

Annual Parish Meeting 22nd April 2021

John Bretherton, Chair of the Parish Council opened the meeting and welcomed those attending the virtual meeting by zoom.

Attending: John Bretherton, Keith Boardman, Stephen Lewington, Helen Cleery and 22 residents.

Apologies: Cllr Peter Eccleson, Cllr Howard Roberts, Cllr. Deepah Roberts, Rev. Pat Townshend, Shirley Hall, Cat Sabine and Greg Irish.

Rugby Borough Council report, read by Sylvia Jacques, Parish Clerk: The Diary is a little shorter than usual due to suspension of a number of activities due to the forthcoming elections on 6th May. Quite a bit of our time has been taken up in this regard.

Warwickshire

- Howard has been engaged in a cross-party working group looking at on street parking across the County. Much attention has been given to 'Residents Parking Permits' within Rugby Borough. This work has been temporarily suspended due the forthcoming elections. Findings of this working party will probably come out to Public Consultation before any decisions are finalised.
- Howard has also been involved in road safety issues and better lighting on the A45 at Longdown Lane, Willoughby were there have been a number of traffic fatalities.
- Parking plans for the grass matting etc. on Adkinson Avenue, Dunchurch are about to go out to consultation with residents.
- All three Councillors have been working towards attempting to influence Warwickshire Highways to reduce the speed limit along the 'straight mile' at Bourton for safety reasons.

Rugby BC

- All three Councillors have been involved in issues of hedging, pot-holes, trees and public litter bin emptying.
- We have been engaged with individuals in the Borough to assist with their housing needs and liaise with our housing department on a number of other welfare issues. Dealing with these issues, helping people and gaining a positive outcome makes the Councillors role satisfying. I am pleased to say that the issues that all three of us have worked on have all had positive outcomes.
- We have been engaged in discussions surrounding the development of a new recycling centre which will serve the Borough, Coventry and Solihull plus other districts. The plant will be one of the most advanced in the country. It is a significant investment and development and will lead the way technologically – e.g., much of the power for the plant will come from solar panels mounted on the roof of the building. We aim to start the building works later this year with the site coming 'on line' in 2023. Whilst much of the detail behind this is 'commercially confidential' we will feed you more information over the coming months as it is released.
- In addition to Committee works regarding recycling, fly-tipping and graffiti we are looking at the formulation of strategies on all three subjects and addressing the root causes of fly-

tipping and graffiti in particular. More details will emerge once we have agreement at Council level.

- Last night (20th April) was Cllr Bill Lewis's last night officiating over a full Council meeting as Chair. The 'Mayor Making' Ceremony will be conducted on 20th May when your Councillor Deepah Roberts will become Mayor of Rugby at a ceremony which will also be streamed live on YouTube. Your new Mayor is already taking bookings for opening fete's etc. – so get your requests in early! The last Mayor from our area was former Councillor Bill Shields who regrestfully passed away on 11th December 2018. Bill was Mayor of the Borough for the 2002/03 municipal year and a Councillor for Dunchurch and Knightlow Ward from 1990 to 2008.

- We have been active in influencing the developers/owners of the former Moji restaurant at Stretton and the former Bull & Bush public house at Ryton to clean up both sites which were demolished and is attracting fly tipping.

- It has been brought to our attention that a resident of Dunchurch has moved out of the area. Mr. Robin Aird served on Dunchurch Parish Council for 17 years, 10 of those years as Chair. He has also been a Trustee of the 'Alms House Charity' for 10 years and has been a volunteer at the Dunchurch Community Library since its takeover by the Parish Council. Robin also Chaired the Neighbourhood Planning Committee of Dunchurch Parish Council for some time. He 'spearheaded' the negotiations with Warwickshire County Council when Dunchurch PC took over the library when it was threatened with closure and he secured the covered bus stop on Southam Road, Dunchurch against a great deal of opposition from Planners. It is the dedication of individuals like Robin on your Parish Councils that keep the villages going. It is not an easy task and I know from experience that Parish Council work can affect social life, family commitments and even one's own health. We three Borough Councillors would like to recognise and thank all you serving Parish Councillors and Clerks for your support to us which in turn helps us to undertake our work on behalf of the constituents of our Dunsmore Ward.

Minutes of the last Annual Village Meeting held in 2019: Passed as a true record. Proposed by John Bretherton and seconded by Stephen Lewington. It was decided to approve future minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting (formally called Annual Parish Meeting) at the Parish Council meeting rather than wait a year.

