

NEEN SAVAGE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 19th May 2021 at Neen Savage Parish Hall commencing at 7.30pm.

Chairman: Cllr Arthur Ratcliff.

Clerk: Mrs D McBride.

There were nine people present.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Cllr A Ratcliff welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting. It is the first time many people have been into the Hall in a long time due to the pandemic.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Mrs S Del Mar, Mrs E Haywood, Mr C Whitworth and Mr A Vanderhook.

3. Approve Minutes of last Annual Parish Meeting held on 29th May 2019

The Minutes were approved as being a true record (proposed by Cllr A Ratcliff, seconded by Cllr O Sales) and duly signed by the Chairman.

4. Parish Council Report

Cllr Ratcliff stated the Councillors four-year term in office had just ended at the recent election. No-one could have foreseen how different the last year has been but we worked through it and continued to publish all our work and meetings on the Parish Council website. Last year's Annual Parish Meeting was cancelled as was the March and April Parish Council meetings. We set up virtual meetings on Zoom from May onwards which worked well although it did emphasise the variations in broadband efficiency with some Councillors unable to attend meetings. We were pleased that members of the public were still able to attend our meetings.

The state of the roads is always a major concern. Councillors and the Clerk repeatedly report issues and there have been some repairs but there are many more to do. Poor drainage is a major factor affecting the roads and so the Parish Council did eight days work under the Environmental Maintenance Scheme to keep water in the ditches and off the road. More work needs to be done and is proposed for the Autumn and Spring, despite the poor timing in the financial year, of the grant approval process by Shropshire Council. The preferred method to report potholes is by email directly to Shropshire Council CSCduty@shropshire.gov.uk. It is hoped that the Ford improvements will still go ahead using some CIL money. Several meetings were held initially but we have heard nothing for many months. Thanks to Andy Vanderhook and Dorothy McBride for pushing forward to have the broadband installed in the Parish Hall. It is of help at meetings especially with displaying documents to reduce paper at meetings and helps with compliance of the Transparency Code. We hope to have an interactive screen installed to enable hybrid meetings with remote attendance, as well. It will be an added attraction for those hiring the Hall too. Following a meeting with the Police Rural Crime Officer we set up a WhatsApp group 'CrimeWatchNeenSavage'. Thanks to Olwen Sales and Dorothy McBride for getting this set up. Please remember to keep social chitchat off this group as the police are members of the group and do monitor it to help us with any issues. Thank you to Charles Whitworth for setting up 'Neen Savage Support' group on WhatsApp last Spring which continues to assist people with any help they may need.

Thank you to the Clerk and all the Councillors who served the community over the last four years and especially to Andy Vanderhook who has not stood for re-election and retired from the Council after 16 years of service. We have two vacancies and hope to fill these by co-option at next week's Parish Council meeting.

5. Neen Savage Parochial Church Council Report

Cllr A Ratcliff read Mrs S Del Mar's report on the activities of the Parochial Church Council over the year since the last Annual Meeting. (Full report attached with these Minutes). Due to the pandemic St Mary's Church, Neen Savage, has little to report. The PCC held a meeting in the churchyard during the summer, but the second lockdown put paid to any more meetings as Zoom facilities were not possible. The church was closed for the winter obeying diocese regulations but was opened for a very moving service on Christmas Day with prayers, readings and some organ playing. We have had a quinquennial report with a raft of repairs needed. We have monies in the Fabric fund for some of the minor faults but certainly not for the major ones. We managed to pay three quarters of the 2020 Parish Share but have not sent anything so far in 2021 as the donations we receive from our loyal supporters have been used to pay for the churchyard mowing, insurance, electricity and church upkeep. Only two Funerals and a Baptism took place in 2020. Many thanks to the Parish Council for their contribution towards the grass mowing.

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6. Neen Savage Parish Hall Committee Report

Mrs C Ratcliff confirmed the Hall reopened on May 17th 2021. Since March 2020 the Hall has been maintained by the Committee and much work has been done using advice from the Shropshire Village Halls Advisory Group. Special conditions of hire have been put in place to make the Hall Covid secure following a full risk assessment and consultation with the insurers. The Committee were fortunate to secure government Covid funding which meant they could respond to the situation immediately, invest in the Hall now and for the future.

The greatest achievement of 2020 has been the publication of the parish book Neen Savage 2020. It has been extremely well received and very special thanks to the author Gill Guest and a hardworking committee. Despite a restricted launch in October, sales have been good and over 150 copies have been sold. The costs of production have now been met from sales and the book will be a valuable source of funds for the Hall in the future. We are delighted to have broadband in the Hall. Many thanks to the Parish Council for their help in securing this. It will be a real asset going forward as we try to attract new hirers.

2020 was a very difficult year but the saddest moment came when we lost, suddenly, our longest serving committee member, Irene Maxwell. Irene was a founder member of the Parish Hall Committee and her cakes and cookery skills were legendary as was her unfailing friendship and support. We all miss her a great deal.

Many thanks to the Parish Council for their continued support to the Hall. Thanks particularly to Arthur Ratcliff for maintaining the grounds with regular grass-cutting. There will be a work party on June 5th. Volunteers are meeting at 2pm if anyone would like to help. On July 17th we are holding our scarecrow event with a traditional theme together with a garden party and Cleobury Brass Band will be playing.

7. Neen Savage Women's Institute Report

Mrs C Evans read the WI's annual report (full copy attached with these Minutes).

We last met in the Parish Hall on Wednesday 11th March 2020 when we had an interesting talk from Ann Pyatt of Cosy Kitchen. With the lockdown everything stopped initially but with the support and enthusiasm of the Committee we joined the Zoom revolution. Committee meetings were always well supported but for various reasons only a few members joined our monthly meetings. Those that did attend found it comforting to chat with friends and we took the decision not to offer formal speakers as not all members were able to join in. Once restrictions eased the Committee put together a 'Goodie Bag' for all members and this was repeated at Christmas and Easter. Members also managed to meet during the summer months at outdoor venues for coffee and chat. We have resumed these in April and May this year. Finally, we plan to return to the Hall next month where I am sure there will be a lot of catching up. The theme is 'your lockdown project' for members to share their creativity and resilience. Our Programme Secretary has planned a busy year for us including climbing Clee Hill, visiting Stone Cottage Gardens and remembering the Swinging Sixties. As always, we are always looking for new members – particularly those that actually live in Neen Savage – and they would be very welcome.

8. Edwards & Hinckesman's Foundation Charity Report

The Clerk read Mr Whitworth's Edwards & Hinckesman's Foundation Report (full copy attached with these Minutes). The Trustees met in August 2020 to interview applicants for awards and review the business of the charity. Grants totaling £3,100 were made to seven young people of the Parish. The Foundation's assets are fully invested with CCLA in the COIF Charities Investment Fund which aims to generate a balance of income and capital growth. Fundraising activities were not possible due to the Covid pandemic, however four generous donations were received from members of the parish. The Trustees are planning a fundraising Garden Safari (Open Gardens around the parish) on the afternoon of Sunday 25th July – details to be circulated in the Vital Link. The Trustees are always keen to hear news from any previous beneficiary of the Foundation. Parishioners are encouraged to put them in touch. The deadline for the receipt of applications this year is Sunday 1st August 2021 with interviews taking place on Wednesday 1st September 2021.

9. Parish Matters

Michael Tomkinson raised a comment from a parishioner regarding grass cutting in the churchyard. The matter will be passed onto John Haywood, Churchwarden.

Cllr Ratcliff reminded everyone of the Parish Council meeting being held next week, thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.56pm.