacity however finances still remain a struggle and they are always exploring ways to manage more frugally. They only receive income of £25,000 per year, less than that received in 2014/15 and this is set to drop by £11,000. They still have to manage inflation and staff salary increases. The school, through sound financial management does have reserves it can draw on. However, the school very much appreciate any grant funding it receives.

It was reported that nine of their pupils come from Erlestoke, representing 6% of the school population. In past years they have had as many as 17 from Erlestoke. Overall 34% of their pupils come from the four villages in the catchment. If the school were just to have pupils from the catchment that would equate to only 51 pupils and they would be forced to close. The school was grateful for the support from families outside of the catchment area.

Exam and test results put the school well above the national and local average, being in the 10% of country. They have just received news from Government that the school is now in top 3%. Grateful thanks to the commitment and support from both staff and parents was reported.

Recent field trips had included a visit to Salisbury Museum. The two main themes in the academic year had been World War II and birds of the British Isles.

The school was pleased to report completion of a new athletics track which now meant running twice around the track would equal a distance of one mile.

Pupils had received cooking lessons from Ann Heath and advice about food and hygiene.

The school's sporting achievements continue to be a source of pride and pupils understand victory and defeat and are always gracious, polite and sportsmanlike.

Other activities which have been introduced at the school include, fencing, archery, cricket, judo and crocheting.

The school community has a high satisfaction rate with happy learners, and the school maintains that happy learners are good learners.

An invitation was extended to the community to visit the school and have a tour of the school.

For information there is a weekly newsletter which is published on the village website.

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5/17.3 Erlestoke Prison

There was no representative at the meeting. The Parish Clerk reported that the prison had extended an invitation to members of the Parish Council to tour the facilities and this would be arranged shortly.

5/17.4 Erlestoke and Coulston Cricket Club

Patrick State was in attendance to represent the Club and give the report, he was the groundsman and a committee Club member.

He opened by stating that it had been five years since they had attended a meeting of the Parish Council and the purpose of that meeting was when the Club was purchasing some land. He was pleased to say that the Club was going strong and financially viable and they were better off than some cricket Clubs which were struggling. The Club is very small but survives, they do not have a big membership so the requirement to play is high. There is a consistency with membership and the Club usually has a team to put out. They do struggle attracting young cricketers due to competition with bigger cricket Clubs.

Last season there were 35 rounds of cricket played mid-week, there was 20-20 cricket and district youth games and some county cricket. The Club had entered the Wiltshire league and introduced competitive Saturday cricket. The Club had been promoted to a higher league.

This year the Club had cancelled five games, due to the weather and it is estimated they are one month behind. The pitch had been water logged so it had been a challenging start to season.

The plans for a new pavilion are going well with. The Club had received planning permission to demolish the old pavilion and rebuild a new pavilion on the same footprint. Gaining planning permission had been expensive but it had unlocked some funding opportunities which are being pursued.

In the past the Club had received considerable grant funding from Sport England, there is a new Sport England fund available and the Club will make an application to this fund and organise some fundraising activities.

The plan for the replacement pavilion is to have a wooden traditional pavilion to blend in with surroundings. The Club are investigating having a power supply installed.

The Club had investigated the use of solar power but it is prohibitively expensive. The Club want the new facility to remain a community facility and used for community events. The Club is planning to engage further with the village.

Unfortunately, there had been a spate of break-ins to cars, lead has been stolen from the roof. The shed has been broken into also. The Police have been good with their response

which the Club appreciated, but due to the isolated location it is difficult to know exactly how to prevent this type of crime.

The community were invited to visit the pavilion and the Club would love to show people around.

Dog mess is a problem some people are responsible dog owners and others hang the bags on gate with some letting dogs go free. The problem is unpleasant, frustrating and unhealthy.

5/17.5 Erlestoke Church

Liz Kemp presented the report on behalf of Christine Hampton who was unable to attend due to a back problem.

Finances: There was £14,000 in the bank account, a healthy balance, however the Parochial Church Council (PCC) was awaiting estimates for work in bell tower, which will be a large job and require the use of scaffolding. Liz then explained how the finances work. The village church is responsible for all costs in running and maintaining the church, there is no funding from the Church of England, so the Church has to remain financially independent. The PCC are very grateful the village for its financial and physical support.

The Church is run by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) covering the religious side, christenings, weddings and funerals.

Five years ago, villagers worked hard to raise funds to have toilets and a kitchen installed. This was not for just Church use but for the village as the closure of the village hall meant there were no facilities for the community when they come together. The location of the Church also means that it can support activities taking place in The Park.

