

ANNUAL MEETING OF OVERSTONE PARISH

Date: Tuesday 15th May 2018 **Time:** 7.00pm **Venue:** Overstone Village Hall

1. Record Attendance and Apologies

Attendance:

Chairman: Cllr A Sharp
Parish Councillors: Cllr J Delany, Cllr Austin, Cllr Giles, Cllr Higgs, Cllr Spooner, Cllr Giles
District Councillors: Cllr M Warren
County Councillors: None
Police: None
Parishioners: As named on a signed attendance list held by the Clerk
Clerk: Jane Austin

Apologies: Cllr S Townsend, Cllr Cribbin, Cllr Shephard, Sgt Dobbs, Andrew Clarke

2. Welcome and Chairman's Introduction

Cllr Sharp welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the parish councillors, speakers and Clerk. Cllr Sharp welcomed the two new parish councillors, who had taken office during the year, to the meeting.

Cllr sharp introduced and welcomed the new vicar, Katrina Hutchins, to the meeting and wished her a happy time in Overstone.

Katrina spoke to introduce herself to the residents and explained that she was responsible for Mears Ashby, Hardwick, Sywell and Overstone parishes and had attended the meeting tonight to find out a little more and offer support in the parish.

3. Accept Minutes of Last Meeting held on 16th May 2017

Unanimous agreement to accept the minutes of the last meeting.

4. Progress any Matters Arising from Minutes of 16th May 2017

None

5. Chairman's Report

Cllr Sharp gave the following report:

Welcome everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting. It has been an interesting year with the most noticeable of changes being the new Sywell Road from the A43. At last we have the Overstone sign at the Billing Lane junction. The speed limit is 30mph, which we hoped might slow the traffic through the village. We are unsure as to why the roundels have disappeared from the carriageway.

The planned speed reductions road improvements at the Sywell end of the village are now on hold due to the financial restraints on NCC Highways.

The new trees and grass are looking good and will mature into a lovely avenue. The grass area was to be planted with a wildflower mix so we have to wait and see if that happens. All this area is under the maintenance of Balfour Beatty and not our responsibility.

The new school block is now finished and fully functioning. It was opened on the 16th April by Alan Carr who was a pupil at the school in times past! The school and children put on a lovely afternoon with gymnastics and ballroom dancing displays, singing and musical performances. Lots of people turned up to join the celebrations and were welcomed with tea and lovely cakes.

The new intake is now up to 24 places in the first round of admissions and will be up to 27 in the subsequent round.

The MUGA has totally changed the life of the school allowing the children an exciting and safe outdoor play and sports facility.

The bus service has been drastically reduced with only 2 buses am and 2 pm and none during the day. This is a great loss to those who use them for work, college and going to town. We have written but as yet received no response.

Overstone Hall – Two applications have been submitted to DDC and are awaiting validation. One application for the restoration of the Hall which contains 6 houses and 10 apartments. The second for 60 houses. An open day is being hosted in the Village Hall on June 13th from 4pm – 8pm.

A planning application has been passed to rebuild a new village shop and Post Office. This is planned to start next spring. To enable this to happen, Mandy is turning the front room of her home into the village shop. Royal Mail are as yet undecided how they are to manage the move, with a previous suggestion ie 2 days per week in the village hall being totally unacceptable.

Northampton ACRE have been working closely on Mandy's behalf to raise the profile of Rural Post Offices asking questions of those we would find hard to reach. In fact questions have been asked in the House of Commons regarding our Post Office. Mandy's day begins at 4.30am with the papers, then a 50 mile round trip around the villages, back for an 8.00am start until 5.30pm. her working week is 82 hours, only taking Christmas Day off.

Our Post Office is a village hub which ticks boxes when talking to people about getting things improved or maintained. Within the newbuild there will be a larger shop area and Post Office. As a parish working closely on this development, we would like to know what you would like to be provided- all suggestions welcome – if we don't use it we will lose this valuable asset to our community.

