

Cosgrove Parish Council

MINUTES OF COSGROVE ANNUAL OPEN MEETING

Held on 26th April 2011 at the Village Hall, Bridge Road commencing at 7.00pm

Present: Cllrs AG Hickie (in the chair), Mr A Bracey, Mrs J Childs, Mr R Gibbs, Mr J Roberts, Mr D Smith & Mr C Stokes

Also present were Cllrs Mr I McCord (SNC) & Mr A Walker (NCC); PC Mick Wallace (and another PC) Northants Police and 5 members of the public

1. Apologies

Cllr Mrs Harbottle (Family commitments). Mrs H Howard (NCC Highways) (on leave)

2. Minutes of the 2010 Annual Open Meeting (previously displayed n/b)

Previously circulated and signed as a correct record at the May 2010 meeting

3. Matter Arising

No matters arising

4. Petitioners or Questions from Electors (required in writing by 12 noon 26th April 2011)

None

(Although photos of highway issues at Mansel Close would be dealt with at PC meeting following)

5. Adoption of Accounts

The clerk (RFO) outlined budget controls and Precept levels that were agreed

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| (a) To receive Audited Accounts 2009 / 2010 | } No comments and formally adopted |
| (b) Accounts for Audit 2010 / 2011 | } Approved |
| (c) Budget Proposals 2011 / 2012 | } Approved with no comments made |

6. Chairman's Report

I thank all Councillors, who give up their time voluntarily and our Clerk as without them we could not operate. It's been a reasonably quiet year. We have fenced off the play area, completed and consolidated the bus shelter (and thank resident Ron Childs for the painting maintenance). We continue to suffer the unsightliness of the old Post Office, the part demolished site of the former Cosgrove House in the Conservation Area and the Listed Lodge at Cosgrove Hall (which is very poor state). We also wait for the development off Bridge Road that was one on appeal and acceptable plans for the old post office site as previous plans were rejected by SNC Planners. We will after the elections on 5th May have an elected full council (unopposed) and look forward with your support for the future and the result of the AV Referendum and District Council Election results

7. Report by Northamptonshire Police

PC Wallace spoke on shift changes and gave beat crime figures from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011 but was not Cosgrove specific but Cosgrove & Grafton Ward (includes Yardley Gobion). Crime numbers in the Ward were down from 77 > 75.

(PC Wallace : 03000 111 222 x 5602 E-mail: mick.wallace@northants.pnn.police.uk)

There were a number of Q about patrols through Cosgrove and the speed issues. The clerk advise that 40mph Stratford Road from Cosgrove Hall > A508 was imminent (originally by 31st March) and the Part-Time 20mph Safe Routes to School Speed Warning signs proposed, were waiting authorisation and legal notices

With no more Qs both officers were thanked and left the meeting

8. Report / Questions for District Councillor

Cllr McCord submitted the following report:

The past twelve months have been eventful and busy at SNC. Last May I joined the Cabinet as the Resources Portfolio Holder, so it was my job to manage the inevitable budget reductions irrespective of the outcome of the General Election.

It is rather amusing now to listen to opponents of the government opposing every decision. Two thirds of the reduction total is not argued about, but you would not notice that when you listen to some of the government's critics.

SNC made an early start on cost reduction removing £1m of cost from the organisation in June and preparing a list of other reductions and ordering this list so we would be ready for when the announcements of the spending reductions came.

As a twin track to this SNC began negotiations with Cherwell District about sharing senior management and services in a more strategic. These talks, chaired by me, were successful and on 9th Dec SNC took a decision to share 15 senior management posts as a first step on joint working with Cherwell.

The Chief Executive of Cherwell took up a new position of CEO of Hounslow Council in January. Jean Morgan, SNC Chief Executive announced her intention to leave. In February Sue Smith was appointed the new Joint Chief Executive of both councils. Sue will take up post 16 May. She is currently the CEO of Harborough District.

Once Sue is in post we will then move to the Directors and Heads of Service.

We expect to save at least £1m per year between us and this just addresses about 20% of the total salary budget.

In addition to this joint working initiative SNC also will be sharing Building Control with Cherwell following some retirements and resignations.

The biggest challenge was to balance the books, we started the year with a £1.8 million projected deficit and this was approx. £9.6m over 5 years. The settlement from Central government was tough. In the year just ended to 31 March 2011, SNC had income of £5.8m from central government. Today that has been reduced by 21.6% to £1.255 million. (Just 59 councils got hit harder)

Next year the squeeze continues and we lose another £640k, only 13 councils got a worse settlement.

Two years from today SNC will have £1.895 million less revenue almost a third down than a three weeks ago.

However these issues have been addressed with a budget that removed vacant posts, reviewed all expenditure, reviewed delivery of services, did not have any member allowance increase, and introduced charges of credit card use.

SNC managed efficiency gains of 23% on last year, reducing the total budget requirement by £1.8m from £12.4m to £10.34 million.

The budget was balanced for the first time in 3 years without any reliance on the use of reserves and your bill frozen.

SNC also established a fund to help with investigations into the effects of HS2 on the district.

While this may not be an issue for this part of the district, any movement of the line could push it our way – we need to be vigilant.

Council Tax collection was one of the best in the country at 99.1%

And if you are owed money by SNC they are nationally recognised as one of the quickest to settle the bill with an average of 6 days to pay and 91% paid within 10 days.

These and other indicators of performance got SNC shortlisted for the Finance Team of the Year at the recent Local Government Chronicle Awards. The only district Council to be shortlisted. The prize was kept in the county, going to Northamptonshire County Council.

