

Little Brook Ward Meeting

Held on Monday, 25th January 2021 at 7.30pm via Zoom

Present

Evenley Parish Council

Chairman Cathy Ellis
Cllr Jeff Peyton-Bruhl
Cllr Jean Morgan
Cllr Sue Ricketts
Mrs Cathy Knott (clerk)

Croughton Parish Council

Chairman Brian Tomlin
Cllr Trevor Davies
Cllr Rodger James
Mrs Ann Le Druillenec (clerk)

Aynho Parish Council

Cllr Jeremy James
Mr Chris Wilson (clerk)

Dr Philip Stevens

Councillor John Townsend, SNC

Councillor Rebecca Breese, NCC

Mr Danny Moody, chief executive, NCALC

Commander, Colonel John Hannah, Squadron Leader Jayne Robertson and Laura Haddy, community relations adviser, RAF Croughton

1. Welcome

Chairman Cathy Ellis welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending.

2. To receive apologies

Apologies were received from:

Evenley Parish Council

Cllr Charles Reader
Cllr Spencer Burnham

Croughton Parish Council

Cllr Mike Tadman
Cllr Simon Kerby
Cllr Chris Fox

Aynho Parish Council

Chairman Leslie Leighton
Cllr David Dean
Cllr Les Horley
Cllr Rachel Moroney
Cllr Stephen Brook
Cllr Liz Hadley
Cllr Jonathan Clinch
Cllr David Icke

3. To Approve the minutes of the Ward meeting virtually hosted by Croughton Parish Council on 27th July 2020

It was agreed to approve the minutes.

4. Matters arising

No matters arising.

5. To receive an update from Dr Philip Stevens on the local Covid-19 vaccination roll out and how plans are being put together

Dr Stevens advised that after a shaky start, the vaccination programme is progressing well at Brackley Community Hospital and is a real team effort of the primary care network covering patients at the two surgeries in Brackley and two in Towcester. The programme commenced by giving vaccinations to patients aged 90 and over and they are working their way down the age scale. Currently, they are vaccinating patients aged 76 and above alongside house patients, residents of nursing homes and care staff. Another 400 vaccines are due to be delivered this Thursday when they hope to vaccinate patients who have been socially isolating since March last year.

Patients are being invited to the hospital to receive the vaccination via text message or a telephone call if text is unsuitable. Very few patients have declined the offer to be vaccinated and these will be followed up to make sure they have an informed reason for doing so. There have been very few cases of 'no shows' but they have a good system in place when this does occur and to date, they haven't wasted any vaccinations.

The vaccinations could be rolled out faster if more were available; the Oxford vaccine (Astra Zeneca) has more flexibility as it can be moved. After mid-February, it is expected that distribution will become much smoother.

Cathy Ellis thanked Dr Stevens for the invaluable work he and his dedicated team are providing and for giving his time to bring us such an informative update.

6. To receive reports from the following:

- **RAF Croughton**

Laura Haddy introduced Squadron Leader Jayne Robertson who has served previously at RAF Croughton, briefly in 2009 and for a longer period between 2013 and 2017. Jayne has now taken the reigns back and is getting up to speed.

Colonel John Hannah provided a base update – due to Covid-19 restrictions, the planning application for the Radomes is complete but is currently on hold. The planning application for a new main gate is on hold until further notice. The Colonel apologised for the poor communication regarding the removal of foliage to the front of the base. This project was requested by the USVF with the process being undertaken via the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO – the lead Ministry of Defence agency for planning, acquiring land and delivering maintenance /construction contracts for US Visiting Forces in the UK) in order to bring RAF Croughton in line with the rest of the bases in the UK (mainly due to safety reasons as trees/foliage within two metres of the perimeter is a risk factor). A re-planting programme will be carried out to restock an equivalent area of mix broadleaf trees, by June 2025 which will really invigorate the environment.

RAF Croughton is one of the first bases in the UK to receive the vaccination and a programme is well underway for staff working on the base, using a tier system of administration. The same methodology has been applied as at Brackley Community Hospital in that there has been no wastage to date.

