

**Minutes of the Elmore Annual Parish Meeting
held at Elmore Village Hall on Tuesday 7th May 2019 at 7.45 pm**

Present	Parish Councillors Mr J Field (JF) Chair, M N Meek (V Chair), Mr T Jones (TJ), Mrs P Turner (PT), Mrs J Hill (JH) Clerk Mrs D Jones	
In Attendance	PCSO Rachel Addinall and Mr Graham Littleton	
1 Apologies	Cllr S Davies GCC	
2 Police Report	PCSO Addinall reported a fall in reported crimes from Elmore since 2018 but an increase in incidents involving poaching, hare coursing and cannabis smoking. Comments following this appear in the Open Question Time section. PCSO Addinall encouraged the public to report all worries about incidents to the police via 101, Crimestoppers and through Community Alerts. These reports can be made anonymously if needed.	

**Chairman's Statement:
Annual Parish Meeting – 7th May 2019**

Finance:

You may be aware that for some years now we have adopted a policy of transparency regarding our accounts. This means that every invoice over the sum of £100 is published on the Parish website. In addition, as well as the annual audit, the Clerk publishes the accounts showing all expenditure and a forecast of expenditure which is then reviewed by the Parish Council at every meeting.

Bank balance: We ended the last financial year with a balance of £5,909 in the account so the finances are in good health.

However, it should be noted that of this total there are certain funds ring-fenced for unforeseen contingences, ponds maintenance and the maintenance of the two Defibrillators – the total of ring-fenced funds is £ 2,230 so currently our disposable funds amount to £3,679.

The Parish Precept, which is deducted as part of every household's Council Tax remains unchanged again for this financial year and is the main source of income for the Parish Council and stands at £2,472 per annum. This sum is divided between all those paying Council Tax for registered properties.

Expenditure. Apart from the recurring expenditure on insurance, membership of Parish Council Association and Clerk's wages, the Parish Council has adopted a pragmatic approach as part of its expenditure policy by only funding what we call 'Community Projects' and it will be no surprise to anyone to hear that the main focus of our attention over the last year was the Village Hall, and last year we purchased a new main entrance door for the Hall thus providing better insulation and security.

Another major project that we have undertaken, along with the other parishes in the Severn Voice area is the responsibility for verge cutting. This is the third year of running this contract and it seems to be working well. We get 2 cuts of the verges and the corner splays per annum. We pay the local contractor and then claim the expense from GCC so this does not cost us anything. This project actually produces a small income for the PC.

We do not donate funds to charities or political parties as the Parish Council remains apolitical.

Any worthwhile ideas for future projects that are of benefit for the whole community would be welcome.

Broadband

The Saga of a poor broadband download speed continues but there seems to be a light at the end of the tunnel. Gigaclear, the company contracted by GCC to lay high speed fibre throughout Gloucestershire, has assured us that by mid to late 2019 the new system will be ready.

However, as we see it there is one rather large hurdle to overcome – namely connecting the fibre laid throughout the village to a server.

This is meant to be being done via a connection to Minsterworth which you may have realised is on the other side of the River Severn.

Since February 2018 the intention has been to drill under the river to establish the connection but the start date for drilling keeps slipping – the latest estimate is that the ‘drilling shot’ is due to take place on Monday 20th May – i.e. in less than 2 weeks! Provided of course that all the necessary permissions have been granted.

We are aware that the trenching work carried out by Gigaclear’s contractors (Complete Utilities) has left rather a lot of large stones on the grass verge areas outside houses and on the grassed areas in lay-bys. In addition, some of the repair work to the tarmac surfaces is starting to subside. We have flagged this up to Gigaclear and await a response.

We have had 2 meetings or briefings from the Gigaclear Management team over the last year: one in August last year and one at the end of March. Since Gigaclear was awarded the contract by GCC for both Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, the company has signed further contracts with Devon & Somerset, Wiltshire, Berkshire, Essex, Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire.