The religious functions of the Church cost £3000 per year this is funded by a small group of people who pay a standing order on a monthly basis but that set up is fragile as two-thirds comes from one source. The costs are also supported from collections following worship. Other income is derived from Church fees for weddings and funerals but the Church cannot rely on that on a day to day basis.

Electricity and water costs last year were £1007. Repairs including gutters lightening conductor check and certification, fire equipment and an electrical check and certification last year was £950. Insurance was £1400 and covers only 25% of the fabric of the building, there is a £250 excess attached to the policy.

Thirty years ago, there were 8/9 members on the PCC with an average age of 40 to 50, back then we had spring and Easter fairs, sponsored family walk treasure trails, a large fete, concerts, plant fair, strawberry teas and Harvest suppers in the Village Hall, all opportunities to raise Church funds. Today there are only three members on the PCC and we are getting older and there is a limit to our capacity to organise events. The PCC is very grateful to the Book Club and those that run it. Other regular events include bingo, a plant sale, a pancake day celebration and strawberry teas. However, support for these events is dropping off.

The PCC would welcome support from the community to put on more events and would be delighted to hear about any ideas for events but ideas must be followed by support to organise the event.

If we don't address the funding issues we will be faced with the threat of closure of the Church and the village really cannot afford to lose another community facility.

5/17.6 ERLESTOKE HUB

Councillor Lewcock reported on the activities of the Hub.

The Hub was set up two years ago to buy the local pub on behalf of the community but that was not realised and so we may fail in our efforts to prevent it being converted to a permanent residence. The current owners have ignored our offers to buy the pub and also ignored offers from private buyers. The full asking price had been offered but refused. There is no serious communication with the owners, despite efforts and the owners have taken the pub off the market, it seems they have decided to remain and sit it out. It is anticipated that in a few years time they will apply for permission to make it a dwelling. What is very sad is watching the building deteriorate. Much time and effort has been put into seeing a solution but we have reached a stale mate. The Hub have tried very hard to engage with the owners but the owners have been reluctant to do so.

In an effort to provide opportunities for the village to come together the Hub had arranged some social functions including regular pop-up pubs which have been done in liaison with the Church. We need to heed the warnings of Church, it is the villages last social facility so what is our plan B? The Hub organised a Christmas fayre on the Secret Garden which was very successful and want to continue to provide some social engagement for people in the village. We don't even know when people pass away because there is little opportunity to get together. The Hub is open to ideas for other activities and will organise some more pop-up pubs this summer.

5/17.7 Neighbourhood Plan

Andrew Cooper the Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group had sent his apologies due to illness.

The Parish Council Chairman, Councillor Jonik explained what a Neighbourhood Plan was. A neighbourhood plan is a community led process. A geographical area is defined and the community work together to decide where development should go and what facilities are required to ensure the community remains sustainable. A Neighbourhood Plan must accord with the Core Strategy of Wiltshire Council.

5/17.8 Ministry of Defence (MOD)

Chris Daniel is Senior Historic Building Advisor with the MOD

He advises the MOD on listed buildings and designated structures. He had recently carried out some research on Erlestoke Ponds and shared a presentation of his findings at the meeting. The presentation is available on the Parish Council's Website at:

Chris reported that now trees have been cleared this has created some steep drops, whilst the paths are wide enough but he asked whether consideration should be given to fencing off the dam.

Some funding has been set aside to commence a structural survey of the dam however if there is anything else of concern these can be discussed with the MOD.

He reported that the ponds are silted up but they can be un-silted to make them safer. There was an initial concern about the security of the dam but it has been discovered during the course of this work that its security is not an issue.

A member of the public asked if by restoring the water levels the silt would return to a normal level? The leakage from the dam has increased so the water level has dropped as have the number of fish.

Chris advised that this was being investigated and they were trying to see if the water level can be brought back up.

Investigations were being made to see how deep the silt was and establish how much the ponds have silted up.

A member of the public reported that the woods had been brutalised with the stripping out of the trees and they would not like to see fencing installed. It wouldn't be an enhancement it would be better to restore them. A request was also made to remove blue green algae signs as the testing had proved that there is none present.

The threat to safety in the area is from the use of motor cycles, where riding was uncontrolled and this was happening every weekend.

A member of the public asked if English Heritage or the National Trust was interested in taking the area over? Chris was unsure about their willingness to do this. Although they could be a useful training feature. He advised that if it was taken on by another agency the MOD would insist on a buffer zone. It would certainly be worth investigating any grant funding potential however.

