

## ECCLESHALL PARISH COUNCIL – ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

APRIL 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011

The Parish Meeting of Eccleshall Parish Council was held on Wednesday April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at the Community Centre, Shaws Lane, Eccleshall at 7.30p.m.

**1). Present were:-**

Councillor G. Dale (Chair)	Councillor D. Pimble
Councillor P. Jones	Councillor J. Pert
Councillor B. Apps	Councillor P. Baskerville
Councillor G. Garner	Councillor L. von Elbing
Councillor M. Starkey	Councillor P. Allsop
Borough / County Councillor H. Butter	
Helen Dale – Staffordshire Wildlife Trust	
Mrs. C. Heelis (Clerk)	17 members of the public

**Apologies were received from:-** Councillors Amos and J. Jones, Borough Councillor F. Chapman Mrs K. Bridgwood (Croxtan Methodist Church),

**2). Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010** – The minutes, which had been previously ratified by the Council were presented to the meeting and copies were attached to the agendas.

**3). Presentation – Jackson’s Marsh and Coppice:-** Helen Dale from Staffordshire Wildlife Trust explained about the formation of a boardwalk in 2007 and the clearing of Walk Mill Pool, which had led to an increase in wildlife and visitors. The Trust was seeking to encourage local groups and young people to get involved and enjoy the marsh and coppice and the abundant wildlife. The Chairman indicated that the boardwalk was an asset to the area and Mrs Dale was thanked for an interesting presentation.

**4). Chairman’s welcome and report:-** The Chairman welcomed those present. Councillor Dale presented an overview of the Council’s activities throughout the year.

The Chairman stated that the Parish Council had applied for and received grants towards kissing gates and milestones in the Parish. Unfortunately, funding from the Borough Council had been reduced for 2011/12 by £1200 and after much debate it had been decided to increase the precept from £47,500 to £48,700, an increase of 0.54p per annum for a Band D property.

No elections were required for the Parish Council on May 5<sup>th</sup> and vacancies on the Horsley and Croxtan Wards would be filled by co-options. Two new members would join the Council in May, Mrs Mary Dodkins and Mr David Jacques.

A decision on plans for the development of 85 dwellings on land at the rear of the Community Centre had been deferred due to insufficient space about dwellings and amended plans had been submitted for 82 houses. Disappointingly, there had been no consultation with the Parish Council or local residents.

The Parish Council had launched a campaign to save local bus services and residents had been encouraged to write to the County Council and MP Bill Cash. D & G buses had taken over and were providing an excellent service. The message to residents was ‘use it or lose it.’

During the year the Council had purchased the open space on Bishops Court. The Parish Council was investigating the provision of some facilities for the young people and was liaising with Jessica Wilkes-Mellor, who had recently conducted a youth survey in the Parish.

The Chairman concluded by thanking the Councillors for their commitment and enthusiasm over the last twelve months and indicated that he was looking forward to working together in the new financial year.

**5). Clerks report and accounts:-** Mrs. Heelis presented the receipts and payments accounts which had been adopted by the Council and audited by the Independent Internal Auditor. The Clerk referred to the Accounts which detailed the diverse range of matters dealt with and supported by the Parish Council together with the numerous grants made during the year to community groups.

- Mr Ranson indicated that he considered an increase to the precept could have been avoided by reducing the grants given local groups, especially churches. It was noted that the amount of

Section 137 expenditure allowed for Eccleshall Parish had been £6.15 per head of population in 2010/11.

#### **6). Reports from Borough / County Councillors:-**

**Councillor H. Butter** reported that he would not be standing as a Borough Councillor in May but would continue to represent Eccleshall Parish as a County Councillor.

Finance from the Local Community Fund had been spent in Eccleshall towards replacement milestones and kissing gates and he was currently working with the Parish Council to replace stiles with kissing gates on another footpath in the Parish.

Councillor Butter indicated that he enjoyed working with the Parish Council and referred to Eccleshall as a beautiful part of Staffordshire.

**Councillor F. Chapman** indicated in an emailed report that he had fought hard to preserve the 432 bus service and was involved in several controversial planning applications. It remained an ambition to see Castle Street improved to the same standards as the rest of the town.

Councillor Chapman was a member of the Environment Scrutiny Committee and as a member of the Health Scrutiny Committee had visited Stafford Hospital to investigate a complaint from a constituent. Cllr Chapman also represented the Borough Council on the Stafford Crime Prevention Panel and the County Council on the Police Authority and was currently addressing the issue of Police Liaison with the Parish Council.

