

NEEN SAVAGE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 18th May 2022 at Neen Savage Parish Hall commencing at 7.30pm.

Chairman: Cllr Arthur Ratcliff.

Clerk: Mrs D McBride.

There were sixteen people present.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Cllr A Ratcliff welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Simon Harris, Mr & Mrs Del Mar, Mr C Whitworth, Mr & Mrs Coleman.

3. Minutes of last Annual Parish Meeting held on 19th May 2021

The Minutes were approved as being a true record and duly signed by the Chairman.

4. Neen Savage Parish Council Report

Cllr Ratcliff read the Parish Council's Annual Report (full copy attached with these Minutes):

Last year's Annual Parish Meeting (APM) took place just after the Parish Council Elections, and saw us short of two councillors, so I'd just like to start by welcoming Julian and Chris to the Council, and thanking them for offering themselves for co-option.

Covid has remained a feature of the last 12 months, but from June onwards we have been having our meetings here in the Parish Hall, with the exception of December when due to a spike in infections locally, and there being no particularly urgent business on the agenda, it was decided to cancel.

As with every APM (and every monthly Parish Council meeting), the state of our roads is one of the most discussed topics. This year we have included an item on the agenda specifically to cover this, and Cllr Tomkinson will be giving a report on that subject shortly.

The Broadband here at the Hall seems to be working well, and is certainly a valuable asset for those of us who have moved into the digital age. The whole project stemmed from the need to comply with the Transparency Code, as well as reducing the amount of paper used at meetings. We are still hoping to shortly be installing a large smart screen here in the hall that will allow us to do this. It will also allow, for example, people to attend our meetings remotely thus removing the need for someone to travel all the way from Shrewsbury to spend just half an hour with us. We also hope it will be an added attraction for hirers of the Parish Hall, for business presentations, or illustrated talks.

At the July meeting, we had a visit from two Police Community Support Officers. Although they informed us that we are lucky enough to be living in a low crime area, it doesn't always feel like it. The Crime Watch WhatsApp group is however still working well when it is needed, and thanks must go mainly to Cllr Sales for that.

July also saw a work party at Pike Common, where we cleared brambles, nettles, docks and willow herb. Subsequently it was mowed a couple of times and now seems to be under a bit more control. Earlier this year there were snowdrops and daffodils growing - they had probably been there all along but you just couldn't see them. We remain concerned about the state of the bank on the other side of the river, but despite our best efforts, it seems we can't get much done about it.

Improvements to the Ford area are still awaiting progress, and we are assured that something will be done, but we are frustrated that our local knowledge of the problems, and the best solutions, are being ignored in favour of those of the Environment Agency, Severn Trent and Shropshire Council Highways.

At the February meeting we had a visit from Pete Blackburn who is the Chair of the Steering Group for the Cleobury Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan. He was invited because we had become aware that Cleobury had possibly been looking at some areas of Neen Savage for housing developments. He was able to reassure us that an area of land by the cemetery to the west of Cleobury was now the most likely option for the next 15 to 20 years.

For the last six months a working group comprising Mike Hurley and Cllrs Tomkinson, Cleford and Hardy have been reviewing the Community Led Plan for the parish. Chris will be covering that in item 10 on the agenda tonight.

To mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the Parish Council installed a bench and a tree on the Green Lane. The bench is solid steel and the tree is a Horse Chestnut, both of which should be there for many years.

I am sure he will be mentioned in Clare's report later, but I would just like to remember Andy Vanderhook who very sadly died in March. Andy had served on the Parish Council for 16 years, only stepping down 12 months ago. His drive, his understanding of all matters planning and otherwise and his considered opinions will be greatly missed.

I would just like to finish by thanking Dorothy for all her hard work as Clerk, and also to thank all my fellow councillors, who seem to me to have gelled into an efficient team who are all prepared to contribute to the benefit of the parish.

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5. Highways Report

Cllr Michael Tomkinson read the Highways Report (full copy attached with these Minutes).

There have been considerable improvements made to a number of stretches along the Bridgnorth Road, the Newbridge junction has been re-surfaced, the Six Ashes to Mawley Road has been repaired and also some repairs to the Stottesdon Road. All these repairs were long overdue but the smaller roads have been woefully neglected. Baveney Lane, Catherton Road and the Shunesley–Detton stretch are all potholed and deteriorating. Six Ashes down to the Church has received some attention recently but the pot hole repair machine does not do a very good job, as depositing tar and grit into a wet, gravel filled hole with graduated boundaries is like sticking a plaster onto wet skin.

