Mitford Parish Council Annual Meeting

7.30pm Wednesday 3rd May 2023

Mitford Village Hall

Present: Chair Alison Young (A.Y.), Cllrs Ted Rodger (T.R.), Mike Sharp (M.S.) and Eric Dodd (E.D.)

Clerk: Damian McEnroe (D.M.)

Also Present: County Councillor Glen Sanderson (G.S.) and Village Hall Committee Chair Keith Stephen (K.S.)

There were no members of the public present.

Welcome: The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Matt Skillen (M.Sk.) and Michael Jeans (M.J.)

1: Minutes of last annual meeting:

The minutes of the last annual meeting held on 9th May 2022 were agreed by all, and signed by the chair.

2: Chairs Annual Report:

2.1 The Chair then presented her annual report, a copy of which is appended to these minutes.

2.2 C. Cllr Sanderson introduced his report by encouraging the Parish Council to seek his assistance with issues whenever necessary.

He gave an overview of the recent rise in council tax of 1.9% and how the council were determined to provide value for money which included actions such as a current efficiency review, a restructuring of staff earning over £100K per annum saving over £700k per year, and the introduction of a new initiative “Fix my Street” which would better manage road deficiencies.

Additionally a new sports centre had recently been opened in Morpeth which will provide extra employment; and concessions for use by those on limited incomes. Car parking within the town would remain free to encourage visitors.

Cllr Sanderson then explained that the Boundary Commission had completed their review and that the consultation process has now commenced which should be notified to P.C.’s imminently.

A brief discussion took place regarding surface water on Spittal Hill and again, Cllr Sanderson encouraged the P.C. to report such matters to him.

An update on recycling was provided by Cllr Sanderson in which he stated that kerbside glass recycling would continue in certain areas, and that it was also intended to begin food recycling once funding issues with Central Government were finalised.

A number of matters concerning planning applications were briefly touched on during his presentation including Gubeon Paddock which had recently been visited by A.Y and M.S. who had been impressed by the owners’ goals. Morpeth Archers/NE1 application appeared to be going to Planning Committee for consideration at some point.

Cllr Sanderson then left the meeting.

3: Village Hall Report: The Chair of the Village Hall Committee presented his report, a copy of which is appended to these minutes.

A.Y. suggested a noticeboard attached to the outside of the village hall may be of benefit in advertising activities within the hall.

K.S. then left the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 8.03pm.

**Annual Report - May 2023**

This is my first annual report as Chair and ‘change’ has certainly been a key theme over the year.

Last August, we said goodbye to Stephen Rickitt, who decided to retire, having been our Clerk for the previous ten years. We also said goodbye to councillors Esther Ridley and Sheena Hudson, who both stepped down for personal reasons. Fortunately, we were successful in our recruitment, so have welcomed Damian McEnroe as Clerk and Councillors Eric Dodd and Michael Jeans, representing Tranwell Woods and Tranwell village respectively. I must also give thanks to Councillor Mike Sharp, who stepped down as Chair last year but continued as Vice Chair, for his guidance and advice over the last 12 months.

We and the nation also said goodbye to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and I hope all parishioners noted that we followed all central government instructions in raising and lowering our flag. We appreciated the numbers of residents who came out to sign our Book of Condolence, which is now housed in the Northumberland Archives at Woodhorn.

In terms of local road safety improvements, we continue to work closely with Northumberland County Council (NCC) to implement speed restrictions and gateway features, like those at the top of Spital Hill. Initial plans presented to us last July for Tranwell Woods and Tranwell village unfortunately proved too costly, so new designs are in the process of being drawn up and costed and the hope this time is that they come in on budget. Given these proposals have been part of our transport improvement bids since 2020/2021, we will press hard for them to come to fruition this coming year. In parallel, NCC have agreed that the road through Tranwell Woods should be a 30mph, not 60mph, zone and we’re just waiting for the legal process for this to be completed. In conjunction with the gateway features, it’s hoped that these measures will reduce the amount of speeding vehicles we see every day. Going forward, the plan is to have similar features at the western and eastern approaches to Mitford and we’ll ensure funds are ring fenced for this, should they be needed.