Court Farm Lane – The bikes using the woods have been greatly reduced thankfully. The litter and dog excrement in the lane continues to be a problem; cans coffee mugs, sandwich boxes, bottles being dropped or thrown from cars and dog walkers not clearing up after their dogs. It is an owners legal responsibility to pick up after their dog, please use any of the litter bins.

Hanging Baskets – These have been put up and we were pleased to receive such positive feedback about them. The tubs will shortly be planted by the bus stop. We are going to write to local businesses to request donations towards the scheme. If anyone here would like to donate, please collect a form from the table.

Thanks to Matthew we have a new Book Share cupboard in the bus shelter which is full of interesting and varied reading. The new village noticeboard by the shelter is double sided so village and parish notices can be displayed. The old board is now outside the Primary School. Thanks go to Janet Delany who co-ordinates the Car Scheme.

6. District Councillors Report – District Cllr M Warren

Cllr Warren introduced himself to the meeting and stated that he had been the Ward member for Moulton for 15 years. Cllr Warren offered his sincere thanks to all the residents who had voted for him at the recent elections. Last October, Cllr Warren was appointed as Chair of Licensing and continues to Chair the Overstone, Moulton, Boughton, Brampton and Harlestone Development Implementation Working Group (OMBBH) – a group that meets to discuss major planning applications and consists of representatives from parish councils, highways, DDC and NCC officers.

Cllr Warren spoke of the demise of NCC and the implications for all and promised to keep the parish council informed of any developments and ask the parish council where he can help to lobby for support on issues facing the parish.

7. County Councillors Report – County Cllr J Shephard (read out by Cllr Giles)

I have now been your County Councillor for the past 21 years and in all that time I have never had to write a report in such a challenging environment and of such a serious nature about recent Northamptonshire County Council activities. I have found this year to be completely without precedence.

I am sure you are all aware as the news has been dominated in recent weeks on the way that Northamptonshire County Council Cabinet has been operated financially which has led to Commissioners in all probability being called in, although at this stage we have heard nothing further. I will try to elaborate:

NCC, year on year, has historically faced a financial shortfall due to lack of appropriate and lessening funding from HM Government for Adult Social Care and Children's Services. HM Government has also imposed budget savings on Northamptonshire totaling £400m since 2010 despite us being a targeted housing growth area, having a large number of Looked After Children (including 'Unaccompanied asylum Seekers' which incidentally cost us £35k per child per annum but we only receive reimbursement of £23k by Government) and with a higher percentage of over 85 year olds due to advancing medical treatments increasing longevity. This has meant that this year we faced a £50m funding gap between what we have to provide by law and setting a viable budget. This has left Adult Social Care on the edge of intervention.

We were also capped this year on the maximum amount that Council Tax could be set at. (6% although we set ours at 5.98%). In the past we have prided ourselves on having the lowest council tax in England but that now, in hindsight, was too ambitious a call, as this decision added to our Social Care shortfall year on year.

As part of the NCC annual budget scrutiny process to find these savings, four areas came under particular focus: Libraries, Trading Standards, Bus Subsidies and Highways, especially Winter Gritting. It became apparent quite quickly following this January's public consultation on the 3 Library options (which elicited a huge response of over 5000 responses on Libraries alone) that this was a particularly unpopular set of spending efficiency proposals. It was agreed by Cabinet and the Conservative Group in February that we should amend these proposals by reinstating some of the proposed bus subsidies and going for a softer option on Libraries which would at least have saved some of our libraries under threat of closure. Throughout all this time I liaised and worked with the Friends of Moulton Library and Moulton Parish Council to try to retain Moulton Library.

Our Chief Finance Officer issued a Section 114 Notice in February which in short was due to the uncertainty of setting a balanced budget. In essence a spending curb was placed on all unnecessary NCC spending. This Notice is still in place. Further to that NCC's outgoing Accountants KMPG issued an Advisory Notice on the eve of our Full Council Budget Meeting stating that our proposed Budget was unlawful and that the savings we had hoped to reinstate following the consultation would have to be actioned in full. The Conservative Group were now obliged to make the unpalatable decision of having to reverse our latest proposals on Libraries and busses and to find even more savings on top, which included a staff pay freeze and a 10% cut in our own allowances. The popular 'Empowering Councillors' Grant was also deleted. Throughout all of this time I continued to work with Friends of Moulton Library and Moulton Parish Council to achieve the best outcome for our cherished Library as a viable community asset.