The Parish Council has reported numerous problems multiple times, but very little communication if any, comes back often not even an acknowledgement. We are now encouraged to report problems using the “Fix My Street” portal. I have produced a summary of all the current reports open in the parish. Some parishioners and councillors have posted reports, however many were removed last December, so currently, there are at my estimate, 32 remaining. I have put them on a spread sheet in date order, which will make it easier to observe and monitor any progress. There are a few inaccuracies that need correcting, but at least it should provide a recordable means of reporting to Shropshire Highways. I appeal to all parishioners to post more reports and to keep updating them on a monthly basis. If you look at this area on the Fix My Street map, we have very few reports compared to Cleobury, for instance. If our complaints about highways are to be taken seriously, then we need more reporters and more reports. Reports can be made with a smart phone or with a computer. Someone at Highways may also realize that reports that are not rectified for long periods are more likely to result in claims for damage to vehicles. Each report has a brief title, so it is a good idea to put something that identifies this pothole from the next one. When posting an update, describe how the problem is getting worse or dangerous. Unitary Cllr Simon Harris showed the road from Detton via Nethercott to the Nash to Highways many months ago and they were worried about it damaging their vehicles. Even a road surveyor commented on how bad the road was. Highways have an obligation to inspect all roads on an annual basis but in this case, either that is not happening, or if it is, someone is deliberately suppressing or ignoring the reports. Those of us who have no option but to travel the road are wondering how bad does it have to get before some action is taken.

In desperation some parishioners have been filling in potholes with gravel. While I can sympathize that this seems like a helpful thing to do, in fact it will only last a few days and will also make the job of doing a proper repair more difficult as all the wet loose material will need to be removed before the repair can be made. Also, if such action is reported to Fix My Street, then Highways are even less likely to come and mend the road, as in their opinion it will no longer be a priority. Through the Lengthsmen Scheme we have cleared out ditches and culverts on the Shunesley-Detton Road. More material has been removed from Picklebatch ditch and a much better ditch re-established by the passing place on the Stonehouse-Stepple Road. The Ford culvert by the Old School House has been cleared out again. I would like to thank Arthur Ratcliff and Anthony Harman for their help and work on the highways.

6. Neen Savage Parochial Church Council Report

Mrs E Haywood read the PCC's Report (full copy attached with these Minutes).

Since our AGM in June 2021 regulations regarding the Coronavirus Pandemic have been unpredictable and in many cases the Church had again been obliged to cancel Services at short notice dependent on the case numbers in the Area, and through guidance from Hereford Diocese and indeed The Church of England.

During last Summer the Church was again able to be opened and thanks must go to Mr Peter Plant who has kept the Churchyard wonderfully tidy. Huge thanks must also go to Neen Savage Parish Council for their most generous Grant. The Parochial Church Council are very grateful for their continued support during a very difficult time.

The Flower and Church Cleaning Rota has been updated with each month being looked after by one person. The PCC is so grateful to all those who have helped during the year and if anyone would like to help at any time they are most welcome. Extra help is always needed at Easter, Harvest and Christmas.

At the 2021 Harvest Festival, refreshments were organized in the back of the Church by Catherine Evans and Lindsey Rawlings and again, the PCC would like to thank both ladies for their support. It was a lovely end to a Harvest Service which had been missed by many.

A recent Quinquennial Report has been done on the Church, with several areas highlighted for repairs. These have been prioritized and will be done as and when possible. The first area, the electrics, have been completed by Bright's of Tenbury who have recently made everything safe with re-wiring and updated switches.

This year Sunflower Seeds are being sold for the First Ever Sunflower Growing Competition. Thank you to everyone for buying seeds and for having them on display. Prizes will be given for the Tallest Flower, the Widest Flower and the most Unusual Looking Flower. Judging will take place at the end of the Summer, with excellent prizes for each category. All proceeds will be divided evenly between St. Mary's Church, Neen Savage and the Ukraine Disasters Appeal.

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7. Neen Savage Parish Hall Committee Report

Mrs C Ratcliff read the Parish Hall's Report (full copy attached with these Minutes).

