

Branston & Mere Parish Council

Notes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at Branston Hall Hotel, Lincoln Road, Branston on
Monday 23rd April 2018 at 7 pm.

Chairman: Cllr Peter Lundgren.

Clerks: Mrs S Stead & Miss N Cockrell.

Members of the Council: 10

Members of the Public & guests: 54

Item 1 Welcome.

The Chairman welcomed everyone and said that it was good to see some new faces. He thanked the hotel management for allowing use of their facilities for the annual event.

The Chairman said that the Parish Council gave grants each year to local organisations. This year, grants had been awarded to the Bowls Club, U3A Croquet, Branston History Group and the Tennis Club before going on to make two additional presentations:

- £1520 to LIVES to help recruit and train local responders – The cheque was accepted by Zoe Dean who said that there had been 22,000 calls in Lincolnshire in 2017, of which 70 were in the Branston area.
- £900 worth of toys was presented to Little Pickles Pre-school to enhance outdoor play.

Item 2 Guest Speaker – Ian Green – Local health provision.

The Chairman spoke about local concern that the GP surgeries would not be able to cope with the additional patients from the planned 362 new homes. The Parish Council had approached both surgeries for comment. The Washingborough Surgery was in a good position as a training practice but the Branston practice had issues. The CCG had met with the Council to discuss future provision.

Ian Green went on to advise that Dr Mahalingam would become the sole trader following the retirement of Dr Parkin. As with any business, the books had to balance. It had not been possible to employ another doctor but a second Advanced Nurse Practitioner had been recruited to diagnose and prescribe minor ailments. The current site would not allow further expansion and the practice had wanted to build a new health centre for many years, with the ability to bring in mobile units for multiple services.

He detailed plans for 8 practices to join together as a federation to provide shared services; promoting self-care through pharmacies and the 111 service for clinical health advice.

He hoped that the planned new medical school at the university would train GPs who would want to stay in Lincolnshire to improve the situation in the future.

Item 3 Guest Speaker – Natalie Cockrell – Neighbourhood Plan update.

Natalie Cockrell said that she had been working with a team of local residents and councillors for over a year. Communities had been given the opportunity to take charge through the Localism Act and neighbourhood plans had proved more popular than the government had expected.

She explained that the National Planning Policy Framework and Central Lincolnshire Local Plan were more broad brush but the Neighbourhood Plan, which would work alongside them, was like the icing on the cake and had real meaning to local people.

The Branston Neighbourhood Plan was currently at the Draft Stage but was expected to be adopted in 2019. Covered by government grants, a separate Village Appraisal by an independent consultant, had picked up on special areas of the village that should be protected for the future.

The draft would be submitted to NKDC, to check compliance with the Local Plan, before a further round of consultation with the community and statutory consultees in August, lasting 6 weeks. An independent examiner would then have the final say before the public referendum.

Miss Cockrell said that only one plan had failed to date but stressed the importance of public participation.

Item 4 Guest Speaker – Richard Naulls – Update on the Speed Review.

Richard Naulls said that the Parish Council was concerned about road safety in the village and had received many speed related complaints.

The speed device had been purchased to encourage motorists to be aware of their speed and to capture invaluable data – volume of traffic, speed and times. The data had been used to put together a comprehensive report, that had been submitted to LCC Highways in December 2016, along with comparisons to Washingborough, Aubourn and Cherry Willingham relating to housing density, road type, schools, play areas and collision stats.

A complaint about the lack of response to the request to review the speed limits in Branston had produced a quick reply in March 2018 that failed to answer the points raised and refused any reduction.

Cllr Naulls said that the Parish Council had not given up and had the support of the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership and residents on Lincoln Road and would invite LCC Highways to reconsider the decision.

Item 5 Guest Speaker – PC Pete Hanson – Local Beat update.

PC Hanson spoke at length about fraud costing the UK £52 billion a year. His presentation covered scam mail; telephone scams; ID theft; clairvoyants; miracle cures; doorstep crimes and foreign scams.