Max Caller CBE, an Independent Inspector was called in by the then Secretary of State, Savid Javid MP, in January to prepare a report on Best Value in the delivery of

NCC services to be completed by 16th of March. This Inspection would be a far reaching appraisal on how NCC was managing its financial affairs. Mr Caller interviewed MPs, outside bodies, staff and many Councillors, (District and Borough and County) including myself in his quest.

Max Caller's Report, sent to Savid Javid MP, was very hard hitting with two clear recommendations for the future, including his view that a new start was needed of local government towards two unitary councils (one in the North and one in the West). This, he states, should be pursued to help protect vital services in the county. Max hopes this will be achieved by 2020 which will mean Northamptonshire County Council would then cease to exist. Mr Caller also made it very clear that it is not the fault of the hardworking and dedicated NCC staff that these problems exist.

His Recommendations are: (and I paraphrase)

- *That a new start is required which can deliver confidence and quality by the creation of two new unitary councils (North and West).*
- *That the Secretary of State should give serious consideration to whether Commissioners should take over the running of all services save planning.*

Max Caller criticized the overuse of capital receipts and also highlighted Budget Scrutiny shortcomings and lack of proper oversight of implementation of the Council's plans for Innovation. He highlighted that it was difficult for Backbenchers to know what was going on financially and that Backbenchers were 'snowballed' when seeking further relevant information.

Savid Javid MP, in his capacity as the then Secretary of State, has in his formal response, which was relayed to the House of Commons on the 27th of March in response to Max Caller's Report, said that he is minded to implement a package of interventions including two Commissioners, the lead Commissioner concentrating on Governance (or how the Council is run) and the other commissioner to work closely with our Authority on strategic financial planning and budgetary control. They could be in place by the end of April he suggested though that has not happened yet. In the meantime Max Caller had invited considered views from NCC Members and Officers by 14th of April before finalizing his decision which was duly done by NCC. Incidentally NCC will have to pay the Commissioners salaries and expenses.

Within our own Conservative Group our Leader Cllr Heather Smith has stepped down along with our Finance Portfolio Cllr Robin Brown. The Interim Chief Executive Damon Lawrenson has also left. We have reformed our Conservative Group with Matt Golby now our Leader and Cecile Irving-Swift as our deputy. A new Cabinet has been announced and we have a new interim Chief Exec. This is just the beginning of some positive sweeping changes that will be made in the short time we have left as a County Council. A new Star Chamber has now been put in place and has already commenced scrutiny of next year's budget.

One Angel Square, the new Council Office Building has been sold for £64m to Canada Life with a 35 year leaseback clause (with no break option). NCC have a one way call option to acquire the building at the end of the lease for £7.5m. (this price is fixed and will not increase with inflation).

This year's report is longer than normal - but I feel it is such a very important issue it is wholly warranted. This has not been an easy year for any elected member of the county council. It has not passed as I, your local member, would have wished.

There have been many recriminations, some true some not, and the new leader has apologized to residents of the county for the failings of the council. I feel it is right that we now draw a line under the past and focus on the future. However long or short that may be.

8. Policing Report – Sgt Dobbs

I am sorry that I cannot be with you tonight, due to other policing commitments outside the county. That said, I would like to place on record my appreciation for the communication and rapport that exists between the officers of Overstone Parish Council and the local policing team. The past twelve months has been a year of change and challenge for the Parish Council. Change and challenge have also been the hallmarks of our policing year too. I have spent countless evenings over recent months, attending parish council meetings across our rural patch giving a personal update on those changes and challenges and I look forward to coming to Moulton to do the same once the new council is established.