It would therefore appear that the company has grown rather too quickly and did not have the management teams in place to cope with the increased workload. This has meant both delays in the construction work as well as technical difficulties. There has also been a constant change of personalities which hasn't made it easy for us to obtain clear answers to our concerns.

One of the unanswered issues is whether or not ISPs like Sky can operate via the Gigaclear network – at the moment there are only a handful of very small ISPs (none of which were previously known to me) who have signed contracts with Gigaclear – but we will keep you informed as the system develops.

Parish Councillors

Over the past few years we have made a plea for some new blood to come forward and offer their services as a parish councillor. This plea has been met with some success but we are now entering a critical stage.

In May 2020 there is due to be a local election and alongside that there will be a Parish Council election. This means that the tenure for all Councillors will expire and all 5 Councillors will be required to stand for re-election. However, I am aware that Trevor Jones, one of our Councillors, wishes to retire permanently at that stage and I too would like to hand over the reins of Chair after 11 years in office. However, I would be happy to stay on as a Councillor for a further year or until a replacement can be co-opted.

Of course this may all change if more than 5 people register their intention to stand for election as I may not even be re-elected! If however, only 5 people stand for election then all 5 will be ‘deemed elected’ by default.

Flood Defences

You may recall the saga of the Environment Agency’s plans to flood 720 acres of agricultural land on the Elmore Meadows – this was successfully fought off but only after a considerable struggle with both the Environment Agency and Central Government.

It is worth noting that the funding for the project – some £20 million – was due to come from the EU coffers as part of the legislation to construct compensating habitats for wildlife. If Brexit comes to pass this year it will mean that there will be no more EU funding for such projects. Equally, as our own Government’s finances tighten, I can envisage a reduction in the EA’s budget and the knock-on from this will be that less money will be spent maintaining the flood defences, cutting the grass along the river banks and clearing up the rubbish after the Severn Bores.

This could therefore entail a certain amount of volunteer work in the future if we are to maintain the integrity of our flood defences and the appearance of the river banks.

Vote of Thanks

I would like to record a formal vote of thanks to all Councillors for their contributions during the year. As you may know, serving on the Parish Council is a voluntary appointment and they give their time for the benefit of the whole community.

I would like to record a special vote of thanks to our Clerk who has been ultra efficient and dedicated, above and beyond the call of duty and as such has made my role so much easier.

John Field (Chair)

4 Open Question Time	Mr Littleton, the only parishioner attendee, did not ask a question but made a statement: he pointed out that we have a nationwide problem with hare coursing and illegal fly tipping. A discussion on the matter of Hare Coursing followed: JF said that local farmers were very upset that hare coursing is going on week after week and he asked PCSO Addinall what was being done as there have been no prosecutions although suspects' names have been reported to the police. PCSO Addinall asked that any evidence in the form of CCTV, Dashcam etc would help to make prosecution work. She asked if more encouragement to report incidents could be put into our Parish Magazine. The question of maintaining our flood defences was raised. With a potential reduction of government funding for removing post bore rubbish and grass cutting we may need to think of other strategies. GL said that he cuts the grass on his stretch of the River flood defence.	
5 Declaration of Members' Interest in Agenda Items	Nothing was declared by the Councillors.	
6 Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting	The Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting on 15 th May 2018 were proposed as a true record by TJ and seconded by NM.	
7Matters Arising	Matters arising from the Minutes of 15 th May 2018 Action has been taken on all matters since the previous Annual Meeting. This has been dealt with in the course of normal business at EPC Meetings throughout the year.	
8Finance	<p>i)<u>Review of Parish Precept for 2019/20</u>. This appears in the Chairman's Annual Statement. The precept remains unchanged this year.</p> <p>ii)<u>Account and Audit</u>. The Clerk had reported to the Council that this work was complete and ready for the Council to approve.</p> <p>iii)<u>Forecast Expenditure for 2019/20</u> This appears in the Chairman's Annual Statement and is shown in the Financial Forecast which is available for everyone to view on the Parish Website www.elmoreparish.co.uk</p> <p>iv)<u>Community Based Projects</u>. This appears in the Chairman's Annual Statement. The plan for agreed work to be undertaken on the Village Hall fence will take place towards the end of May 2019. TJ asked about the Pond maintenance fund of £600 which is ringfenced. Ponds are in need of maintenance but as the Council is not planning to spend public money on projects based on private land, it was agreed that we should</p>	

