

**MINUTES OF COPYTHORNE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON  
TUESDAY 14<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2017 AT 7.30 P.M. IN THE PARISH HALL (Main Hall)**

**Chaired By:** Parish Council Chair Cllr Joseph Reilly

**In Attendance:** District Councillors Diane Andrews; Derek Tipp and 49 members of the Copythorne Electorate.

**Locum Clerk to the Council:** Mrs Susan Brayley

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from County Cllrs Edward Heron and Keith Mans and District Cllr Les Puttock

**2. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2015**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2016 were signed by the Chairman.

**3. Parish Council Report**

Cllr Joseph Reilly, Chairman of the Parish Council gave the following report: -

- Thanked the former Chairman, Cllr John Goodwin for his contribution to the Council as Chairman and his continued contribution to the Parish.
- Thanked Michael Mortimer and Margaret Weston for their work as former Clerks to the Council and welcomed the Locum Clerk, Susan Brayley
- Thanked the Parish Lengthsman for all his work in the Parish and advised the Lengthsman contract had been extended until 2018.
- Advised that after many years of resident's requests for a children's playground and thanks to the enthusiastic support of the Parish Hall Committee in agreeing to allocate Parish Hall land for the playground this was all ready to go ahead. Observing that special thanks must go to the Friends of Copythorne Playground group who were dedicated to raising the funding for the project, Cllr Reilly also thanked the County and District Cllrs who had donated funds from their community grants allocation to the project and a special thank you to Paultons Park for their very generous donation of £10,000.
- Thanked the New Forest Ramblers for the provision of two very welcome benches located on the football pitch touchline
- Reported that the Parish Council precept for the year had been set at a total of £17,060 for the year and represented in real terms approximately £1.68 per household of the total Council Tax bill which included County and District costs.
- Reported that three Cllrs attended the Public Enquiry into land at Bartley Forest Farm that resulted in the NFNPA being granted an enforcement order against the owners. This was now waiting on the Inspectorate decision.
- Also, that following residents raising concerns on the use of land at Romsey Road, the NFNPA had again served an enforcement order against the landowner, which was also being appealed. Cllr Reilly advised attendees that concerns should be raised directly with the Inspectorate.
- Finally, Cllr Reilly expressed his thanks to the Friends of Copythorne for raising the funding to provide the community with a second defibrillator which would be installed at the Parish Hall. The first being situated at Bartley Post Office.

#### **4. County Councillors Reports:**

In Cllr Mans absence, Cllr Reilly read out the following report on his behalf: -

The last year has seen further central government cuts to local councils. The County Council has done its best to ensure that back office facilities continue to bear the brunt of this cash reduction. It is encouraging to observe that all libraries and waste disposal sites have nevertheless been kept open and that the County has retained its School improvement programme. The County has also filled the gap from the reduction in funding from the Environment Agency for flood protection.

More locally Cllr Mans had spent all the £32,000 in his allocated devolved budget, grants given included support for Parish Council defibrillators, energy saving projects, playground repairs and finally sports and arts groups.

#### **5. District Councillors reports:**

Councillor Diane Andrews advised she was Chair of the Planning and Development Control Committee and identified the process was to hear representations which were then debated prior to the vote to grant or deny the application. Cllr Andrews also explained that she had become a District Cllr as she was a champion of “old school politeness” and had wanted to make a difference by serving the community.

Cllr Andrews then reported that figures provided by the NFDC recorded that there were currently 26 families and 17 individuals with local connections to Copythorne parish on the list for affordable homes for rent in the area.

Councillors Derek Tipp reported that the NFDC faced a £1.6m reduction in its Central Government Grant which represented 19% of its funding, this meant a district council increase of 3.2% in Council Tax, representing a £5 increase on a band D property. Finally advised that the £18.3m budget represented a drop of 21% since 2010, much of which had been achieved via efficiency savings and reductions in the Senior Management Team.

#### **6. Neighbourhood Policing:**

PCSO Richard Williams advised that his area produced a monthly beat report, held regular beat surgeries, the Copythorne one being at Bartley Post Office and that the beat officers email and mobile contact numbers would be made available via the Parish Council website. The neighbourhood team were receiving good reports from the public and encouraged attendees to report anything as the team were always interested and could add to information already received.

Finally, PCSO advised he was actively trying to reactivate the Copythorne Community Speedwatch and that the local neighbourhood watch working well.

A member of the public queried why the preferred contact was via a mobile number? PCSO Williams explained that 999 was emergency only and that the 101-number information was slow to reach the team, whereas if the team were on watch then a call to the mobile would be picked up immediately.

#### **7. Affordable Housing:**

Parish Cllr Simon Lucas gave a presentation on the status of the Affordable Housing proposals for the Copythorne area being put forward by the Parish Council, NFDC and the HARA organisation. This was followed by a question and answer session as follows: -

- *Please note use of this bullet point indicates a question raised by an attending member of the electorate.*

- Concern that the proposal of one property for sale at open market rate was contrary to original agreement
- How do we know that local connections will rate higher on Housing Association scoring system and what does “local” mean – living in or outside the area.

