

DRAFT MINUTES

Until agreed at the next Annual Parish meeting 19th May 2015

	Minutes of the Elmore Annual Parish Meeting held at Elmore Village Hall on Thursday 5th June 2014 at 7.45pm	Action
<u>Present:</u>	Parish Councillors: Mr J Field (JF) – Chair, Mr A Nash (AN) – Vice Chair, Mrs J Hobbs (JH), Mr T Jones(TJ), Mr N Meek (NM) Clerk: Mrs D Jones (DJ)	
In Attendance:	Val Overton, Barry Overton, Denise Barker, Graham Littleton, Steave Voyce, Anselm Guise, Clare Stewart, Nick Stewart, Debbie Allen, John Hardisty, Jennie Field, Stephen Davies, Sharon Sugars and guest speaker, Neil Carmichael MP.	
1. Apologies	Sally Guise, Jill Hurren, Cllr A Blackburn, Cllr Dave Mossman, Colin Ellis	
2. Police Report	Not in attendance and no report received.	
3. Neil Carmichael MP	Address to Elmore Parishioners on local issues: Three topics covered were Flooding, Broadband and the Stroud Local Plan <u>Flooding:</u> NC emphasised the Government’s commitment to protect homes and invest more money in flood defences country-wide, agreeing to apply pressure to the relevant agencies. He noted that the EA are involved in so many areas of life and therefore we have to look at how to streamline them.. <u>Faster Broadband:</u> NC re-stated the Government promise that there would 90% coverage for faster rural broadband and 100% coverage of a minimum of 2MB download speed by the end of 2015. <u>Stroud Local Plan</u> NC said that the Parish Council will not see an operative plan yet as it is still in the draft stage. He emphasised the value of a Neighbourhood Plan for our Parish. <i>‘The local plan maps out housing and employment growth in the Stroud district for the next two decades and is critical to ensure a sustainable and strong local economy for future generations’.</i> NC then offered to take questions on any subject.	
4. Open Question Time	Flooding : Questions were addressed to NC by parishioners. These covered house insurance costs in affected areas, the EA and post flooding rubbish on the river banks. NC said he would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take up any individual’s issue with the Association of British Insurers (ABI) • send to EPC the ‘legislative process regarding insurers’ • push the Environment Agency to make sure that maps clearly show what defences exist • apply pressure to speed up EA processes. NC thinks that there will be greater clarity through ‘change management’ within the EA with named people in control of specific functions • refer the post flooding rubbish collection to the EA. He recognised that the rubbish left creates further problems with blocked culverts and drains and also means that the grass cannot be cut. He also assured the meeting that the EA has planned projects underway now and for the future medium and longer terms. He also reminded the meeting that any householder could apply to the EA at Tewkesbury for a statement of flood risk for any property.	
5. Declaration of Members’ Interest in	Nothing was declared by the Councillors.	

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Agenda items.		
6. Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting held on 13th May 2013	These were proposed by TJ and seconded by JH. The minutes were signed as a true record by JF (Chair).	
7. Matters Arising from the Minutes of 13th May 2013	The matters arising from this meeting were followed up during the Elmore Parish Council Meetings of 29 th July 2013 and 2 nd September 2013. It was recorded that Weir Green is no longer on an official ‘Bore Watching’ site - and has been removed from the EA website.	
8. Chairman’s Annual Statement	<p>Parish Precept and Finances For the 4th year in a row the Parish Council decided not to increase the Parish Precept. Despite this decision we have managed to maintain a healthy financial situation as well as investing in some improvements within the Village, including: New Notice Board by Village Hall Repairs to the War memorial (with the help of Elmore Land Charity) Set up and published the Parish Website Self help on making and erecting several open notice boards around the village We still believe that during the ‘recession’ it would not be right to either increase the precept or embark on expensive projects. At the end of the FY our bank balance stood at £ 4,950 of which we have ring-fenced the sum of £1,300 as a Contingency Fund and £600 for maintenance of the Millennium Ponds thus leaving a figure of £3,000 available for future projects</p> <p>Local Elections This year saw the retirement from Stroud District Council of Cllr Graham Littleton after some 14 years as a District Councillor – thanks to Graham for all his sterling work on our behalf. Many people won’t realise what goes on behind the scenes but I can assure you all, that Graham has worked tirelessly on our behalf. Graham’s newly elected successor, Dave Mossman from Hardwicke, couldn’t make our meeting.</p> <p><u>Parish Council</u> All the seats on the Parish Council were due for election this year. However, as there were not enough nominations to warrant an election, all those who put in their papers were deemed elected on 22nd May. One of our councillors, Clare Stewart, has stepped down after 14 years as a Parish Councillor. I will be sorry to see her leave as I valued her support and advice while we’ve worked together and thank her most sincerely for her time, dedication and voluntary service on behalf of the village. The new Parish Council now comprises myself, Andy Nash, Trevor Jones, Jenni Hobbs and our new councillor, Nick Meek.</p> <p>Parish Clerk After an unsuccessful advertising campaign, our interim Parish Clerk, Dorie Jones agreed to take over the post from December 2013.</p> <p>The Environment Agency’s Severn Estuary Flood Risk</p>	

