

MINUTES of ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Wednesday 13th May 2015

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, elected members completed Declaration of Acceptance of Office & Register of Member's Interests forms:

Trevor Gill, Alastair Whetstone, Michael Blakeman, Darrell Muffitt, Martyn Heard.

AGM/P1 2015

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm

Apologies: Councillor Chris Williams.

Present at meeting: David Hutt, Trevor Gill, Michael Blakeman, Darrell Muffitt, Alastair Whetstone, Martyn Heard, Clerk (Helen Hide-Wright), Councillor Bart Dalla Mura.

Public: Kevin and Kathy Martin

1) Confirm minutes of last AGM: Minutes were accepted and signed by David Hutt. Proposed: Trevor Gill, Seconded: Alastair Whetstone.

2) Chair's Report Year 2014-15: David Hutt.

As retiring chairman I would like to take the opportunity to combine the annual statement with a reflection over the past four years since the time of the formation of the last Council.

In April 2011 the long serving members of the Council, Lily Hope Frost, Jill Burgess and Sarah Richardson, stood down. Jill had done a very good job as Chair, supported by both Lily and Sarah. Jill and Sarah continued what they had started by developing an excellent Avon Dasset website. Jill has now moved to Scotland. Sarah Richardson continues to look after the website for which the Council is most grateful and appreciative.

Formation of the new Council

When I initially took over as Chair, it was evident that the priority was rebuilding the Council. In my position as Chair I very much appreciated the willingness of Alistair Whetstone to step up as a relatively new arrival to Avon Dasset and to operate as my Vice Chair. I was also very appreciative of the other three members who supported me from the outset of the newly formed Avon Dasset Parish Council namely, Dan Robertson, Kevin Martin and Diana Biddlestone. Work commitments were always respected together with family commitments for Diana. We were aware that her contribution may not be for the full term of the election period of 4 years. However in the 18 months she was able to serve on the Council her most notable contribution was the coordination of the fund raising exercise that ensured the steps of St John The Baptist Church were built. Once again the Church has become extremely significant and an increasingly used asset to the village.

Whilst Kevin Martin resigned during the early years of the newly formed Council and we welcomed Trevor Gill and Chris Campbell as new members. Dan gave great support to the council particularly on the days dedicated to cleaning up the village. He was also invaluable

in his contribution of being a gentle voice of reason in the pub helping get our message across. Work and family commitments did eventually lead to Dan Robertson having to retire.

Trevor's work since he joined the council has been tireless and considerable. He has worked well together with our very able clerk Helen Hyde- Wright helping with budgets with regular attendance at meeting held by local organisations such as the police and neighbourhood watch initiatives. His work in helping to maintain the appearance in the village leaf clearing and helping unblock the drains, a fundamental to the up keeping and appearance of the village community. We now have excellent street lighting, and well maintained roads and drainage that works! Thank you Trevor.

For a time the council continued one short of full compliment. In May 2014 the council suffered the tragic death of Chris Campbell through a heart attack in his mid 50s. Chris was really well respected and well known in the village for his tremendous work with the annual downhill soap box derby. His contribution in the brief time he was working with the council brought balance and hard work to our team and he will be greatly missed. His position has now been taken up by Mike Blakeman. Mike is now a retired architect and his knowledge of planning together with his awareness of the way in which we are looking to preserve the culture of Avon Dassett is sure to prove invaluable with the council moving forward. Early 2015 we have also now been joined by Martyn Heard which returns the council to full compliment of five.

The village is currently a population of just over 200 the oldest Reg Watts currently 88 and the youngest as at April 2015 a few months old. George Finlay Robertson son of one of our former councillors, Dan Robertson.

With the help of our historian and friend of the council Sarah Richardson we have established that as far back as the dooms day book when the first census was taken and further censuses in the 13th and 17th century the population of Avon Dassett has always been between 150 and 250 people. This experience could well be unique if not extremely rare for what is effectively more a hamlet by definition than a village. It is with this thought in mind that the council has to consider how it can best serve its community and maintain a culture which has developed over 1000 years.

The Chairman's Philosophy and Approach to running Avon Dassett Parish Council

At the outset of my term as chair I presented my concept of the way in which I felt the council should operate.

