

Cosgrove Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Parish: 15 May 2024

1. Councillor Mark Draddy (MD) opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. David Smith unable to attend due to family reasons. Parish Clerk, Jenny Evans (JE) will run the meeting.
2. Apologies received from Mr and Mrs D Smith, Mr Proctor, Mr and Mrs T McCarthy White, Mr and Mrs M Phillips and Ward Cllr W Barter.
3. The Minutes of the Meeting on 17 May 2023 were agreed without amendment.
4. Cllr Paul Roberts (PR) read the Parish Council Annual Report on behalf of D Smith, Chairman (attached to these Minutes at Appendix A). No questions.
5. JE delivered the Parish Council Annual Financial Report (attached to these Minutes at Appendix B). No questions.
6. Ward Councillor Ian McCord delivered key points from his Annual Report (attached to these Minutes at Appendix C). Key points were:
 - WNC Finances: reckon they will get to balance (= + or - £1m); biggest concerns are expenditure on care - adult and children. Children's care is £30m overspent from a budget of £180m. Potholes need sorting out but first you need to fix care - these departments burn money.
 - WNC planning - the department itself is a problem placed 316 out of 328 among planning authorities for response rate. Self-building is becoming more of an issue. Noted lack of enforcement by planning - example of road opening between A5 and A43.
 - National coverage of WNC and the previous council leader. Resigned following claims of domestic abuse (denied). This issue has been a massive distraction in the past few weeks. Adam Brown will be installed as the new council leader.
 - Extended thanks to JE and the PC and Furtho Development Objection Group (FDOG) for all they have done as it makes the job of a Ward Councillor easier.
7. Cllr McCord presented the Portrait of HM The King. It was received on behalf of the Village Hall by Mrs Ruth Stokes.
8. During the Open Forum the following matters were raised:
 - Any news on the canal side bench that was taken away? Answer: It will be replaced by a donated bench. Currently being built and hopefully in place before the end of this year.
 - There seem to be a lot of trees 'hacked' down in Lock Lane? Very unsightly. Answer: Probably needs further investigation.
 - When will the development just before the bridge be started? Concerns about the impact on the road surface and parking. Answer: No idea. The board says property has been sold. Planning permission granted some time ago and PC keeping an eye on it. PC hopes the developer will have a delivery plan agreed (and enforced) by WNC.
 - Any update from the car which has been dumped in the trees by Northampton Road? Answer: IM reported it but council and police both disagree it is their responsibility. IM will follow up.
 - How can the PC put pressure on people to maintain their hedges near the road - hedges all overgrown compared to other villages? Answer: Everyone can report it online via Fix My Street but the reply is usually it is the responsibility of the homeowners. Potentially the PC can also go to highways to ask them to act.
 - Could the PC find out who owns the land and PC take it up with the landowners? Answer: Question to be added to the Agenda for the June PC meeting.
 - 20 mile an hour speed limits in other villages. Why can't we have that here? Concerns that people do not keep to the limit. Compared to other villages where there are advisory notices, Cosgrove doesn't even have a sign. In the centre of Cosgrove, it is 30 miles per hour. Answer: IM has tried to establish the criteria for which villages get which signage. And is following up. Some signage will cost more money and the PC might have to contribute. Highways Liaison Officer is coming to the next PC meeting, either residents can come along or email JE. Email address supplied. To get the best

response possible from the Officer, residents encouraged to come forward with any questions to be put forward in advance.

- Concerns over hedges - did report to Fix My Street last year, including photos. Resident explained there had been some response. Answer: PC doesn't have any jurisdiction over overhanging hedges.
- Unused telegraph poles in the villages - what is happening. Answer: There is only one left - outside Sambrook Cottage. The owner of Sambrook Cottage is in weekly contact with Openreach's escalations team and hopes for a satisfactory conclusion soon.

9. Presentations by invited speaker and community groups: All speakers to be treated with respect.

Pete Winkelman: Acknowledged issues re Furtho Pit and shares residents' pain. PW came to Cosgrove in first instance for a training ground site first time around didn't move forward on it but is hopeful that if he comes back to it, the Parish will be more receptive. Every chance in the future, PW may well sell his land in Cosgrove if a suitable future purpose cannot be found. PW asked the meeting if anyone has good ideas for using the land to tell him via JE. Reiterated he wants to be neighbourly, and comments again he may come back to the training ground idea.

Questions to PW: Has PW developed a relationship with Gordon Miller (owner of Cosgrove Hall) as the state of the Hall was a big loss to the village? Answer: Some contact with Gordon Miller and Richard Steele (Cosgrove Park) but not aware of any plans they might have. PW had looked at the possibility of putting in a road and bridge to Cosgrove Park but to offset the cost there would need to be a large housing development which he felt would not be acceptable to residents.

Why can't Cosgrove Park put in a road from Castlethorpe? Answer: PW aware RS had worked hard on options for Cosgrove Park access. PW reiterated he had no plans and would talk to the Parish first.

Does PW have any connections with the Buckingham Canal Society? Answer PW said he had a soft spot for the BCS owing to their can-do attitude. Information was given by a member of the public about perceived damage to adjacent fields.

PW closing remarks: he would sell the site if he was not going to do anything with it, but he would come back to talk to the Parish first. PW stated he wanted feedback and asked residents to come to him with ideas. PW was a keen advocate for a vibrant community, and this was one of the things that had attracted him to Cosgrove. He will stay in touch with the Parish Council.

Peter Webb and Simon Norris, Old Mail: Standing in for the Cosgrove editors (Trevor and Liz McCarthy-White). Prime function to provide a village newsletter free of charge. There are in excess of 1500 copies delivered in Cosgrove, Potterspury and Yardley Gobion by 63 volunteers. OM has been in publication over 40 years and 30 local organisations regularly contribute. 7 volunteers are involved in production plus a treasurer. Expenditure predominantly print costs, income comes from advertising. The OM has been running at a loss and is using reserves to cover the deficit. Post Covid appeal brought in funds to supplement the finances and donations enable the OM to break even. Parish Councils from the three villages help with contributions. The OM would welcome donations from the organisations who fill the pages. Advertising income has dropped following the loss of a long-standing advertising manager - anyone interested should get in touch. There are no plans to stop the printed version of the OM. There is now a Facebook page and there are plans for a website, which is still in development. No questions.

Ruth Stokes- Parochial Church Council

The purpose of the Church Council is to keep the 11th century church open which costs £6000 per annum. A further sum goes to pay the parish share - pays for the priest, diocese, bishops and attendants. There are a variety of fund-raising activities that contribute to building up the funds: for example, monthly teas in the garden, the Lent Lunch. There is an annual gift appeal supported by the PCC. All the fundraising goes towards keeping the church open daily. Thank you to everyone for their contributions and support. Cosgrove has links to other parishes in Clely benefice and share the priest. The Church is available for christenings, marriages and funerals and all are welcome to attend the regular services held in Cosgrove – details in the OM. There is a food bank collection point, and funds are also raised for, among others, Willen Hospice and the local Air Ambulance.

Joy Shirley – Womens' Institute

The WI is very different to how it once was. There are monthly meetings with a speaker on specialist subjects and tea and cake at all meetings. The WI have walking groups and visit local tourist attractions followed by tea and cake. On 4 June there will be a fashion show demonstrating a capsule wardrobe. All are welcome to come along and to join the WI – the only condition is you must be a woman!

Furtho Development Objection Group (FDOG) Andy Bush (AB) and Wayne Evans (WE)

Simply the wrong development in the wrong place - trick was missed when the local plan was published and for Frampton's it's just a get rich quick scheme but for residents it is a huge issue. Developers are amending the application and West Northants Council is still considering it. The work FDOG has done has significantly impacted the project. Developers admit flooding will be likely. In response to the hydrology report they have produced a scheme to build a massive dam to mitigate the risk. Environment agency have expressed concerns about what would happen if this dam were to fail. The definition of the habit has also put the application on hold: FDOG consultant identified part of the site as postindustrial open mosaic which is a rare habitat. Developers are now required to do a seasonal survey over 4 seasons and submit conclusions. This started in July 2023. The Wildlife Trust objected the habitat attracts rare plants. This has been noted and responded to by WNC. In the Local Plan, AL5, the original policy, stated it needed to be an employment zone, but modern logistics are not based on high employment number models and in the future there will be more automation and fewer jobs. FDOG thinks the project is unviable if the required roundabout is built. The other objection is based on traffic and congestion. Highways do not have an issue if congestion is not severe and, despite everyone's lived experience, the A5 and A508 adjacent to the proposed site are not considered to be severely affected by the proposed development. FDOG has a heritage report that shows serious errors in the developer's report and is considering what to do with this. There are strong flooding objections - this area floods on regular basis and there have been flood warnings in place 17 times since October 2023.

There is a new draft Local Plan out for consultation and the Parish Council and residents need to comment on it as it outlines plans for the area until 2040. The proposed development at Furtho will be covered by policy EC4. There are several omissions when compared to AL5 and these omissions make it feel like the WNC are on the side of the developers. Guidance and a short cut with relevant links to the planning document are available on the Stop3000Trucks website. Deadline for comments 2nd June.

What has FDOG been doing? Raised 3000 objections - a good campaign and number of objections was unexpected by WNC; raised £16,500 (some from local parish councils but the majority from private donations); has a range of merchandise to advertise the campaign (and bring in funds); radio and newspapers interviews; lobbied political and local council figures.

What's next: Continue fighting, updating residents and lobbying MP's; forthcoming events (in Stony Stratford, Old Stratford and Castlethorpe); anticipate decision by the EA may come in time for the application to go to the strategic planning committee for decision in September or October. If it ends up at appeal, continuing the fight will be costly, so continued fundraising is important.

What can residents do? Keep on putting in objections; comment on the local plan before the June deadline. No questions.

IM gave a short update on the Local Plan highlighting the potential housing designated for Deanshanger ward is now planned for Northampton – this is a result of comments made by members of the public during the consultation. It is noted under the Daventry warehouse site there is a floor space limit, so why is this not applicable in Cosgrove?

PW congratulated the community for the sustained effort they are making and commented to make a change you must do the kind of work FDOG are doing behind the scenes - that's the way to impact decisions. PW felt the straightening of the Dogsmouth Brook proposed by the developers will change it from looking like a dog's mouth. This has always been a protected characteristic of sorts and other planning applications have had to avoid it.

10. A Vote of Thanks was given to all delivering presentations and those attending. The Meeting ended at 21.11.