

MEDBOURNE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting

Held in Medbourne Village Hall Wednesday 8th May 2024

Present : Cllrs Kendall, Easton, Delaney, Wooton and Burrows

Also present : Parish Clerk + 3 members of the public

Minutes of 2023 Annual Parish Meeting : This were agreed as circulated.

24APM1. Chair's Review of the Year

Thank you all for your attendance, you are all very welcome. Before I give my review of the year, I would like to briefly introduce myself to anyone who does not know me. My name is Seb Kendall, I have lived in Medbourne, on Ashley Road since 2011 with my wife Jo and our 3 children Harry, Lucy and Sophy. I retired from the Royal Air Force after 38 years of Service just over 2 years ago. I joined the Parish Council 3 years ago and was elected to be its Chair shortly after joining.

As I reflect and give you my Review of the Year, I want to touch on a number of issues.

But before I do that, I would like to thank all of the people who volunteer their own time, effort and resources, typically without reward to keeping the Village healthy and moving forward – Firstly, my fellow Councillors who you will hear from shortly.

To the uninitiated, the breadth and depth of what the Council does and has responsibility for is remarkable. In short, it is the first tier of government and is ran by predominantly unpaid, volunteer councillors who give up a significant amount of their time to ensure the smooth running of a multitude of things that make up the fabric of the Village, and hopefully incrementally overtime, improve aspects of village life. Crucially, the Parish Council is that vital interface between the Village and the next level of Government which in our case is Harborough District Council and beyond that, Leicestershire County Council, whose collective remit, resources and responsibilities are far greater than ours. Nevertheless, as the Parish Council we have the detailed and nuanced understanding that serves to shape and influence activities that directly affect us but are outside of our immediate responsibilities. Headline activities include commenting on all planning matters in the village - an activity underpinned by the excellent Medbourne Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Council also liaise with, and report matters to LCC Highways on all matters to do with roads, pathways and trees. Furthermore, we have a role in supporting and participating with a number of village organisations such as The Sports and Social

Club, the Medbourne Educational Foundation Trust and The Village Hall. As you can probably imagine, this list is not exhaustive. In the last year 2 new members have joined the Parish Council, firstly Martin Delaney who has taken over the demanding planning portfolio. Martin has brought to this role a very keen eye for detail and an extraordinary degree of diligence. He has an excellent way of explaining sometimes complex planning issues to his fellow councillors making our decision making easier and importantly, as objective as possible. In addition, Martin has also been digging into the important issue of village street lighting and is incrementally improving this vital service. Secondly, Becky Burrows has taken on the maintenance portfolio and has been patrolling the village reporting all manner of issues throughout the year. If you see a pothole being repaired, a drain being cleared or a sign being replaced, it is down to the effort and attention that Becky has brought to this role. Can I also mention 2 long standing members of the committee. Firstly, Lyn Easton who this year stepped up into role of Deputy Chair of the Council. Lyn is a wise sage, and I value her input, advice and opinion greatly. Secondly Michelle Wooton who this year single-handedly choreographed the Parish Council Village Survey – more about that later - and also has been instrumental in a number of road and village safety initiatives – again more about that later.

These recent arrivals mean that we do not have any vacancies on the committee right now, however, if you are interested and want to have an interesting, influential and not too onerous role in your community, please come and speak to us about joining the Parish Council where at the very least we can register your interest or maybe co-opt you onto a project that needs more human ‘horsepower’ to move it along.

I also want to pay tribute to the myriad of people, not on the council who do many things such as maintaining the War Memorial, keeping the Village Hall running, arranging village social events, cutting the various Parish grassy areas not under Highways jurisdiction, maintaining the Medbourne Hollow, to picking up litter and many other things too numerous to mention. They all do it willingly, because it is the right thing to do, and because they have a sense of Service to their local community and beyond, which we your Parish Council recognise and salute.

Last year, I mentioned that the future of our Village Shop was an area of particular concern. In the intervening period a committee was formed to investigate taking the shop under some form of ‘community ownership’ to preserve its future in relative perpetuity. You will all be aware that circumstances surrounding the shop have now changed, but I would like to publicly thank the committee who explored the possible schemes that were available to the Village for shop community ownership; this was done with an extraordinary investment of their own time and resource. The incredibly extensive form filling, numerous surveys, planning applications, consultations and endless meetings they undertook in what was then an effort to

save the shop was a huge undertaking and I would like to thank them for their massive efforts which were in the finest traditions of a publicly minded endeavour.