Cllr Andrews advised that the allocation was done by the NFDC using their local connection allocation system and had already been successfully used at Minstead.

- Concern was raised that in a previous open meeting the NFDC representative had indicated local connection could not be guaranteed as other circumstances could alter this priority.

Cllr Andrews advised this applied to Social Housing waiting lists not Housing Association lists and that the Parish Council would want to have firm agreements on terms and conditions ahead of the building programme.

- It was observed that the NFDC lettings policy need to be seen and understood by all.
- Questions were raised as to the basis of the Housing Association undertaking and could the electorate be reassured that these properties would not be removed from the rental market via “the right to buy”. Or be taken via an NFDC or similar exchange agreement

Cllr Reilly advised this would be in the formal agreement with the Housing Association and again local connections were key, so no exchange basis.

- A query was raised as to the process of circumstance change, if family in property and circumstances improved was there a review method that would compel the property to be given up to others.

Cllr Lucas replied this was a vexatious issue nationwide, however reassessment could take place after five years.

- What would happen if there were not enough local people to fill the properties?

Cllr Lucas advised in theory would be filled from NFDC allocation list, but not an issue in Copythorne where demand was greater than availability.

- It was pointed out the subject had been under discussion since 2012 and was no further forward and that information was slow to be released and not timely. Was regularly not on website early enough and the residents were getting contradictory information. Points raised with the HARAH representative were not acted on nor were several simple errors, e.g. flooding: boundary issues and the sudden adding of land not previously put forward. Questioned who was leading the process.

Cllr Lucas advised that all the points raised would have to be included in the revised schedule and that the additional land had been removed but pointed out that the landowner clearly wanted to develop that site.

- Concerns that inaccuracies raised had not been acted on by the Working Party, and that the proposed open market property was being made available at public expense and could not be permitted to remain empty. Was also concerned that was all happening too fast, non-recognition of flooding issues at Bartley, nor was the impact on local infrastructure such as schools being investigated.

Cllr Lucas advised that school placement process was based on several factors and if there were more eligible children in the catchment area these would take priority.

- Concerns were also raised concerning lack of public transport, Drs Surgeries and shops, etc.

Cllr Lucas pointed out there were only 15 units planned.

- It was stated that the discussions had been going on a long time and that the majority of the Parishioners did not want this to go ahead and when were they going to be taken notice of and when were they going to be governed by a majority.
- A vote was suggested
- It was pointed out that those in attendance were not representative of all the residents views and that a ballot should be taken separately to get the real view.

Cllr Lucas advised that a previous consultation (not referendum) had given back a large majority of favourable feedback.

- Questions were raised as to the necessity for affordable housing in the area.
- It was advised that as both principle planning authorities (NFNPA & NFDC) were in the process of developing 20-year plans, it would be advisable to wait on their completion.
- It was stated that there were sufficient members of the electorate in attendance to demand a Parish Poll be conducted within 30days.

The Clerk advised that 30days was insufficient time to issue the papers and that would need to obtain advice from the Council advisory body, Hampshire Association of Local Councils as to the correct process. When the attendees stated they were unhappy with the use of HALC, the Clerk suggested that she contact the Elections and Governance Officer at the NFDC for advice as any poll would be conducted by the NFDC. This was agreed as acceptable. The Clerk to seek advice from NFDC concerning Parish Polls and then to publish this in detail on the website.

Cllr Lucas advised that advice had been received that day concerning potential new funding streams, but these were not yet understood and needed investigation.

- It was observed that a Parish Poll was not binding on the Council and believed it could only be on one question and requested Clerk clarify this with NFDC.
- It was stated that elected representatives should consider if they were making the wrong decision and that decision would force the electorate into demanding a poll.
- It was stated that not all electors were against the affordable housing proposal.
- It was questioned how the meeting was advertised and was advised via the statutory requirements of noticeboards and website.
- It was questioned why not individual email? And was advised not statutory requirement and was published on website.
- It was observed that safeguards needed to be put in place to stop the flow of misinformation.
- Assurance was requested that the Council would not fall back on the 2012 questionnaire as the wording was inaccurate and it was largely now discredited.

Cllr Lucas advised that this would be properly restated so that could deliver a straight "Yes" or "No" not a "Maybe".

## **Item 8 - Public Session. To Consider Any Matters Raised by The Electors Of The Civil Parish of Copythorne.**

- A concern was raised regarding the state of Oak trees in Winsor Road. The Chair to advise landowner details.
- A query was raised as to when a future meeting regarding the affordable housing issue would be arranged.

Cllr Lucas advised that providing more information was obtained on the new funding, would be included in April Meeting.

The Clerk advised this was dependant on the report being made available to the public via the website a week before the meeting.

- A query was raised as to the regularity of website updates and was answered that as a minimum, a week prior to a Council meeting, but that documents could be uploaded at any time.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.30

Chairman \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_