

Little Brook Ward Meeting

Aynho Village Hall

Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2017 – 7.30pm

MINUTES

PRESENT

- Aynho – Chair – Stephen Brook  
Fi Burge, David Dean  
Clerk: Sadie Patamia
- Croughton - Jean Coles, Ann Le Druillenec, Pamela Gelder, Penny Forbes, Brian Tomlin, Chris Fox, Virginia Griffiths
- Evenley - Jean Morgan, Cathy Ellis, Jeff Peyton-Bruhl, Cathy Knott, Brian Sinclair  
County Councillor Ron Sawbridge  
District Councillor John Townsend
- Apologies - Lisa Proffitt (Evenley), Trevor Davies and Rodger James (Croughton), Leslie Leighton, Julian Maddocks-Born, Andy Anderson, Jeremy James, Chris Reynolds and Bob Mann (Aynho)

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone. Apologies are listed above.

2. Minutes of Ward meeting held at Evenley on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2016 at 7.30pm

These were approved.

3. Matters arising

County Cllr Sawbridge stated that Highways would review roundabouts not the CC.  
The Chair stated he had attempted to get the PCC (S Mold) to attend this meeting but had been unsuccessful.

4. Address by County Councillor Ron Sawbridge

County Cllr Sawbridge gave the following report –

There really hasn't been much change since the report I gave at the Ward meeting in July and on the assumption that you have read this I'll avoid repeating it.

Over the last two months the budget for the financial year 2017/18 has been prepared and is due for adoption by the County Council at its meeting on the 16th February. It hasn't been easy with financial pressures continuing to increase, reflecting the reduction in the Revenue Support Grant from the Government and the rising costs mainly being created by the demand led services concerned with people:

Care for the elderly, disabled, and people with learning difficulties and Services for Children and families.

The whole process is becoming more complicated with many adverse cost factors. The County Council element of the tax residents pay is set to increase by 5% for the new financial year with over half of this to fund additional adult social care costs.

It is my continuing firm belief that the financial pressures will not be solved until a single unitary authority is formed. This should have been done years ago and I think that action is at last being planned to bring this about, but the process will not actually start until after the elections on the 4th May. In the meantime the intention is to learn from other authorities which have already created unitaries in an effort to reduce the cost of bringing this about.

Many of you will have seen in the Press that Oxfordshire has unveiled its plans to create one unitary authority covering the whole county which is expected to save at least £100m over a five year period. Buckinghamshire are doing the same. Proposals to form unitary councils have to be submitted for approval to the Government after public consultation, and the Government would like the proposals to be supported by City, District, Borough, and Parish Councils. I don't really think there is much chance of reaching a complete consensus on this in Northamptonshire.

The only other thing I'm going to mention is the new 'Crystal Palace' built behind the existing County Hall in Northampton. This is due to open in March. The reason for building this is to enable all the County Council staff to be located in one modern energy efficient office block. Although this may appear to be a long term sound concept I do think the timing is completely wrong. To have done this at a time when there are so many changes taking place, including reductions in staff numbers, and it is obvious that major reform is required is I think utterly wrong.

This will be my last Ward Meeting. I was first elected for the Brackley West Division in 2001 and then re-elected for enlarged Middleton Cheney Division after the changes in 2013. Little Brook is the only Ward that holds Ward meetings. I think this is an excellent idea but regrettably, although I have tried, the other four wards have shown no enthusiasm in doing it.

I have particularly enjoyed my time as the County Councillor representing this Ward and I thank you and all residents for supporting me over the last sixteen years.

JPB from Evenley asked where do the reductions in spend come from in the creation of a unitary authority? RS stated that there were fewer councillors. When eight different councils in the county all with CEOs merge there is less outlay and fewer buildings.

He stated it would take out some democratic representation

District Cllr Townsend stated he felt that Unitary authority is much better and should be Government led. He stated that Shropshire and Wiltshire have done it and it works well

The question was raised as to whether Northants would consider having a referendum to see if people would be willing to see a 15% council tax rise? RS stated that the problem with referenda is that they are very expensive

RS stated he felt that Parish Councils would potentially become more important under a unitary authority

The Chair stated that the Ward would like to officially thank RS, who will not be standing at the election for all his work over the past years.

## 5. Address by District Councillor John Townsend

JT stated that the main thing occupying the District currently is the SNC local plan. The draft plan will probably come at the end of the month. He stated it is important to ensure it is carefully read. Most development will be in Brackley and Towcester, with some in Middleton Cheney. He feels it is important to look at the exceptions which allow development outside confines.

It was stated that there was a worry about the burden of house building within the villages. BT of Croughton feels that there is an issue with village development in that the PCs tend to know the land owners so could therefore be accused of making people rich

6. HS2 update (Croughton Item)

Cllr Brian Sinclair delivered an update.

He stated that as of yet the final go ahead had not been given.

HS2 has an engagement team who will listen to PCs. Construction partners will be selected apparently in April. When they are appointed we will have a better idea of how the Ward will be affected.

A community fund has been set up. You can apply for money if it affects you as a PC.

It has been implied that if the land that HS2 has bought is not used will be handed back to PCs.

In theory the work will start in 2018 and 2026 is when phase 1 will be complete. It will be a 24/7 operation.

£1.4 billion has been spent so far.

Any issues can be raised directly with HS2 through the meetings.

RAF Croughton works have started, Silverstone are having a new visitor centre, Tesco roundabout will worked on too. All will have an effect on the A43 and therefore potentially the Ward.

Abthorpe works are under budget and on time.

It is the construction phase which will be particularly disruptive as opposed to when the railway is fully operational.

BT from Croughton asked if there will be moves to keep other traffic out of the villages. Although construction traffic will be kept out there is a fear that regular road users may divert off the A43 to avoid construction traffic. BS stated he would mention this at the next meeting.

7. Community Governance Review that SNC will be carrying out this year (Croughton item)

It was generally agreed that the Ward would not wish to change anything covered by this review. Each PC is happy with its member numbers and boundaries.

8. AOB

There was no other business

9. Date of next meeting to be held in July 2017 in Croughton

It was agreed that this would be held on 17th July.