Using a sporting analogy it has been my intention that the council should run its duties for which it is elected by the Avon Dassett rather like a good referee runs a rugby or football match. The game runs smoothly and the memory for the crowd and participants is just that. What they don't necessary notice is the thought and care that has gone into this experience and the referee simply finishes the match with the quiet satisfaction that the game has gone well. Following on with this analogy it does not mean that the referee does not occasionally have to blow the whistle hard and take action. However this should be done bearing in mind the overall endeavour is to ensure that the interests of the residents are looked after and the culture is maintained.

Notable Events & Improvements

At this point I will like to recall some of the more notable events which clearly demonstrate that this quiet hamlet is not so sleepy.

An emphasis has been made on the public areas of the village new street lighting at significant expense has now been replaced. This required an exceptional request on behalf of the council to increase the annual precept in order to carry out these improvements. It is only fair to say at this point that during the previous chairs tenure the Avon Dasset council volunteered to reduce their precept. However the council felt it appropriate to apply for and to receive the increase in the precept for what was going to be essential work in the village in 2014-2015. A further increase in the precept to the village for the year 2015-2016 has been applied for. It should be noted that this results in a direct increase in local council tax paid by the residents of Avon Dasset. This is because Stratford District council organise their affairs in such a way that the increase is directly paid for by an increase in council tax levied on the 80 or so residencies in the village. I would therefore caution against applying for a further increase in 2016-2017 without first making the residents aware. The previous council preferred to use the route of applying for grants for special circumstances. Funding for specific projects which are considered worthy are available, an example of this was the original costs in relation to establishing the website.

Notable events 2014-2015:

1. The resurfacing of the main road through Avon Dasset.
2. Significant improvements now increase the profile of the thirty MPH speed limits at the top and bottom of the village.
3. The drainage work which has been carried out by Stratford District Council.
4. Further work in this area is to be undertaken in the near future in order to improve the drainage at the top of Church Hill.

Broadband

At every parish council meeting the subject of broadband improvements has been discussed and it does now appear to be part of a bigger agenda which will lead to super fast broadband being introduced into more rural areas including our own during 2016. However we wait to see as promises have been made in the past. Nevertheless great thanks should be given to Trevor for his ensuring this item has been part of the monthly agenda's and his tenacity in pressing Stratford District Council on this issue.

Avon Pub

Unfortunately we now face the position where the village pub has closed with effect from January 2015. Currently it is up for sale as a going concern the Avon Dasset Parish Council has registered it as an asset of the village and as such at least for the time being stalled any thoughts of an application to turn the buildings and its land into residential use. We are

hopeful that a buyer will come forward and once again the social centre of our community will once again thrive.

Green Areas

The green areas have been well maintained and an initiative to “sponsor a flower tub” does appear to have been well received and we look forward to the prospect of the village maintaining and indeed improving on its reputation of being an area of outstanding natural beauty.

May I take this opportunity to wish the council well with its efforts on behalf of Avon Dassett in the coming years.

3) Election of Chairman & Vice-Chairman and completion of Acceptance of Office form by Chairman.

David Hutt Proposed Trevor Gill for Chairman of Avon Dassett Parish Council. Alastair Whetstone Seconded the proposal. Trevor Gill accepted the nomination and signed his Acceptance of Office form as Chairman.

David Hutt handed his Reading Room key to Darrell Muffitt.

Trevor Gill proposed Mike Blakeman in the role of Vice-Chairman of ADPC. Seconded: Alastair Whetstone. Michael Blakeman accepted the nomination.

4) Financial Report with annual review of Standing Orders, Banking Standing Orders and Direct Debits, Fixed Assets List, Financial Regulations, Emergency Plan, Risk Assessment.

Trevor Gill had circulated the reports prior to the meeting. All the reports, with the exception of the emergency plan, were accepted by the meeting. The emergency Plan needs updating with information including new councillor details. **ACTION: Emergency Plan to be updated by next monthly meeting.**

5) Charities Report: None.

6) Member Reports: None.

The meeting closed at 7.40pm.
Meeting.

The meeting was followed by ADPC’s Annual Parish Meeting.