

# NEEN SAVAGE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2024 at Neen Savage Parish Hall commencing at 7.30pm.

Chairman: Cllr Arthur Ratcliff.

Clerk: Mrs D McBride.

There were 21 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 O Sales.

3. Minutes of last Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2023

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).

Cllr Ratcliff reminded everyone that all the information relating to the business of the Parish Council ie Agendas, Minutes, Financial Information etc is available and regularly updated on the Parish Council website. While on that subject, all Town and Parish Councils are currently being encouraged to change their websites from ".org.uk" to a ".gov.uk" address. This is something that we will have to do in time, but at the moment we feel it is wise to wait and let some of the bigger councils make the change and see what problems they come up against. Either way, we will have to keep our .org site, mainly to prevent anyone else getting hold of it. When the change comes, there will be a link to get to the new .gov site.

The state of our roads, and our continued efforts to try and improve them will be covered by Cllr Tomkinson in his report, but I would like to point out that freak weather events, like Storm Babet, undo years of work in a few hours, and these storms seem to be occurring with increased regularity. I will also just mention the Litter Picking and thank everyone who does their bit in the parish - either on a regular basis (as I know many do) or as part of our litter picking weeks.

Having being promising for the last 5 years at least, the new big screen has been installed in the Hall. Money was set aside for this to help comply with what was then, the new Transparency Guidelines, to help people attending council meetings, to view documents under discussion. The Parish Council has bought and installed the screen, with the hope that it will also prove a useful addition to the facilities on offer here in the Hall. In the end, it was no bad thing that it took so long because, with the speed that technology is moving forward, the system that we were looking at 5 years ago was considerably more expensive than this Smart TV and would already be hopelessly out of date!

Something that is coming up at every PC meeting is an update on the progress of the Clerk's efforts to get the deeds replaced, for the land on which the Parish Hall stands. These appear to have been lost at some point before the handover of Council documents to the current Parish Council in 2017. These deeds need to be replaced to regularize the positions of the Parish Council and the Parish Hall committee with regard to this plot of land. This has been creating a huge amount of work for the Clerk, and despite the fact that we have ample evidence regarding ownership, the Land Registry are being very slow.

While I will again leave it to Cllr Tomkinson to explain the situation with the Ford Drainage Improvement Project, we are becoming increasingly aware of the dangers that the Ford itself poses to local people and even more to drivers that don't know the area. We have come to the conclusion that even if nothing else is done, the signage, warning of the risks involved in using the Ford needs to be improved. The County Council seems totally uninterested in doing anything about this, so at the next PC meeting, we intend to discuss whether we can put up some signs to help the situation.

In the past year, the Six Ashes junction has gained a bench and a new bit of fencing, but sadly has lost its Six Ashes. The bench to replace the one stolen 18 months ago has been designed, made and installed by Mr J Barrett and myself, with the aim of making it less attractive to thieves. The fence also needed replacing for safety reasons, and we have put in a fence which is lower, but has twice as many upright posts. The idea is that the lorries which park up there will go over the top of the rail instead of reversing until they hear the "crack". To make it even more visible we will be installing three large wooden planters, like the ones you may have noticed in Cleobury, hopefully in the next few weeks. The car park at Six Ashes is a facility which is not necessarily used much by the residents of the parish but nonetheless I still feel it is an asset worth maintaining.

As for the Six Ashes trees, Highways had deemed them unsafe because of disease and they had to come down. The contractors that took them down did a very tidy and efficient job, but we will be pressing the County to replace them as soon as possible with something suitable.

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This is the last year for this current council, and some new faces would always be welcome. I would encourage anyone who might be interested in standing next year to come along to a few meetings and see what it is all about. Finally, I would like to thank all of my fellow councillors for their contributions over the last year, with special mention to Cllr Tomkinson for coordinating the Environmental Maintenance work on roads, ditches, and culverts, Cllr Sales for all her work on the website and WhatsApp Crime Group, Cllr Hardy for attending numerous SALC meetings and reporting back to us, and, of course, thanks to our Clerk, for all her hard work, help and advice, and keeping us all in order.