Village Hall Report: presented by Mary Cook (MC), Chair.

This has been a strange and difficult year for all community halls. Our AGM could not be held in 2020 because of Covid restrictions. We are hoping that we can hold an AGM in July this year. We are advised that we cannot fully open the hall for bookings before May 17th and then opening will be very restricted. We need to take advice on this matter.

We have an enthusiastic and energetic team of people who help to run the village hall. However, we always welcome new committee members. We have welcomed Shirley Hall as a new member in 2019. Unfortunately, Selina Larque has resigned from the committee this year. I would like to thank Selina for her hard work as our secretary. She will be missed. I hope we can recruit some new members for 2021.

Whilst we have been closed, we have undertaken a great deal of work on the Hall. The toilets have been refurbished. We have obtained a grant from Thurlaston Pools Plot and

Dunchurch and Thurlaston community fund, to convert the ladies toilet for wheel chair access. We thank both organisations for their generosity.

During the Covid shutdown we have had the hall redecorated internally and will be having the external woodwork treated. You may have noticed the new awning to protect the front door.

We have accepted a covid grant from the local authority to offset our major loss of funding. This grant was made available to all local authorities by the government to help village halls with the loss of income due to the Covid shutdown. We are very grateful for this money which has enabled us to continue paying our bills.

We are very grateful to those organisations and individuals who raise money and who help us to keep the hall going. We could not manage without your efforts, so a big thank you to everyone.

If anyone is interested in seeing our accounts, we do publish them on the PC website. If you would like a copy, please let me or Simon our Treasurer know.

thurlastonvht@gmail.com (Treasurer) or thurlastonvhc@gmail.com (VH chair)

Our garden takes some maintenance. The front garden has been maintained voluntarily by a small group of people and they would welcome more volunteers. I think people will agree that the front garden looks lovely and we would like to thank Gill Dakin and her small team of volunteers for working so hard on it.

The Eden family have been cutting the grass for many years, they have now retired and we would like to thank them for their hard work. We now employ Chris Howes to cut the grass every fortnight.

Our fund-raising tea party in August 2019 was well attended and raised £350. We hope to be able to hold another tea party in August this year but we are unsure if we will be able to do so because of Covid. We have had wonderful support from volunteers to help and also to make delicious cakes.

A thank you to Sylvia for making new table cloths for the hall.

A special thank you to Marilyn Watts, Judy Brooks and Ronnie Carvell plus their band of helpers who organised the mini mart last Summer. This raised an amazing sum of money which was equally divided between the Church and Village Hall. In a year when the fete could not take place this was a welcome addition to our funds.

This village hall along with the church is the hub of our small community we are grateful for your ongoing support.

Mary Cook. (Chair)

Parish Council report: Presented by John Bretherton, Chair of the Parish Council.

The last Annual Village Meeting was held on the 11th April 2019, which seems far longer than two years ago.

So much has happened since then, not least the pandemic, but Thurlaston Parish Council has continued meeting throughout on its usual schedule of 7pm on the second Monday of every other month, albeit meetings since the first lock-down have been conducted via Zoom.

Back in 2019, Helen Creery and Norman Lines had already been councillors here for many years, but there were three new councillors elected unopposed in May 2019 - Keith Boardman, Stephen Lewington and myself - and with Sylvia Jacques, who is our Parish Clerk, this team remained static through to January 2021.

This year, there are two councillor changes of note and I would like to pay tribute to two special people who have chosen to step down in the last few months, and who have been stalwarts for many years, deserving a resounding vote of thanks for their valuable and diligent service.

Firstly, many thanks to Helen Creery, who joined Thurlaston Parish Council on the 1st June 2009 and will have served almost 12 years when she steps down in May.

Helen is passionate about this village and has always been a well prepared and professional councillor. She was responsible for village maintenance under the Lengthsman Project and kept a keen eye on planning applications, having been Chair of the Thurlaston Planning Sub-Committee for some years. For many planning applications, she compiled the Parish Council's response to Rugby Borough Council and was efficient in her use of words to convey our views.

I have certainly benefitted personally from her help and advice – and her ability to identify the key salient points, appraising herself of the issues, and interfacing well with applicants where necessary.