In those updates, I explain the ramifications and effects of the Policing Model which was introduced in Autumn 2017 - a researched and evidenced model which places our resources in a way which best meets the competing pressures of threat and risk, increasing demands and reducing budgets. This force has rightly and properly maintained its commitment to neighbourhood policing, though our numbers have reduced. That said, it was promised (one largely kept) that neighbourhood officers would be red-circled and kept on their beats. In terms of neighbourhood policing (different from response policing) Overstone continues to be policed by the team at Brixworth comprising PC John Hutchings, PCSO Steve Sangster, PCSO Jo Wright and SC Stephen Coleman. They in turn are supported by the town team based at Daventry. In the course of the next year, it is hoped that neighbouring parishes will see the introduction of a parishes-sponsored PCSO which will boost the team at Brixworth and allow better cover of the whole patch.

At some point, the police base at Brixworth will be under discussion as part of economies to drive down our estates costs, but this will not be in the next twelve months, and the most sensible option under discussion is shared accommodation with the Fire & Rescue Services. Your Clerk and I continue to discuss any opportunity to collaborate with parish councils such as yours in relation to extra policing and I would certainly welcome an opportunity for this as the new council is established.

The priorities for the rural neighbourhood policing of Daventry District remain visibility, speeding and antisocial behaviour. Community Speed Watch, and the work of the Safer Roads Team are the main weapons in the fight to reduce speed on the roads - a concern raised in virtually every parish. I have spoken of the smarter ways in which we need to work differently on visibility (or accessibility) and antisocial behaviour.

A major concern for me, as someone who lives and works in the District, has been the increase in dwelling burglary in recent months. Burglars change their tactics as security measures change and morph. We have just completed a study of 200+ rural burglaries and will be putting together a roadshow of easy-do tactics which homeowners can put in place to make our communities more hostile to thieves.

With our reduced numbers and increased demands, I welcome the interest and involvement of parish councils in neighbourhood policing and community safety - something which section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act makes a responsibility for

councils to consider. The Parish Council directly represents the community, which is why I have supported a scheme for each parish to have a PLR - a police liaison representative - something supported by the County Association of Local Councils. I very much hope that Overstone Parish Council will appoint a PLR as it forms shape.

I do hope to come and give a more detailed address to your council, but I conclude this brief report by assuring you of our 100% enthusiasm and energy, whatever the demands and resources, to keep your community of Moulton safe and protecting your residents and visitors from harm. I look forward to working even closer with the council in the twelve months ahead. I thank former and new councillors for all they do for the good and betterment of our community.

A resident mentioned finding difficulty using the neighbourhood alert scheme. Cllr Austin to investigate.

9. Report From Overstone Village Hall Committee

The Village Hall is the centre of the village and a community meeting place. 2017 was quite a successful year for Hall hire producing close to £5,000.00 in hire charges.

To keep pace with inflation we have introduced new hire charges which are:

SUMMER HIRE RATES from APRIL 1st.

OVERSTONE & SYWELL RESIDENTS - £12.00 per hour.

ALL OTHER HIRERS - £15.00 per hour

WINTER HIRE RATES from OCTOBER 1st

OVERSTONE & SYWELL RESIDENTS - £14.00 per hour.

ALL OTHER HIRERS - £17.00 per hour

These new rates will also compensate for the increase in Gas and Electricity charges in the winter months.

Regular hire's will always attract the lower rate where applicable.

Whilst discussing hire charges we have recently received a complaint that we charge other charities for the Hall hire rather than providing it free of charge.

I would like to inform everyone that it is against the Charity Commission rules to 'donate' to another charity and by providing the Hall free of charge we are technically 'donating' to that charity.

However we are perfectly at liberty to discount the hire rates for a bona-fide charity.

This would be decided on an individual basis.

Events held during 2017 produced an income of £1,187.00 and a profit after expenses of £812.00

Other expenditure in 2017 was £6149.00 which included Maintenance/decoration charges of £3047.00 so 2017 left us a deficit of £691.00.

Cash in Bank currently held is approx. £8000.00

Events currently held/planned for 2018.

The Race night held in March was a huge success producing a profit after expenses of £650.00

The Morning Breakfast held in April also produced £350.00 after expenses.