But giving the authority a financial future was not the only thing that we did.

In the past year, Master Plans for Blackley, Towcester and Roade have been published, consulted upon, reviewed and approved.

We have finally made some progress on the Core Strategy seizing the opportunity with the change of government to reduce the number of houses required when the previous targets in the Regional Special Strategy were abolished. The draft pre submission core strategy is now being consulted upon and it is our intention to then have this disaggregated into a SNC local plan in time.

Locally in the ward we lobbied for a successful refusal on the plan to build 47 houses in Yardley Gobion. I had an interesting bank holiday weekend when we thought an illegal traveller's camp may be established just along the A508. I attended the May Fayre here in the village in May. I can also report some success in getting SNC conservation department to demand repairs to listed properties that have been neglected.

On planning we don't always get what we want, but often conditions are placed on things that maybe the applicant would have preferred to have. On the ACE Plant Application we successfully lobbied for conditions on hours of use, lighting, noise and bunding.

May I once again thank Derek, AG and you all for your help throughout the year. This job is only possible with the help of functioning parishes and I am most grateful to you all. I shall continue to circulate to you all via email as much relevant information as I can.

The local elections are due on Thursday May 5 along with the referendum on the voting system. I am seeking re-election.

Thank you

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There were no question

9. Report by County Councillor

Cllr Walker submitted the following report:

This year I stand here with some trepidation, given my report on my year's activities as your Conservative County Councillor. Last year saw a new Coalition Government come to fruition as well as the deepest cuts in spending required by this country since WW11. All due to Labours miss - management of the economy for 13 years. The effects on us as a County Council have resulted in a 1st year saving of £73M, 14% of our budget of £1.2B in real terms.

I remain Scrutiny Champion for NCC (ex officio Cabinet member) and through our Scrutiny Committee system have had to preside over some fairly hefty and robust debates to ensure the Administration can fulfil their commitment to the overall savings required to give NCC a balanced budget. As you are all aware there will be no Council Tax rise for the next two years. This does go some way to helping the less well off in our communities. We are also sharing number of back office functions with Cambridgeshire to reduce both our costs.

I am still Chair to the Local Government East Midlands scrutiny Network. This helps Scrutiny throughout the East Midlands to share Best Practice.

Again we have had a problem this year with the weather through December and January. Although, nowhere as bad as last year. NCC through May Gurney performed well again, being one of the few Councils in the area keeping the entire major A roads across the county open daily, even in blizzards. The new mix of sand and salt compound helped by melting the snow before it froze to ice. Unfortunately expenditure cannot be spread to include village roads. Under the new Localism Bill we should be able to do more for the elderly and vulnerable with footpath and driveway clearance ourselves.

Yes we do have a pot hole problem. 'You Choose' told us to make a priority which we have maintained. Equally, the Coalition Government sees this as a priority also and has given us monies to assist.

As you may be aware the Police Authority has also had to make cutbacks as well. All police areas have been restructured to accommodate funding issues and this may affect local monies for the support of PCSOs. Although I am not aware that any front line officers have been lost. As of the 28th March all police speed cameras have been turned off due to the high maintenance costs where most, if not all the money going to the Treasury and not to local policing.

We still maintain the program for our Care for the Elderly, whereby we enable the Elderly and Infirm to have a better quality of life by assisting them to help themselves and not be automatically shoved into a care home. OK those with high income are going to have to pay more for this service but that assists those who cannot.

We now have a new CXO (Paul Blantern) paid a lot less than other Councils. Again a structure of backroom staff has taken place. Equally I have had to match this as Scrutiny Champion to ensure members are involved at all levels. The Government pulled the plug on the waste Management Partnership with MKC. Procuring a Waste solution for NCC and MKC I am informed by the PFI was too costly in our present climate. Although we can no longer, just fill in holes in the ground with rubbish a plan B on recycling is being developed.

Equally the East Midland Fire Service Control Centre is not going ahead which I was a Director of, due to the cessation of the East Midlands Agency Quango. NCC Fire Service is looking at new ways to carry out its statutory function that may lead it away from being member led.

Continued Scrutiny of the Empowering County Councillors Scheme continues to ensure value for money and the correct procedures being adopted by Councillors. A further £10,000 was allocated last year and I managed to spend all my allocation on local worthy causes including a donation to Cosgrove PC towards fencing costs. I can report that £7,000 is being made available for 2011/12. My activities locally have involved Transport (Buses) and the 89 Service is being negotiated; Local Services including home to school; Road resurfacing; Housing; Benefits and Libraries.

I am no longer on the Kingsbrook board of governors due to a continual conflict of interests as a County Councillor and a District Councillor for Deanshanger. As Chair of Governors' I felt that I moved the school in the right direction for 2011 and onwards. I am fully supportive of the Amalgamation with Roade for a continued improvement and better education Standards for the children in my ward that are and will go there. (Sometimes people forget this is being done for the Education of the now and future children in this area!!)

My local work activity for parishioners is increasing yearly mainly due to the recession and cut backs. I still manage to maintain a turnaround response in 24hrs of 100%.

A big thank you to your Clerk and you Councillors for your professionalism and indulgence whilst I have been dealing with matters in your area.

I can be contacted on:-

Telephone 01908 – 260302

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There were no questions

10. Any Other Business

Crime Figures - The clerk to seek Cosgrove figures (especially due to the 3-4,000 visitors to the caravan Park during the season)

With no other business the meeting closed at 7.55pm