Norman Lines commented that he couldn't recall Helen ever missing a meeting and that her contribution to the village has not been limited to Parish Council - she also supports local events – helping to account for takings at the Village Fete, helping to organise the progressive supper, contributing to the craft show, and a regular with the village rambles.

Helen Chaired Thurlaston Parish Council in 2014 and can retire knowing that she completed a stint of committed service and valuable contribution.

Secondly, and just as significantly, a thank-you to Norman Lines, who has been another key member of the team for many years, and chose to step down at the beginning of 2021. Norman worked for Rolls-Royce for 44 years and moved to Thurlaston in 2005. His involvement in a group to improve communication between villagers led to him joining the Parish Council in 2015.

Soon after joining, he was responsible for renewing the Village Design Statement and he went on to lead the Parish Council's responses to Rugby Borough Council's Local Plan. He consistently delivered a high standard of work on planning, and made valuable contributions to operating procedures. He was also instrumental in development of the Thurlaston Parish Council Website with the primary objective to fulfil our publishing obligations - now achieved.

From personal experience, Norman was a committed councillor, always willing to provide colleagues with help and support. Whenever I asked anything of him, his response has been thorough and insightful. We will miss Norman's technical expertise, diligent appraisals and passion.

In recent years, the changing of the guard has been a worrying time for Thurlaston Parish Council, because it has been difficult to find people willing to become councillors. We should be fine this time around, but I would like to take this opportunity to emphasise the value of Thurlaston retaining a Parish Council, and the danger of taking this for granted.

I work full-time, so I appreciate how difficult it is to commit to giving voluntary time – and, *I might add*, so does my wife!! - but without a Parish Council in Thurlaston, we lose a place at the table and a voice that expresses opinions in the Parish.

To give several examples where having the Parish Council has made a difference...

- A resident recently wrote to me expressing his frustration, because Rugby Borough Council would not reply to him as a private individual, whereas they would reply to the Parish Council.
- Another resident wrote of her concern that she had received no confirmation of receipt of her response to a planning application from Rugby Borough Council – a receipt was given when she retried, this time copying the Parish Council.

Thurlaston Parish Council has a history of standing up for the Parish – it strives to maintain Thurlaston, its nature and its identity.

We know from links we have made with neighbouring parish councils that their priorities are, quite rightly, with their own parishes.

We know that Rugby Borough Council's approach to many things, and especially to Planning, does not align with views here in Thurlaston.

We know that if we fail to form a Parish Council in the future, Thurlaston Parish Council will dissolve, and our place at the table will be subsumed by Dunchurch or Rugby Borough Council – and it is unlikely that we could ever reverse that loss.

We should not risk losing our Parish Council and, to quote one of my predecessors, “**we should all care too much about our community to let this happen**”.

Here endeth the lesson!

We have no such problem this time around and have been very fortunate to find two new and promising councillors to fill the vacancies left by Norman and Helen.

In May, we will welcome Justin Owen and Tom Linnecor onto the Council. To give a little background...

Justin was born and raised in Lancashire (and might I just add that Lancashire is a fine county with a great cricket team!!). He crossed the Pennines to study Mechanical Engineering at Sheffield Hallam University, alongside climbing and fell running in the Peak District, Lakes, Wales and the Scottish Highlands.

His career has been in lasers; automating pharmaceutical drug discovery processes; automated cell culture; and, most recently, developing surgical robotics.

He has moved several times between the Midlands and Cambridge, but he and his family chose to settle in Thurlaston in 2014, where they enjoy cycling and walking on the nearby lanes and footpaths.

I first met Justin very recently, while we were considering the Thurlaston response to the Eastdene planning application (R20/1030) to build 40 bungalows behind the Care Home. Justin played an active role on the Parish Council's Planning Working Group and was instrumental in persuading his brother, who is an arboriculturist and consultant, to write an appraisal of the site, which may well have influenced Rugby Borough Council's decision to serve the landowners concerned with several tree preservation orders.

Justin says he would like to help safeguard the village and its surroundings for today's residents and future generations.

Tom was born in Rugby and brought up in Coventry, where he lived for 27 years. After meeting his wife, who is also from Warwickshire, he relocated to London, and they lived at Canada Water for several years, but they moved back up to Thurlaston in 2015, and started a family.

Tom's career is centred on Public Transport, predominantly in the Bus and Coach industry. After serving an apprenticeship as a bus mechanic, and spending several years on the workshop floor, he progressed through management and is now a Technical Engineer for a large UK Coach Operator, and based in Birmingham.

