ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

**Cubbington Parish Council**

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held at 8:30pm, 18th May 2023

the meeting ANNUAL PARISH MEETING was held at Cliff Cleaver Pavilion

Present:

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| Councillor Ian Hodges (Chairman) | Councillor Paul Watkins |
| Councillor Daniel Meggitt | Councillor Esther McCarthy |
| Councillor David Saul (Vice Chairman) | Councillor Pete Smith |
| Councillor Lorraine Palmer | Councillor Gary Willoughby |
| Councillor Ron Gillett |  |

Warwick District Councillors: Councillor Alan Boad, Councillor Daniel Russell

Warwickshire County Council: Councillor Sarah Boad

Members of the public: 2

1. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 26th May 2022 were received and discussed.

RESOLVED THAT: the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 26th May 2022 were approved.

**2. CHAIRMANS REPORT**

Welcome to the Annual Parish Meeting for 2023. This is the first for some of our Parish Councillors and after the May elections, are now all elected members. At our Annual Parish Council Meeting we have adopted the General Power of Competence.

This past year has been a consolidation, where we have strived to ensure that the work of previous years has been established and well received by our parishioners.

Recreational Facilities

The Recreation Ground continues to be maintained by our Maintenance Officer and Mowing Contractor. The 300+ trees planted over the past 2 years are starting to grow and blossom, adding colour, shade and interest. The Orchard trees are starting to get established and it is hoped will provide fruit to harvest soon. These include plum, apple, cherry, pear, apricot and walnut.

We also have an Incredible Edible area in the Sensory Garden which is run by a parishioner. This provides an area of raised beds for children to learn how to grow vegetables.

The Recreational Ground is a huge asset to be enjoyed by all.

Working with volunteer groups the other Parish Assets including the bus shelters have been tidied and maintained.

The Clerk is working with another local organisation who offer volunteer days, these will be beneficial in updating our facilities.

Village Hall

The Village Hall still remains a difficult situation albeit that a new Village Hall Trust Committee has been established in accordance with the Trust Deed. Sadly, 12 months on and despite failed promises the new Committee are still unable to obtain the funds held at the HSBC, putting the Village Hall at significant risk.

Despite the reformed Committee providing the correct banking documentation these funds are still being held by signatories who are not members of the Committee this is as a result of legal action taken out against the Parish Council in February 2022.

Obviously, the old, dissolved Committee has no right to these funds and are refusing to update the mandate. These funds are for the running of the Village Hall and no other purpose. The Village Hall continued without any disruption to hirers and has been successfully run for over 14 months by the Interim Village Hall Manager and the Parish Council. There is, therefore, no reason that these funds are not released. An update from the bank stated that a new cheque book had been obtained, so any used cheques will be fraudulent.

Apart from the time and expense incurred by the Parish Council and Chairman of the Council in trying to rectify the situation, this has now become a serious matter as it is stopping the annual accounts for the Charity being produced for the year 2022, as the bank account cannot be verified. Signed confirmation has to be provided to the Auditors for Money Laundering purposes, and these cannot be completed.

The Village Hall Trust Committee have notified the Charity commission of the situation. On their advice a “serious incident” has been registered. Information shared includes the names of those who are withholding the bank account unreasonably. Late submission of accounts carries a fine, this fine will be borne by those withholding the account and not the Committee nor the Sole Trustee, the Parish Council.

A great deal of patient has been displayed whilst dealing with this matter in order to save public funds on litigation. The Committee has now instructed a solicitor to take legal action against these individuals, as all previous solicitor letters have been ignored.

Despite the difficult and at times stressful hurdles, it is clear that the actions taken in February 2022 were correct. The Village Hall is running successfully and remains viable. A significant achievement by all those involved.

On a more positive note, the Village Hall is attracting more hirers which has enabled the Committee to retain the old hire rates. This increase in use allows the Committee to provide extra facilities and both inside and out have been decorated, it now has full CCTV and also internet access available to all hirers.