To the frustration of residents, a continuing problem in Mitford is the water running off Spital Hill and onto the recently resurfaced B6343. We know that the source is an underground spring which can’t be re-routed, but if we work closer with NCC to increase the drainage capacity into the river, we may prevent the road being damaged further. At the very least, we need to ensure that when the drain is formally reported as fully blocked, NCC understand the importance of unblocking it as a priority and quicker than has recently been the case.

Over the course of the year, the parish council have considered and commented on 16 planning applications and 3 Tree Preservation Order (TPO) applications. Whether we support or object, the aim is always to ensure that any development or change is appropriate and not out of character with our green belt setting.

We’ve also worked to improve the aesthetics and environment of the parish throughout the year and to this end, a total of 14 new trees have been planted. After a successful bid for NCC funding, 12 trees to mark last years’ Platinum Jubilee were planted on the eastern approach to Mitford, mirroring the 10 Millennium trees. We thank Mitford Estate for allowing us to plant just inside their field boundary, given the highway verge was too narrow. Also, 2 new flowering cherry trees now welcome visitors into Fontside. We continue to maintain the look and tidiness of the parish with regular grass and hedge cutting and footpath clearance.

In other positive news, this past year has seen an increase in joint collaborative working with the Village Hall Committee on a number of projects such as improving the Hall’s Audio Visual (AV) facilities and assisting in funding bids to gain future energy resilience. I’d like to give particular thanks to Councillor Ted Roger for his work on this, which I’m sure the Village Hall Committee Chair will echo in his report. We also sponsored two very successful free First Aid sessions for residents, held in the Village Hall, and the hope is that this type of community event can be repeated.

Following the previous Covid restrictions, it was a joy to see so many parishioners celebrate the Platinum Jubilee Fayre last year, and it’s hoped that the same success can be replicated in the events for the King’s Coronation and the 2023 Village Fayre.

Financially, the Parish Council remains in a strong position; we’ve restricted our budget to a small increase this year but this has translated to a small decrease in the Parish component of the Council tax, known as the precept. Reserved funding is in place, should it be needed, to contribute to the gateway features mentioned above and funding has also been allocated for other initiatives to improve the look of the parish: new benches, wooden containers by the noticeboards and more flowers and bulbs being planted. This leaves total unreserved funding of £10,426.

Looking ahead, I hope that we can conclude the projects which seem to have been on our agenda for some time, as well as make progress on some new smaller projects which are in the pipeline. Finally, I wish to thank our County Councillor for his continued support despite his heavy workload as well as all members of the Parish Council for their input and the Clerk for keeping us on track with meetings and finance.

Councillor A Young

Chair

Mitford Village Hall chairman's report 2023

Hall use has continued this year in much the same vein as last year. The regular bookings are keeping the income ticking over and there has been quite a few extra one off bookings for children’s parties, council events etc

Current regular bookings include:

Monday

Country Dancing 10-30 till 12-00 Brownies 6-00 till 7-30.

Table tennis most Mondays

Tuesday

Pilates 10-00 till 12-00 Dancing 7-30 till 9-00

Wednesday

Parish Council 1st Wednesday of the month

Historic Society 2nd Wednesday of the month during summer.

Thursday

Table Tennis 7-00 till 9-00

Friday

Nothing at present

Saturday

Nothing at present

Sunday

4th Sunday Cafe Church service from this month (May)

There have also been some improvements to the hall. We have just this week completed the av installation. This comprises a projector and drop-down screen which is remotely operated and

ceiling speakers with a separate subwoofer.

This should enhance the hall greatly in regards to future potential bookings and we are also

looking into other options, such as movie nights etc.

we are hosting a celebration of the Kings coronation for the village on Sunday May 7th, which will be utilizing the projector to screen the tv coverage.

The Hall has also just been redecorated.

Wi-fi still free to use.

We are now recognised as a Warm Hub.which meant we got £500 grant from CAN for energy costs. We are in the process of setting up some events to promote this initiative. We have received a lot of help and grants through CAN and the local council. (£500 grant from council)

We are also looking into power sustainability and future proofing the hall and are investigating the possibility of solar panels and back up batteries in case of power cuts in the future. This would also save money on electricity costs.

Application to National lottery is underway for a £10,000 grant to help with costs.

Repairs to the air source heat pumps and heating system were undertaken after it broke down during the winter.

Keith Stephen
Chair