**POULTON PARISH COUNCIL**

**ANNUAL MEETING HELD ON THE 13th MAY 2024**

**AT 7.30 PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

Parish Councillors – Cllr. Collyer-Bristow, Cllr. Hyslop, Cllr. Gillibrand

Poulton Playing Field & Allotment Charity – Caroline Allanson, Trustee

Poulton Village Hall – Hilary Antingham, Chair

Poulton Cricket Club – Will Bathurst

No additional members of the public attended the meeting.

1. **Chairman’s Report – Poulton Parish Council**

Another interesting last year for most communities in Britain with a very wet winter and Spring; ongoing global issues such as Ukraine and Gaza; Westminster politics galore and illnesses for the King and Princess of Wales. Poulton has been impacted by the weather, avoided the global issues and politics but suffered its share of medical ailments and losses. Where our community is involved, we simply can’t “take our eye off the ball” and we must continue to look ahead and after each other and, as stated at last year’s AGM, all work together to keep our village and its residents in tip-top condition.

The village has continued to demonstrate unity, a sense of fun and camaraderie. It has also seen the various village bodies working together for the united benefit of all.

Sadly, some notable Poulton residents have again passed away in the last year. We have also said “goodbyes” to some long-standing residents but happily they have been replaced by newcomers – some of whom have jumped straight into community events and activities.

The Parish Council has been remarkedly stable in the past year and is still made up of Ed Hyslop, Chris Davies, Tom Gillibrand, and me. We still have one outstanding vacancy, which we continue to try to fill, and we await the right and available character to put themselves forward. And we will continue to seek wise counsel from those who have “been there, seen it and done it” and remain in the village.

The same constant has been our excellent Parish Clerk, Heather Harris, and I know my fellow Councillors would like to join me extending thanks to Heather for her guidance in the worlds of local politics, Government bureaucracy and Council administration.

Issues old and new remain prevalent on our Agenda. The large number of AirBnB’s in the village, though two are currently being sold, continue to bring a regular influx of visitors throughout the year, all using the leisure facilities and footpaths and causing some loss of privacy and surfeit of noise in some parts of the village. Flooding, of sewage and surface water, are on-going problems and the state of the roads continues to tax and trouble us all. Planning applications, good and bad, come before the Parish Council on a regular basis. Special thanks to Chris Davies, as planning guru and author for his sage advice. We hopefully try and do all we can to encourage traditional buildings alongside modern additions. The playground facilities need to be kept safe and sound. Plans to replace broken and dangerous playground equipment have gathered apace over recent months following interminable and lengthy conversations with suppliers and grant investigations. Fundraising is currently happening via Crowdfunding [PLEASE SEE ELSEWHERE IN POULTON EYE THE QR CODE FOR PLEDGES] and the supplier plus equipment needed have been selected. Hopefully things can get totally sorted by late Summer. The Parish Council are aware of many youngsters having their own gardens, but the playground is for all the villager’s and visitor’s children and grandchildren. Finally, the green areas of the village, verges and the trees falling under the Parish Council’s responsibility continue to be looked after.

The speed of traffic and the number of heavy lorries travelling through Poulton has continued impacting on our quality of life, our properties, and our safety. But again, as with the playground, things are finally happening following snail-like decisions from the police, Highways administrators and Council bureaucrats. The first of four speed cameras in the village has recently been erected with the others hopefully coming soon. The aim is to deter speeders rather than us wanting to report and fine them and we will be working closely with the police with the operation. Education not sanction. The ideal is less heavy traffic using the village as a thoroughfare, a reduction of speed on the East of the village and a 30mph speed limit observed throughout.

The Parish Council has been involved in some ongoing discussions between the England’s Trustees, PFAC and the Cricket Club and hopefully the harmonious relationship necessary can be formed with everyone working as one.

The Poulton Eye continues alongside the Village Facebook and website to be Poulton’s official communication hub. Many thanks to the co-ordinators, Poulton PCC and the two PE editors, Rosie Arkwright, and Lizzy Pryor, for their hard work plus all those who contribute “copy” and help “spread the word”.

As Chair of the Parish Council, I have really tried to incorporate together all the various village organisations via open and transparent communication. Poulton as a village and community is much stronger working together rather than in factions and with individual agendas. More people, especially newcomers and younger residents, need to be joining and involved with all our voluntary organisations, helping share the workload and being “one big happy family”.

Finally, and again, I would like to thank the Parish Clerk, Heather, and my fellow Councillors, Ed, Chris, and Tom, for all their support of me in the past year. It is also very important to record my public thanks to Lisa Spivey, our District and County Councillor for all her support and continual sound advice to the Parish Council and me. She has attended nearly all our meetings and I know is always working hard for us all.