The Colonel feels that the change in US administration should not have a detrimental effect on the base and future projects are not under threat.

- **Councillor Rebecca Breese**

Vesting Day will take place on 1st April when North (NNC) and West Northamptonshire Councils (WNC) will be formed. The new leader for WNC will be Ian McCord and Anna Earnshaw will be the new chief executive.

This will be a fresh start for the county and a lot of work has already happened, making Northamptonshire one of the highest performing counties in England. Reserves are building again and the budget will be set on a stable foundation. Adult social care is locality based with hubs in all local areas with social workers now empowered to make decisions without going through a long-drawn-out process. This will transform people's lives and will save a lot of money in the process. All services will be more cost effective; a new children's service trust has been created which will act on behalf of the two new unitary councils providing vital services for youngsters in care, on the social register, etc.

Rebecca will be the portfolio holder for finance at WNC and the first draft budget has been announced. The budget will make sure that council services are affordable and sustainable and work will continue to review contracts, income sources and assets. It has been proposed that council tax is increased by 4.99%, in line with Government recommendations. For WNC this would mean an average Band D level of council tax of £1,566.39 from 1st April (an increase of £74.45) which would make a considerable extra £7 million, and with the impact of Covid-19 this is very much needed. Currently council tax reductions/discounts (through SNC) are dictated by each authority. This needs to be harmonised over the next seven years to make it fair; a consultation was issued in October regarding these issues. Elections are set to still go ahead on 6th May but this may change.

Evenley, Aynho and Croughton fall into the Middleton Cheney Ward (which follows Northamptonshire boundaries) and Rebecca, John and Rosie Herring are the ward councillors (until the next election).

Rebecca answered questions on business pooling and highways issues, advising that Kier WSP were coming to the end of their contract. As a unitary, WNC will have much better control over highways and hope to put in place a more superior service. She asked for councils experiencing ongoing highways issues to send her the details which she will discuss with Jason Smithers (Northants Highways).

- **Councillor John Townsend**

John paid tribute to Rebecca advising he was very pleased she is now in charge of finance.

This should be John's last ward meeting (if the elections go ahead). He said he's experienced some extraordinary times and has got a lot out of his time serving as a councillor, expressing how difficult it is to get candidates to stand and even more so now, when going forward there will be a heavier load on local councils.

Planning has been John's forte and he advised parish councils they need to have a good planning system in place. Since becoming a councillor in 1984 there has been a huge increase with 30,000 new houses being built in South Northants; despite this, he's justly proud that the area has managed to keep the character of the district.

John answered questions on planning, advising that SNC do take notice of parish council comments submitted in response to applications but as they are driven by law, they can't always agree with them. He said the standard of officers has improved over the last three years.

Rebecca advised that John has carried out some amazing work on behalf of the whole district during the time he has served as a councillor, including the design of the route of the M40 and A43. John said that a book has been commissioned detailing the formation of South Northamptonshire fifty years ago which will be published this April.

- **Danny Moody, NCALC**

If they go ahead, the local elections in May could become a logistical nightmare due to the pandemic and the tight timeframe which falls at the same time the councils switch over and Easter. Danny reiterated John's sentiments around the difficulty in finding new councillors and advised councils to promote the elections to the best of their abilities.

On 7th May 2021, regulations permitting town and parish councils to meet remotely ends so it is hoped the May meetings will be able to take place face to face. NCALC is however, lobbying to extend the regulation so that councils are able to choose how they meet.

Regarding LGR, a huge amount of work is going on behind the scenes. Danny advised that engagement with Future Northants has been good and weekly meetings are taking place to talk things through. NCALC is acting as a translation service, filtering through all the important, relevant information to councils via its weekly bulletins including links to resources.

Parish Councils will grow in importance over the next few years as WNC time will be heavily dominated by concentrating on statutory services. There will be a need to shout out to get things done in our own areas as there will be more competition in future. We need to make sure there is a good ongoing relationship between WNC and town and parish councils.