When not at work, or entertaining his two young children, you might see Tom running or cycling around Draycote, or playing football.

With Tom's professional background, Health and Safety is always near the top of the agenda, and he is particularly keen to help reduce speeding throughout our village.

We plan for Tom and Justin to be co-opted onto Thurlaston Parish Council at the AGM in May, and discussions have already been had with Tom and Justin, and with my fellow councillors and our Clerk, about the council structure and distribution of responsibilities for the year 2021-22. Plans will be confirmed formally at the AGM.

There is still some uncertainty around precise arrangements for the AGM - the current concession, allowing councils to hold meetings virtually, expires on the 6th May, so the current rules require us to meet in person on our scheduled date of the 10th May. We are waiting to hear if there will be an extension to the virtual meetings concession - we shall have to wait and see!

As part of our plans for the coming year, we will be reinstating the Planning Subcommittee. Thurlaston Parish Council spends a great deal of time on planning applications and, as many of us are all too aware, there are seemingly inevitable changes planned that will impact Thurlaston significantly.

Rugby Borough Council adopted its Local Plan on the 4th June 2019, which outlines a complete change to the greenspace in the whole of "South-West Rugby", effectively joining Dunchurch and Thurlaston to Rugby.

Within our Parish, immediately to the north of Coventry Road, the Local Plan designates that we shall have warehouses.

Notwithstanding fundamental local opposition, in September 2020 Rugby Borough Council's Planning Committee granted outline approval to Tritax Symmetry for the whole of the warehouses site under application **R16/2569**, but that approval had a condition of reducing the heights by 3 metres.

Three weeks ago, on the 31st March 2021, Rugby Borough Council's Planning Committee granted full permission for the first two warehouses under application **R20/1026** and waived the height condition, effectively increasing the heights by 3 metres.

I listened to the Planning Committee Meeting on the 31st March and would just like to replay a few of the individual comments...

Firstly, **Peter Butlin** approved the application, regardless of the extra 3M height – he said:

“I think on balance the impact of an extra 3M to what was already approved is relatively insignificant compared to the benefits of employment and the future jobs that could be created on the site”.

Given the case Rugby Borough Council made, that warehouse space is in great demand, I am sure there would still be good prospects for employment if the warehouses were 3M shorter.

Secondly, **David Cranham** approved the application, again regardless of the extra 3M height – he said: *“This is a relatively minor change to the height of the buildings and a little bit of alteration to the access”*

Mr Cranham gave no technical explanation as to why these changes might be regarded as “minor” or a “little bit” – perhaps he just meant from his standpoint, from the Old Vicarage in Hillmorton!

Finally, **Peter Eccleson** opposed the application – he said:

“We’re creating the impression to the public that developers can pressurise us as a planning committee and as Rugby Borough Council into reversing some of our recent decisions.”

I agree with Peter’s sentiments, but would go further than “creating the impression”; it is more like *“confirming beyond all doubt”*.

The warehouses outcome is extremely disappointing. Judging by the Committee proceedings, it seemed to me that approval was more or less guaranteed – as Mr Butlin put it *“what was already approved”*. There seems very little incentive or inclination for Rugby Borough Council to stand up to the applicant, and the aims of these parties seem very much aligned – and very much at variance to Thurlaston’s.

Sebastian Lowe’s leadership of Rugby Borough Council marks a low-point for Thurlaston. His team shows no sign of caring for the environment or the local residents, or for conserving the best of what we have. And R20/1026 does nothing for the climate in Rugby Borough Council’s declared Climate Emergency.

Rather, they have been careless with SW Rugby, they have caved under pressures from the applicant and central government, and they have condemned Thurlaston to becoming a village on the edge of an industrial estate.

The other planning application with a large potential impact on Thurlaston was R20/1030 – a proposal to build 40 bungalows in the heart of our village.

The applicant was Eastdene Investments, with development focussing on the land around Thurlaston Meadows Care Home. The scale and impact came as a real shock:

- Our Parish has 132 dwellings in total; 40 new bungalows would be a 30% increase.
- The whole development is for older people, so it would increase the average age of our residents.
- The increased population would add significantly to the traffic on our narrow roadways.

