

**Draft Minutes of Erlestoke Annual Parish Meeting
Wednesday 26th April 2017
at 7:30 p.m. in the Village Church**

Present Cllr. S. Jonik (Chairman of Erlestoke Parish Council).
V. Neal, L. Roberts (Locum Clerks)

32 parishioners were in attendance – see separate list of attendees

Welcome by Cllr. S Jonik, Chairman of Erlestoke Parish Council. Introduction of Virginia Neal and Linda Roberts, present as Locum clerks.

Apologies: Cllr. J Hunt- Davies

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 27th April 2016.

Mrs Southorn (JS) suggested that the minutes are incomplete as the clerk could not keep up with minute taking. An email has been sent to the Chairman detailing what JS thought to be missing from the minutes.

Cllr Jonik says that the minutes have been looked at by the Parish Council and councillors have agreed that they are an accurate record of the meeting.

Proposed: Cllr. K. Lewcock Seconded: Cllr James Durham
Show of hands: 6 in favour, 3 against. Carried 6 to 3

Reports

Wiltshire Council – Richard Gamble

As this AGM falls within the “purdah” period before an election, there is a limit on what I can say about the past year in case it is taken as electioneering. I am therefore providing the Annual Report from Wiltshire Council which provides information about the whole spectrum of activities with which the council has been involved.

The year again was one where financial pressures were challenging and we have had to make further savings. We have aimed to do this with minimal reduction in services and I hope you agree this has been largely achieved. The pressures on staff numbers and time have been relentless yet, despite that, Wiltshire was voted the Best Local Authority in England to work for.

I have particularly been involved in a number of subject areas:

- Children’s Services & Schools – In my role as portfolio holder for Education I have been pleased to see the proportion of children in Good & Outstanding schools to be the best in the South West.
- Economic Development, Skills & Strategic Transport – My responsibilities cover skills, and almost all the data for Wiltshire is strong. For example, the numbers of people on Job Seekers Allowance is only 0.6%, which is half the national figure. The number of apprentices has grown strongly.
- Planning – I have supported the production of Neighbourhood Plans, and as a member of the Eastern Area Planning Committee, have been involved in a number of key planning decisions. I was particularly pleased to see an unwanted development in Great Cheverell rejected by the Planning Inspectorate.
- Devizes Area Board – The Area Board has given capital grants to many projects in the area and has supported services for young people with substantial revenue funding. We have also appointed an Older People Champion and Mike Challinor is already proving effective. Local road schemes have been supported by CATG including the junction at the end of Lower Road. We have not yet found a solution to the crossing on the High Street.

- Transport – In my role as director of TravelWatch, I have been encouraged to see that bus services in Wiltshire have, for the most part, been sustained in strong contrast to other counties in the South West. The TransWilts rail service linking Swindon, Chippenham, Melksham, Trowbridge and Westbury is the fastest growing in the country and is soon to get new rolling stock with more capacity. We hope to extend the service through Salisbury to Southampton Airport before too long.

It has been a privilege to represent this area and this parish on Wiltshire Council. I am grateful for the support I have received from the Parish Council, which has been regularly represented at Area Board meetings and other public gatherings. The Area Board meets every two months and everyone is invited to attend.

The next meeting is on Monday 5th June at Sports Club Devizes 6 for 6.30pm

Erlestoke Prison – Chris Simpson (CS) Deputy Governor.

This is a changing establishment benefitting from national investment. Avenues for dealing with offenders are being explored.

The new Governor Tim Knight plans to get Erlestoke back to where it once was. Appointments of new managers have been made.

From next Tuesday back up to full capacity - 524 inmates. We are national hub for programmes to address criminal behaviour. Due to a lack of regime there have been certain frustrations and a lack of discipline. There has been a national drive to make all prisons no smoking environments. Looking to make positive communities and to engage with local communities and businesses to pay something back. If anyone has any queries send an email.

Q: What is a cat C prison? A=greatest risk of harm to public. B=Establishments such as Exeter, Bristol where prisoners are re-categorised and moved to an appropriate establishment

D=open prison – working towards end of sentence but not of serious risk to public.

Sentence plan – things they have to achieve. Good behaviour, incentive levels. If a Category B prisoner is doing all that is asked they will proceed to Cat C. Projects such as MoD - refurbishment of equipment for MoD, Academies, Greggs & Timpsons.

Offending behaviour work at Erlestoke. No sex offender therapy. Once levels of behaviour can be maintained. Some Cat Ds awaiting space in open prisons.