The Hall reopened in May 2021, albeit with restrictions on usage and several revised Risk Assessments. As expected, bookings have been generally slow to pick up, but it is good to welcome back our regular hirers, the Parish Council and the WI. We also now have a weekly Yoga class that runs on a Monday evening.

Sadly, during the last 12 months we have had to say goodbye to some hardworking long standing committee members; Sandra Dodd, Barry Treves and Andy Vanderhook. Their contributions to the hall have been really important over many years. Andy particularly is missed by us all. He served as Parish Hall Secretary for 14 years and always produced prompt accurate minutes and records, so essential to any committee. His belief in the importance of supporting local community resources, like the Parish Hall, meant he had a firm commitment to maintaining a viable active hall in Neen Savage, available for present and future generations. To this end he was always willing to get involved with events and plans as well as day to day maintenance.

Ros Haines, an existing committee member, was happy to volunteer as our new Secretary. We also welcome Catherine Evans, who joins us as WI representative.

We had a very successful Annual Fete and Scarecrow convention in August. There was a great turnout and we decided to alter the location of the stalls to round the back of the hall including Cleobury Brass Band. During the afternoon the new red bench in memory of Irene Maxwell was unveiled and is now at the front of the hall alongside the red Phone box.

In December we had a successful outdoor Christmas event for all the family. We were fortunate to obtain the services of Father Christmas, who brought gifts for all the children. There were Christmas donkeys in attendance and we provided Mulled wine and Mince Pies, as well as Roasted Chestnuts and Samosas.

We had intended to improve the roadside boundary last winter, by removing the conifers by the gate and two lime trees, replanting the poor parts of the hedge and planting a new hedge by the gateway where the conifers are now. The improvements will make the hedge a better barrier, improve the environmental quality of the boundary, allow the remaining trees to thrive and mature, and improve the long-term health of the hedge. An environmental consultant was hired to give us a report particularly on the impact of the changes for bats and other wildlife. A positive report was received but plans were rescheduled for next winter because we had to seek legal advice following a solicitor's letter from the neighbours. We believe that this has now been settled and we will do the job in the autumn/winter.

We are also looking at building a small extension on the back of the hall, to be a store room for tables and chairs.

There will be a Bring and Share Lunch on July 5th to celebrate the Queens Platinum Jubilee. This year's Scarecrow Convention and Annual Garden Party will be on July 16th with a Jubilee theme.

Mrs Ratcliff thanked all the committee members and their families, for all their hard work and contributions. Also, thanks to all who came to the June Outside Work Party. A particular mention to Arthur Ratcliff for cutting the grass all season and offering his help as general handyman, and Andrew Pearce for siding up the hedge for us.

8. Neen Savage Women's Institute Report

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

Members were thrilled to return to the Parish Hall and resume face to face meetings in June 2021. Two meetings were out and about at Stone Cottage Gardens and also a talk and drive around Clee Hill and Oretton with Mr Alf Jenkins.

We were also busy in the community - helping Cleobury WI with an Afternoon Tea for the NHS, serving refreshments at the Little Hearts Matter Day at the Pioneer Centre and a very successful cake and produce sale at the Scarecrow Convention. Funds raised from this allowed us to subsidize membership of the WI for 2022 by £10 per member. In December we took over the running of the Advent Soup Lunches at Cleobury Market Hall, raising £705 for Severn Hospice. We also launched the Children's Clothes Initiative with Cleobury WI, based in the Market Hall where children's clothes can be donated, swapped or collected by anyone in the community.

Monthly meetings continued from October. We also meet informally locally on the last Thursday of every month for coffee. We have an exciting programme of talks, outings and activities planned for this year, as well as a cake stall at the Scarecrow Convention and the Soup lunches again in December. We are all embroidering our names on a tablecloth to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Membership has grown over the last year but we would welcome more, especially if you live in Neen Savage! We meet on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, 7.30pm here at the Parish Hall.

9. 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 2021 to interview applicants for awards and review the business of the charity. Grants totaling £3,750 were made to eight young people of the Parish. Fundraising from the Garden Safari in July 2021 raised £800. 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 1st August 2022 with interviews taking place on Wednesday 31st August 2022.