As I previously mentioned, a foundational body of work which underpins our planning responsibilities is the Medbourne Neighbourhood Plan. To quote from the document itself:

“Neighbourhood Plans were introduced under the localism Act (2011) and give members of the community and Parish Councils greater influence over planning matters and how the Parish will develop”.

First of all, if you have not read the MNP, I thoroughly recommend it and want to pay tribute to all those involved in putting the current version together which was promulgated in 2018. Given the influence it is supposed to give us, I have seen the good and the bad side. On the good side, we have engaged with developers using the MNP as a benchmark for our discussions, and it has worked. Equally though, I have also witnessed an example of where the MNP has effectively either been ignored or not upheld by higher planning authorities and this is something which we are very actively involved in trying to put right. The document covers the period from 2018 to 2031 but is reviewed periodically and last year a very slightly amended review version was published. You can access this document through the Medbourne Parish Council Website. You will also be aware of the 3 major multi-house development sites currently in the village. One on the Uppingham Road nearing completion one on the corner of Hallaton Road and Paynes Lane and another currently in the planning stage adjacent to the Hallaton Road site just mentioned. All 3 of those are designated areas for development in the MNP and any comments provided to HDC on these by MPC are guided by the detailed assessment and requirements listed in the MNP.

Another area where vital work has been undertaken in the last year is Road Safety. This is a subject that, without exception, concerns everyone in the Village. Over the 3 years I have been on the council this has been a subject of constant attention and a lot of correspondence. Previously, white painted village gates have been installed - with another set going in on Paynes Lane later this year - , radar activated speed signs have been placed on all approaches to the village. Primarily thanks to the efforts of our District Councillor Mike Rickman, who has lobbied our local police force and pressed LCC Highways relentlessly, village speed limit signs have been re-positioned on both the Drayton Road and Hallaton Road in an effort to improve speed limit adherence in the village. In addition, we have been working with our local police and have had a recent visit of a mobile speed enforcement team with roadside speed guns to catch speeding motorists; more visits from them are expected in the near future. As always, we welcome all and any suggestions on how we can continue to improve the critical issue of Village road safety.

Last year I described how many of you will have been frustrated by how long it is taking to reopen the Packhorse Bridge which has been closed for many months now because of the unsafe condition of the handrails. For the unaware the Bridge is the responsibility of LCC Highways. The bridge is a listed ancient monument and as such, is subject to strict controls when working on the structure. The good news for all to see is that we are very near works being complete and the bridge re-opening is scheduled next week for sometime on Thursday 16 May. We are also pressing hard for the Ford to be repaired and you will hopefully have seen the latest update on that. For those that have not the Ford repair plans are awaiting Environment Agency Approval with the repairs scheduled for mid-to-late summer when the Brook is typically at a low ebb. New railings will be installed and I can confirm approval has now been given for depth gauges to be positioned which will act as a further deterrent to the occasional driver who thinks they could navigate the fast flowing waters when in full flood! While we will not delay the functional re-opening of either the Packhorse Bridge or the Ford, it has been suggested that we should maybe celebrate the re-connection of the village with some form of official opening ceremony for both crossings later in the year – standby for details!

For many of us who visit both the Sports Club and Rural Relaxing, you may be pleased to know that the Parish Council has been successful in securing a grant from HDC for over £28,000 and promises of further funding from Medbourne Charities, Mr John Biggin of TruckEast Limited, and the David Ross foundation, will allow us to initiate a project to lay a footpath from the kissing gate at the bottom Hallaton Road side of the sports field up to the Sports Club car park. This will remove the need for people to walk down the Hallaton Road itself especially during the dark/wet winter months. We hope construction on this will start sometime in the late summer.

Finally, thank you to those who last year completed the Parish Council village questionnaire. The questionnaire sought your feedback and views and opinions across a number of village areas and issues. We can now use the results to guide how we invest and develop the village facilities going forward – the footpath project being a case in point.

As we look forward to the future, I will sum up as I have done in previous years. It is worth reflecting on our history as this can provide us with clues as to where we may be going. I have previously mentioned the excellent Medbourne Neighbourhood Plan. In it, there is a brief history which I will now quote.

