

YOXALL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting
held on Thursday, 5th May 2022 at 7.00pm
in the Parish Hall, King Street, Yoxall

Present: P Hughes, J Williams, D Muir, S Evans, P Kitt, P Bailey,
M Arch, R Keys and R Yapp

Also Present: Five Members of the Public
R Young – Clerk to the Council

1) APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from L Beech and J Jessel.

2) MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON THE 6TH MAY 2021

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 6th May 2021 were approved as a true and correct record.

3) MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

➤ No matters were raised.

4) PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman, P Hughes, reported the following:

As in other years, this year has not been without its challenges, but it is a great relief to see things getting back to normal, even if that normal is in a revised way. Certainly, the devastating crisis in Ukraine has sent its shockwaves around the world, particularly across Europe. Our thoughts are with Ukrainian families at this time.

The Parish Council are mindful of the increases in utility bills, fuel prices and maintenance costs and so have looked carefully at the precept for Yoxall Parish Council. We have increased this by three percent to £28,982.00 for 2022-2023. This represents an average of £30.76 per household on their Council Tax Bill.

There are clear examples of how the increase in the precept will be utilised; Goose Green, Milne Holme Pingle, Ferrers Field, noticeboards and sitting areas.

We have entered the Best Kept Village (BKV) Competition again for 2022, having had a two year break due to Covid. We usually enjoy consistent success, thanks, in no small way to our small army of litter pickers keeping our village clean and tidy. The competition begins in May and runs through to August.

Thanks

To so many people for their help and support.

Thanks to our local businesses; always doing unsung work behind the scenes and, of course, their generosity. For example, last December we delivered 101 Christmas boxes to our older or infirm residents thanks to the generosity of local business donations and hard work. Who knows how many we will cover this next Christmas!

Thanks to our Staffordshire County Council Representative, Julia Jessel, and to our East Staffordshire Borough Council Representative, Laura Beech. We have secured grants with their support, adding improvements to the village.

Thanks to our Parish Councillors for their energy and ideas, including a tenacious ability to chase funding and grants, without which we would not be able to achieve so many projects and improvements around the village.

Thanks also to our regular contractors who work diligently on our behalf, keeping Yoxall and its recreational areas maintained to a high standard. They work in a way where they take ownership of these areas.

The Village Hall

Bookings have now returned to pre-lockdown levels and, although a couple of regular uses have since opted to continue with Zoom classes, they have been replaced by new weekly hirers.

Veronica Shorthouse, our Caretaker of many years, has moved away from Yoxall to live near her family and has relinquished her Parish Hall duties. Veronica has maintained the Hall as it were her own home and has left with our thanks and best wishes for her future happiness in her new home.

Cleaning and maintenance is now carried out by Betzys with the assistance of Mrs Stewart, who also supervises issue of the Parish Hall keys.

We are planning improvements to lighting, fire doors, windows and entrance doors this year. The Parish Hall has already had a boiler and some white goods replaced.

Yoxall Riverside Regeneration – Goose Green

In May 2021, some saplings from The Woodland Trust were planted to improve the area at the back of the Newsagents and also along the north boundary with Helen Parks to create a hedge. Reviewing the planting recently, some of the saplings have survived but quite a few have not and especially at the back of the Newsagents as some heavy equipment has been used to access the back yard of the premises. Recompense has been offered and some replacement small trees will be planted there when conditions are favourable.

In June 2021, St Peter's School PTA planted a time capsule and marked the spot with a tree at a community event.

A wild flower area was planted last August when wild flower hay was strewn over an area beside the wildlife pond. The hay was provided by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and spread by Burton Conservation Volunteer Group.

In September, we asked Burton Conservation Volunteer Group (BCVG) to help with the clearing out of the wildlife pond. They spent two days with local volunteers and cleared out and extended a second quarter of the pond and also helped with clearing low branches and brushwood from the perimeter. A 'Doggy Dip' area into the River Swarbourn was created.

The cost of the pond clearing by BCVG was funded by South Staffordshire Water Pebble Fund.

National Forest Community Woods Network

The Parish Council is now a member of this group. Di Muir attended one of their meetings at The Timber Festival in July. Then in October there was a workshop at Whistlewood Common which Di Muir and Sue Evans attended. Discussions and talks took place at both events covering a wide range of issues regarding The National Forest locally.