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10. Review of the Neen Savage Community Led Plan

Cllr Chris Hardy read the Review of the Neen Savage Community Led Plan (full copy attached with these Minutes). The Neen Savage Community Led Plan is available to view on the Parish Council website for anyone who doesn't have a paper copy. The document was adopted by Neen Savage Parish Council and by Shropshire County Council. Relevant key components of the plan were included in Shropshire Council's Site Allocation and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan which was adopted in December 2015 and this document sets out proposals for the use of land to guide future development for the period up to 2026. Components of the plan were also included by Shropshire Council when they produced the Cleobury Mortimer and Surrounding Area Place Plan which was published in 2019/2020. This document is now overdue for a review. Our review of the Neen Savage Community Led Plan is very timely because it will allow us, with a high degree of confidence, to ensure that the current wishes of our parishioners are given full consideration when the Cleobury Mortimer and Surrounding Area Place Plan is reviewed. The Community Led Plan Review was conducted by Cllr Cleford, Cllr Tomkinson, Cllr Hardy and Mike Hurley attending a series of meetings where we gave consideration to the Summary of Actions and Recommendations which can be found in Section 12 of the document. From these meetings we generated a large amount of text that we have attempted to summarise in the draft document which is currently available to review on the Neen Savage Parish Council Website. The findings from the review are that the Community Led Plan is still relevant for Neen Savage today. The plan captured the fact that parishioners value, and regard as very important, the preservation of the rural nature of the parish. There is still a strong desire to see this embraced by Neen Savage Parish Council when considering development across the community. We conclude that this expectation has been fulfilled by the Parish Council since 2014. Finally, parishioners are welcome to make any contributions to the review before it is finally adopted by our Parish Council. The Parish Council will then distribute our findings to Shropshire Council, other neighbouring Parish and Town Councils, our Unitary Councillors and any other interested parties. The Parish Council would like to be in a position to adopt the findings of this review at the next Parish Council meeting which is due to be held on 25th May 2022.

11. Division Boundary and Community Governance (Parish Boundary) reviews

Cllr Ratcliff stated the Boundary Commission is currently reviewing the division boundaries. Currently we are in a two-member division, which Shropshire Council supports, but the Boundary Commission are keen to see single-member wards which would mean splitting our unitary councillors. We are waiting to see how our local parishes would be re-grouped. The parish boundary review process starts next year. Due to development spreading across some parish boundaries it has been suggested that parish boundaries could be changed or parishes could join with their neighbours. Parish boundary changes would not be enforced as they need to be agreed by all parties. The Parish Council would welcome any comments on parish or division boundaries and will put forward comments to the Boundary Commission.

12. Unitary Councillor's Report

Unitary Cllr Gwilym Butler and Cllr Simon Harris have issued a joint annual report (full copy attached with these Minutes). Cllr Butler congratulated the Parish Council on being very well ran. He agreed with Cllr Tomkinson's report on the issues with Highways and urged people to keep reporting all issues. Cllr Butler met with the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable recently. They are keen on crime prevention but also improving community engagement. Parish Councils can have a quarterly visit and all victims of crime should be visited. There is a new epidemic of drug and alcohol abuse coming into mainstream culture of middle-class people. There are currently 619 children in care – two-thirds due to neglect. There are currently 64 children in children's homes and Shropshire Council would like more people to step forward to be foster carers to help these children. Police are keen to work with all local authorities, schools, social workers etc to try and take early action to prevent children going into care. The B4363 will be surface dressed this year. Community partnership working set up during Covid will continue as people are now struggling with cost-of-living rises. Shropshire Council delivered a balanced budget in February but needs to find a further £8m due to inflation. Post-Brexit, money is going to the Shared Prosperity Fund for distribution. Central Government is not communicating directly with smaller rural counties so Shropshire may need to join with neighbours to apply for funding. Parliamentary boundaries are changing and the Ludlow constituency will now go as far north as Shrewsbury. Cllr Butler confirmed the current division works well with having two councillors but people are encouraged to think about their local areas with regards to division and parish boundaries as some growth is needed to keep schools, local businesses and the local economy flourishing.

13. Parish Matters

Cllr Tomkinson commented on the poor reinstatement of the B4363 after Severn Trent installed a new water main ten years ago and hoped they will leave the road in a better condition when they finish their current work on the A4117 near Mawley. Cllr Butler confirmed the work will be monitored.

Cllr Ratcliff thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.37pm.

It was agreed at the Parish Meeting (Minute Ref 2023/03) that these minutes are a true record of the meeting.

Signed.....Arthur Ratcliff.....Chairman Date.....31st May 2023.....