7. To provide and update on HS2 works in the area

Cathy Ellis advised that work compounds are being set up off the A43, A421, A422 and A4421. Vegetation clearance and fencing is taking place along the line of the route from Twyford up to Greatworth and the haul road, access roads and drainage activities have commenced. Work will begin soon to demolish the existing bridge on the A4421 and the installation of temporary bridges on the A4421 and A421. There will be temporary road closures on the slip road off A43 to Radstone and A422 Brackley Road in February.

Evenley Parish Council continue to attend the HS2 liaison meetings and along with the chairman of Hinton-in-the-Hedges, are pushing for something to be done about the A43's inadequacies to take the weight of extra movements during the construction phase.

A meeting will take place later this week to discuss opportunities for cycle routes along the line of the HS2 route.

8. To discuss appointing a police liaison representative in each parish to act as a single point of contact with Northamptonshire Police

Danny explained that this role came about during a conversation he had with Sergeant Sam Dobs over complaints received about a lack of visible policing and having a single point of contact for parish councils. It can overlap with Neighbourhood Watch or be a stand-alone role. Having a police liaison representative will help to establish contact with the relevant members of Northamptonshire's neighbourhood policing team.

9. To discuss the May elections and finding new councillors

After attending a training session to find new councillors, Cathy Knott asked other councils for their ideas on the best way to promote the elections. The general consensus was that current councillors are the best advocates and coffee mornings or zoom meetings would be beneficial to people thinking of becoming more involved with their community. Websites, posters and social media all play a big part in the process. If face to face meetings can't take place, it might be worthwhile making a short video explaining what the council does with councillors explaining their responsibilities.

10. Parish Council news

Aynho Parish Council

Chris Wilson advised they had recently co-opted two new councillors and rejigged the roles of other councillors. They

are currently involved in improving an old track and replacing old sheds with a shipping container. One of their new councillors is interested in biodiversity and has started Aynho Eco – an initiative to improve biodiversity in the village and find ways to help residents who would like to be more eco-friendly.

Parishioners are now using the new bus service Ability along with Cherwell Links which seems to be working well and is more cost effective.

Croughton Parish Council

Brian Tomlin advised that Western Power Distribution has made a good job of laying mains throughout the village. A resident has sponsored a vehicle activated sign and they hope to purchase another one using HS2 funds. Unfortunately, the seven-ton weight limit and the 20 mph section of road doesn't appear to have made a difference and traffic remains an ongoing problem.

Evenley Parish Council

Cathy Ellis advised that we now have a nice new village sign (courtesy of HS2 funding) which is in situ on the village Green. During the pandemic we have been swamped by visitors from out of the village so we have needed to replace bollards around some of the worst areas of the Green to deter parking. We now have an electric supply on the Green which enabled us to light a large Christmas tree which was very popular with villagers and we were able to enjoy some socially distanced carol singing and mulled wine.

A new farm shop has opened on Bicester Hill (<https://www.barnowlfarmshop.co.uk/>) which has proven to be very popular. Unfortunately, there is an issue with the lack of a footpath in this area so we are looking at applying to lower the speed limit to keep pedestrians and cyclists safe.

Recent planning issues have pulled the village together and a lot of effort has gone into submitting two objections. We are hoping to apply to the HS2 community environment fund again in April for a new bus shelter to replace our current one with something more in keeping with the area.

The allotments are all tenanted and we now have a long waiting list.

We have been struggling with Northants Highways and the chicane on Broad Lane still hasn't been completed. This has now caused further issues.

Members from St. George's Church have been instrumental in providing covid-19 support to residents in need.

Sue Ricketts advised on severe odour issues at Gateridge Farm, off Charlton Road (bordering Evenley and Croughton land) and gave a precis of the last three years as a neighbour to the farm. Despite a South Northants environmental health officer being involved, they have closed the case advising that neighbouring residents should take a private civil case out against the owner or contact the Environmental Agency (both long processes). John Townsend asked Sue to send him as much information as possible and agreed to take the matter up with both Environmental Health and the Environmental Agency.

11. Date of next meeting to be hosted by Aynho Parish Council

26th July 2021 – to be confirmed.

12. Chairman's closing comments

Cathy Ellis closed the meeting at 9:37 pm saying she'd learnt a lot tonight and had covered some really important subjects.