“It could be said of almost every parish in England that its history is what makes it unique. Medbourne residents certainly do believe this to be the case - and with good reason. It has been a Roman settlement, a ‘Dark Ages’ survivor, an Anglian estate, a feudal Norman Manor and a prosperous medieval market town based on local agriculture. The signs may sometimes be

subtle but Medbourne today looks the way it does because of its richly layered history.”

We may not see it because we are living it day-to-day, but whilst preserving what has gone before, we are also, as a community, adding another layer to that rich history of Medbourne, and that inevitably means change. However, rest assured that as your Parish Council, we will try and manage that incremental development in the interests of the whole of the Village.

24APM2. Other reports covering the past year

Medbourne Education Foundation – report by Michelle Wooton

By way of update for those who might not be familiar with the Medbourne Educational Foundation Trust. This is a charitable organisation that owns the bottom half of the sports field. With 4 trustees on the committee that meet monthly to review opportunities to raise funds, ensure the maintenance of the children’s playground and the overall financial stability of the trust.

Over the last 12 months a number of events have been held to raise funds to e.g. install a new gate to the playground, purchase new signage and pay for insurance etc. It’s been a particularly successful year with approx. £1500 raised. An application is also being submitted to HDC for section 106 funds from the Paynes Lane development to replace some play equipment in the playground.

It is also worth noting that the relationship between the sports club and the MEFT is stronger than it possibly ever has been with collaboration and support being offered by both parties for e.g. fund raising at the 2023 fete, repairs to the foot slabs along the playground and more recently agreement on the new footpath on the sports field that crosses over both sections of land.

Village Hall – a verbal report was submitted by Lyn Easton

War Memorial – report submitted by David and Mim Nance

There has not been a lot to report for the past year. The new membrane and gravel has proved successful in reducing weeds and improves the appearance. There remains the problem of vehicles mounting the kerb and disturbing the gravel although that is impossible to prevent.

It is worth noting that the agapanthus that was planted in each bed have survived and these were grown by Jack Hollingsworth. We hope that we have continued to provide some colour all year round and can confirm that we are happy to continue.

Sports Club - report submitted by Michelle Wooton

The sports club has had another successful year across a number of key activities. A series of fund-raising events such as race nights, quiz nights, produce shows,

Christmas fair, fetes/celebrations has secured funds to allow the continuation of developments with the club such as soft furnishings and general maintenance.

The bar management has also continued to be a great success, providing a secure source of income and consistency of opening times which also helps to encourage people to visit.

Pervious discussions around youth teams/training for 5yrs up has proved successful with a great turnout for aspiring cricketers and the on-going summer tennis camps.

There has long been a need for additional footpaths in the village. With funds now secured from generous donations and section 106 funding from, the Paynes lane development this can now be realised with a much-needed footpath running along the inside of the sports field.

A fantastic example of great collaboration from the sports club, MEFT, HDC, the local community and Hereward Homes. Expected completion autumn 2024.

Street Lighting – report submitted by Martin Delaney / Ian Clarke

Following expensive quotations from the PC's lighting maintenance contractor (E.ON Energy Solutions Ltd) for repairs to non-working lights in the village, a condition survey of all streetlamps and a review of maintenance arrangements was conducted. This resulted in E.ON fixing most lights under the paid for maintenance service (currently £158.40 per quarter) the scope of which was clarified with E.ON to cover replacement of any failed 70W SON lamps and dusk-to-dawn photo-cells.

PL22 on Drayton Road, which had been unserviceable for several years, and PL14 at the bowls green, both needed new lanterns to fix them which cost £972.65 (inc. VAT).

Spare parts no longer being available for the existing Philips sodium lanterns, they have been replaced by new LED lanterns. Although emitting a whiter light, these use 70% less electricity than the orange sodium lamps. To further reduce power consumption (by around 45% average over a year), the new lights have part-night operation with an off period between midnight and 5:30am.

Medbourne residents have been canvassed about the lighting changes. Messages of support being received via the Parish Council website and no messages raising objection or concerns. The PC therefore intends to implement a rolling programme over several years (as budgets allow), to replace all old sodium lanterns with similar energy efficient ones. This should allow the PC to renegotiate the unmetered electricity supply and reduce the currently very expensive streetlighting electricity bills.

Last December, a turning lorry felled streetlight PL04 at Old Holt Road. National Grid was called to make safe; the driver was identified and a Police report filed. It took some time to pursue the insurance claim but the streetlight was replaced in April by a new pole and LED lantern.