Future events:

June 23rd Cream Teas afternoon.

Dates to be confirmed for: Morning Breakfast, Quiz night, other to be confirmed

We are planning an extensive development of the outside area around the Hall that could be used for outside events, such as Village Fete, Children's Parties, Dog shows etc.

However, this will only be achievable through a grant system or possible contributions from the ongoing development at Overstone Lays.

I am also exploring the Charities Commission Grant system to see if Overstone would be eligible for any monies that maybe available.
The outside structure of the Hall is looking very tired and in need of some serious TLC. I have explored the possibilities of having the Hall clad in a Plastisol coated galvanised sheeting, this would 'future proof' the Hall.

All the above can only be achieved with the constant support of the Overstone residents and it is encouraging that the attendants to our functions are steadily increasing.

We could do with some 'Young Blood' to help on the committee so if anyone is interested please contact myself or any of the Committee members.

As a final comment, I would like to personally thank everyone on the Village Hall committee for their tireless efforts to make every event a success bearing in mind they are all volunteers.

Thank you

Cllr Sharp thanked John and the committee for all their hard work.

10. Report From Overstone Playing Field Committee Andrew Clarke OPFA Chairman 2017

(Read out by Cllr D Spooner)

The 2017 year proved to be another challenging for the charity, in part for all the familiar reasons of maintaining the playing field on a small income.

With the local population increasing significantly including school expansion, that increases financial risks, we completed the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) process that limits trustee liability to make membership attractive. This should help to secure a valuable and independently managed village asset for future generations.

Fund raising proves to be very difficult, especially competing with local organisations who can offer services to generate income. Costs of essential maintenance continue to rise, requiring continuation of our efforts to seek viable funding. Support from Overstone residents is essential if we are to continue to provide a clean and safe play environment. Communication to and from playing field users via the internet has not improved which is disappointing. (details displayed on the park signage:

overstoneplayingfield@ymail.com) However, our committee continue to maintain our village playing field in very good condition, it remains clean and secure, with no significant increase of vandalism damage.

The committee remains stable, although we need more trustee members and representative members to join, to make a viable succession plan for the future. I would like to sincerely thank those past and present, who spend considerable personal time supporting the field. Their efforts provide visitors with many indirect benefits that are not always obvious, and rarely appreciated or acknowledged. The school continues to maintain its support, with financial contributions and personal time of its staff and representative members. This support is crucial, to ensure our School plays a prominent role in children's health and physical development within our community.

Financial support from local taxation revenues for "routine" maintenance remains a distant hope, so we must somehow aim to secure increased regular income if the playing field is to remain available, not least in recognition of the efforts made by our small team, but those founding committee members who made it possible to have

our own green space. As costs continue to rise, high cost equipment replacement planning requires more local support. Following a village questionnaire and feedback, the next planned projects are; Install infant equipment, Adult fitness machines and a Nature Garden, improving a small area at the entrance to encourage children's appreciation of our local natural environment.

The new committee have another difficult year ahead: Increased economic pressures, financial viability and limited resources are big challenges. More involvement of willing residents with assistance from local community and village organisations is vital to your Playing Field's future.

Why not volunteer and help us to care for it? It's your Playing Field!

13. Open Forum – Parishioners Question Time

1. Complaint re: Reduction in Bus services. Clerk to write to Stagecoach
2. What is the point of a bus pass if you cannot use it.
3. Why can't the playing field be used during the day when the primary school are using the Field. Cllr Sharp to investigate.
4. Why do some houses on Overstone Leys have a Moulton address. Clerk responded that Royal Mail issue the addresses.
5. Why can't the parish council pay for a chicane or road humps installed.
6. Overstone Lane is closed.
7. Large number of lorries entering village. Cllr Sharp to contact John Amos.
8. Sywell Lane roundabout needs repainting
9. When will S106 monies be received from Overstone Leys?

14. Confirm Next Meeting

The date of the next Annual Parish Meeting is to be confirmed.

Meeting Closed at 8.05pm

Copies to:

Parish Councillors (7), District Councillors (2), County Councillor