

COUND PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman: Cllr S D Scott
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Clerk: Lisa Harris

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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING Held at 7.30pm on 20 May 2021 at The Guildhall, Cound

Present: Parish Councillors T Roberts (Vice Chairman), B Howarth, S James, R Sartain, R Davies, K Symonds and Shropshire Councillor C Wild

Clerk: Lisa Harris

Also present: Four members of the public including Mr J Hall.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor S Scott (Chairman) and from Sarah Green. The reasons given were accepted by the Council.

2. Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 16 May 2019 were proposed as a true record by Councillor Davies, seconded by Councillor Sartain and unanimously agreed by all those present as a correct record and duly signed by the Vice Chairman.

3. Any items arising from previous Minutes

Nothing to report

4. Annual report from the Chairman

The last 12 months have been dominated by the Covid pandemic. As a Parish Council we have managed to keep our meetings going with the May 2020 one being our first via Zoom.

In May we were rolling out the free SmartWater kits to all households and by July the signage was up around the Parish.

In July we had notification of the Local Plan Review by Shropshire Council.

In November we had notice that our Clerk, Kathy Symonds, was retiring and the process was started to find a new Clerk. Lisa Harris was appointed and started on 1 February 2021.

In November it was agreed to ask Shropshire Council to do a Traffic Speed survey on the A458 at Cound Park, at the request of a local resident. We were given the results in January which showed that the speeding was not excessive.

In January we set the precept at £5756 which is the same that it has been for the last 3 years.

We were notified of Community Governance Reviews that will take place after the May Elections. We will have to wait and see if this will affect Parish Councils.

In March we awarded our Environmental Maintenance Contract to a new contractor after consideration of two quotes.

We were given first sight of plans to improve the line of access onto Cound Arbour Bridge by Shropshire Council.

Major work has begun this year by Greene King at the Riverside Inn. We learnt of the sad death of Hillary Cuffley, a resident of Cound who had been a Parish Councillor for many years.

In May the Parish Council was up for election, but with only eight applications we did not need an election.

Simon Scott

5. Annual report from the Ward Councillor

What a year this has been! This time last year I reflected upon how things had changed due to the onset of the pandemic. Little did we know then that 12 months later, we would only just be coming out of our 3rd lockdown and that this will be our first face-to-face meeting.

Although awful, Covid has shown the best of us in our community reactions. The community support groups that have grown up, volunteering, looking out for each other and of course the recent testing and vaccination successes that shines a light to the "new normal". Atcham residents are lucky to have such a dedicated and hardworking collection of Councillors who have supported our community in so many ways during the Pandemic.

I pay tribute to all our healthcare workers who have worked in unbelievably tough conditions, and all front-line workers who have kept us fed, safe, taught our children and frankly just kept us going. I also pay tribute to the staff at Shropshire Council who have had to learn new roles at short notice to react to the pandemic. Council staff are slowly returning to their substantive posts but there is a considerable number of staff that continue to work across track and trace and testing and vaccine centres.

The pandemic has brought out the absolute best of our community spirit and kindness and I sincerely hope that this spirit continues well after the pandemic has been controlled.

Planning Matters

Cound remains Open Countryside in the local plan but there is little doubt that proposed development in the surrounding areas will impact on us.

Budget

The Council's finances have again come under enormous pressure, Covid has played a huge part in this but thankfully funds from Central Government have helped offset some of the expenditure and loss of income but not all. We have seen significant additional pressure in costs for Children's Social Care with the number of looked after children almost doubling in 12 months.

Council agreed in February 2021 to increase Council tax by 1.99% which equates to approximately £3.5M, in addition the government Social Care precept of 3% was requested by

the officers but members reduced it from 3% to 2% for this financial year. However, the 3.99% increase in Council tax does not even cover the increased Children's Social Care budget. We continue to lobby government for levelling up funding. Unfortunately, the Fairer Funding Review did not take place due to the pandemic, but we are told it will be undertaken later this year.

Highways

Over the past year Highways and the lack of communication and getting the job done has been a real issue for many residents and Shropshire Councillors alike. Shropshire Council has 3,200 miles of roads to maintain, one third are A & B roads, two thirds are C roads or unclassified. Two thirds of the resources are spent on the A& B roads leaving insufficient funds for our C and unclassified roads.

We seemed to make really good progress on potholes during the early part of 2020 but by January of this year we seemed to be back at square one. It is very apparent that whilst some roads just need potholes sorting out many roads require major works. The budget available for this work is not sufficient and a promise has been made by my group to invest an additional 40M over the next four years. We, alongside many other rural councils, are also working with our MPs and government committees to instil on the government that more funds are needed for our roads. We are winning some battles, but the war is yet to be won! Over the past 6 weeks I have driven and walked the whole Parish 3 times and have reported all the potholes that I encountered; I have to say that some were absolutely horrible. On my last drive around many had been filled in and hopefully over the next four years we will see a marked improvement in the state of our roads.

Local Issues

Cound bridge has been damaged yet again, there are plans to improve access onto the bridge in the Capital budget. The bridge engineer will be meeting the PC on site shortly to discuss signage and the proposed scheme in detail next month.

Air band and their poles have causes quite a few issues, Tim Roberts and I have had several site meetings and Teams meetings have been held on different occasions with the PC to discuss the many issues that have arisen. Hopefully the majority of the issues have now been resolved.

I have always enjoyed working with Cound Parish Council and look forward to working with you over the next four years.

Claire Wild

6. Parish Matters

None notified.

The meeting closed at 7.33pm.

Signed:
Chairman

Date: