

OLLERTON WITH MARTHALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held on 14th May 2007 at Ollerton, Marthall & Little Warford Village Hall at 7.30.

Meeting started at 7.30

Present – Cllr's. A Street (Chair) J Holmes (Vice Chair) G Mason, G Littler, D Hawkins, R Barnes, R Weston & M Berrisford.

07/39 – Apologies for absence – Cllr. E Davison, B.C. T. Fisher & C.C. S Wilkinson.

07/40 – Chairman's Report.

I thanked retiring Chairman Geoff Mason on behalf of the Parish when I assumed office last May, but I would begin by saying how much I have valued the down-to-earth responses I have received when I have used him as a sounding board. But, as I have said to him privately “ Geoff, how did you know when to step down?” It has been a particularly taxing year.

Shortly after his appointment our Parish Clerk became unable to continue in his post and, in order to fulfil our civic and statutory duties, we had to replace him.

I am immensely indebted to all those who were involved in this process and I believe that a satisfactory conclusion has now been reached.

As a number of statutory obligations had not been fulfilled it was urgent that a new Parish Clerk be appointed and we were delighted when Mrs. Sue Cannings (a recent appointee to near-by Chorley Parish Council) accepted the job. With our assistance Sue has been able to reconstruct most of the missing or uncompleted paper work and she is reasonably confident that her negotiations with our auditors (who were aware from other sources that problems were likely) will lead to our reports for 2006-7 being signed off with minimal qualification.

And as Sue is already well on the way to achieving the required qualifications we can hope that our passage to Quality Parish Council status will be reached without undue delay. We look forward to a successful relationship and are especially appreciative of the way she has tackled the problems she had inherited.

The next challenge, and by far the saddest, was created by the death in January of Councillor Gordon Hodkinson. Gordon was first elected in 1992 and served, amongst other roles, for fourteen years on the Planning Committee, latterly as Chairman. His friendship and cheerful and conscientious contribution to our affairs are sorely missed.

Councillor Robert Weston has assumed responsibility for Planning. Our recommendations and the Borough's decisions are once again being regularly reported in the “Parish Post” and on the village website. The opportunity has been taken, thanks to Councillor Weston's computer expertise to further streamline our

procedures and I am confident that the reputation we have with Macclesfield Borough Council Planning Authority, for prompt and relevant comment, will be enhanced without any loss of democratic consultation.

The death of a councillor automatically triggers a specified procedure for filling a vacancy, which attracted two applicants. As mandated, submissions by both were followed by a ballot of the Parish Councillors and we are delighted to welcome Dr Martyn Berrisford as our new councillor. As a long-serving general practitioner, now retired, he has obviously already given many years of service to the community and we sincerely hope he will enjoy doing so in this new role.

That's what the modern jargon labels 'The Human Resources Scenario'! What have we been doing for you, our electors?

Once again we entered the "Community Pride Competition" or the "Best Kept Village" (as most of us still call it), coming sixth in our category, but as runners-up in the "Building Community Life" section for which we were awarded a cheque for £150 and the plaque displayed on the wall behind you. Residents are congratulated on this result, especially those who presented to the community life judges, Councillors Littler and Holmes directed this campaign- to whom many thanks.

The January gales damaged a number of mainly old trees, but happily we escaped personal injury. Sadly a hornbeam planted by village schoolchildren to commemorate the Queen's Silver Jubilee was irreparably damaged. We used our award cheque from the Community Life Competition to buy a replacement. A black walnut was sourced through Warburton Landscapes and a planting ceremony by former pupils was organised by Councillor Littler on 28th March.

The 'Parish Plan' text has been agreed by Macclesfield Borough Council and Cheshire Community Council and will soon be ready for distribution to all residents. The initiating body, the Country Side Agency, stipulates that the Plan must be managed by an independent Steering Committee representing a full cross section of the community but the launch and funding is routed through the Parish Council. We are in debt to Councillors Holmes and Hawkins who represent us on the committee, to individual councillors and to all the residents who have contributed to the Action Teams. The Parish Council looks forward to working with the committee in furthering the vision which the Plan will set forth.

These are just a few of the highlights of the past council year. Each councillor agrees to lead on a portfolio of matters and the diversity of subjects to be covered, often to strict timetables and guidelines, is mind-boggling for a small community such as ours. Subjects range from totally parochial matters such as the flower festival, homework, trees and hedges, highways and drainage maintenance, local transport and footpaths; through Regional concerns like the Cheshire Waste Plan, Cheshire and Northwest Regional strategies, County Planning Fora and Manchester airport developments;

right up to global warming, the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, impact of changes in the law on licensing and gambling, the next reorganisation of local government and a new edition of the National Code of Conduct in Local Government. And others I am sure to have overlooked. Each requires time and application and sometimes attendance, by councillors, at meetings outside the Parish. The residents, and I as Chairman, owe them all a hearty vote of thanks.

I also thank Borough Councillor Ted Fisher and County Councillor Steve Wilkinson, who attend as many of our meetings as they can manage, and are always ready to advise us and act as conduits to their authorities and thank Dr Paul Dorey, assistant editor to the Parish Post and Village website controller, for his support.

Finally, a personal 'thank you' to the Vice-chair, Councillor Jenny Holmes without whose help and guidance I would have struggled to get through the 1st twelve months.

This concludes my report for the year 2006-7.

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Cllr A Street
Chairman, Ollerton with Marthall Parish Council

Date.....

Meeting closed at 7.45