## 5. Highways Report

Cllr Tomkinson read the Parish Council's Highway Report (full copy attached with these Minutes).

Cllr Michael Tomkinson was pleased to report that due to a persistent campaign waged by the Parish Council and continuous reporting of road issues, a formal complaint and involvement of our MP, the road between Nash Crossroads and Detton Junction will be overlaid with tarmac in the second week of June. We are still pressing for improved drainage infrastructure along this road which will help keep water off the roads and ensure the new road lasts for longer.

Following patching and pot hole repairs last summer the overall state of the road had improved until the storms in October which did a lot of damage.

Four ash trees were cut down and removed by Shropshire Council at Six Ashes as they were showing signs of Die Back. For five years, the Parish Council has been trying to get a £10,700 CIL funded project underway to improve the drainage near the Ford. Unfortunately, Shropshire Council sat on the WSP report for almost two years and the costs have now escalated. Various options were proposed but their preferred option has now been further delayed due to their proposal being contrary to CIL legal requirements regarding access to the field. The Parish Council is looking at options to undertake some of the work locally to enable the remainder of the project to go ahead.

The Parish Council has been very active with environmental maintenance work; cleaning gullies, drains etc and hopes the grant funding from Shropshire Council will continue.

The Fix My Street app is still the best way to report highway issues and everyone is encouraged to use it. The app is still not perfect but if issues are not resolved you can add updates or repost the report again with slightly different wording.

Thank you to everyone who has worked or volunteered on parish roads this year and to Simon Harris who has supported our efforts and sometimes has managed to cut a way through the jungle of bureaucracy that hinders us.

## 6. Neen Savage Parochial Church Council Report

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

There have been a lot of compliments on the tidiness of the Churchyard and thanks go to Mr Peter Plant for its upkeep and to the Parish Council for their continued support. Thanks also to all those who clean the church and arrange flowers each month throughout the year. Two new refuse bins have been obtained and are available for any waste.

Mr J Haywood has completed an up-to-date mapping of the Churchyard which is available in the Benefice Office.

Priorities in the Quinquennial Report are being worked through with the electrics having been completed. Funds will be set aside for re-tiling the roof on the north side, should the need arise.

Due to Clergy shortages, there are just two services a month. The Harvest Festival was cancelled due to inclement weather and flooding. Thanks to John and Sue Del Mar for organising a very moving Remembrance Service. The Crib Service was once again very well attended.

This year there is a Pet Service on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> June, an Open Gardens Event on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June (in conjunction with the Edwards and Hinckesman Foundation) and a lecture in the church on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> June on the 'Wyre Forest Coalfields'. Tickets are £10.00 and available from any PCC member.

## 7. Neen Savage Parish Hall Committee Report

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

The Hall Management Committee has ten trustees who met six times during the year plus held a Strategy Planning Day. Events organized during the past 12 months included a work party to tidy the grounds as well as the Scarecrow Convention and Fete in July, a Christmas Celebration Event on 22<sup>nd</sup> December, the Easter Day Big Breakfast on 31<sup>st</sup> March and an Open Morning in April, primarily organized by the WI but with representatives from all local organizations.

Improvements to the Hall include the new smart TV supplied by the Parish Council, refurbished road gates, a new logo for the Hall, removal of two trees and planting of new hedging plants. The main project is to upgrade the toilets and create a new storeroom for the tables and chairs as well as a shed to be installed on a concrete base behind the Hall later in the year to provide further storage. Thanks to Ros Haines for chasing grants to enable the improvements to take place.

Funding has been secured from the Lottery (£10,000), Parish Council (£2,500) and the Platinum Jubilee Fund (£3,667). Future events and plans include an event on 14<sup>th</sup> September, purchase of new tables and chairs, further hedge planting on the road boundary, the development of a marketing strategy to promote the Hall and a parish photo in 2025.