Cllr Chapman indicated that he had enjoyed working with the Parish Council over the last four years and thanked the Chairman, Clerk and Members for the help he had received in representing Eccleshall on the Borough Council.

**Police:-** There was no report to receive.

**7). Reports from Council Committees:-** Reports were received from the Planning, Traffic Management and Enhancements Committees. Copies were available of reports from all the Council Committees.

- Residents of Bishops Court queried what was proposed for the open space. Mr D. Wright asked whether safety surfacing had been considered in conjunction with the proposed swings, together with fencing to keep the dogs out of the area. Mrs Watson indicated that young people of all ages already used the area for football, cricket and riding bicycles. Councillor Dale replied that the scheme was in the very early stages and assured the residents that they would be consulted and allowed an opportunity to have an input into the proposals.
- Mrs Stuart queried whether there were any plans to restock Elford Pool with Fish. Councillor Dale replied that the Council had opted not to introduce any fish at present as the quality of the water remained poor. The fish and terrapin that had been there were from local residents private gardens.

**There followed an interval, during which refreshments were served.**

**8). Reports were received from the following organisations:-** Allotments Association, Eccleshall First Responders, Offley Hay Village Hall, British Legion, Eccleshall in Bloom, St. Chad's Slindon, Eccleshall Scouts, Walton Hall School, Broughton Parish Rooms, St. Peter's Broughton and Eccleshall Community Centre.

**Eccleshall Scouts:-** Mrs. Parton described a scout visit to Siberia in 2010 which had been the culmination of two years of planning and fundraising. The scouts had received a warm welcome and participated in many activities including hiking, caving and fishing. The Council was thanked for the grant, which had helped to facilitate the trip.

**Allotments:-** Mrs Davies reported that 63 of the 65 available plots were currently taken. The Parish Councillors were thanked for supporting proposals for a shelter, toilets and storage facility on the site.

**British Legion:-** Mr McKnight thanked the Parish Council for the contribution towards the cost of the band for Remembrance Sunday and the people of Eccleshall for their kindness and generosity.

**St. Peter's Church, Broughton:-** Councillor Butter indicated that the grant from the Parish Council, which was toward site upkeep of the churchyard was very welcome. The Church had to raise £2000 a year for this purpose and many complements were received on the appearance of the churchyard.

**St. Paul's, Croxton and Broughton Parish Rooms:-** Mrs Roe thanked the Parish Council for the grant towards the upkeep of the churchyard as the area was difficult to maintain and the small congregation was trying hard to preserve a Christian presence in Croxton. Broughton Parish Rooms welcomed funding from the Parish Council and Councillor Butter enabling a digital projector and screen to be purchased in 2010.

**Eccleshall First Responders:-** A new defibrillator had been purchased with funds from the Parish Council, Local Members Initiative Scheme and donations. Mr Watson reported that the new vehicle was being fitted with auxiliary equipment and would be ready for the summer. A new member had been recruited and the group was using the Methodist Church Rooms as a standby post.

**Eccleshall in Bloom:-** Councillor Baskerville thanked the Parish Councillors and the community for their support to provide the floral displays and Christmas trees, which together with annual events such as Open Gardens helped to attract visitors to the town.

**Offley Hay Village Hall:-** Mr Crellin indicated that the committee was grateful for assistance from the Parish Council. The hall was a wonderful facility located in a lovely rural setting and the committee hoped to add a patio area in the summer.

**Walton Hall School:-** Mrs Hill reported that due to a change of Government the School had been unable to attract the sponsorship required to create a theatre. However, the funding received would be used to improve the existing facilities in the hall for the production of plays. The school enjoyed being part of the Community of Eccleshall and Parish Councillors were welcome to attend future productions.

**Community Centre:-** Councillor Dale thanked the Parish Council for support towards the conservatory, which was very popular with the elderly and an asset to the building. The Centre was well used and if potential users could not be accommodated they were often referred to Offley Hay Village Hall.

**9). Any matters of Local or Topical Interest:-** Mrs Watson queried whether anything was being done to prevent parking on Stone Road. Councillor Dale replied that this matter was being monitored by the Traffic Management Committee and evidence would be submitted for consideration at the next meeting of the Local Parking Committee in October.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending what had been a very interesting and worthwhile meeting.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.30pm.