There was no prior communication or local consultation - Thurlaston Parish Council and local residents “discovered” this application when details were posted on Rugby Borough Council’s website. Details were issued on the 3rd December 2020 and the formal deadline for submitting responses was the 6th January 2021 – in other words, the time allowed for

responding spanned Christmas and New Year, and was seen as a cynical move to make it difficult to devote time, find suitable and available professional expertise, and build a credible response.

A large group of Thurlastonians reacted very quickly – far beyond just the Parish Council:

- we leveraged contacts within and outside of the Parish Council,
- we created a Planning Working Group and set to work,
- we managed to retain the services of a planning consultant and a barrister
- we issued a questionnaire to residents to assess local views on the application
- and we had a heck of a lot of Zoom meetings in December and early January

Out of the 168 people who responded to the questionnaire, 166 opposed the development; only 2 supported it.

A great deal of help and input was provided by locals who joined the Planning Working Group - it was a real team effort. Without wishing to underplay the contributions made by many, perhaps the most impactful were from:

- One member put us in touch with Grandborough Parish Council, who recommended the barrister who acted for them in relation to Lodge Farm.
- And another who persuaded his brother to write an Eco assessment of the site to counter Eastdene's report, which we had considered was weak.

The barrister we commissioned helped define our strategy and wrote a large part of what became our response.

The planning consultant gave initial advice and reviewed and tweaked the response.

The final result clearly benefitted from professional input.

Rugby Borough Council subsequently served several tree preservation orders on the landowners and requested additional details from the applicant. Our efforts had a significant impact and succeeded in stopping the application from proceeding in its current form, but note that this remains a live case that could be resuscitated.

Planning looks set to continue to take up a lot of our time. In Q1 this year we responded to a second and separate Care Home application (R21/0152) and we are wary of a re-awakening of the 40 bungalows.

There will be further warehouse applications and changes to the roads and the prospect of Tritax diverging further from what has been promised so far.

I would like to say a few words about the Precept, as a number of residents expressed concern about the large rise in our requirement for the coming year.

The increase amount of £20,000 is solely related to planning - to cover recent costs incurred in Q1 this year, and similar anticipated future costs in the current fiscal year. Notionally, some of this funding was to be clear, there was no increase requested for any other of our cost areas.

The increase decision was not taken lightly, particularly in the context of hardships brought by the pandemic, but it is justified by the number, extent and impact of the developments proposed within and around Thurlaston.

Bear in mind that the Parish Council is made up of ordinary people who live in the Parish and care about its present and its future, but we are not planning professionals. We recognised the value that professional support added to our recent planning responses and, given the scale of change proposed under the Local Plan, felt it would be remiss if we failed to budget for further professional advice.

This money will not be frittered away, but it will give us some options if we need professional advice.

In closing, I would like to thank my fellow Councillors and our Clerk for all their work and support over the last two years. These are good people to know and work with, they have always been very good to me, both personally and as colleagues, and are rarely thanked enough for the work they do.

Keith Boardman consistently takes on a lion-share of the work. He single-handedly runs every aspect of our Website, and has done so since its inception. The Website would suffice easily as an individual contribution, but Keith is now the key person on Planning, where he is likely to take a more leading role in the coming year, particularly in the absence of Helen and Norman. If I could point out one fault, it's that Keith hoovers up actions during our meetings before any of the rest of us can be embarrassed into volunteering. We will aim to spread his load a little more broadly in the coming year, but hats off to Keith for the work he does for us all.

Thanks too to Stephen Lewington. He took on the renewal of the Emergency Plan soon after joining the Parish Council and followed this through to completion in 2020. Stephen is very good at making insightful points diplomatically, and is likely to take a leading role on staffing in the coming year.

I don't want to re-iterate my previous comments on Helen Creery and Norman Lines, but I thank them too for their hard work. Helen has chaired the Planning Subcommittee throughout my stint on Thurlaston Parish Council, and I have unashamedly ridden on Helen and Norman's coat-tails, relying on them to identify the key points and write the first-draft of responses. Norman also analysed the Local Plan and the SW Rugby SPD in much detail, unearthing many of the points we subsequently made in our responses to Rugby Borough Council.

Last, but by no means least, I would like to thank Sylvia Jacques, our Parish Clerk. It is an oft-overlooked advantage having a clerk who lives in the Parish. She is active in the village, knows many of our residents personally, and is willing and able to deal with many of the day-to-day issues that arise, quietly and effectively - as well as completing her council administration functions.