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	<p>Management Proposals</p> <p>The EA's 'consultation' on their Flood Risk Strategy took place in July 2013 following extensive discussions by the Severn Voice Task Group. Although it was termed a 'Strategy', there were no actual proposals in this document but only a selection of possible options. So we are none the wiser as to what will happen to our flood defences in the future. Some of you will recall the well attended meeting held here last summer. The EA finally published the results of their consultation and it was disappointing to discover that only 62 responses were received by the EA from the whole of the Severn Estuary. They conveniently forgot about all those people who visited their 'road shows' and made comments in the visitors' books.</p> <p>Since the consultation we learnt that the EA intended to stop maintenance on the 4km flood defences around Elmore and say they will be 'engaging' with landowners in order to work out a solution for funding any maintenance work required. Despite these assertions - there has been no engagement!!</p> <p>In February this year your Parish Council wrote to the PM to state our concerns about the future and the regulations which govern the way in which the EA allocate funding to projects. (<i>a copy is available electronically</i>)</p> <p>You have heard from our MP, Neil Carmichael, that there is extra funding committed to flood defences in our area. However, despite all our efforts to date we have had no formal assurances from the EA that any of this money will actually be spent on the local flood defences either in the form of maintenance or improvement.</p> <p>More on this topic later in the meeting.</p> <p>New Water Main</p> <p>Severn Trent installed a new water main throughout most of the village. Although there were a few teething problems it seems to have been a success.</p> <p>Planning & Licensing Applications</p> <p>There was a steady flow of planning applications, none of which were contentious.</p> <p>The licensing application for Elmore Court caused a small measure of concern but so far the events there seem to have run smoothly with minimum disturbance to neighbours and the village.</p>	
<p>9. The Precept for 2014/15 and Forecast Expenditure for 2014/15</p>	<p>At our last Parish Council meeting we set the Precept for 2014/15 at £2,400; the same as the previous 3 years.</p> <p>Our forecast of expenditure for this coming year covers the regular items such as insurance, Clerk's wages and membership of profession bodies. However, this year we have the maintenance of the Parish Website and the cost of the Newsletter. In addition, we have the aspiration to obtain one and maybe even two Defibrillators as part of our Emergency Plan. These will be expensive items – in the region of £1,000 each - and the purchase will require some more research.</p>	
<p>10. County Councillor's Report</p>	<p>Not in attendance and no report received.</p>	
<p>11. District Councillor's Report</p>	<p>Not in attendance and no report received.</p>	
<p>12. Severn Estuary Flood Risk</p>	<p>This topic was covered in the Chairman's annual statement but JF added that despite our frustrations at the lack of a solution, we do not have a battle with the EA. We believe that regardless of what our MP said</p>	