Q: Will the Governor be shared? No, Shepton Mallet now closed.

Q: Are you fully staffed – 88 officers in post. Some undertaking training others covering those shifts.

Q: Theatre Companies – Pimlico Opera coming in still. Other work going on. Ceramics, Art etc

Q: Village at Eastern end has quite a view of prison. Some agreement a few years ago that landscaping would be carried out. Possibly as a result of risk to security nothing has happened. CS will take a look at this and check records. If there is some form of landscaping that can be used and progressed it will be considered.

Q: Negative aspect of people walking round the prison throwing things over the fence. Is this still a problem? Someone reported this at one time and an arrest was made. Things valued inside ie tobacco as now illegal. Want to eradicate 'throw overs'. Netting options don't really work. More increased police presence, relationship encouraged with police. Random searches in the local area going to be undertaken to improve and reduce 'throw overs'. Direct dial to police control room. Plain clothes operations being undertaken, all leading to a reduction of throw overs.

Q: Noise from prison at night time can be excessive. Are windows open? Older units at village end, the windows do open. Staff aware of excessive noise eg shouting. A difficult thing to curb but action being taken.

If support needed for charitable causes – please get in touch.

Erlestoke and Coulston Cricket Club – Report read by Cllr K Lewcock on behalf of Mark Douse Chairman E.C.C. Thank you for asking for a report on our activities over the last year.

The club as ever is buoyant, social and vibrant, with around forty playing members, drawn from Erlestoke, Coulston, The Cheverells, The Lavingtons, Edington, Bratton, Warminster, Westbury, Worton and Trowbridge. We play Twenty/20 matches on Wednesday and Friday evenings, with traditional forty overs per side on Sundays. The junior section also regularly attracts thirty plus

youngsters each Monday evening for training, and participates in local leagues and tournaments. For 2017 we have also taken the ambitious step of entering the Wiltshire League (Division 6) for the first time in the club's history.

We have two regularly updated social media platforms, which both have a large following:

Twitter: @erlestokeccc

Facebook page: @Erlestoke & Coulston Cricket Club @the Walled Garden 2017

Towards the end of last season club members undertook repairs to the Walled Garden access track, firstly by clearing the surface, and then filling holes and resurfacing with both road repair macadam and several tonnes of loose tarmac, followed by a whacker plate. This was the best solution which the club's finances and resources could provide.

The south and east sections of the wall surrounding the ground have - as part of the clubs on-going commitment to preserving the ground since the purchase from the Ministry of Defence - been repaired by a professional using traditional lime mortar and reclaimed bricks. We hope continue this phased repair work again during the warmer months of 2017, on sections of the west wall.

As the parish council may be aware the cricket club has plans (not yet submitted) to construct a new pavilion. This we hope will be in the same location as the current structure, and of a slightly larger and traditional wooden construction. There are currently two sub committee's within the club working on the planning/construction and funding of this potential project.

We await to hear of any new developments regarding the future of the George & Dragon public house. Our club is much stronger socially with this open, being so close to the ground, and has pledged £2000 to the "Save the George Fund". As the Club Chairman, I wrote on behalf of the members objecting to the change of planning condition proposed on the former B & B lets. However, the club committee has subsequently learnt that this variation was granted by Wiltshire Council.

The annual bonfire and fireworks evening last year, attracted a record crowd and provided valuable income for the club, thanks to the commitment of the 20+ members who plan and run the event, an increased year on year public following, and some perfect weather conditions. We have already won our first match of the season (away to Collingbourne Ducis) and this evening host our first home game (Urchfont), and look forward to a successful (and dry!) sunny season.

Erlestoke Church – Report presented by Chris Hampton. A Copy of the annual report 2016 was handed out to all attendees. This document sets out how money has been spent, church attendance and general life of the church. The financial section small. A full copy of the annual accounts is on display at the front. Church accounts are in reasonable shape, no major repair bills. There has been some minor maintenance work carried out to roof, gutters and downpipes. Electrical work has been done. Thanks to generous financial support from both outside and inside the village, the PCC are very grateful. The new vicar has been appointed, but he has not yet been seen. A comment has been made about the lack of visibility. When children's activities have taken he has taken part. Audrey & Tony Tye were both on the committee, sadly they have both died. New committee members would be very welcome.

Erlestoke Hub – Report presented by Cllr. K.Lewcock.

