

Linkinhorne Annual Parish Meeting

Monday 12 April 2010 at 7.00pm
Linkinhorne Parish Hall, Upton Cross

Minutes

The Chairman, Cllr Masson, spoke about the achievements in the Parish and the District Councils of George Wilson who sadly passed away on Friday. One minute's silence was observed out of respect for George.

Apologies: Kate Crawshaw (Farmers' Market), Rev Marilyn Elliott, Roger Halliday (Duchy of Cornwall), Michael Hinks (Cornwall Council), Oliver Jones (Cornwall Council Highways), Jonathan Luker (Cornwall Council Planning), Christopher Lunn (Affordable Housing), Julia Sanchez (LAHA)
Cllr Hearn, Cllr Roberts

Present: Joy Cullingham, Roger Cullingham, L Ford (DCRO), L Hopes, M Horrell, M J Horrell, Z Jones, B A Norris, M A Norris, Mark O'Brien, M Wemys, G Wooster
Cllr Daniel, Cllr Dilworth, Cllr Gilbert, Cllr Hopes, Cllr Hordley, Cllr Horrell, Cllr Lobban, Cllr Martin, Cllr Masson (chairman), Cllr Todd, Cornwall Cllr Turner, Cllr Wooster
Julia Todd (clerk)

Minutes of the Meeting of Tuesday 14 April 2009 proposed and seconded were approved as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

'Caradon Community Network'

Mark O'Brien, the manager of the new Caradon Community Network, introduced the organisation and gave a talk on its conception and function. He described it as a brand new approach, committed to providing a strong voice for local communities by grouping together small parish and town councils under the umbrella of the Community Network. Concerns had previously been expressed regarding the possibility of the unitary Cornwall Council becoming Truro-centric, but Mark's brief is that this does not happen. The 'Localism' department under which he operates recognises that different communities have different needs and priorities; it ensures that local people have a say in the plans and priorities for their own area, and that the services are what the local people want. In Cornwall a total of 19 Community Networks have been created; our CN comprises a cluster of parishes, and Callington Town Council. It had been intended to name the CN, Callington Community Network, but the members of the area objected and chose to name it Caradon Community Network. Mark's key role is to support the elected Cornwall councillors, researching, reaching out to and assembling people and groups. He liaises with Town and Parish Councils and will shortly be including those in the voluntary sector to identify specific needs and give support and guidance in fulfilling them. Noting the needs of Linkinhorne Parish Hall and local football groups, to name but two examples, he offered time to help and advise with funding for such projects. The Caradon CN panel meetings take place every other month. It had been agreed that structuring the meetings around a theme was a good approach and enable priorities

to be considered and decided upon with the service providers. This enables them to understand what works for the local community, and identify its needs. For example, the last meeting was concerned with housing, both affordable and otherwise, and was attended by Cornwall Council planning officers who responded to a series of questions on this subject. To sum up his role, Mark explained to the meeting that if something was not working or there were difficulties in moving forward in the community Mark and his team there to assist. He insisted that the CN is not another level of bureaucracy but there to help give voice and support; it can influence service providers and help to direct spending for the benefit of local people. Mark then invited questions from the floor.

Q If, as has been said, the meetings will be public; are they? How are they published?

A The decision on public access and publishing is taken by each panel. This area has decided upon holding public meetings. They are announced in 'Cornwall Matters' in the Cornish Times, but Parish Councils could advertise them as well. Mark pointed out that the CNs are independent of Cornwall Council and Town/Parish Councils.

Q Do the CNs have a website?

A Caradon Community Network has a page on Cornwall Council's website; it is managed by Rosemary Stone but panel members can tailor the page to suit the needs of their own community.

(Grateful thanks from Parish Councillors were reiterated for the help and support with administering the Parish Plan questionnaire).

Q A member of the public expressed concern that individual parishes' needs will not be met.

A Mark feels that Cornwall Council having set up the service for Cornwall Councillors, provided the opportunity to assemble the smaller groups in the community, and the strong voice it gives them with ensure that they are heard. Q If there are issues bordering other CNs i.e. Launceston, how will these be dealt with?

A They (the CNs) meet frequently to work out issues, recognising the differences between communities but pulling things together where interests were common.

The Chairman commented that both he and the Vice-chairman had first attended the CN meeting with scepticism, but increasingly it was clear that, sitting with other Town/Parish Councils, the meetings were taking shape. Both councillors are now more confident that we will have more influence in Truro. It was, however, still early days but they are being won around.

A member of the public commented that there seemed to be no difference between the CN and the old District Council. Mark explained the functions of the DC had been absorbed into the unitary council and that savings within departments at Cornwall Council level were not obvious on a day to day basis, but there are fewer personnel. Cornwall Council was obliged to ensure service continuity, therefore there is a transition period, working behind the scenes to make use of existing forces and merging departments in order to make efficiencies. The CN provides a voice, help and support to access, but does not provide, the services.

There being no further questions the Chairman expressed grateful thanks to Mark.

Chairman's Report

2009/10 has been a year of beginnings and endings. From April last year the new unitary council, now named Cornwall Council came into existence. This signalled the end for the old Cornwall County Council and for our local district Council, Caradon. We as Linkinhorne Parish now work through a Local Community Network called Caradon Community Network and for an increasing number of things, direct with Cornwall Council in Truro. This transition has not been easy and with the County's stated aim of saving many millions of pounds we have to be vigilant. Many functions are in transition and your parish council continues to make strenuous efforts to ensure that local services do not suffer.

You will not need me to tell you that the past year has been a difficult time financially. Your council has been as frugal as possible in its spending and has restricted future projects to ensure that Council Tax rises, where we can influence them are kept to a minimum.

At the Parish Meeting in April 2009 a request was made for the council to provide allotments in the parish. I have to tell you that I was quite staggered to see those facilities available to the newly formed Linkinhorne Allotments Association by December last. Considering the amount of study, lobbying and ground work required to complete such a project, to have the ground available, fenced, and tenancy agreements in place in just eight months is a tremendous achievement. For this I recognise the hard work and dedication of a few of your councillors and the kind assistance of Mr Michael Horrell of Yonder Netherton who so readily and reasonably leased us a suitable parcel of land. I also acknowledge the grant made available to us through Cornwall Councillor John Turner which helped facilitate the scheme.

Another major event of last year was the completion of our Affordable Housing Project in Upton Cross. The twelve new units at Marke Valley View became available for occupation from August 2009 and are now almost completely filled. This achievement, of which we are justifiably proud grew out of the first Linkinhorne Parish Plan and I cannot describe to you the vast amount of dedicated work put into the scheme by your parish council and particularly by some individual councillors.

That Parish Plan, published in 2003 is now out of date and the goals set within it largely met. We are in the midst of compiling a new plan and you will all have received and hopefully returned, questionnaires asking what changes and improvements you would like in your parish over the coming years. If all goes well the new plan will be published in the autumn.

I am now reaching the end of my tenure as Chairman of Linkinhorne Parish Council. It has been a testing time, particularly through the consultation period and birth of the Unitary Council and I would like to thank all those who have supported me over the past three years and given me the satisfaction of seeing so many projects, large and small brought to successful conclusions

I have of course had the support of our Parish Clerks during that time and would like to thank them, past and present for their help. My thanks are also due once again to the Footpaths Committee for maintaining these important arteries within our rural parish and to the various unsung sub-committees and working groups who beaver away for the benefit of our community. I would also like to thank our Cornwall

Councillor Mr John Turner for his interest in our parish work and for the support and dedication of PC Garth Hatt and his team.