In closing, Thurlaston Parish Council has been very busy since the beginning of December due to the significant developments proposed within the Parish. We expect Local Plan developments will continue to keep us busy for the foreseeable future, as new applications are submitted, and approved cases translate into building work and associated infrastructure changes. We are looking forward to welcoming our new councillors, and rising to the challenges of the coming year.

Dunchurch Broughton Endowed Trust: Trustees Governor report by Greg Irish. (read by Sylvia Jacques)

The Trustee Governors are responsible for administering the Trust fund left to the junior school by a local benefactor Frances Boughton, after whom the school was named.

The last project the trust has contributed to was making improvements and refurbishing the outdoor quad area which the headmaster felt was underutilised. Improvements included better and more versatile seating, replacing the windows and doors, a stage for drama and an area for sporting activities. This work has been completed.

The headmaster has recently left for a new position. New projects have been put on hold pending discussions with the new head once established.

The trust remains in a healthy position.

St Edmunds Church report: by Reverend Pat Townshend (read by Brian Bowsher)

2020 was a very disruptive year for St Edmund's owing to the pandemic, and it was necessary to stop in-church regular services for about half of the year, and to participate at home on the Zoom services run from the Vicarage and St Peter's. Nevertheless, we were able to hold 10 Communion Services, 18 weekly half hour reflective prayer meetings as well as a Remembrance service outside by the Cross. Sadly, we were not able to run our Easter Services in St Edmund's, but we were open for the Christmas Day Service, though not for a Carol service or a St Edmund's Day service, a loss deeply felt.

Throughout the year, the committee has been involved in the renovation of the Church House since the death of the previous tenant, who had lived there for some 35 years. The lack of income was a major issue for us, and it was necessary to make a large investment in the renovation work to bring the premises up to a modern standard to be able to let it again. This was enabled by a very generous bequest from the Baugh family, who were strong supporters of St Edmund's over many years and gave us the beautiful stained-glass window admired by so many. Church House has now been let again, improving our finances, and should enable us to keep the church roof in a reasonable state, which is a continuing concern. Lockdowns through the year have made it impossible to help run the regular social events such as the coffee mornings, reading club and sketching activities which normally would take place. When possible, fund raising events took place outside to support the village and Myton Hospice. We have a faithful band of people who help to run the church; cleaning, providing and arranging the flowers, playing the music, keeping things in good repair and enabling us to run services. Special mention must be made of the additional work needed last year in organising and overseeing the refurbishment of Church House, which should provide us with better financial security.

I ask again, as indeed I asked last year: What does the village want of the church? Is it important to this village that St Edmund's continue? If this is the case, I need to remind people once again that our congregation is ageing, and if the Church's presence in Thurlaston is to continue for future generations, we need more involvement from villagers in terms of direction and participation.

This is a difficult problem but, with the grace of God and the efforts of God's people, St Edmund's will flourish and carry his love into the world for many generations to come.

Poors Plot Charity: Report by Cat Sabine, Clerk, and read by Sylvia Jacques, Parish Clerk.

With a grant of 43 acres of land, the Poors Plot Charity was founded in 1728. The land was divided up so that the poor of the village could grow crops to help support their families. Only a few plots now remain, these are referred to as the "allotments". The rest of the land is rented to two tenant farmers; together they provide the charity with its income. The charity is registered with the charity commission and its objectives are:

"To relieve either generally or individually persons resident in the Parish of Thurlaston who are in condition of need, hardship and distress"

Until recently money was mainly distributed to people of the village for help with winter fuel bills, coal and electricity etc. We are strictly bound to the conditions of the charity but are always looking into ways of using a portion of the income to benefit people in the village. Two years ago, we increased the level of Educational Grant available towards any young person resident in the village who is going on to further education of any kind, from £250 to £300. If anyone would like some financial assistance towards their further education then please contact the charity secretary, or one of the trustees.

The Poors plot email address is catsabine@outlook.com

Anyone who wishes to apply for a grant, please send an email to our clerk at this email address and she will send you an application form. If you prefer you can contact one of the trustees, all details are available on the village notice board, or can be obtained from the clerk. Please note that all grants and applications for them remain strictly confidential. We have not had any face-to-face meetings in the last 12 months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have however, made a couple of grants (which due to their nature will remain anonymous.) We have increased the rents on our farmland this year to bring them in line to local prices. We continue to offer help & support to those that need it.

The next meeting of the trustees will be held on Monday 20th September 2021.