Mr Chairman - The Erlestoke Hub Ltd is a 'not for profit' Community Benefit Society set up in November 2015 by a group of Erlestoke villagers to try and buy the George and Dragon Public House and open it as a Community Pub putting it back at the heart of our village.

I am the chairman and we have six other active members of our team.

The owners of the Pub have twice applied to turn the Pub into a residential property but since the last Parish Meeting the application, which was opposed by many members of our community, was turned down by the Wiltshire Planning Authority. It remains a closed Pub.

Since then we have made two offers to buy the Pub but the owners are reluctant to sell and the current situation is a stale mate and it has become frankly rancorous and divisive.

Having lost our post office and village hall our village is a prime example of a small community deeply affected by the loss of local facilities leaving some of our residents isolated and lonely and I am not simply talking only about the elderly. Regular social contact between villagers is limited and only this

church is left for meetings and social activity. Fiona who edits the local magazine and Stan the Chairman of the Parish Council make a great effort to keep communications going. The Cricket Club make an important contribution but the fact is children are being born in our village, neighbours are getting ill and longstanding members of our community are dying and we may not know this information until it is too late or sadly we may not know it at all. Although older residents are moving out on the plus side new residents are moving in. We have probably the highest number of young children in the village for a long time but you would probably not know it. There used to be so many regular activities for young children in our community but apart from the best efforts of the church little now. We have lost the ability to monitor the health and wellbeing of our own village community. Social interaction has declined but The Erlestoke Hub will continue with its efforts to find a way to return the Pub to its proper purpose and put the soul back into the village. Meanwhile we will be organizing some activities like the 'Pop up Pub', held in the Park last year to try and bring local people together to socialize and we are always grateful for volunteers to help with our efforts. Thank you.

Neighbourhood Plan – No report. A meeting to be organised within the month to start the process again. NPC coming together to update the plan. Committee always looking for new members. The idea is that the whole village becomes involved.

Q: What was the result of the questionnaire completed last year? Results not to hand. On website. Results were positive. Results of questionnaire to be republished. Action: S. Jonik

MOD – no report

Golf Club – no report

Parish Council Accounts – This is a brief report, as the Clerk to the Parish Council stepped down in September 2016. The Parish Council have had a difficult year. Procedures for running a parish council have been upgraded and much work has taken place to get the council in order. A thorough internal audit has been carried out by Auditing Solutions Ltd. A number of recommendations have been made that the Parish Council need to address over the next year.

Money has been saved due as the clerk salary has not been paid out over the past few months.

Cllr . K. Lewcock asked for a record of thanks to Stan for all his hard work in keeping the council functioning over this difficult period.

Parish Council Chairman's Report - Cllr s Jonik

Looking back at my previous reports it amazes me how I start by saying we had a busy year with important issues to deal with. This last year has again been busy and I might say difficult for the council, and I must start by thanking the councillors for their hard work and resilience.

Our Clerk Anita Whittle resigned in August leaving the council to fill her role. I have never underestimated the responsibility and effort required to be Clerk, and with the new transparency and operating procedures required to run the council we have spent some time restructuring and organising the council to cope. These procedures are now in place and ready for the new council to work with after the May elections. It has now become apparent that we will require a qualified Clerk to operate with the governments new Transparency Code and operating procedures.

Our internal auditor Bill Smith retired this year. Bill did an excellent job for the Parish Council keeping a close eye on the accounts keeping the books straight and balanced.

It's worth stating that we are all volunteers and spend a lot of our free time, and sometimes money for the total benefit of the village and nobody does anything for their own personal gain.

We had one vacancy for councillor and were very pleased to Co-Op Natasha Barton as a councillor she works very hard in the community and will be an asset to the Council.

The Proposed change of use from public house to residential at the George & Dragon was refused, and it is reassuring and pleasing to know that the community have raised enough money to buy the property as a public house.

Natasha Barton delivered a report on the village Defibrillator. The meeting on the 18th August was attended by 20 people and they intend to do another meeting next year. Thanks go to Mr Beershaw, Mr French and Mrs Newing-Moore for organising and presenting the demonstration.

Erlestoke Hub have asked permission to hold Pop Up Pub events in the Park, this started last year and was so successful we see this as an ongoing event for the village. The church provided the electricity for lighting and services.

Again we have opposed the Boundary Change Proposals, where Erlestoke and the Lavingtons would become part of Warminster/Shaftesbury Area. Formal consultation to take place in the near future. This would mean we would report to a different Area Board and lose our historic ties with Devizes. We have pointed out that Erlestoke looks naturally towards Devizes.

