

Linkinhorne Parish Council

Annual Parish Meeting

Monday 8 April 2013

Linkinhorne Parish Hall, Upton Cross

Minutes

Apologies: Cllr Horrell, Reverend Tony Stephens, Renata Hunter (PTFA)

Present: Gary Bayles, Samuel Bayles, Cllr Chris Boarland, Catherine Brunsdon, Pat Chubb (Pastoral Team), Cllr Steve Couch, Roger Cullingham (PRoW), Cllr Chris Daniel, Norma Draper (Community Lunches), Cllr Carl Hearn, Gayle Hollington-Wyatt (UX Drop In), Louise Hopes (The Link), Cllr Malcolm Hopes (PC Chairman), Cllr Christine Hordley, Simon Hordley, Cllr Alex Huke (Maker with Rame PC), Zena Jones (RMVH, Lunch Club, Tuesday Trekkers), Cllr David Lobban, Cllr Beryl Martin, Mavis MacLeod (WI), Richard Masson, Sue Morton (Linkinhorne WI), Cllr Sean Moyse, Brian Norris (UX Drop In Centre), Michelene Norris (Community Lunches), Tom Pawley (Henwood Village Society), Karen Renshaw, Cllr Carol Stansfield, Julia Todd (Parish Clerk), Mike Todd (History group), Cornwall Cllr John Turner, Cllr Bernard Wooster (PC Vice Chairman)

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Monday 16 April 2012 were signed and approved as an accurate record.

Councillor Alex Huke, Maker with Rame Parish Council on

'Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP)'

Alex Huke talked about his experience and the process of setting up a NDP. He explained the purpose of a NDP, that it gives communities the opportunity to shape their own future, giving local councils the power to, for example, define development (housing, renewable energy, etc) within their community, and assume responsibility for local services (Community Right to Challenge). He pointed out the importance and challenges of establishing a steering group of several parishes involving members of the community, interest groups, and landowners. He explained that the Parish Councils' involvement is to manage the project 'from the wings' with the emphasis on the wider community taking centre stage. He urged those present to participate in the current consultation for the new Cornwall Local Plan as any NDP would need to accord with the final version. He explained that the project should result in a referendum but only if it passes the scrutiny of Secretary of State for Communities.

In answer to questions from the meeting he spoke of the difficulties of gaining public support, maintaining motivation, and attracting funding to support the administration of the project. It relied almost exclusively upon volunteers. Expert help and advice had also been patchy. However, there was now more funding from central government, and

groups such as the Cornwall Rural Community Council were giving useful assistance, particular with admin tasks.

There was also conflict arising due to different visions between the parishes in the group but on the whole it was considered to be an advantage to set up a NDP as a group of communities. Alex kindly brought some handouts which will also be made available on the Linkinhorne website.

Chairman's Report

This completes the sixth and final year of this present Parish Council – an unprecedented period in modern times. While my report should rightly concentrate on events of the past year it may be appropriate also to make some reference to the term as a whole.

In the course of the year I was sorry to receive their respective resignations as Parish Councillors from Richard Masson and Kim Gilbert. Both were very long serving members of this Council but each left for entirely understandable personal reasons. In their place and to fill a vacancy outstanding at the end of last year we were glad to welcome Sarah Coombs, Carol Stansfield and Chris Boarland.

So what have we achieved in the last twelve months? Nothing, I think, of major significance to the community as a whole but a number of more local items which we believe to have been of benefit to those concerned. In no particular order, the War Memorial has been cleaned and its railings repainted and now looks more fitting for those whose memories it honours. We finally have the promised parking restriction markings in Upton Cross which do seem to have alleviated some of the parking problems in that area. Thanks in no small part to the continuous efforts of our ever supportive Cornwall Councillor, John Turner, and pressure from the Parish Council there seems to have been a significant improvement in the reliability of the collection of our refuse and recycling which was causing us all so much grief this time last year. We at last have a new goal net, some new litter bins and some more picnic benches on Jubilee Field. The benches are going to be anchored to fixed positions to try to stop them being misused as play equipment or means of climbing the boundary wall. I am not sure how much credit we can take for this but it is good that at least a large part of the Parish can now have access to the new superfast broadband service. I suppose we did have a hand in finding a site for the new green box in Rilla Mill though none of us expected it to be fixed at ground level in a flood meadow! A start has been made on refurbishing the various Parish notice boards where necessary (which may explain to those who noticed the temporary removal of the board in the Parish Hall car park). The new and lockable board at present close to the shop will also be resited in the car park where it will hopefully be more accessible. We are grateful to the 1st Linkinhorne Scout Group for agreeing to undertake regular cleaning of the bus shelter at Minions in return for a modest contribution to Group funds – a welcome example of community help. Finally we were pleased to be able to keep at the same figure as last year the amount of our annual precept which is included in your Council Tax.

On the planning front we have considered and commented on the usual substantial array of applications though there is a feeling that Planning Officers are beginning to take less notice of the views of consultees such as our Council. This, of course, flies in the face of the Government's much vaunted "localism" policy. What a surprise! We were, however,

particularly pleased that the new owners of the old Methodist Chapel in Rilla Mill felt encouraged, in advance of any formal planning application, to come to one of our meetings to explain in some detail their aims and plans for the building and to hold open sessions when those interested could walk round, see what was envisaged and make their comments. This is a dominant and sensitive building within the community and such consultation for a potentially major development can only be welcomed.