	investigate the ownership of the land where our Millenium Ponds are before planning to use this money. The committee agreed to allocate up to £200 to investigate the ownership of Parish Council land in Elmore. The Clerk agreed to write to the Land Registry Office on behalf of the Council.	Clerk
9 County Councillor's Report	<p>Cllr Stephen Davies' written report.</p> <p>County Council Report 2019 for Elmore Parish Council Annual Meeting</p> <p>The County Council tax increased by 4.99% which is a 2.5% Gloucestershire County Council increase and 2.99% Adult Social Care Levy. This is lower than any neighbouring Council.</p> <p>However there has still been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · £2m extra to protect older people. There has been a 28% increase in older people since 2007. · £11m extra for Children and Young people, reflecting the challenges of the poor Ofsted report. Work on improving Children Services continues with some real progress noted by Ofsted. · Year 2 of £150m investment in roads. · £45m for Gloucestershire schools. 98% of children have been offered a place at a school of their choice. <p>More locally I have been involved in a number of Projects including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Cross Keys Roundabout <p>Work on this will commence imminently and there was a consultation event last week. This is an investment of £3.8m and importantly includes the infrastructure for traffic lights at a later date.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Speeding <p>An area where there is on-going and growing concern is speeding and I am looking at how we can address this, through the Severn Voice group of Parishes.</p> <p>Finally if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at Stephen.davies2@gloucestershire.gov.uk or on 07802 595 30</p>	
10 District Councillor's Report	Cllr Gill Oxley – No report received.	
11 Highways	<p>JF reported that he has seen patching of potholes on Village roads, although no Highways notification of this happening had been made.</p> <p>Parking at Sellars Bridge was discussed. There is parking over the double yellow lines whenever there is a big event such as fishing on the Canal. No enforcement is taking place. NM agreed to try to find a way to contact traffic wardens to see if this area could be monitored and violations reported.</p> <p>Lake Street road problems had been seen by Highways, Daniel Tiffney with NM. It was agreed that a Highways Structural Engineer would be asked to assess the problem of cracking down the centre of the road and verges falling away. There was discussion about asking the drivers of the large vehicles who have to use this road to get to and from farms in Elmore Back to slow down and take bends more carefully, therefore avoiding adding to the damage.</p>	<p>NM</p> <p>JF</p>
12 Elmore Emergency Plan update	JF reported that he was regularly updating this and looking to recognise who might be the most vulnerable residents in the community.	
13 Broadband and	This was covered in the Chair's Annual Statement. JF agreed to keep the community up to date. There is due to be a 'drill shot' under the River on 20 th May. <i>(Afternote: this drill shot was subsequently cancelled)</i>	JF

Telephone Update		
14 Parish Communications	<p><u>The Parish Council Website</u> was reported as looking good and up to date. It was agreed that we could look to our local Facebook site about Elmore News to add information to the Website.</p> <p><u>The Bridge</u>. The 20th Issue marks 5 years of the publication.</p> <p><u>Database</u>. This is maintained by JF on a regular basis.</p>	
15 Planning Review and Update	<p>Planning – Review/Update</p> <p>. Several properties in the Village have application with SDC.</p> <p>All applications plus any related correspondence can be viewed online on the SDC website under Planning Applications.</p>	
16 Any Other Business	No other Business.	
17 Date of next Annual Parish Meeting	To be held during May 2020 to coincide with local elections.	
	The Chairman thanked those present for attending and declared the meeting closed at 9.05 pm.	
	SignedDate	