Churchyard and Burial Ground Clean-Up

As part of the Village Clean-Up for BKV and in co-operation with St Peter's Church PCC, there has been a weekend of tidying up the churchyard and burial ground. This is a long term project and the Church is very grateful to all the volunteers who turned up over the weekend and made a good start to creating A Green Corridor through the village. The Parish Council have agreed a composting area in the

new area of the graveyard. It is hoped that Parishioners tidying graves will use it to dispose of dead flowers and greenery having removed plastic packaging which should be placed in the grey bin nearby.

SpiltMilk and 'A Little Wander'

The audio tour created by SpiltMilk has been completed and was launched in April 2022. The tour is an easy one mile walk around the village and suggests the listener looks at parts of the village with new eyes; 'Wander and Wonder'. It is available through a QR code which has been circulated on flyers and posters and is also on the Parish Council website. Printed copies are available in the Church.

Planning

Fortunately, the Parish has not been subject to any major planning applications in the past year. The ESBC Local Plan and our Neighbourhood Plan are serving us well in allowing some controlled growth through small schemes such as Redbank Farm and other rural sites to provide some new housing but not any major encroachment of the village's main settlement area. Regeneration of redundant farm sites will continue and we have held discussions with ESBC planners to explore what new controls or conditions could be introduced to prevent over development.

Extensions and similar home improvements form the bulk of new applications and though the majority of these are acceptable, there have been some occasions this past year where we have had discussions with neighbours and planners regarding issues of concern.

ESBC will be reviewing the Local Plan again this year and though we do not expect any significant changes, your Parish Council maintains an ongoing dialogue with senior officers and members in monitoring the interests of the village.

One issue of concern is the lack of affordable and retirement accommodation locally, though this situation is mainly governed by developers' agendas and their willingness to address this situation in meeting local housing needs. Moving forward, we will continue to encourage appropriate development in providing homes for a wide cross section of the community.

Roads and Pavements

We have liaised with Staffordshire County Council to improve road safety in Yoxall. Data has been collected regarding traffic flow up to the new year but has not been reported as yet.

Requests have been made for mobile speed cameras, but these seem to be very infrequent.

HS2 vehicle activity continues to be monitored and liaising with HS2 management continues.

Potholes in the roads and damaged pavements have been reported to SCC Highways. Additional monies have been set aside. The state of the pavements in and around Yoxall have been reported and, although these pavements have been inspected, repairs will be prioritised.

Diversions when closure or works on the A38 now tend to avoid A515 with the odd exception. We receive regular updates from Julia Jessel, our County Councillor, and these updates are put on the Parish Council website.

Open Spaces

Milne Holme Pingle

Milne Holme Pingle continues to be mowed and maintained in a similar manner to Ferrers Field, Swarbourn Meadow and Goose Green. New fencing has been installed around the perimeter. A new gate was also fitted but this sadly was stolen. Trent Rivers Trust are progressing their project for a Trent Rivers Way and as part of the Way, Milne Holme Pingle is viewed as an ideal place to take some respite for walkers. Following site meetings with the Parish Council, they have agreed to position a Totem pole to show the location and a bench with a map of the Trent River Way on it at the bottom of the Milne Holme Pingle. We hope to site a proper path down into this area in the near future.

Ferrers Field

Again, an area much used and enjoyed. We endeavour to keep these areas to a high standard with regular ROSPA and safety inspections for the facilities. A Parish Council initiative was to form a development group with Parishioners to see how Ferrers Field facilities could be improved. Thanks to Laura Beech, our Borough Councillor, funds have been made available for an additional picnic bench on the field.

Further equipment will be installed over the coming months thanks to a grant obtained from Sports England. We are trying to make this area more widely usable for all age groups as well as ability. Thanks to the busy mums who found time to represent the community to come up with a consensus of ideas. The path to Savey Lane from Ferrers Field has been repaired and resurfaced thanks to Julia Jessel for pursuing this with County Council.

Yoxall Parish Council School Ambassador Review

Despite Covid restrictions throughout both calendar and academic school years, we have actively contacted school to ensure communication remains open.

Children were successfully invited to design a logo for the Conservation Group and a winner as selected. Prizes to be awarded to all finalists, hopefully in May 2022 (Covid restrictions in school have prevented this happening).