The old gaslight style streetlight at the gate of St Giles Church (PL23) has been deemed “unserviceable” by E.ON so they will not repair it and have offered replacement by a new pole and lantern (at around £4,000 cost). However, as this streetlamp does not belong to the Parish Council, the Church has been asked to have it inspected and, if possible, repaired by their electrician.

During the year, several of the road signs in the village needed replacement lamps which was done following reports to LCC highways by lighting warden Ian Clarke.

The current status is that all Parish Council streetlights are operational, as are all road sign lights.

Traffic Safety [see reference to this in the Chair’s report]

Valentine Goodman Charity - – a verbal report was submitted by Lyn Easton

Info Resources Advisor - report submitted by D Tufts

Broadband and Mobile Services

There is very little to report regarding broadband with both BT (and users of its network) and Gigaclear providing a mostly stable service. As last year, I’m not aware of any further developments regarding the proposed mobile phone mast in Holt Road. This would alleviate the long-standing problems with poor-to-nil reception in some parts of the village. More importantly, it should be assumed that the village will not receive reliable 5G services unless this new mast is erected. It is expected that the development, whenever it happens, will come under “permitted development” with little scope for objection.

Village Web Site Village web site: <http://www.medbourne.org.uk>

Following migration of the Parish Council web site to a new site there is still a close linkage from the Village Web Site to the new PC web site. PC meetings are still recorded in the diary of the village web site but each entry includes a link to the PC web site for access to documentation. No PC information is duplicated on the village web site. The main outstanding issue is that a very large volume of historic PC information still resides on the old web site. All this data has now been passed to the Parish Clerk both for safe keeping and potential uploading to the new PC web site. Given the scale of the task of uploading so many documents that may never be accessed, I offer an alternative for consideration by the PC. It may be possible to create a single page explaining what further historic documentation is available on demand by submitting a request to the PC. This is a matter for the PC to decide. Whatever action the PC agrees to take to make with respect to historic data, Activity on the Village web site has continued as normal. A dedicated photo gallery for pictures of the Coronation celebrations was uploaded with 49 submitted images and, for the first time, 4 videos .

Email and Twitter

The number of email subscribers has risen from 243 to 265. There have been a number of new residents and I'm fairly certain that most of them have joined the list. A measure of the relevance of the email list is demonstrated by the fact that the only residents ever to leave the list have either passed away or moved. The Medbourne Village Twitter account continues to get a good level of engagement, totalling 306 in the last year, just a small drop on the previous year. Engaging third party accounts such as HFM is key and ensures events and news gets featured beyond the core follower base. These followers have risen from 401 to 411. Stand-out posts centred around Bottle Kicking as per previous years.

Thanks are again due to Amy Hayward for administering Twitter.

Benches – Report submitted by Paul Pollito

Main street. Opposite village shop triangle.

Metal frame with soft wood slats. One metal stretcher is broken, which does not affect the safety of the bench. Repainted in April this year.

Hallaton Road/Churchyard.

Pair of hard wood benches approximately 5 years old. Good repair. Lichen rubbed down.

Tow Path.

First bench. Hard wood bench, donated some 3 years ago by Mrs. Gill Wilson. Lichen has been rubbed down.

Second 'Robert Blood' bench. Very poor condition. This bench is now beyond repair. Consideration should be given to replacing this bench if deemed necessary.

The Robert Blood plaque could either be placed on the first bench (to which Mrs. Wilson would be happy to agree) or alternatively could be placed on the Hallaton Road/Churchyard bench, alongside that of Maurice Stanton.

Ashley Road/Top of Main Street.

The Leicester Mercury is made of aluminium alloy and is in good condition.

Drayton Road.

The Archie Inchley bench has a concrete frame with wooden slats. This was repainted in April this year. Reasonable condition.

Slawston Road/Paynes Lane Junction.

Simple wooden bench in good condition.

Nevill Holt Hill/ Nutbush.

This bench was removed last year as it was deemed unsafe.

Stephen Sanderson has kindly replaced it with a sturdy old hard wood bench which is in reasonable repair.

Tree Warden

It was noted that Jamie Markee has agreed to take on the role as 'MPC Tree Warden'

24APM3. Annual Budget Statement 2023-24

The Annual Statement was received and agreed. It was noted that current reserves are approximately 75% of the annual precept.

24APM4. Questions to the Chair

None made on at the meeting.

24APM5. Public Question Time

No matters raised at the meeting

Meeting closed.

DRAFT