

Lilford-cum-Wigsthorpe Thorpe Achurch

Annual Parish Meeting – Tuesday 11 May 2021

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

Good evening and welcome everyone to our Parish Annual Meeting. Thank you everyone for attending this evening despite the slightly unusual outdoor venue.

I would like to start this evening with a special welcome to the newest members of the Parish Council, Gareth Hopkinson and Marion Healey. It is great to finally have a Cllr to represent our community in Wigsthorpe so thank you Marion. I would also like to formally congratulate Cllrs Wendy and David Brackenby and Geoff Shacklock for being re-elected last week.

I have just finished my first term as Chairman of the LWTA PC and it has been an interesting and rather unexpected year due to the COVID pandemic. The pandemic has impacted all of our lives in many different ways and it has been fantastic to see how our community, despite being so rural, has pulled together to support each other throughout the year. I know that lock down has also reminded many of us how lucky we are to live in such a beautiful area with such rich history.

When I took over as Chair last year I never envisaged that I would not actually get to chair a meeting in person with all the PC meetings being moved to Zoom. One of the main challenges we envisaged with meeting via Zoom was how we ensured that members of the public had the opportunity to attend the Parish Council meetings and comment on matters of interest or concern. We didn't need to be concerned as this has worked well and we have had numerous members of the public participate in meetings on subjects ranging from planning to rights of way.

Notwithstanding the pandemic and having to meet via Zoom, the Parish Council has continued to drive the agenda to improve our community and has achieved a lot including during the year:

1. **Lilford/Achurch fingerpost sign** – successfully lobbying NCC Highways to replace the broken sign with a new fingerpost sign rather than a modern place sign
2. **Aldwinkle Road bridges** – again lobbying NCC to find a solution to prevent the regular damage to the bridges.
3. **Rights of way** – supporting residents by liaising with landowners and other Parishes about the access to Thorpe Lakes and the track from Lilford to the A605.
4. **St John the Baptist church gates** – Cllr Hopkinson took over the reins from outgoing Cllr Terry Barcham to work with the Church Wardens to identify the best solution to replace and repair the gates to the Church. Cllr Hopkinson also secured funding for this project which will be completed over the next few months from a very generous local benefactor.
5. **Fly tipping** – the pandemic saw an increase in fly tipping but working with the superb Waste team at what was ENC we have managed to rapidly remove waste which had been tipped and secured signage in Achurch to deter future incidents.
6. **Dog fouling** – the pandemic also saw an increase of visitors to our beautiful villages to exercise during the national lock down with their dogs. Unfortunately this did see an increase in fouling and again working with ENC we secured appropriate signage in both Achurch and Wigsthorpe to remind people to pick up after their dogs and dispose of the waste appropriately. This has led to a reduction in fouling.
7. **Planning** – the PC has considered a number of planning applications, some more contentious than others and has even commented on matters outside of the Parish where

there could have been an impact on our community such as the proposed motor cross site at Old Weston.

The pandemic has not stopped the Parish being represented and having a voice at local groups including the Joint Action Group, Police Liaison and the Rural Coordination Group. Thank you to the Cllrs and Nicki for making the time to attend these meetings. The PC has also responded to consultation papers on reforms of planning.

Financially the Parish Council has a healthy reserve and the Council continues to manage its finances diligently with particular support from our PC Clerk Nicki Philips and Cllr Tim Bird.

Sadly the previous tenant of our local pub, The Fox Inn decided to not to renew his tenancy following a change in ownership. There have rightly been concerns raised about the future of the pub. I understand that new tenants have been secured who have plans to reopen the pub shortly and ensure that it can remain a hub for the community. The new tenants have also confirmed that they are happy for the PC to meet at the pub in the future.

I would like to finish with a special thank you to Nicki Philips the Clerk of the PC. Nicki is the backbone of our Parish Council. She brings her wise counsel with good humour and a clear intent to ensure that we continuously look for ways to improve what we are doing for the local communities. Her knowledge of local Government is superb and she is always willing to get involved even when the subject may not strictly fall within her job remit. So thank you Nicki. We really do appreciate you and everything you do for us.

Thank you again for attending the Annual Parish Meeting. I will now open the meeting up for any questions or comments.

Justin