

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY PARISH COUNCIL
MEETING OF SWANTON ABBOTT
HELD ON APRIL 6th. 2021 VIA ZOOM AT 7.00p.m

PRESENT – Cllrs. Haden (Chair), M. Vaughan, R. Gee, C. Belsham,
A. Brown & R. Talbot, the Clerk, G. Kimmerling, NNDC Cllr. Penfold & 16
members of the public.

Cllr. Haden outlined how the meeting would run. Members of the public would have 3 minutes each at the start of the meeting to voice their comments.

1. The editor of the Abbot said the Parish Council had been happy with the newsletter at the previous meeting so questioned what had changed. In the Village Plan, 92% of respondents were in favour of the publication. It is designed to be collaborative and inclusive and is successful. The Parish Council already owns the newsletter.
2. It is not the way forward to disband the Village Plan Steering Committee. There had been a proposal at the last Steering Group meeting, suggesting a way forward, which had not been voted on. The Plan should be completed.
3. There have been a lot of resignations from the V. Plan Committee. An external assessment of the questionnaires would be sensible.
4. The Abbot is important and should continue in a glossy form. Articles and embellishments could be reduced. There has been a lot of good work so far in the V. Plan but recent animosity has caused problems. It should be offered to an independent assessor and should not be shelved.
5. Support for a hard copy of the newsletter but would not support an on-line version.
6. The Abbot is part of the overall communication within the village, including the Hub, Facebook, Notice-boards etc. There is no data on how many people read the paper copy but many people use the Hub. The editor is doing a good job but not everyone needs or wants a paper copy so we could save wastage by producing less paper newsletters.

AGENDA

- 21.26 a. Apologies for absence. NCC Cllr. John Timewell.
b. Declarations of Interest in items on the Agenda. None

- 21.27 a. To consider and reach a conclusion on the suggestion of disbanding the present Village Plan Steering Committee and to consider a way forward.

Cllr. Haden thanked everyone who had worked on the Village Plan and had given a lot of their time to this project. He explained that the group had been set up in 2019 with a wish to capture the views of the whole village. A questionnaire had been produced but he felt some questions were incorrectly constructed. Not many younger people had responded. There had been protracted discussions on how to progress the plan with particular problems with the question on development. Mr. Glyn Williams had been invited to join the group as he had experience with the previous plan and had been given the data. He suggested re-visiting the village re the development question. Three people resigned and Mr. Williams also left the group. Cllr. Haden felt the group

had strayed from the original intentions and he contacted the nine people who had formed the Steering Committee. Six expressed a wish that the group be disbanded.

Cllr. Haden suggested the following ways forward:-

- 1) Hand the raw data over to an independent party to complete the report.
- 2) Take the view that the Parish Council is already addressing many of the issues raised so a new plan isn't needed.
- 3) Set up a new V.P. Steering Committee, excluding anyone who had been on the existing group, to complete the plan. People may have new ideas after the Covid 19 epidemic.

Cllr. Talbot suggested:- 1) removing the erroneous answers, getting an independent analysis of the questions and completing the plan.

2) As some questions are flawed and not representative, forming a new group to take this on.

3) Park the whole thing as many issues have already been addressed.

He did think that the plan should be completed.

Cllr. Vaughan felt it was wasting money to complete the plan.

Cllr. Brown said there was a duty to complete the plan and suggested finding out the costs involved.

Cllr. Gee felt the group should be disbanded but the plan should be produced as several people had completed the questionnaires. It should be analysed independently to be above suspicion. The spreadsheet could be handed over with the data so there shouldn't be too much work left to do.

Cllr. Belsham said it had been a good idea in 2019 but it was now outdated. There had been animosity in the group and some questions were skewed. There are lots of good things happening in the village and the Parish Council should address issues as they arise. The group should be disbanded.

Resolution. Proposed by Cllr. Haden and seconded by Cllr. Belsham to disband the present Village Plan Steering Committee. There was a show of hands with 4 people in favour of the resolution and 2 against. The resolution was passed.

Cllr. Haden said the Parish Council would get information on the costs and work involved in completing the plan and it would be on the next Agenda.

21.28 a) To consider the running costs of the Parish Newsletter – aka The Abbot.

Cllr. Haden explained that in 2020 the Parish Council agreed to merge the existing newsletter with the SAS newsletter as the previous editor was stepping down. Dr. Day took on the role of editor and has produced 5 copies to date. One key concern is the cost. It used to be £82 per quarter and is now £148 per 6 editions a year. This makes the newsletter the third most expensive outlay from the Parish Council. Cllr. Haden felt that sending a copy to every household might mean that some newsletters could be put straight in the bin. He suggested having collection points in the village for people to collect the newsletter. He believed that more people are comfortable with on-line technology after Covid19. He acknowledged that not everyone has access to the Internet and some copies would still need to be delivered by hand – the Parish Council could find out who those people are.

Cllr. Talbot said he looked forward to his paper copy of the Abbot. All groups and associations have input, it is edited well and worth every penny. He suggested one of the Councillors could take on getting paid advertising in the magazine.

Cllr. Vaughan said the Parish Council needs to find out how to get the costs down and needs to find out who wants a paper copy.

Cllr. Brown said the costs won't drop a great deal if fewer copies were printed. The cost has gone up as there are more pages (8 instead of 4) and it is produced more often (6 times a year instead of 4). Advertising could be the way forward but she felt it should be someone outside the Parish Council who looks into this. In general, distribution is not a problem.

Cllr. Haden said there should continue to be a paper copy as well as a Digital edition downloadable from the new Village Website, Community Hub website etc.

Cllr. Gee said the newsletter is well received. Some groups feel they get less room than others in the publication. The cost could be reduced if it reverted to 4 pages. It would be good to have it re-cyclable and to be on-line. It should be distributed to those who need this but collection points would also be good. She asked if it needed to be in colour. She felt that people can advertise on the Hub for free so would not want to pay for advertising in the newsletter.

Cllr. Belsham felt the cost was too expensive and should be kept at 4 pages. 10 years ago 200 copies were printed for £80. She agreed with pick-up points such as the phone box and felt it should be on the Hub. She agreed that people were unlikely to pay for advertising when it is free on the Hub.

Cllr. Haden asked for a show of hands for the following:-

- 1) For collection points rather than direct delivery (except to those who need it). 5 in favour.
- 2) For a digital edition as well as the paper version. 6 in favour
- 3) A quarterly publication rather than 6 times a year. 5 in favour. Cllr. Brown said she preferred the publications to coincide with Parish Council meetings.
- 4) 4 pages rather than 8. Cllr. Vaughan said it was un-necessary to cut down on the pages if the publications were less and Cllr. Belsham agreed. Therefore the question was – to remain at 8 pages. 6 in favour.

b) To consider taking ownership of the Parish Newsletter and to agree how to manage the publication in future.

It was agreed that there was a benefit to having a paper publication and a Digital Edition version. It is hoped that Dr. Day will continue as editor and Cllr. Haden will discuss this with him.

The meeting closed at 8.20