He suggested that elderly residents were often targeted as they were more trusting, less savvy and often lonely. He encouraged people to talk to any elderly friends and relatives about what to be aware of.

He said that the impact on the victims was huge – physical deterioration; low self-esteem; poverty and isolation.

Item 6 Notes from the APM held on 10th April 2017 to be approved as the Minutes.

Acceptance of the notes was proposed by Richard Naulls and seconded by Hannah Willcox.

There were no matters arising.

Item 7 Chairman’s Annual Report.

It hardly seems a year since we were last here and I’m pleased to report that your Parish Council has continued the good work on your behalf to improve your community.

We’ve had some changes on the Parish Council this year: Malcolm Ross stood down from the council last year and Richard Naulls took on the job of vice chairman but I’m pleased to say that Malcolm couldn’t stay away and re-joined the council at the next opportunity.

Ray Cucksey also stepped down from the Parish Council – Ray served for a long time including as chairman for seven years – our thanks go to him. We were very pleased to welcome two new councillors; Charlotte Kutarski and Marc Blair; both bring a lot of experience and knowledge.

There is a casual vacancy at the moment – so don’t be shy come and join us!

We’ve had a change of assistant clerk this year. Vanessa Sparkes left us September but I very pleased to say that we’ve been able to appoint Natalie Cockrell to the assistant clerk role. Natalie was the consultant for the Neighbourhood Plan and liked Branston and working with us so much that she decided to join us. Natalie is also a planning officer at Bassetlaw District Council and brings a huge wealth of knowledge – especially on planning issues.

It has been another busy year. We’ve heard about the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan – and my thanks go to everybody involved in this important project.

On the planning front your Parish Council negotiated a cash contribution of £25,000 from the developer of the solar farm extension. It will be shared with Potterhanworth. We’ve also negotiated with a telecoms provider for £30,000 to lease a corner of the Moor Lane Recreation Ground for a telecom mast. The Parish Council deliberated long and hard about the wisdom of entering into a lease with a telecoms provider but the need for better communications is proven in our Parish and Neighbourhood Plans and, in truth, the mast would undoubtedly have been erected somewhere in the village and the Council thought that they could do something worthwhile for the village with any funds from the developer.

The parish is about to receive it’s first ever Section 106 money from developers. This is the money that developers have to provide for the necessary infrastructure to support people moving into the new homes. It’s never enough money – and it’s difficult to negotiate for funds whilst also objecting to the planning applications - but I’m pleased to say that, whilst we may not feel too happy about all the new housing, we will receive some money towards providing additional facilities in the village.

To that end your Parish Council has been busy progressing the pavilion project; working with funders and advisors to replace the current facility, that is really not fit for purpose, with a modern sports facility that can accommodate male, female and junior teams and provide space for indoor sports and community events. The Parish Council is working with LK2 – specialists in delivering projects of this type. I’m hopeful that the time is right and the funding will come together to deliver this important facility. My thanks to all involved and in particular to Cllr Ross who has led on the project and Dale Lui from LK2, who just happens to live in Branston.

Last year saw a summer fete on the recreation ground. Very much driven by the need to consult the community on the Neighbourhood Plan and funded from a neighbourhood plan grant. The event was popular and well received. At one point over 500 people were at the event and the rain almost held off until the last act! Many have expressed a wish for an annual event – a summer fete or maybe a beer festival. The Parish Council will support any feasible proposals but the organisation will need to come from others.

And whilst we are talking about volunteers I understand that the Village Hall, which is such an important focus in our community, is in need of some volunteers on their committee.

The Library continues to flourish. The library volunteers are all heroes and, supported by Lesa our library co-ordinator, the number of people using the library continues to grow – and it’s not just books: there’s all sorts of

groups and activities for all ages. If you and your family are not regular users of the library please have a look at what's on offer.