Pupils are once again involved with BKVC 2022. Their posters will form part of the village preparations for the BKV competition. Prizes will be awarded. (May 2022, as above).

Liaison with school commenced regarding pupil environmental participation. A bespoke litter picking day for the school around the village was proposed. (Covid has prevented final date arrangement).

Yoxall Parish Council Conservation Group including Footpaths Review

The Conservation Group was launched on Goose Green in September 2021 and membership now stands at 35 people. The group aims to maintain, promote and educate all aspects of conservation within the village for the community as a whole.

The first indoor meeting was held in April 2022. Our guest speaker was Mr Paul Rochfort, Principal Rights of Way Officer for Staffordshire County Council. The event was attended by 25 group members and one new member joined the group at the meeting. The evening was popular with attendees and there were requests for future such meetings. This will be subject to availability of speakers.

The Green Corridor Project was launched in April 2022. This is to actively maintain the trees, plants, foliage and therefore wildlife (including birds and insects) within the churchyard and burial ground at St Peter's and is in conjunction with the PCC. The project will run for several years to achieve its aims and will require ongoing maintenance thereafter. Approximately 15 people joined the launch of this project working over Saturday, 2nd and Sunday, 3rd April. A good inroad was made to the work required which will also be led by the seasons.

A monthly walk within the village area using our public footpaths commenced in December 2021 and is proving to be very popular with regular attendance. There is an average number of participants for each walk of 10 people. People join the walks for a variety of reasons including to reconnect with the village following Covid lockdown.

Footpaths have been cleared of storm debris by members and the footpath audit previously completed has been used to investigate maintenance requirements. Costings and methodology for replacement/repair of stiles commenced. Links maintained with SCC reference footpaths and grant opportunities.

Regular updates of the Group's activities have been made within The Fisherman, YPC website and Yoxall Community Facebook. Advertisement of events have also been made in PC noticeboards and local businesses/organisations.

Sue Evans

BKVC 2022 (Best Kept Village Competition)

We have entered the 2022 competition detailing all that the village has achieved since last judging in 2019.

St Peter's School are creating posters which will be displayed in the bus shelters and around the village to promote our participation. There is also a colouring competition which pupils are being encouraged to enter using a Yoxall specific themed picture (created by Bryony).

There have been two village tidy-up sessions, in Autumn 2021 and Spring 2022. Both were successful events with exceptionally good turnout in April.

The event is being promoted throughout the year, particularly immediately prior to and during the judging periods. This is via posters, repeater boards, articles in The Fisherman and PC website.

Other Achievements and Initiatives this year include:

New design in Village welcome pack for all our new residents to Yoxall Parish.

Christmas Boxes delivered to over one hundred of our residents (see above).

Establishing our Footpaths Group – We hope to collate all forty-two footpaths in and around Yoxall. Also, liaising with County Council and land owners regarding upkeep of these paths.

Establishing the Conservation Group (launched in 2020).

New flags for the Church and Village Hall.

New litter bins and dog bins, although we may need to increase these.

Parking facility next to St Peter's Walk. This coincides with the establishing double yellow lines into Hadley Street.

Wheelchair acquired for Village Hall.

Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

We are working with the community and Sports Club organising an event on the Sports Club field on Friday, 3rd June.

As you will appreciate, there has been a great deal covered over the last year. Much has been achieved and much still to do in order to maintain this lovely place where we live.

Kindest regards.

Philip Hughes, Chairman, Yoxall Parish Council

5) COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

- J Jessel had reported she was on Election duty today but had assisted the Parish Council with Highway issues during the year.

6) BOROUGH COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

- L Beech gave a detailed review of matters relating to East Staffordshire Borough Council.

7) FINANCIAL REPORT

- The Parish Clerk circulated copies of the Receipts and Payments Schedule for the year ended 31st March 2022.
- The Parish Clerk reviewed the Receipts and Payments for the year.
- The Parish Clerk also gave details of the balance outstanding with the Public Works Loan Board.
- It was proposed, seconded and agreed to approve and agree the Receipts and Payments Schedule for the year ended 31st March 2022.

8) MATTERS RAISED BY PARISHIONER

- No other matters were raised.

The meeting closed at 7.41pm

P Hughes
Chairman of the Parish Council