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Management (SEFRMS) Update	<p>the problem lies in Government Policy formulated by this and previous governments which dictate the rules by which the EA operate.</p> <p>At the end of the day the problem centres on money and the way in which the EA are prepared to look at the cost effectiveness of the situation. No account is taken of the true value of the farmland, the food production potential, local businesses or employment. Therefore the livelihood and properties of those living adjacent to the river could be threatened.</p> <p>However, the rules permit the EA to 'squander' upwards of £20 million creating a wildlife habitat yet the cost of improving a 10km length of the defences is in the region of £7m!</p> <p>JF (Chairman) is a member of the Severn Voice Task Group on this issue and they are continuing to engage with the EA, the Minister responsible, our MP our MEP and other stakeholders such as the Lower Severn Drainage Board and the NFU as well as GCC and SDC.</p>
13. Elmore Parish Council Website	<p>This year Elmore Parish Council has created a new website as a forum for comment and information. The website address will also be shown in the new parish magazine and is: www.elmoreparish.co.uk.</p> <p>The first issue of the new magazine will be delivered on 12th June.</p>
14. Broadband and Telephone lines update	<p>JF made the following statement concerning telephones and Broadband.</p> <p>Over the last 6 years your Parish Council has been engaged with BT and Open Reach in order to improve the telephone links into Elmore.</p> <p>Prior to our efforts there were over 30 homes that had shared lines and so were not able to obtain Broadband. Now nobody is on a shared line but the broadband connection is, at best, adequate but unreliable, especially for those relying on it for business.</p> <p>Several years ago Open Reach engaged a contractor in order to attempt to drill under the canal to lay an extra cable from Hardwicke Exchange to carry 100 additional telephone lines. Sadly this project was a disaster and after three attempts the drilling mole disappeared so the project was aborted.</p> <p>The latest Government initiative to provide Faster Broadband to rural areas has added an extra dimension to our efforts. We discovered that Elmore and Longney were to be excluded from this venture as the technical problems seemed too great. However, BT has now relented and will be installing Faster Broadband to the Street Cabinet situated at the junction of the Longney turnoff this side of the Pilot. This will be done by firing a microwave signal from the Hardwicke Exchange to a receiver by the cabinet using a technique called 'Backhaul'. This will be the first installation of its type used in the UK and is a bit of an experiment for BT. The planning application for the erection of the receiving pole has already been submitted by BT to SDC and we have been promised that the Faster Broadband connection should be in place by the end of the year.</p> <p>JF commented he was reliably informed that this will be a minimum of 2 MBps compared to the 0.7 MBps he currently receives. This should be a significant improvement.</p> <p>We have also asked BT to examine the possibility of upgrading the underground and over ground telephone cables to either fibre optic or a new copper system in order to reduce the resistance. No promises have been made but BT has stated that they will examine the possibility.</p> <p>As ever, the devil will be in the detail. The signal will get to the Street Cabinet but it is then up to individual households to arrange a connection via their own Broadband provider. The cost of such a connection is not yet known!</p>

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<p>15. Planning – Update on new regulations</p>	<p>The recent Queen’s Speech said that Government has plans to introduce revised planning regulations during the next year. These changes will dramatically alter the whole planning process with more relaxed rules and a speedier process. For example, up to 3 redundant farm buildings could be converted to residential properties on every farm in Elmore without the need for Planning Permission! With no settlement boundary we are now at greater risk. NC commented that neighbourhood plans are the answer.</p>	
<p>16. Any other Business</p>	<p>During AOB Barry Overton asked why the parishioners weren’t given the opportunity for questions to the Parish Council. JF apologised for any misunderstanding and stated the Open Question Time for not just for our guest speaker. He then asked Barrie Overton to put his question; This concerned pothole repairs on Lake Street (the road leading to Elmore Back). JF reminded those present that we must all make repeated reports to the Gloucestershire Highways Department via their website. Members of the Parish Council do not have greater authority or power to make the report than each member of the public.</p>	
<p>17. Date of Next Meeting</p>	<p>The date for the next Annual Parish Meeting is to be announced for some time in May 2015</p>	
	<p>The Chairman thanked all present for attending and declared this meeting closed at 8.45 pm.</p>	
	<p>Signed..... Date</p>	