



Kemble & Ewen Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Friday 1 May 2015 at 7.30pm in Kemble Village Hall

Present:

Roger Pettit – Chairman of the Parish Council
Shaun Parsons – County Councillor, Gloucestershire County Council
Nick Spindler – Parish Clerk
22 members of public, including all but one Parish Councillor

[The AGM for the Village Hall committee was held until approx. 7.45pm. This is the last AGM at which Andrew Lennard will be the Chair.]

The Chairman welcomed everyone to this Annual Parish Meeting, and in particular to guest speaker SP with the election imminent.

Apologies were noted from "Mac", Alan McQuillin. Tony Berry – the new District Councillor, Brian and Pat Ayres, and Carol Dougill,

1. The minutes of the meeting held on Friday 16 May 2014 were approved and signed as a true record.

2. Report on any matters arising from the previous minutes

The Chairman said that priorities such the Top Farm development, Community Gardens, railway parking, potholes and similar matters would all to be covered during the meeting.

3. Chairman's address

Roger Pettit – Chairman, Kemble and Ewen Parish Council

Hot off the press, we received the final consent for the Top Farm Development this morning. Following our last consultation, we raised some additional points that we then pursued with Bovis and subsequently at the CDC planning committee meeting. Pretty well all of these were agreed and are contained within the consent. In particular, some variety in wall and roof finishes, to include some rendering and some cut stone, some slate and rustic red tile roof finishes; a level of street lighting which controls light pollution; various landscaping features to soften the edges of the development; additional visitors' parking and bollards at the end of the footpath which terminates opposite the end of Old Vicarage Lane to prevent vehicles leaving the development via OVH and Church Road. The one outstanding aspect now is the closure of Old Vicarage Lane to drivers who might be tempted to park on the farm track. The Farm Manager is agreeable to the installation of a locked gateway so we just need formal agreement from the landowners for this to be installed.

Overall I think a decent outcome in which residents' concerns have been generally recognised. It is 'early days' yet on the airport development proposals. The initial reactions of the planning authorities is: - for Wiltshire DC, that their Local Plan has been approved and their housing targets met without this; and for Cotswold DC, that it is too late for inclusion in their consultation process. We shall see what happens with this. My suspicion is that it will have some appeal as a partial alternative to the large development proposed at Chesterton, the possibility being that, over time, we might finish up with both.

First Great Western has submitted a proposal for a new car park adjacent to the road leading down to the Tavern with 333 spaces. After what seems like an age of effort to resolve our parking problems this is good news. We have commented on screening of the facility, lighting levels, the addition of a footpath from the main road, the junction with the main road and the requirement to retain the existing car park. Once this is all settled we shall also seek to introduce parking controls within the village, but this is also likely to be a lengthy process.

On the subject of the railway, we have been pleased to use the communication channels opened up as a result of the track-redoubling project to prompt some attention to our station buildings. Unfortunately, these days this is a multi-company responsibility. You may have noticed that FGW have been replacing window frames, making stonework repairs and redecorating to good effect. We are also nagging Network Rail about the footbridge and The Railway Heritage Trust about restoring the water tower. I am hopeful that by the time of this meeting next year we shall have seen significant progress on both.

The Cotswold District Local Plan first draft initial consultation has been completed. Initially we were asked to identify locations for 30 new houses in addition to the 50 at Top Farm. Three potential sites were to be considered, Clayfurlong, West Lane, and the land off Station Road, known as the Community Gardens. Following consultation our response was that only 12 new houses should be included and subject to survey, and that these might be accommodated alongside the Community Gardens. The draft Local Plan accepts this reduction in numbers and we await further consideration on this. Meanwhile we have sought designation of the Community Gardens, the playing field and the green on West Lane as Green Spaces, which would prevent future development. Again, these proposals have been included in the Local Plan. The second stage of consultation will be carried out later this year.

On the subject of Plans, we would like to produce a Neighbourhood Plan. This is, in effect, a Parish version of the District Council's Local Plan. It is a labour intensive process and, while sponsored by the Parish Council, should be primarily a statement of residents' wishes and aspirations. We therefore seek volunteers to participate in this process so please do speak up if you would like to be involved. As we all know, road maintenance is not a strong point here in Gloucestershire. In an effort to seize the initiative I took the Highways Manager on a tour of our villages a few weeks ago to agree priorities on a local plan of action. We are due to meet again next week when I hope we can agree a maintenance programme for the year. They started well with an expensive road closure application for the Smerrill Road. The road was duly closed last week but - guess what? - the repair team failed to turn up! We can only hope that this isn't a signal for the rest of the year.

We congratulate and were pleased to support the defibrillator team who have now completed their project with the installation of the third defib at The Tavern. We have also awarded community grants to Little Fishes, Kemble and District Playgroup and Open the Book. We wish them all continuing success.

