

**NORTON BAVANT VILLAGE MEETING**  
**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**HELD ON WEDNESDAY 18 OCTOBER AT 7.30PM**

**Present:** Mike and Jane Wooldridge, John and Didee Acworth, Liz Dawson, Geoff Frost, Graham and Hilary Connellan, Sue Elliot, Chris Gunter, Suzanne Newman, Andy and Jane Docherty, Edward Moore, Mike and Lynne Ersser, Andrew Lane.

**Apologies:** Jo and Gordon Evans, Pat Frost, Chris and David Charles, Ian and Rebecca Newman, Martin and Menisha Dietrich.

**Matters Arising:**

1. A letter to the village from the Chairman encouraging the use of village amenities was sent out at the end of September.
2. Call for volunteer cleaners. The Chairman thanked those who had already volunteered to clean the hall. Liz Dawson, and Pat and Geoff Frost have also volunteered to help.
3. Mike Ersser robustly expressed his concerns about the conduct and record of the last village meeting:
  - a. He challenged the validity of a decision being made about a precept because no one had been warned there would be a vote and decision on the matter. The Chairman pointed out that the agreement from the Autumn 2016 village meeting had been that to answer the County Council's request to be informed as to whether or not the village wanted a precept, this should be discussed fully at the April 2017 meeting, with everyone in the village being informed prior to the meeting of what a precept was, how it would operate, what it could be spent on, who would control it and what the likely impact would be on each household in the village.

Graham Connellan (having operated precepts in another parish) had written a detailed paper answering all of the above points, and the Chairman had meticulously sent this out before the meeting, with an agenda (including 'Proposal of a Precept' at Item 6) and covering letter emphasising the importance and relevance of the discussion to all village households. Anyone who could not attend the meeting was invited to send in their views. The point of the discussion was to answer the Council's question - 'Do you want a precept?' Mike E did not accept this as a warning that a vote would be taken and a decision made.

- b. He expressed the view that there had been little discussion on how a precept would operate and was concerned that the Trustees of the Amenity Fund could spend what they wanted and require village residents, by law, to pay for that spending. Graham Connellan and the Chairman reminded him that how a precept would operate had been explained in detail in Graham's paper, and discussed at great length in the meeting. It was important to understand that if

the village decided on having a precept, the amount that could be raised was limited by law to about £626 a year (depending on the electoral roll) plus whatever amount the village decided to spend on items from a specified list, from which the only items having any obvious relevance to Norton Bavant currently were the 'Village Green' and the 'Bus Stop'. So a likely scenario would be a bid for a precept of £626 plus £500 for the grass cutting, total £1,126 or an average of about £19.63 per household per year (but weighted by rating band, some paying more and some less - breakdown provided at the meeting and attached to the minutes). Furthermore, the cheque for £1,126 would be received by the Parish Clerk and administered by him/her in accordance with the wishes of the village. The Amenity Fund and anyone else could bid for some or all of the £626 and would have to justify what they wanted the money for. The village meeting would decide and the Clerk would allocate the money accordingly.

c. He demanded to know why a letter to the Chairman from a village member (opposing the idea of a precept, challenging whether the field and hall were well enough used to be of any value to the village, and offering to run the village website) had not been printed in the minutes or put on the agenda of this meeting for discussion. The Chairman advised that he had read out the core points from the letter at the last meeting, along with those of another letter, for discussion at the meeting. He had also had letters from village members supporting a precept and expressing great appreciation for the field and village hall. These were also referred to in the meeting and the minutes. It was not practical nor normal practice to record verbatim in the minutes the comments of everybody; a succinct summary of the key issues and arguments was considered fair.

**Decision:** It was proposed by Edward Moore and seconded by Mike Ersser that the wording of the decision about the precept at the last meeting should include the word 'consider' as this had actually been what Gordon Evans had proposed. The minutes had recorded an abbreviated version of Gordon's two part proposal for simplicity, and the wording would not change the outcome of how any proposed precept was dealt with, as per sub-para b above. The original wording was 'The Village should consider raising a precept for Norton Bavant should it wish to undertake new initiatives and/or support the retention of amenities that are already in place'. The motion to amend the wording was carried unanimously.

#### **4. Village Website**

In the heat of the discussion in Item 3, the village website had been mentioned. Tom Hartshorn had spoken to the Chairman previously offering his services to create a new website for the village. The Chairman needed to talk to the current website administrator again before a decision could be made.

#### **5. Appointment of Parish Clerk.**

The Chairman called for a volunteer to take over from the current Clerk and Andy Docherty volunteered to take over this role after the next meeting.

## **6. Update on Church Restoration.**

Graham Connellan updated the meeting on Church renovation. Next projects will be re-pointing the tower, re-hanging the bells, kitchenette, outside toilet and re-wiring and lighting. Redecoration will take place once the walls have dried out fully.

## **7. Bell Ringing**

Graham Connellan had had a successful day at Heytesbury re-learning how to ring bells and hoped that once the bells are re-hung that other people might volunteer to learn to ring.

## **8. Village Events**

After some discussion it was decided that we should have a Happy Hour, Sue Elliott and Chris Gunter volunteered to help organise this event. Date to be decided.

It was decided that we should have the Open Gardens event on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018.

## **9. Amenity Fund Update**

The Chairman had prepared a balance sheet for the last 6 months, which reflected high usage and income from hire of the hall. Income included £800 for hire of hall and field, £756 in donations and £350 in Gift Aid. Expenditure had only been £342 (mostly electricity) but bills exceeding £1,100 (grass cutting, insurance and electricity) were due in the next 6 weeks, which would leave the fund with slightly in excess of £3,500 by Christmas (about 2 years worth of normal expenditure). This was a very healthy situation and one that meant any consideration of the need for a precept would not be necessary for some years.

## **10. WW1 Trees**

Wiltshire Council is planning to plant 10,000 trees in memory of those from Wiltshire who died in WWI. Mike Ersser agreed to help with this project. Ideas are encouraged from members of the village. Proposals will be put to the next village meeting.

## **11.AOB**

### **Removal of Stones and Fencing from Verges**

Mike Ersser briefed the meeting on the removal of stones and fencing from the verges that he had carefully placed to protect the verges and daffodils that he had purchased and planted. Mike's briefing included a photograph of a village member removing a fence.

*Post Meeting Note:* Chairman met with the said village member, who outlined his position and thinking. This was relayed, as requested to Mike and Lynne Ersser. The member's response to the observations and photos provided to the

meeting by Mike Ersser are as follows:

“After talking with Wiltshire Police and Wiltshire Council Highways, the matter is now in the hands of my legal representative. I will not be commenting further at this time.

David Childs”

### **Dog Fouling**

Dog fouling is again on the increase. All dog owners are reminded that it is their responsibility to clear up after their dogs in all public places including the lane that runs from the Jubilee Seat to the Old Rectory.

**Date of next meeting. 7.30pm, 14 March 18 in the Village Hall**

**JC Acworth  
Clerk to the Village Meeting**

**M Wooldridge  
Chairman of the Village Meeting**

**26 Oct 17**