1. **District Councillor Report.**

I was delighted to be re-elected to represent The Ampneys and Hampton in May 2023. I held my seat and also a place on the Cabinet at CDC. This year, my portfolio has been Communities and Public Safety with a focus on sewage pollution and flooding.

To that end, I have been holding monthly meetings with the water companies serving the district (Thames Water, Wessex Water and Severn Trent) in the build up to our Sewage Summit to be hold on the 8th July at the Corinium museum.

I have been chairing a multi-agency working group looking specifically at sewage and flooding issues in Fairford and the surrounding parishes.

I sit on the Cabinet Transform Working Group looking at how we can make up to £1.5million of savings each year over the course of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy period, whilst continuing to deliver services.

I also chair the Cotswold Safety Partnership and attend the Safer Gloucestershire partnership meeting.

I attend as many parish council meetings as I can and aim to respond quickly to emails and case work requests.

There has been much media focus on Local Government this year, with the financial pressures on councils across the country widely reported. Notably, some councils have had to essentially declare themselves bankrupt, whilst many are at risk of collapse without an injection of cash into the sector. The Local Government Association estimates that £4billion is needed over the next 2 years just to stay at a standstill position, with upper tier authorities with responsibility for Adults and Children’s social care in particular danger.

Amongst all of the doom and gloom (and never-ending rain!), however, there is plenty to celebrate, and so I wanted to take this opportunity to highlight some of the great successes that hard-working council officers continue to deliver despite the bleak picture. The public sector, and local government in particular is a fantastic place to see community focussed members and officers doing their best to deliver statutory services and go the extra mile to ensure that our district continues to thrive.

Here are some highlights from across the Council from the last year.

- CDC has been ranked as the 55th best performing local authority in England (out of 312), with our waste service and recycling rates of particular note.

-We have a new corporate plan which outlines four key areas of focus (Housing delivery, Economy, Climate and Communities) and providing statutory services to a good level.

-In sourcing of staff from Publica to begin in about October so we have more control of staffing and what they do, can make services more cost effective and better and make it more attractive to recruit.

- Funding for various projects agreed through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund, including:

· £400,000 for business grants for projects across the district.

· £100,000 allocated for village hall improvements. Several grants agreed already for projects including energy efficient lighting, a new kitchen and replacement windows.

· £75,000 for the Grace Network to bring the former House of Fraser in Cirencester back into use.

· Funding extended for another year for the Growth Hub, which enables them to operate an outreach service to cover the whole district.

· Various projects for Cotswolds Tourism, including an upgrade to their website.

· The inaugural Cotswold Homes and Interiors Festival which was held in Cirencester in March. It involved businesses in that sector from across the district.

Changing Places toilet facilities for the severely disabled delivered at Cotswold Farm Park, Cirencester Abbey Grounds, Birdland and soon to be Cotswold Country Park and Beach.

Other more general points to make, but which are broad indicators of the economy and issues where we have had influence include:

· Unemployment in Cotswold continues to be the lowest in the county.

· Town centres are performing relatively well with vacancy rates substantially lower than the national average.

· Broadband coverage is continuing to increase – 98.3% superfast, 65.1% full fibre.

· Royal Agricultural University Innovation Village planning application has been submitted.

Work is now underway at long -term derelict buildings in Dollar Street, Cirencester

- We have begun work on a new Local Plan with public consultation on initial ideas, updates on Policies and call for sites completed and Design Code public consultation completed in December.

- Ecology. Habitat Regulation document ensuring recreational impacts by new developments are mitigated in Zones of Influence (north Meadow and Cirencester Beech woods)

- Green Infrastructure strategy updated to ensure developments provide green open spaces and wildlife corridors.

- Systems set up to ensure that Biodiversity Net Gain can be delivered and monitored for the regulation 30 years after development.

- Cotswold Water Park. 51 community bike stands have been installed throughout the District and within the CWP.

- CWP Nature Recovery Plan, Collaborative work with Cotswold Lakes Trust and Somerford Keynes making wet wildlife corridors.

- ERS. 165 licenced taxi and private hire drivers have completed Safeguarding training at CDC in how to safeguard children, young people, and vulnerable adults and how to respond to evidence presented to them. Licenced drivers can be found on the website Public Contact List including wheelchair accessible vehicles.

- Flytipping. We have won a grant for continuing education on Duty of Care to prevent flytipping. Working with neighbouring Districts, Highways, and the Police we continue to hold Stop and Search to advise van drivers of the requirements for Waste Carrying licences.

- Building Control, by May 1st to comply with new gov regulations following Grenfell Tower Fire all the team have had to take rigorous online exams.

- Building on the back of successful Crowdfund Cotswold campaigns from play equipment in Down Ampney, Meysey Hampton and Ampney Crucis, Ampney Crucis Village Hall raised over £30,000 toward solar panels, with a £7500 contribution from CDC. In total Crowdfund Cotswold has leveraged over £860,000 for projects across the District in the last 3 years.