The balance of the charity accounts at 31st December 2020 was £42,935, which is very healthy.

Newcombe and Spears Almshouses: Presented by Walter Harvey.

For those who are not aware, the local almshouses are a terrace of six small houses in Dunchurch between the Dun Cow and the Church, opposite the Scott statue and Mops. The charity was founded in 1690 and has run continuously since then. It is for the benefit of Dunchurch and Thurlaston residents and Thurlaston Parish Council appoints one trustee. As with all old buildings last rebuilt in Victorian times there is a constant requirement to repair and refurbish.

The major expenditure in 2018 was for the refurbishment of number two. There was a full refurbishment of the bathroom plus new flooring in the kitchen, lounge and hallway. Redecoration throughout and new carpet in the lounge. This came to £8,000. Number three

had some damp-proof work and subsequent redecoration plus a new storage heater in the lounge. This came to £2500. Number one also had a new storage heater and new shower door totaling £1,700. Minor work in the other almshouses brought the total to £13,500. Number six became vacant in June 2018 a new tenant moved in in January 2019.

In November 2018 we had the quinquennial inspection report for all six almshouses. This is a very detailed report by chartered surveyors on every aspect of the buildings external and internal construction and cost £1,800. Fortunately, it discovered no major problems but highlighted items like blocked drainage gutters and slipped roof slates which require attention before problems develop.

During 2018 expenditure exceeded cash income by some £3,000 but our long-term investments provide reinvested income to cover temporary annual deficits. The Charity funds remain in good order and enable the trustees to maintain comfortable albeit limited accommodation for the residents.

Village Fete 2019: Presented by Sylvia Jacques.

We had the same team as in 2018 for the organising of the Fete, although sadly Karen stepped down because of prior commitments. We thanked her for her hard work running the children's area. Ronnie took over this area and it was a great success.

The date of the Fete was 6th July 2019 and the theme was the 50th anniversary of the Moon Landing.

You may remember we had some exceptional scarecrows again and the yarnbombing decorations were outstanding and supplied by the WI to celebrate their 150 years anniversary.

We had a different Ukulele Band and they kept a jolly atmosphere all afternoon with their music. In the evening, After Dark band played in Main Street and entertained all. The Rugby Beekeepers came again with their bees and honey. Various other stalls and activities as usual with the result of the takings slightly up on the previous year.

We spent some money on repairs to the shed in 2019, the shed was also painted and the hedge and rubble cleared from around the outside to keep a clear pathway around. A barrier was erected at the rear of the shed to keep the soil away. The profits were shared between the Village Hall and the Church.

We had already started to organize the Fete for 2020 and the theme was going to be the Olympics. We were hoping for some more spectacular scarecrows and were thinking up some new games and events. Sadly, as you know we had to cancel this year because of the Coronavirus.

This year, 2021 is still up in the air and we are not 100 certain we shall be able to have a Fete. We are having our meetings very soon to discuss what we will organise We would like to do something and have a few ideas.

The recipients of the Fete money have suffered without the funds that they have come to rely on for the upkeep of the Church and the Village Hall. So, from that perspective we want to raise some money somehow.

Thurlaston Chronicle 2020: presented by Keith Boardman

It was at the 2019 AVM that our long-standing Chronicle Editor, Brian Coleman, announced he wished to step down. Brian has been our village stalwart reporter for more years than he cares to remember. He pleaded for professional help to assist with reports, articles, compositing, stitching together, so that the publication may continue. Then there was a vacuum, no show of hands. Alas 2020 became an annus horribilis and we were left with little to say about all our normal community groups that in previous years have so willingly provided their valuable contributions.

Chronicle 2020 almost never happened. Somehow, I pulled a short straw – and I succumbed to take the post of Interim Editor. Notice ‘interim’ not ‘permanent’. The deal was that I would assemble the Chronicle if others would feed me material. Suddenly a couple of ladies sprang into action and the show was on the road. With wonderful help from our leaders and numerous creative writers and artists material drifted in. The theme of course was life during lockdown. Within three weeks from launch of the idea to fair copy we were ready for printing. As a special treat our Parish Council splashed out and agreed to fund colour printing throughout. Artistic lockdown contributions just had to be reproduced in colour.

So, the Chronicle did appear during August 2020 after all.