This increase in hirers does not detract from the basic problem that the hall is old and not energy efficient. A report was requested on the insulation and energy requirements of the hall, and it proved that we must take steps to make it more energy efficient as it will soon become unviable.

After taking a postal consultation of all residents and the positive feedback a working party was set up to look to the future. It was decided that we should look at the feasibility of having a new hall with better energy efficiency and also be multi-function that will be more suitable to our resident’s needs. Work has gone well on this project, and we will soon be in a position to open consultations with the parishioners to gain their feedback.

Our thanks go to the team involved in spending a great deal of time and energy on this project namely Cllr Watkins, Willoughby, Hodges and the Council Clerk.

Thanks to the tenacity of the Village Hall Trust Committee’s Chairman, the Village Hall is now on the correct banding for water rates billing. This returns a significant monthly saving and hard-fought compensation has been received.

Water Harvesting System

Our thanks go to the volunteers who meticulously watered our new stock of trees and hedges over the past dry summer, the water harvesting system enabled this team to save and nurture over 96% of the plants which are now nicely established. A big thank you to the volunteers.

Pavilion Update

Work continued on improvements to the Pavilion. A grant was obtained from WDC to remove the central wall from the building which has opened the space up and it now provides a much better space for hirers.

The large water heater has been removed and a new smaller unit installed. This heats the water for the building apart from the showers. This will save money.

Work to reconfigure the disabled toilet has upgraded the room and created a useful storage area.

Our thanks to Cllr Daniel Meggitt for overseeing this work.

NHP

Cllrs Watkins and Willoughby have continued the work on the neighbourhood plan, which is now ready for the consultation stage, this has begun and will continue over the next few months.

Thanks to all Parish Councillors for the work they have done for the parishioners, and we look forward to the next year when we can move forward.

We had two vacancies after the May election, and we have already received applications to fill the vacancies via co-option. We look forward to having a full team and continuing our work for the parishioners of Cubbington.

1. **REPORTS FROM THE COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS**

Councillor Boad has been made Mayor today.

**4. REPORTS FROM PARISH CHARITIES**

Cubbington Freeholders

The Trustees of the Cubbington Freeholders charity are Robert Inman, Jerry Lewitt, David Morris and Norman Pratt (who is also the Clerk to the Trustees). In March this year we very sadly lost David Morris as a long-standing Trustee and Carole O’Donnell was subsequently appointed as a Trustee as David’s successor.

The Trust are the owners of the former quarry situated off Leicester Lane which was awarded to them through Commissioners who were appointed to administer the Inclosure Award for the Parish of Cubbington dated 12th February 1768. The objectives of the charity are stated as: *“Common stone quarry to be used for the digging and getting of stone for freeholders and landowners of the parish; income for public purposes for the benefit of the parish of Cubbington”*. This was subsequently amended and currently the quarry area is occupied by Warwickshire County Council for the storage of highways material, and this provides the charity’s sole income.

From the income received the Trust provides funds for the good and benefit of the community and community-based organisations within the Parish of Cubbington. The charity’s financial year ends on 31st December and since the last report made in May 2022 the following grants have been made:

Cubbington Albion Football Club: purchase of equipment £2000

Cubbington CE Primary School: purchase reading books £1500

Cubbington Jigsaw Club: purchase of jigsaws £ 375

Cubbington Parish Council: donation towards alterations to the

Community Pavilion, the camel appearing in the village Christmas

event and a donation towards the cost of the proposed pedestrian

crossing in Rugby Road £2350

Cubbington Players: donation towards the cost of new sound equipment £2000

The lease of the site to Warwickshire County Council expired in March 2021 and discussions are continuing with them regarding their future use of the area. This has become a very protracted process and has involved Norman in lengthy and complicated work which is very considerably more than what would normally be expected. I would like to record my sincere thanks to Norman, in his role as a Trustee and Clerk to the Trustees, for all the work that he has carried out over the past twelve months and into the current year. My thanks must also go to Jerry for his invaluable support for the Charity and to Carole for volunteering to join us.