Thanks were given to Arthur Ratcliff for cutting the grass and George Haywood for cutting the hedge.

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## 8. Neen Savage Women's Institute Report

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

It has been another busy year for Neen Savage WI, with an interesting variety of speakers and visits. Speakers included Mark Baldwin on the History of Postcards, Phil Carter on Old Ladywood and a 1940's themed Tea Party in the Hall. There were visits to Mawley Farm, Heath Farm Meats and an interactive fun day at the Pioneer Centre.

The Charity of the Year was Nineveh Care Farm at Bayton and £600 was donated to them in March.

Coming up we have visits planned to Stepple Hall and Stourbridge Glass Museum and talks on Kinlet Hall and Canal Adventures as well as interactive sessions on belly dancing and candle making.

The Children's Clothes project continues in the Market Hall in collaboration with Cleobury WI.

Membership stands at around 19 members and we would love to welcome more, especially if you live in Neen Savage.

You are welcome to come along and try before you buy. We meet on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, 7.30pm here at the Parish Hall. We also continue to meet informally every month for coffee.

## 9. Edwards & Hinckesman's Foundation Charity Report

The Chairman read Mr Whitworth's Edwards & Hinckesman's Foundation Report (full copy attached with these Minutes).

The Trustees met in August 2023 to interview applicants for awards and met again in March 2024 to review the business of the charity and plan fund-raising for 2024-25. Grants totaling £3,200 were made to five young people of the Parish.

The Trustees are helping organize the Open Gardens Event on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June in conjunction with the church. This year's deadline for the receipt of applications is Monday 1<sup>st</sup> August with interviews taking place on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

## 10. Unitary Councillors' Reports

Unitary Cllr Gwilym Butler and Cllr Simon Harris have issued a joint annual report and a Shropshire Council Report (full copies attached with these Minutes). Cllr Harris introduced himself to those present and thanked the Parish Council for their invitation and commented that this was the best organized, best attended and most dynamic of Annual Meetings he had been to this year. Cllr Harris stated that he could not promote anything party-political due to the General Election having been called. The division boundaries will change from May 2025 with Neen Savage being put in a ward with Stottesdon, Hopton Wafers and Kinlet. Cleobury Mortimer will be in a different ward with Milson & Neen Sollars, Boraston and Nash. Following next year's parish elections, there will be a parish boundary review.

Cllr Harris shares our cynicism about the Ford drainage project and is also mindful that HS2 money for highways has still not been allocated to the county council. Cllr Harris commented that he is aware that planning enforcement can take a long time and whilst it may seem that nothing is happening, the investigations are confidential and not publicly available. Shropshire Council's financial situation is tough at the moment. They achieved 80% of planned savings last year but this year will be hard. Shropshire Council is not bankrupt and is working through a plan on how to cover social care needs.

## 11. Parish Matters

Mr Treves asked people to be aware of the locations of defibrillators in our local community and check that they are all registered. Some are only available for limited hours as they are on work premises and others are available at all times. Mrs Evans asked what was happening with regards to Ford signage following the incidents this spring. The Parish Council have been pressing Shropshire Council for improved signage and will be discussing the options at the next Parish Council meeting on June 26<sup>th</sup>. Depth gauges need to be improved and information telling people not to rely on their SATNAV or electronic maps needs to be installed. The speed of the water is a major issue as well as the depth and it is difficult to relay that information to drivers who are not familiar with fords.

Mr Sales asked about rural crime. Local police are proposing to arrange a local surgery event and residents are encouraged to use the parish CrimeWatch WhatsApp Group.

Mrs Price asked if there was an easily accessible way to view all planning applications in Neen Savage on the planning portal as the obvious search words do not show all the applications. Advice will be sought from Shropshire Council as this should be possible. It was noted that the Parish Council is notified of all parish applications even if 'Neen Savage' is omitted in the application address.

Cllr Ratcliff thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.52pm.