Finally, on matters of personnel we are pleased to welcome new Councillor, Carol Dougill, who is also the new Head at Kemble School, and also newly nominated Nicky Travlos who is due to start after the election. Unfortunately, however, our Parish Clerk, Nick Spindler is standing down. We shall miss his professionalism and support and are very grateful for his service over the last 3 1/2 years. Also, Duncan Cooper our village orderly has moved on following a promotion in his job, so thanks also to Duncan.

With the forthcoming election John Birch our District Councillor of the last 12 years is also standing down. John has always kept in close contact with us and has been helpful and supportive throughout. We thank him and wish him well for the future.

Thanks also to all those who organise and run the numerous clubs and organisations in the village, to Pat Ayres for her numerous contributions to this and for the weekly 'newshound' feature in the Standard, to Brian Ayres for tending the war graves, the various editors of the Parish Magazine, to Steve Marsh who runs the village website and of course, to fellow councillors for their hard work over the year.

4. Residents' comments and questions

a. A question was asked about "S106 benefits" arising from the Top Farm Development. RP replied that this had evaporated to a large extent through the appeal stage, as our submissions were not approved as part of that process. The CDC sought contributions towards a mobile library and various road works, so some of our fairly extensive list made it through. David Ball commented that with the 'affordable housing' element being 50% of the development – and unusually high proportion – this was a benefit to the community. RP added that anything the village really wanted they could usually get, the defibrillators being an example.

b. Re road resurfacing, when will we know what will be done? RP said he has an imminent meeting with the Highways Manager, Richard Gray. Repairs to Windmill Road have already been signposted for the end of May. It was asked if the roads will close – RP replied that it would be a tow-away zone, not a closure.

c. Who owns the road towards The Tavern from the A429? RP explained it is owned by Network Rail and is therefore not a public highway.

d. Will they fix the flooding and potholes on that road? RP said that a mini roundabout was part of the plan for access to the new car park. We are hoping most of the traffic will approach from the main road, and I can imagine it will all be resurfaced.

5. Guest speaker

Shaun Parsons, County Councillor, Gloucestershire County Council

Mr Parsons said he intended to avoid anything political, and recognised that many voters were already fed up with the election! So, just a few points: -

I was delighted that you were the first Council to benefit from my 'Active Together' contribution.

To help with your roads, I've allocated £5k towards Windmill Road, which Richard Gray will discuss with the Council. I'm wary of too much expenditure when the Top Farm building site will take its toll. The A433 and A429 are planned for resurfacing, as there are still scars from the mains drainage of over 30 years ago.

Looking a bit further out, I'm quite nervous about the doubling of trains in 2017, as this may generate extra traffic for you – many commuters may prefer Kemble to Swindon and the wider area as their starting point. I've submitted a paper on this to Shire Hall, and I'm concerned about the fit with the overall road network. I'd like to get a roundabout at the A433/429 junction, perhaps with some S106 monies, and also at the junction neat the Thames Head. The potential for further "rat running" through Ewen and South Cerney needs thinking about now too.

A resident asked about larger patching of potholes, and the relative cost over ten years of proper repairs versus patching. SP responded that the Highways team were using newer processes, with different mixtures for hot and dry weather. There were significant problems with the switchover to the Amey contract, and they took some time to settle in. The Highways people had been too optimistic, but Richard Gray is now on top of the job. Larger patching is better and the teams are encouraged to fill nearby holes, not just those 'white lined' for attention. 'Rutting' can be lethal for bicycles and motorbikes; larger vehicles often wear away the carriageway edges.

RP thanked SP.

6. Finance - a summary of the past 12 months

Residents were reminded that they can inspect the PC's books by arrangement with the Clerk, and that an unaudited summary is in the Annual Report distributed throughout the Parish and provided tonight. A resident asked about VAT being reclaimed. The Clerk confirmed that it can be, and that this work was in hand for a period of around eighteen months, which will show in next year's accounts. RP reminded everyone that the Precept had remained unchanged.

7. AOB

A resident expressed concern about two large oak trees and the possible effect on the foundations of her property in The Oaks. She thought when she had moved in about 20 years ago that the trees would be maintained. As a mature oak can reach 80 feet, it seemed a daft choice, she added.

RP replied that the trees along the A429 were planted by the Council about twenty years ago as part of deliberate programme. There were concerns on the west side about Ash trees which had self-sown and were interfering with a dry stone wall. The owner there substantiated a case for action, and they were sited on Highways Department land. Highways cut them down, and we tidied up the banks and also had the PC's own trees inspected. Three were defective and were removed for safety reasons. We will replant up to the railway bridge in due course, with slow growing trees. In the resident's case she should arrange a survey if she is concerned. The Council may be able to help identify a suitable professional to give an opinion.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm.