



Ashchurch Rural Parish Council

Draft Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting
held at Ashchurch Village Hall, Ashchurch Road,
Ashchurch, Gloucestershire. GL20 8LA on 20 May 2024

Venue: Ashchurch Village Hall, Ashchurch, Gloucestershire. GL20 8LA

Present: Cllr. T. Davies, (Chairman), Cllrs. R. Drewitt, D. Garnett, G. Grey, I. Parker and B. Wright.

Attendees: J. Owen, (Clerk), L. Beech, (Assistant Clerk), B. Cllr. Mel Gore and three members of the public.

20.5.24.1 **Welcome by the Chairman of Ashchurch Rural Parish Council**

20.5.24.2 **To receive and consider apologies for absence and confirm the meeting is quorate**

Apologies received from Cllr. S. Mitchell, C. Cllr. Vernon Smith, PCSO, Representatives from Ashchurch Village Hall and St. Nicholas Church.

20.5.24.3 **To receive the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meetings held on 11 March 2023**

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meetings held on 11 March 2023 were signed by the Chairman.

20.5.24.4 **To receive the following reports:**

4.1 Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr. T. Davies gave his Annual Report, see Appendix 1.

4.2 St. Nicholas Church – a report was received, see Appendix 2.

4.3 Ashchurch Village Hall – a report was received, see Appendix 3.

4.4 Save Our Lanes – J. McAulay gave a report – see Appendix 4

4.5 Pamington Residents Association – R. Drewitt gave a report – see Appendix 5

4.6 Local Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) – PCSO sent apologies but no report received

4.7 Tewkesbury Borough Council – B. Cllr. M. Gore gave a report which included the following:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) had been reviewed which included various reforms relating to green belt and agricultural land, increases in energy/carbon efficiency requirements
- A new Strategic and Local Plan consultation had been completed, the next stage would be Regulation 18 in June 2024, with adoption expected 2026-2027
- A review of the Garden Town identified 17 recommendations. The renamed Garden Communities project now had greater emphasis on engagement and a charter was created and adopted by Tewkesbury Borough Council (TBC). It was hoped stakeholders would endorse the charter designed to help shape future development
- North Ashchurch Consortium were continuing consultation with TBC

• TBC had recently launched a public consultation regarding a proposed name change to North Gloucestershire Council at a cost of £10,000
Councillor Gore thanked Ashchurch Rural Parish Council and residents for their support throughout the year.
Councillors and members of the public were very unhappy about the proposed name change and associated costs which comes from public money.
The Chairman reported on site allocations and confirmed ARPC would not be allocating sites. Cllr. Gore said it was a missed opportunity by TBC not supporting the parish councils. Members were disappointed plans from 1988 for A46 relief road were not carried through.

4.8 Tewkesbury Borough Council – No apologies or report received from B. Cllr. C. Coleman

4.9 Gloucestershire County Council – a report was received from C. Cllr. V. Smith, see Appendix 6

20.5.24.5 **To receive questions from members of the public**

A member of the public stated that she was interested in establishing a Resident’s Association in Aston on Carrant, she thanked Cllr. Drewitt for his assistance and confirmed she would need support with this.
Suggestions were received for a different room layout for future meetings in the village hall due to the acoustics.
Members of the public stated that they were against the development in the parish.

Meeting closed at 18.52pm

Signed Date
Chairman of Ashchurch Rural Parish Council

The draft Minutes will be signed at the next Annual Parish Minutes

Appendix 1

Chairman’s Annual Report – May 2024

This is my first year acting as Chairman of Ashchurch Rural Parish Council and it has certainly been one of significant activity and ongoing development. My colleague David Garnett was elected as Deputy Chairman.

The year started with elections to the Parish Council and we welcomed 4 new members following the retirements of long serving members - John Hargreaves – Chairman, Angela Brown Gordon Shurmer both of whom are former Chairmen and the passing of Dave Street all of whom served the parish for many years between them and we thank them for their service and commitment to the community.

New members are Ian Parker, Sue Mitchell, Richard Drewitt and Gareth Gray

Subsequently Brian Cook also retired and we have thus also co-opted a new member – Ben Wright. We thank Brian for his commitment to the community as well

The new members have all brought a new enthusiasm to the parish council and have embraced the many issues that we as a Parish Council are seemingly continually facing – particularly new developments for housing.

The Garden Communities programme is effectively for c10,000 new homes and 95% of these are to be built within the parish of Ashchurch and if it proceeds it will transform the entire parish doubling the population of the whole of Tewkesbury and the surrounding district. However this is still a concept and there are many hurdles for it to clear if it is to succeed.

The principles of the Garden Communities programme are to develop new homes alongside employment opportunities and supporting infrastructure which in principle is welcome. However the characteristics of our parish and in particular the A46 which is already nearing capacity through our parish during peak periods and National Highways together with Gloucestershire County Council Highways are developing schemes for the public to comment upon. We are hopefully expecting some sort of options during the coming year but there have already been significant delays.

Once a solution is finalised then there has to be a business case submitted to the Ministry of Transport, subsequently approved complete with a suitable design specification and an application to central government for funding. There is much speculation as to the costs involved but we believe indications of c£250m or more are involved. Even when that is approved we do not expect construction to commence much before 2035.

Meanwhile Tewkesbury Borough Council are unable to provide a 5 year housing land supply and thus speculative development for new homes has the presumption to be approved unless there are significant planning reasons for not doing so. Consequently, the parish is being inundated with new planning applications and we have already seen permissions granted for 1470 new homes in the Fiddington area, 200 south of Wheatpieces and new applications totalling around 535 new homes at Aston Cross, south of Pamington and more along Fiddington Lane. These are all individual applications without any significant infrastructure improvements and thus simply exacerbate the issues with the A46 and the capacity of supporting services including schools, medical services and utility capacity e.g. sewerage, water and electricity supply.

We are also aware of additional potential applications of around 4000 homes north of the MOD site however these are adopting Garden Town principles and will provide new infrastructure and thus in principle are perhaps more desirable for the community however it faces many challenges to proceed - not least transport and flooding concerns to which there are no obvious solutions.

During the last year we have met with a number of the developers concerned - challenging erroneous assumptions where necessary and to try and maximise resources for the community. These will no doubt continue throughout the coming year.

An example of community resources is that ARPC will become the owner of a new large community centre, sports fields and allotments as part of the Persimmon development for 850 new homes at Fiddington Fields. This will not be available until the site is half built i.e. before the 425th home is occupied and we imagine this to be in another 4 years or so. Additional resources will be available as part of the 460 homes south of the above 850 being developed by Barratt Homes.

Make no mistake here the parish is being transformed before our very eyes and the rural environment as we know it today is becoming urbanised and not always in a good way. I also note that we have not seen any proposals for the development of employment land which is a key element of the Garden Communities

programme. We all should also be aware that unless it is located within easy reach of housing it will simply exacerbate car travel congestion at peak periods.

In addition the parish council has embarked upon a review of the existing Neighbourhood Development Plan or NDP. This is perhaps the main tool we have to challenge speculative development as applicants will need to adhere to the policies contained within it. The existing plan which became official policy in 2022 is predominantly focussed on transport matters. The review will update these existing policies given the scale of ongoing development but also add a) a Local Nature recovery strategy which we are developing with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and b) Green buffer zones around existing communities. The plan being to not only preserve what is currently in place but to also improve the environment where we can.

A result of the NDP is that ARPC are entitled to 25% of the Community Infrastructure Levy applied to all new developments. These are significant sums and we welcome suggestions from residents for investment in projects that will benefit the parish community.

Clearly with so much activity within the parish our clerical support is being stretched and becoming overwhelmed with all the administrative work to keep us not only compliant with regulation but also to enable us to accommodate all the ongoing day to day work that the above generates. Fortunately we took the decision a couple of years ago to strengthen our capability in this regard and appointed a trainee as an assistant clerk who has subsequently undertaken the relevant Clerical training and provided valuable support. We are now about to embark on adding a third member to the support staff team and hopefully will be able to recruit another trainee who can follow the same path and thus ensure we remain equipped to face the challenges ahead.

Tony Davies, Chairman of Ashchurch Rural Parish Council

Appendix 2

St Nicholas Church report

As most of you will know, we are still awaiting the appointment of a new Priest in Charge.

The year has not been without its challenges but we are still managing to keep up a regular rota of services and we are very grateful for the help we are currently getting from retired priests. They have also been helping with baptisms, weddings and funerals.

We introduced a new family service on the first Sunday of each month at the beginning of the year which is led by Julie Fay, our lay reader and our worship team. It has proved very successful. Our harvest festival and Christingle services were also well attended.

We welcomed Carrant Brook and Ashchurch schools into church for their harvest celebrations and Ashchurch School also came for their carol service.

On alternate Friday mornings in term time we run a baby and toddler group – Little Fishes, and on the alternate Fridays in the spring we had a music teacher lead baby and toddler music sessions.

We have continued to engage with our local schools Carrant Brook Junior School, Northway Infant School, Ashchurch Primary School and Alderman Knight through Experience Easter and Experience Christmas sessions in church, when a total of over 200 of our parish children visited over the three days on each occasion.

An “Open the Book” team visit each of the primaries monthly to do an interactive assembly, that involves telling Bible stories with pupil participation. We are always made very welcome.

A worship team also visit the two care homes in the parish to lead a service on a monthly basis and our choir visited Magnolia House for Christmas carols.

As well as our fete in June, we held a quiz in the spring and, nearer Christmas, Serenity Choir held a concert in church.

As the parish church for Northway, Ashchurch and surrounding villages we are eager to be involved with families and events in all these areas. We shall also endeavour to rise to the challenge of all the proposed new housing.

As the funding has now been withdrawn for the upkeep of our grounds and around church, we as a worshipping community are responsible for keeping all those areas tidy. We would welcome any help both physical or financial in order to ensure its upkeep.

Appendix 3

Ashchurch Village Hall – 2023/24 report

Bookings continue to remain fairly consistent with the Hall being used every day of the week with 8 regular hirers interspersed with “one-off” bookings.

Despite significant increases in energy costs our finances remain in the “black”, though, as a charity, it is not the intention of the trustees to endeavour to make sizeable profits.

The first Ashchurch Village Hall was opened late in 1926. It was built from timber and galvanised sheet. Before the first hire the first committee had a demonstration of the latest 50 and 100 candlepower electric bulbs. There was no mains electricity so their use would have also required an “electric machine” to produce the necessary power. These were very expensive items then.

Maybe the committee should have taken on the expense since the new Hall was destroyed by fire on 6 January 1927, only seven weeks after its opening, when an oil light fell from its hanging on the ceiling and smashed on the floor immediately igniting.

But, the committee had wisely insured the building. The replacement building was of brick with an external render and the roof was tiled. It was decided, this time, to wire the new building for electric light and an “electric machine” was acquired. The new Hall was formally opened on 15 November 1928 and is still in use although various extensions and improvements have been made over the years.

During the intervening 96 years, the Hall has been run by an independent management committee. Initially there were many members but over the years they have gradually reduced in number and now the current committee have decided it is time to make a new arrangement which will ensure that it can continue and prosper for many more years. The Hall will stay as a charity but it will have just one trustee and that will be Ashchurch Rural Parish Council. The process of transfer hasn’t completed yet and is now in the hands of solicitors acting for the present trustees and the parish council.

We continue to press on with getting the Meeting Room extension off the ground and, although it has become a very protracted matter, we hope that very soon we will be in a position to place an order with a favourable contractor.

Both present and new trustees hope that after the extension is started that we might also be in a position to look towards improving other areas of the Hall for example, to replace the front and side entrance doors which would not only be thermally beneficial but would improve both security and aesthetics. Other areas of improvement are also being considered.

AVH Trustees - May 2024

Appendix 4

Annual Report 2023-2024 SaveOurLanes Community Association (SOL)

Constitution's Purpose and Objectives *'The association is an informally constituted community group for people living in Fiddington and the surrounding area who share a pride in the character of the rural amenities and seek to protect them.'*

SOL initially covered the area between the Motorway in the west and the railway in the east and from the A46 in the north to Bozard Lane in the south....also including Walton Cardiff village. However, SOL are happy to support any local community with a similar objectives.

Our aim is to retain our rural amenity.

- Quiet Lanes.
- Retaining and enhancing PROW.
- Wildlife protection.
- Village separation.
- Landscape.

During the last year we have recruited several new committees' members and developed a WhatsApp group enabling us to have instant discussion, whilst interacting with the community on Facebook and regular emails to ensure that they are made aware of what is happening locally.

The onslaught of piecemeal development is continuing with 120 dwellings being approved at appeal, 30 Dwellings plus 9 Dwellings in Natton, approved by TBC Planning Committee and a further 140 dwellings are currently in consultation.

This brings the total dwellings with planning permission in the SOL catchment area, which is only 1.8 sq. miles to **1469**.

We also continue to deliberate and comment on the other development proposals in the parish, ensuring that the constraints are identified and acknowledged, and appropriate solutions are investigated.

SOL continue to support the Community Pathway Group, keeping local PROW useable, which has been challenging with the wet weather this winter making extremely muddy conditions.

SOL is represented on the Garden Communities, **Community Liaison Group** which meet monthly, where we can contribute to shaping the future of the Garden Communities, and endeavour to protect what we cherish about our rural community.

SOL have recently agreed to endorse the Garden Communities Charter to encourage 'planned' development to meet the 9 Garden Communities principles.

SaveOurLanes Community Association – May 2024

Appendix 5

PAMINGTON RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Report to the Ashchurch Rural Parish Council Annual Meeting 2024

Over the last year the PRA has continued to support the interests of residents in the original hamlet of Pamington and to comment on wider strategic issues which are likely to affect us in the future. The majority of our work has been concerned with road safety and longer-term development issues, particularly the Greystoke proposal to build 175 homes south of Pamington, which went in for planning in December.

Newsletters – 2 newsletters have been distributed in the last year (July and March) alongside many e-mail updates. 55 out of 59 homes are now signed up to our e-mail group and this has made communications much easier.

Community Speedwatch - September and October saw a return of Community Speedwatch after a break of many years. 17 volunteers helped with the traffic monitoring and this work developed the relationship with the Police road safety team.

Pamington Lane TRO – The Police recommendation to GCC to close the lane to through traffic in support of public safety was welcomed by the village residents with 88.2% in favour of closing the lane following a poll suggested by the Police. This is a significant step toward improving safety in our community. The campaign for potential closure of the lane has been ongoing since 2007, so it has been a long process to get this far.

New Signs – We appreciate the efforts of ARPC in securing funding from GCC to purchase signs for the lane which will promote the Speedwatch campaign and neighbourhood watch.

B4079 – The recent announcement from GCC that the seven bends route will be resurfaced in July has been welcomed. We would like to think that the continual pressure on GCC from the PRA over the last few years has had some influence on this work, supported of course by ARPC.

Garden Communities – Richard has been appointed as the chairman of the TBC Garden Communities Community Liaison Group. The PRA are currently the only active resident's group in that liaison group.

The PRA continues to try to engage with the wider local community and to contribute to APRC meetings whenever possible.

Richard Drewitt
Chair, Pamington Residents' Association
3 May 2024

Appendix 6

GCC News – April 2024

Council to launch countywide hoarding care and support groups at awareness day event
Gloucestershire County Council will launch its countywide hoarding care and support groups with an awareness event in April.

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershire-county-council-news/news-march-2024/council-to-launch-countywide-hoarding-care-and-support-groups-at-awareness-day-event/>

Household Recycling Centre to reopen after improvements made to the site Wingmoor Farm Household Recycling Centre will reopen on Good Friday, 29 March, after work to make repairs and improvements to the site were completed.

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershire-county-council-news/news-march-2024/household-recycling-centre-to-reopen-after-improvements-made-to-the-site/>

Improvements to parking and traffic control in Cirencester

New measures to improve parking and traffic control are set to be introduced in Cirencester Market Place and the town centre.

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershire-county-council-news/news-march-2024/improvements-to-parking-and-traffic-control-in-cirencester/>

Simple steps to help prevent a cigarette fire in the home

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) is reminding smokers to 'Put it Out, Right Out' whenever they light up, to help reduce fires in the home.

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershire-county-council-news/news-april-2024/simple-steps-to-help-prevent-a-cigarette-fire-in-the-home/>

99 per cent of primary pupils offered a place at a school of their choice

This year a total of 6,051 Gloucestershire children have been offered a primary school place for September. Some 99 per cent have been admitted to one of their preferred schools, with 94 per cent of pupils receiving a place at their first preference school.

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershire-county-council-news/news-april-2024/99-per-cent-of-primary-pupils-offered-a-place-at-a-school-of-their-choice/>

Be Water Aware to reduce the risk of drowning

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) is urging people to stay safe in and around water to reduce the risk of accidental drownings.

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershire-county-council-news/news-april-2024/be-water-aware-to-reduce-the-risk-of-drowning/>

Last chance to have your say on adult social care consultation

There are just two weeks left to give your views on proposed changes to the council's adult social care fairer contributions policy.

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershire-county-council-news/news-april-2024/last-chance-to-have-your-say-on-adult-social-care-consultation/>

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