Our flock of Lincoln Longwools on the green has increased. With the proceeds of the final Christmas Market – sadly missed – another lamb was purchased to complete our flock. I have to say that the positive comments I receive from far and wide shows how important public art is to everybody's general wellbeing – and I was pleased to see that someone had wrapped them up to keep them warm in the snow!

Talking about snow and potential emergencies, the Parish Council, and in particular Cllr Marchant, has developed an Emergency Plan so that, should the worst happen, we have a plan and volunteers in place to help those in need. My thanks to everyone involved – especially the 50+ volunteers; which is impressive.

Whilst talking about Cllr Marchant, he has appointed himself assistant dog warden with special responsibility for dog poo bags left hanging in hedges and trees – even though the dog waste bin is only a few yards away. Cllr Marchant's record to date is 31 bags along one path. This bizarre behaviour - bagging up the faeces and then leaving the bag in a tree or hedge is difficult to understand and certainly ruins others enjoyment of the footpaths. If the dog warden identifies anyone doing this, a fixed penalty will be given and I think as a wider community we need to make it clear that this behaviour is not acceptable.

This is my final annual report as Chairman. I have decided to stand down as chairman and let someone else have a go. I've been very fortunate to have such a supportive and active group of councillors and vice chairmen during my time. However the work and responsibilities of the Parish Council is increasing every year. In some ways that's a good thing as the parish gets a greater say in what happens in our communities but it comes with a correspondingly greater workload. I've been very lucky that, individually and collectively, councillors have been willing to take on specific responsibilities – like the pavilion project, speeding, health and safety, dog poo and more - which means that the work of the Parish Council has become more of a team effort and so more gets done and it makes the chairman look good!

My time as Chairman has been rewarding. As a parish we've done some good things which I'm proud of and also dealt with some challenging situations – such as unwanted planning applications and the threat to our community library. My sincere thanks go to all the parish councillors from the past 6 years who've helped make Branston a better place to live and especially to Cllrs Ross and Naulls for their support as vice chairman during that time.

I would like to mention the work of our handyman Rick Wilkinson in keeping the village tidy. I would also like to thank those selfless individuals who tidy and litter pick around their homes, streets and where they walk. Your efforts are very much appreciated.

My sincere thanks and appreciation go to our Proper Officer, better known as the Parish Clerk. Sarah works far beyond the call of duty and I thank her personally for her support and guidance during my time as Chairman.

Finally may I remind you that the Parish Council welcomes members of the public to the monthly? The meeting agenda is publicised on the notice boards and online before the meeting, which is held on the first Monday of the month and there is an open forum at the beginning of the meeting where parishioners are free to raise any issues. Your feedback is important to keep councillors aware of issues that affect the parish so please don't be shy and I urge you to come to the meetings or contact us through the website.

It has been a pleasure to present this report and I'm happy to confirm that your Parish Council is in good order; is financially sound and is ready to meet the challenges of the future.

In conclusion I commend this report to the meeting.

Cllr Naulls gave a vote of thanks, saying that Peter had been an excellent chairman who had done an enormous amount of work with drive and determination and would be missed in the role although would continue as both a Parish and District Councillor.

Item 8 Public Forum.

Sylvia Minshull spoke about the Food Voucher Scheme.

She said that during term time, 45 Branston children were eligible for free school meals. During school holidays, particularly the long summer holiday, they missed out on the nutrition and returned to school less energetic.

She said that the cost of providing vouchers (£9 pw) to the families during the summer holiday was £2500. Donations from individuals, groups and All Saints Church and from two fundraising events had raised the amount needed in 2017. Eligible families had been sent vouchers by the head teachers to be redeemed at the Coop.

To repeat the scheme in 2018, fundraisers were planned, including an Art Exhibition. Further funds would need to be raised to be able to continue year on year. The scheme would feature as the Coop Community Champions from September to November.

No further issues were raised.

The meeting closed at 9.38pm.