Thanks, must also be recorded for the many years of service given by David as a Trustee and we will miss his local knowledge as a lifelong resident of Cubbington.

Thomas Southern Charity

The Thomas Sotherne Charity was founded on a charitable fund set up in the seventeenth century through the Will of Thomas Sotherne, who lived in Stareton, to help elderly residents of Cubbington by making small gifts towards the cost of living.

The Trustees, who were appointed by Cubbington Parish Council in May 2022 for a three-year term of office, were David Morris, Mrs Carole O’Donnell and Norman Pratt (Chairman). Very sadly David Morris died on 2nd March this year and the Trustees would like to pay tribute to him for his long and dedicated service over very many years as a Trustee.

Income is derived from dividends from units invested in the COIF Charity Investment Funds which are managed by CCLA Investment Management Ltd. When sufficient funds are available, usually every two years, small gifts towards the cost of living are given to local residents who receive a state pension and were born and have lived in the Parish of Cubbington all their lives. The charity has available only a very limited amount of funding and donations are always welcome to help individuals within the local community.

It was not possible to make gifts in December 2022, but sufficient funds were available by April this year when the Trustees were pleased to make gifts of £30 to fifteen local residents.

**5. Cubbington Village Hall Trust Committee**

The Village Hall continues to be run efficiently. The Village Hall Trust Committee has reformed under the stipulations laid out in the Trust Deed. I am the Chairman of the Village Hall Trust Committee.

At the last meeting (17th April) the Interim Village Hall Manager provided the following update, and many of these have since been delivered:

1. Fixfire booked in on 28 April

2. Updated Fire Evacuation Plan

3. Bluetooth for the stereo and new mics now purchased & installed

4. Flower Club doing decorations for the Coronation event.

5. Girl Guides made some decorations too.

6. Panto booked for Christmas again, Little Red Riding Hood.

7. New hire called Trainmaster using the Village Hall next week to see how it goes.

8. Losing extend exercise class on Thursday morning as instructor changing jobs.

9. New hire focusing on Diabetes health using the Village Hall and the Pavilion.

10. Party bookings doing well, can do better though, but this is usually because there’s already a booking and I can’t squeeze them in which is good news but only serves to flag the limitations of the existing VH on numbers of hirers and income.

11. Coronation plans going well, massive bouncy castle, food and drink, face painting etc.

12. Paired back Funday this year, keep it simple as most people who organise it will have done everything for the Coronation event.

13. OAP Association using the Village Hall a lot more, skittles and seated exercise classes new to the hall.

14. We now have WiFi installed.

15. Reviewing electricity costs, currently with E-on to see when tariff finishes and what it might be next.

16. Improvements to the hot water system in hand to improve control and reduce cost.

Utilities

Electricity account

As reported at the May 2022 APM meeting the electricity account debt has been cleared and is now up to date. The direct debit is reviewed regularly to ensure the account remains on track.

Waterplus Account

Significant work carried out with Waterplus to get the Village Hall on the correct level of billing with a reduction of over £500 per annum. Overpayment to be recouped or credited. This is being monitored to ensure this remains correct.

Bank Account

The New VHTC are still unable to obtain control of the Village Hall bank account with HSBC. The Committee has reported the issue to the Charity Commission and the Village Hall Insurance legal services have begun legal action to obtain the account and protect the funds from mis-use.

The 2021 accounts have been produced and externally audited.

The 2022 accounts are due to be submitted to the Charity Commission but completion is not possible due to not being able to confirm transactions from the HSBC account.

In summary, the VH Manager and her team on behalf of the VHTC and the Parish Council have returned the VH to a stable and positive financial position and are providing a much improved venue within the limitations of the existing VH and its current running costs. They are to be congratulated for their energy, effort and professionalism in making the VH a success.

**6. MATTERS RAISED FROM THE FLOOR OF THE MEETING**

The OAP Association were holding their annual Plant Sale at the Village Hall on Saturday 27th May. All welcome.

Meeting closed at 9pm