Now please no resting on your laurels, I would really love for us to have a permanent editor, and again a plea for an Editor in Chief. The title comes for free! We may want to consider a revamp of the journal, possibly more forward looking than a chronicle. I’m happy to assist technically if I can. However, being a Parish Councillor and undertaking strategic planning duties, acting as publications guru, website editor, ‘Welcome Pack’ editor, and provider of occasional parish office IT support, is plenty thank you.

This was as a result of checking statistics. Need to check where the new Councillors views are, when they come into office.

Thurlaston Website 2020: Presented by Keith Boardman

Norman Lines incubated the website baby. It was his brain child; his ideas are well documented in his 2019 Annual Village Meeting report. I formally joined the Parish Council in January 2019 and the website became my induction challenge. Norman had organised a website platform provider, gave me the keys, and largely left me to it. However, he remains my mentor, for which I’m always most grateful.

During February of that year, I met our website provider and we had a session in a Kenilworth bar, had a beer or two, and I was shown the ropes. I was given the password to get started! First task was to get a domain name – not doing things by halves we went to the Government’s Digital Service - and we became registered with domain thurlaston-pc.gov.uk. The full internet address is therefore:

<http://www.thurlaston-pc.gov.uk>

In broad terms Norman had developed an outline ‘vision’ for the website. This laid the legal foundations for the information that Parish Councils must present – in essence to ensure complete transparency for what we undertake. Examples include:

- Parish Council meeting minutes – I have uploaded all our minutes from 2007 to the

present. These electronic records are our archive which we often refer to. Obviously, Parish Council membership changes with terms of office; to have available records of previous discussions and decisions are very useful; they assist succession planning.

- We have to display numerous parish policies and where relevant procedures to invoke them. To date we have twenty adopted documents ranging from Government transparency requirements to the Emergency Plan and Tree Management.
- For day-to-day villager communications we have started to develop a knowledge base of local major plans and developments, such as with regard to the Rugby Local Plan. We include our responses to all planning applications.
- Finally, we aim to use it as a reference point for village community groups – such as a Ramblers Archive, or details of our Arts & Crafts Group. It's there for all to use – if you have ideas just drop a line to Sylvia, our Parish Clerk, by using a 'Contact us' feature on the website.

Last, but not least, the website itself requires sustainable IT support. Currently all mainstream updates are undertaken by myself. However, we are always on the lookout for building additional resources and resilience. You don't need to be a web expert – familiarity with office and editing programs, digital image editing, and basic computer housekeeping would be a good starting point. Hands on training can follow. Do let the Parish Council know if you would like to be involved.

Open Forum:

Brian Coleman gave thanks to the Parish Council given the way they have had to work during this past year.

Question about the 'Golden Triangle', Tritax, about the hours of work on the site, will road repairs be carried out. John Bretherton (JB) thinks it is 24/7.

The same letting agents Averson Young, are employed by RBC to work on the re-generation of the Town Centre. Occupancy of these buildings was not considered during the planning consent. Keith Boardman (KB) has been in touch with Jeremy Wright to discuss the planning and the views of the RBC.

Brian Coleman (BC) mentioned the Climate Emergency that does not seem to be taken into consideration.

Discussion followed regarding Tritax and RBC.

Mary Cook asked about Thurlaston Meadows (TM) application. JB said that R20/1030 seems to be on the back burner for now. There were several reports missing from the application and RBC requested the applicant provide further detail, but this has not yet been received. Several TPO's have been issued. A few new signs have appeared adjacent to the footpath as it crosses the site, warning pedestrians to stay on the path. While RBC awaits the requested information, the Planning Officer (Joanne Orton) has decided to postpone visiting the site for herself. TPC will continue to monitor and follow up.

KB stated the latest application R21/0152 for TM has to be treated as an individual application but if considered together with R20/1020 there will be a conflicts with regard to land utilization and road layout.

Norman Lines (NL) could not get any information from the Planning Portal to view responses to TM, which everyone is entitled but these have to be requested. NL had some ideas for the next way forward. Some of the points the inspector raised seem to have been overlooked.

Various issues discussed on the planning side. Considering asking barrister for an opinion.

Sustrans 41, planning committee next week, extension of line Offchurch to Long Itchington.

Future Business:

None

The meeting was closed at 9.00pm.

Date of the next Annual Village meeting will be a Thursday in March or April 2022, date to be arranged. May have to move back to March if in an election year

Minutes by Sylvia Jacques

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Signed by Chair..... Dated..... -