Cornwall Councillor's Report

Cornwall Councillor John Turner commented that the transition to unitary council had been quite a task. Instead of representing one community his 'patch' is now much bigger but is more interesting. He expressed sincere enjoyment in working with the small councils. He informed the meeting that the process of moving six into one was not easy; there had been different systems across the services, particularly in finance and IT structures that needed to be rationalised. Many staff members were upset at the new way of working with new jobs being created and losing old ones etc, and there are still problems with staff morale. It is a people problem not structural. The savings predicted were on target for the future but re-structuring costs are, for the moment, on-going. Cuts will come and need to be managed. Cllr Turner emphasised the benefits of the 23 one-stop shops, particularly in Callington and Saltash. If immediate answers to queries are not always forthcoming the staff can soon find out. In response to a comment from the meeting he said that staff from Westbourne House in Liskeard had been permitted to use parking facilities at Luxstowe House. He also informed the meeting that feasibility of selling off surplus buildings was being considered. He noted that the service that deals with car parking has moved from Liskeard to Bodmin, although the reason for doing so was not clear. A single website for information and services is now available. Cllr Turner expressed the importance of having a local voice (localism) and having it heard but feels that there is still a danger of losing it. Those in Truro ignore the needs of the part of Cornwall, especially in the domain of economic development and health, but he continues to fight to keep Truro's sights on SE Cornwall.

There is now a single housing register, making it easy to apply; Western Morning News on Saturday, one stop shops, and the website give details. Local priorities are still retained within the local area. Planning has also been standardised, instead of different rules for each district, it now focuses on bringing Town/Parish Councils into the decision-making process (within the rules) offering the opportunity for local influence.

On the subject of waste management the proposal for an incinerator at St Dennis was refused but by 2016 all landfill in Cornwall will be full and will come to Cannon bridge. An appeal process is in place and the outcome will be available later in this year but the need to find a solution is urgent.

Cllr Turner was pleased that Upton Cross traffic calming scheme is some way to being resolved, that Highways is taking more notice. The scheme is improved now that the trees are cut and the build-out removed. The problems with gritting over the winter will be reviewed and councillors' opinions will be sought. Cllr Turner invited questions from the floor.

Q Since there are current waste depots still around why can't incinerators be placed on those sites?

A The costs of small incinerators may be the problem but fewer across county will be considered.

Q Why is it that the design and safety concerns of the traffic calming were not addressed by the experts before committing to building?

A The staff at Highways are well-qualified but are not practical, and do not complete jobs properly.

Q Why do the design staff and the safety staff not collaborate before building?

A They do not always talk to each other.

The view was expressed that a roundabout would have worked but councillors were told it was too expensive. It seemed that Highways were in a rush to spend the money on the scheme and now the mistakes are costing even more. Cllr Turner agreed.

Q On what grounds was the incinerator refused at St Dennis?

A The impact on the landscape regarding the size of building and traffic on approach to the site. It had been impossible to design these out.

Q Amazement was expressed that the problem of waste disposal has dragged on; should we not look at existing sites and consider how we can use waste more sustainably.

A Many systems are being considered, including new ones, those that are more sustainable; but warned that it will drag on for some time.

Q If Cornwall Council is supposed to be making savings, how can it justify wasting money over the traffic scheme?

A The costs quoted in the press were not correct. It had always been County that dealt with highways' matters.

A lack of confidence was expressed by the questioner in the ability of Highways to do a good job following the problems in Liskeard then at Upton Cross.

Q Why the name 'one-stop shop'?

A It would be just that, but some specific queries may need to be referred. The service has been used a great deal and is more comprehensive than before.

Q How long would it be until Cornwall Council adopted the new development framework for planning?

A Planning policy documents will be ready for consultation by 2011; this was confirmed by Mark O'Brien. Priority planning, i.e. for affordable housing, was being brought forward.

The Chairman expressed thanks to Cornwall Cllr Turner who then departed the meeting.

Open Session for any other matters

Q Can the Parish Council have any influence in achieving repairs to the affordable housing, in particular those houses damaged in the recent fire?

A The Parish Council can only ask questions. It was agreed that the clerk would contact West Country Housing and Cornwall Council to establish the situation.

Q How many Parish Plan questionnaires had been returned?

A 298 (40%)

Prize Draw of the Parish Plan questionnaires received prior to 15 March 2010
Mark O'Brien kindly consented to drawing the tickets and the results are as follows:

1st 554, 2nd 173, 3rd 073

The remaining tickets will be kept in case a re-draw is necessary in the event that prizes are unclaimed.

Thanks were expressed for the work of the Parish Council, and for donations to the Luncheon Club and to the cost of grass-cutting at Parsons' Meadow.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm

*Councillor Richard Masson
Chairman
Linkinhorne Parish Council
6 April 2010*