This is my one chance publicly to express my personal thanks to all those Parish Councillors who have so willingly and, of course, freely given of their time, knowledge and experience, not just over the past twelve months but in many cases the whole six years (and often more). Regardless of whether they are looking to continue or calling it a day we all have every reason to be very grateful to them for what they have contributed.

My thanks would not be complete without including our long suffering Parish Clerk, Julia Todd. Much of what she does for the community is unseen by most. While she is rightly paid (modestly by modern standards) I know from personal experience that she labours very many more hours than her contract requires. She disarmingly explains that she always expected to be putting something back into the community! Without her quiet guidance and advice, my job would have been immeasurably more difficult if not, frankly, impossible.

Overall I believe we as a Council have much to be satisfied with over the past six years but where perhaps could we have done better? I think our biggest disappointment was our attempt, started all those years ago, to review and refresh our Parish Plan. You may remember the questionnaire that so many of you completed in 2010. I believe that with the aid of assistance paid for out of a grant we may be about to see some results though the role of the Parish Plan has by now largely been superseded by its successor, the Neighbourhood Development Plan, of which you have heard much tonight. We largely failed with our laudable attempt with the Parish Plan because its success depended on work by community volunteers other than Councillors. In the end just not enough came forward to finish the job. You have heard that a Neighbourhood Development Plan will require at least as much reliable and committed volunteer effort. Does it still exist in our small community? You will have to decide.

So what do we leave for our successor Council to work on? I hope that we do not leave too many loose ends as we reach the end of our time but subject to any late withdrawals I see that we only have 9 nominees for the 13 places on the new Council. At least we will save the cost of an election but perhaps it is time for us to consider if a small parish such as ours really should still be expected to choose 13 Councillors when I know of many larger ones with fewer.

Its most pressing problem, however, is likely to be with the toilets at Minions. We only heard in the last few days that Cornwall Council has decided no longer to maintain them. We were told that unless our Parish took them over they would be closed from today. We have secured a stay of execution until the end of July but unless by then Truro can be persuaded to change its mind, hard decisions will have to be made on whether to take them over and, if so, how many sets of public toilets a small Parish like ours can reasonably afford.

Clearly there is also work to be done on Jubilee Field. It is perhaps disappointing that the Jubilee Field Recreation Committee that was started just a year ago and to which I made

encouraging reference in my Report last year has so far failed to offer us any advice or make any public report. Perhaps there just is no enthusiasm among the families of the field's main users to do anything about it. The new Council will have to decide. Another and personal concern of mine is our web site which I believe is now looking a bit dated and doing scarce justice to us. The only item in the "News" section is dated January 2008! I know there is some provision in our budget for next year to look at this so it could be an interesting project.

This concludes my spell as your Chairman. Fortunately our Standing Orders limit any Councillor to a maximum of three consecutive years in office. It has been an interesting three years! But it has also had significant moments of pleasure and even of satisfaction. Thank you for putting up with me. I wish my successor and indeed the whole new Council all good fortune.

Malcolm Hopes

Cornwall Councillor's Report

CCllr John Turner spoke to the APM for the last time as out-going Cornwall Councillor, a role which has involved much hard work and many hours in Truro. He praised Linkinhorne Parish Council as an exemplar of the bottom tier of local government and thanked members and officer for their efforts. He commented that he had not been in favour of the unitary council but acknowledged that it had achieved many savings. The struggle to save will continue in the face of further government cuts to local councils. He expressed his dismay that Cornwall Council has persisted in its Truro-centrism and this has become starkly obvious in the light of the recent decision to close the public toilets at Minions; a decision that John finds particularly disgraceful given the investment in the World Heritage Site.

John also stated that by not raising the Council Tax a little this year will have dire consequences for next year since an 8% increase is now anticipated. He also noted that the Caradon Community Network was an excellent example of how such organisations should work.

In closing he thanked everyone for their support and for the privilege of working for the community.

Cllr Hopes, on behalf of the parish, offered sincere thanks to John for all the work and support he has given.

Open Session

Q – if we are to keep BT telephone kiosks, as the Parish Council had decided, in the parish please could they be properly maintained or, if not, removed?

A – the Parish Council requested that they remain for the sake of emergency calls since there are areas in the parish where mobile signals are unobtainable. It was **agreed** that the clerk would take up the matter with BT. A resident of Henwood commented that the locals keep the kiosk in Henwood clean and tidy.

Q – was the Parish Council aware of the prospect of a wind turbine of industrial size in South Hill but close to Linkinhorne? The questioner noted that it would be three times the height of Nelson’s Column.

A – yes the Parish Council was aware but is not a consultee on applications outside of the parish. The application is going to planning committee this week.

Q – when will Linkinhorne Parish Council begin the NDP process?

A – it has not been decided whether or not one would be considered but, in any case, it would need considerable support and volunteer time from the community at large in the parish.

No further questions being raised the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting closed at 8.10pm.