Another idea from the public was to give it over to one of the engineer regiments as a project. Chris advised that they have tried this but it hasn't borne fruit.

5/17.9 GOLF CLUB

There was no representative from the Golf Club.

6/17.10 COMMUNITY POLICING TEAM – PCSO SAM BURNSIDE

PCSO Burnside reported that he had spent the last year working in the area and that Erlestoke was one of his 23 villages he covered along with another colleague. He reported that the main issues were connected to the prison with packages regularly being thrown over the fence. The Police had also responded to fights which had broken out in the prison.

By the time reports of vehicles approaching the prison and throwing items over the fence and the Police arrive on scene the culprits have long gone. One offender is a bike rider who rides up to the gates and blatantly throws a package over the fence.

The Parish Council would be grateful if Sam could share the statistics with them so they can report on the Parish Council Website.

Sam reported that the nationwide problem of theft from vehicles is in the area and reported that on 24th April the theft of a handback, (snatch and grab) left on the front seat of a vehicle had taken place in the area. Sam urged everyone to ensure that no valuables are left on display in vehicles and if you are planning to leave the car in a remote area that valuables are locked away in the boot before leaving home. That way if anyone is watching they won't see you put valuables into your boot.

Sam referred to the Stokehill Farm area, where there is a problem it seems people are being watched as they park up to walk their dogs and there has been a spate of theft from cars. The area is now a Police priority.

He was pleased to report that there had been a reduction in thefts because of Police activity in deterring perpetrators and added that Westbury and Trowbridge had seen a large hike in this type of crime.

Sam reported on the several accidents on the B3098 as well as damage (vandalism) being caused to parked cars. They have had some success with intelligence and Sam urged everyone to report anything suspicious no matter how small as this intelligence creates a bigger picture for the Police.

Sam advised that the team were addressing ways to communicate better and that why should publish successes more often.

A member of the public raised the point about unauthorised vehicles going off road and the fact that they are intimidating. He advised they were difficult to catch as the vehicles were unlicensed. He advised people not to directly tackle offenders but to either call 101 if not urgent or if the drivers were aggressive and people were feeling threatened and in danger to call 999. He asked that all incidents were reported. Sam stressed that the public should not put themselves in danger.

17/5.11 BROADBAND

It was reported that fibre was now in the village and that some residents had had it installed to their homes. At the present time it was not clear how much of Lower road would get access to fibre. It was also still unclear how much better the service would be to residents if they had not subscribed to super-fast broadband.

17/6 VILLAGE ISSUES

17/6.1 VILLAGE FACILITIES

Rafe Colenso lives at Manor Farm. He reported that he would love to be involved in improving village facilities. He had carried out extensive work to the farm and its buildings which had been in a very poor state of repair. There were some buildings which could be developed to create a space for community events, such as parties, wedding receptions village get-togethers. The garden is lovely and would create a beautiful setting which could be used to encourage more people to the village. Rafe wondered if the idea was of any interest to the village now that the village had lost its village hall it would be great to see an improvement in facilities available. Rafe advised that he would be happy to talk to people about the idea.

17/6.2 LITTER PICKS

If there are plans for another litter pick please can the community be given plenty of warning.

17/6.3 PEDESTRIAN EXIT – THE PARK

It was reported that the pedestrian exit from the park by the churchyard very, very muddy and is used by many people. Could anything be done to make it safer underfoot? AS it is also a dangerous place to cross the road due to the and stay steady on foot.

17/6.4 GRASS-CUTTING, THE PARK

It was felt that grass cutting was not carried out regularly enough and sometimes the grass was 6-8 inches long which made it difficult for youngsters to play football. A plea to have it cut more regularly was made. A request was also made to consider having the grass-cuttings picked up especially in the children's play area. It was suggested that perhaps a village compost corner could be created using the grass clippings.

The Parish Council Chairman agreed to take up the matter with the grass cutting contractor.

17/6.5 MMOBILE PHONE MAST

A member of the public made the suggestion of having a mobile phone mast attached to the spire of the village church to improve signal. They went on to say that they can be installed very discretely. Councillor Mrs Barton advised that there may be a problem due to the mobile phone blockers around the Prison. It was agreed however that the idea could be investigated. If successful it might provide a regular income for the Church.

There being no further questions the meeting closed at 9.35pm

The next meeting of the Parish Council would be the Annual Parish Meeting (AGM) to be held on Wednesday 23rd May 2018 at 7.30pm in the Village Church.

DRAFT