· More recently, we’ve supported the Poulton Cricket Club, which has raised £14000 towards an electric mower, with a £3250 contribution from CDC.

· Another example of activity reliant on the commitment of local people - CDC ‘made’ the Down Ampney Neighbourhood Plan in late March – which is the culmination of years of work by local volunteers – with advice, support, and constructive criticism from CDC! Amongst other things, it will help protect the green space opposite the school and village hall and qualify them for a 25% share of CIL receipts. Some linked advice in the context of Co-op land disposals. Strongest ‘yes’ vote in Cotswold to date.

· The contract to run our three leisure centres and the Corinium Musuem went to Freedom Leisure who took over on 1/8/23. The new provider has listened to customers and each of the leisure centres has increased its membership over the last 12 months despite the changeover.

· Health and Wellbeing: we successfully ran the Holiday Activity and Food Programme during the school holidays, piloted the first Mr Motivator fitness event at which 100 people participated and rolled out 'Fit Kits' at community events and to individuals in their own homes to promote easy fitness routines for people who may not usually have the opportunity to access this.

· Culture - over the last year we have been preparing the launch of a new Cotswold District Culture Strategy - the first of its kind locally - which will happen this autumn. The aim is to link up and better promote the wonderful cultural offerings across the District to boost the economy, tourism, and wellbeing.

· Two events targeting the cost-of-living crisis were held in the North and South of the district. These were really well attended, identifying support for residents in the area, along with tasty food and entertainment for the children.

· We launched our “Unsung Hero” scheme and will look to promote those community champions who are the lifeblood of our towns and villages.

· Cirencester Pantry continues to grow and thrive and has saved over 15 tonnes of food waste

· Encouraging other community groups to set up pantries

· We have recognised the need for satellite staff to work in Moreton to ensure residents in the north requiring benefit claims and job seekers don’t have to travel to Cirencester to sign on

· Encouraging social housing providers to not remove carpets when re-tenanting properties, helping to eliminate unnecessary waste and expense.

1. **County Councillor’s Report.**

This year has again been a very busy time for the County Council and my focus has been on local highways issues with much of the winter spent sorting out flooding. I have asked questions and proposed motions at Full Council meetings and set up working groups for various local issues which seem to have been positive. Here is an overview of some of the work I have been involved in as your County Councillor.

Budget for 2023/24

Proposals put forward by the Conservative majority administration for a budget of £616million were passed in February. This represents a £42m increase in the budget compared to 23/24. For a band D property, this will mean a monthly increase of £6.34. The increase is above the expected rate of inflation for this year. It is made up of 2.99% increase on council tax and a 2% precept for adult social care.

Amendments by all three opposition parties were accepted. These included the following from my Group:

£25,000 – Increased spending on Public Rights of Way

Increasing the resource available for mapping so people know which walking routes are available to them.

£25,000 – Additional money for Flood schemes

In a year with huge amounts of flooding across the County, the group felt it was important to support communities that suffered from the flooding that occurred.

£100,000 – Additional money for Road safety

Liberal Democrats are committed to reducing the number of deaths that take place on the county’s roads which continue to cause alarm and are significantly higher than statistical neighbouring authorities.

£20,000 – Feasibility Study to support foster families

Work up the governance arrangements and criteria for a scheme to allow foster carers to make improvements to their home to take extra children.

This is a Liberal Democrat idea to provide more space for foster carers to take care of more children. The Policy could save the county council millions in the future if it means fewer children being put into out of county placements.

Motions to Full Council

In recent meetings we have tabled motions, of which amended versions were passed after the Conservative administration removed criticisms of the government. Topics included:

· Shortening waiting lists for Cancer care and the NHS

· Holding the Conservative Government to account to keep their promise of restoring policing to 2010 levels (we are still a long way off this in police per person terms)

· Cost of Living Crisis

· Declaring a roads emergency

Local Bus Transport

The County Council has had a bid for £6 million accepted to introduce more electric busses in the county. The Robin bus service is due to be rolled out in the south Cotswolds in the Autumn and should provide a really useful mode of desperately needed public transport in the area.

The Council has agreed a bus improvement plan worth £4.4 million meaning some services are now more regular.

This means the trend of recent years seeing cuts to bus services is finally starting to slow. This is thanks to local groups supporting existing bus services. Services like the Robin (a bookable bus that links with existing bus routes) have been a success and are showing a blueprint for supporting rural services in the future.

Road Safety Policy

Our group is committed to the County Council’s vision for reducing the amount of road accidents taking place across the County. The Council now has a pot of over £2,000,000 to tackle road safety.

Going forward, the aim will be to spend this money wisely and reduce the high casualty rates we currently see on Rural A roads.

Highways Local Fund

I was delighted to support some patching works (Ewen and A417 Ampney St Peter), flood alleviation schemes (Somerford Keynes, Cerney Wick), verge tidying (Ampney Crucis), setts (Down Ampney) and signage (Meysey Hampton).

Build Back Better – Councillor Scheme

I received many applications for the remainder of my Build Back Better pot and was able to support many fantastic groups this year including Down Ampney Primary School, Cotswold Counselling, Meysey Hampton Guides, Ampney Crucis Village Hall, Poulton Parish Council Playground, Kemble Community Gardens, Cotswolds Lakes Trust, and Cotswolds Friends. I still have some money left which has to be spent by the end of this year, so do get in contact if you have a project.

Committees

This year I was honoured to be selected by my fellow members to Chair the Adult Social Care and Communities scrutiny committee which looks at Adult Social Care, Public Health, Trading Standards and Coronary Services. This is a fascinating committee and we have looked at various topics including the use of alcohol in everyday life, how the county looks after refugees and asylum seekers, the coronary service and coroner’s court and housing for the homeless.

I also sit on Corporate Overview and Scrutiny which looks at the County Council’s corporate remit.

I took part in the bus Working Group mentioned above which had a very targeted remit and made a series of recommendations for Cabinet and council to consider.

This is just a brief overview of the work of the last year. Please feel free to contact me about these or any other matters.

1. **Poulton Playing Fields & Allotment Charity – Caroline Allanson.**

A new agreement with the Cricket Club has been finalised. The Club have agreed to maintain Englands and the pavilion for 12 months. Englands is of course open to all villagers.

Plans for 2024/25:

Southern boundary fence

Remove western fence.

Repair allotment fencing.

Replace main entrance gate.

Parking – parking is available for villagers if they are having an event.

The Trustees will put information in the PoultonEye regarding relief for the poor which is the remit of the Charity. Only two requests have been made in the last 8 years.

The Trustees are still looking for a suitable use for the meadow area, perhaps an area for dogs to be off their leads. The meeting discussed the issue of dog mess which is a constant issue on Englands. Dog owners are ignoring the request that dogs remain on a lead and dog mess continues to be left all over the field. The Trustees are keen for Englands to be safe for children to play on, but the dangers of dog mess are a real issue.

The Trustees have recently changed and there was an acknowledgement of the hard work and long service of the previous Trustees, Fredrick Folkestad, Paul Burnip, Roger Davies, and Claire Turner. The new Trustees are: Sanjay Saxena, Chris Davies, Simon Hall, and Natalie Baird-Clarke. Caroline Allanson remains as a Trustee.

1. **Poulton Village Hall Committee – Hilary Antingham.**

Maintenance work continues on the village hall, the walls have been repointed and the adjoining wall with BT will be undertaken.

Events continue to be held and well attended:

Books & Biccies

Film nights.

Post Office & Pantry

Although some groups did not return after the pandemic, ad hoc hiring has increased.

There is a plan for a summer BBQ on the 13th July to encourage new members of the village to come along and meet other villagers.

1. **Poulton Cricket Club – Will Bathurst.**

The Club has a good volunteer base and has reached its maximum size of 140 children plus 60 adults. The Club has 20 qualified Coaches and consequently no outsourcing is required. There is now a waiting list for the first time although, villagers will be prioritised.

There is a new floor at the front of the pavilion. New tables, chairs, and fridges and £30,000 of equipment have been purchased.

The Robot mower has been very successful and frees up volunteer hours. The Crowdfunding for the robot was very successful and helped by the CDC grant which Lisa Spivey facilitated. A new rollar has been named Turbo after Wayne.

Plans for 2024/25:

Tidy the sheds and side of the pavilion.

Move from Ampney Crucis to Meysey Hampton for the third 11.

Kitchen refurbishment.

Changing room refurbishment.

Apply for ECB grants.

Events for the last weekend in June are planned: quiz, cricket matches, music, garden party, and Bake Off.

Social membership is available to villagers for £5. Friday night use of the pavilion bar and BBQ. Children’s membership remains at £60 for the season, payable by instalments.

Mr Bathurst said that cricket involvement was reducing in the Cotswolds, but Poulton was flourishing with men’s, women’s, and children’s clubs plus three mixed senior teams. Poulton has the largest cricket square in the county and every effort is made to protect it from the weather and damage.

1. **Poulton Parochial Council – Simon Collyer-Bristow.**

There will be a sing-along on the 5th July which unfortunately clashes with the Friday night Cricket Club so parking will be an issue. Dates need to be communicated between the groups to avoid such clashes.

The entrance to Church Lane has been repaired. There is a blue car which consistently parks near the entrance and hinders visibility for people leaving Englands.

The meeting closed at 9pm.