Throughout the year we attended the Area Board meetings in Devizes, feeding back information on events and decisions made at the Area Board. Richard Gamble our Board representative advises us and updates us on all aspects of local and county news.

We have created links to "HELP Counselling Services" a registered charity offering a free or low cost confidential service to all adults and young persons over 16 in the West Wiltshire area. The service is offered regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnic or cultural background, to people of any faith, or none. They listen to your concerns and problems and help you to find your own way to personal well-being. Your identity will not be disclosed to anyone, although a supervisor and staff team will support your counsellor. It is our aim to provide a safe, supporting atmosphere in which you will be heard.

The B3098 continues to be high on our agenda and our campaigning for a School crossing sign is being raised at next CATG meeting in Devizes, Cllr Gamble is very supportive of a 20mph limit though Erlestoke. The Parish Council might be asked to make financial contribution if a new sign is required. A recommendation was also made to downgrade the B3098 to a C road. Two serious accidents occurred at the Lower Road cross road, this was reported to Highways where it was noted that the road signage was worn and the hedges covered the junction warning sign, this has now been sorted. We also note that the finger direction sign to Erlestoke at the cross road has also been removed by Wiltshire's Highways and we are waiting for this to be replaced.

We now own speed indicating devices (SIDs) and are in the process of testing them for installation in the village. We will be working with other villages in our area and share its use when required. Again BT are looking at removing the Pay Phone on the high street, we have opposed this as the mobile network in Erlestoke is either poor or not available and this could be the only means to communicate out of the village for some people.

We have kept the precept the same as last year with no increase.

We are still waiting for Fibre broadband to be available in the village, there appears to be some movement as BT have erected new telegraph polls around the village allegedly for Fibre. Having said this we can't get a definitive response from BT when Fibre will be installed.

We still have worrying environmental issues with the lakes south of the village. The springs feeding the lakes are now such low pressure the water depth has dropped. This has had a detrimental effect on wild life. In fact all the fish have either died or disappeared and the lakes are in a very poor state. We are now speaking to the Environment Agency and hoping to arrange a meeting with the MOD to possibly rejuvenate the area back to how it was.

We can all see the tree felling work that has been done in the woods, the next phase is to burn the brash wood branches and wood piles ready for planting the new broad leaf trees.

I would like to thank all the Councillors and parishioners for their efforts throughout the year and a special thanks to our Devizes Area Board Councillor Richard Gamble for the support and hard work he does for the village.

Q: The buying of pub doesn't seem to be going anywhere. Planning permission is still active for a new village hall. Perhaps we should have a plan B of a smaller village hall linked to the church as a village asset for use for entertainments. Cllr S. Jonik agreed that this would be a good idea. The village needs somewhere for people to meet. A Neighbourhood Plan will stipulate what the village wants for the future.

Q: To Cllr Gamble – a resident of 9 yrs. A lot of road repairs have taken place but few have lasted. What quality assurance does the council get from the companies who carry out the repairs?

The road has collapsed between Gt Cheverell and the A360. Barriers have been erected – when will this be repaired??

Cllr G – response. The barrier is to do with the landowner. Plans to do work in June, too long in Cllr G's view. Raised again with Wiltshire Council today. Road work budget has been increased by £21million to overcome the backlog – a national problem.

Works are now being done longer term. Wiltshire replaced Balfour Beatty with Ringway. Confident that Ringway are reputable. Pot holes appear in winter – a temporary repair is done until a permanent one can be made when weather improves.

Q: Did Ringway carry out repairs on A360 near Tilshead? Already holes appearing. Cllr Gamble will check. Utility companies might have been doing a temporary repair.

Q: Is there a blacklist of contractors who fail?

Comment: The road between Dauntsey's and Little Cheverell has deteriorated since rainwater drainage works carried out by the school. Meeting to be used as reference to future meetings.

Q: Hilperton has wide pavement 20mph limit and other traffic calming.

We have been asking for traffic calming measures in Erlestoke for years why there is such a difference. No pavement. Weight limits advisory. A not suitable for HGV sign and lack of footpath signs needed. Cllr G response - difficult to resolve but supports the principle of traffic calming.

Broadband - New telegraph poles have been put up but no definitive date has been provided for the upgrade. 1.6 download on Talk Talk, with BT 4mb download for free. PC have been advised that fibre broadband will be coming this summer. There may be a limit set by BT, which can be changed.

Village Issues – nothing raised

Meeting concluded at 21.05