

Neroche Annual Parish Meeting

2022

Chairman's Report

Introduction/Greeting

So here we are again, another year has passed and issues which have occupied

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and thank you for coming this Annual Parish meeting. First I would like to thank the parish councillors who stepped down at the last election and especially Jon Bell for his service as chairman for the last seven years and Mark Pope for his work on the council.

I will also be introducing our guest speakers who include our newly elected county councillor/s Ross Henley and Sarah Wakefield who we look forward to meeting at our parish council meetings to report on matters arising in new unity council and lending their support on matters which include the Unity council. Also Mr Ken Brown from Corfe parish council who will be speaking later in the evening.

Parish Council elections

After the elections we still have a few vacancies on the parish council and I would urge anyone interested in joining the parish council to contact us and we can discuss co-option at our next meeting (which will be a next Thursday). During this evening we will hear from John Parsons on the subject of what the parish council does and from Mr Ken Brown what they can achieve.

Neroche parish council sits on the second Thursday of every other month and agendas and minutes are posted on the notice boards and on the parish website.

Fingerpost scheme

The finger post scheme was started on a volunteer basis with financial support from the parish council and with the help of Jane Hole and John Learoyd and many others we have managed to rebuild, replace and repaint all of the finger posts in the parish.

We are now in the maintain stage of the project and have already been required to replace one finger at Staple Fitzpaine. We do have a fund for the maintenance of these signs to cover paint and hopefully the odd damaged finger however we do hope that will be covered by the person responsible insurance.

Village gateway

A matter that has been on the agenda for far too long has been for a village gateway sign alongside the road into Staple Fitzpaine from the direction of Castle Neroche. This was put forward to Somerset county council on a scheme that allowed county councillors to apply for funding on two projects a year. As you can imagine the size of the area covered by our councillors the list of requests was pretty long. Now that Somerset has become a Unity Council we will wait to see if this scheme continues.

In the meantime with such a long waiting time the parish council will seek alternatives to have a signs erected sooner rather than later. This may include voluntary donations with additional funding from the Parish Council or by way of the precept however this seems a little unfair to the other parishes in the group.

Defibrillator

Jon Bell was chairman of the PC when we purchased the first defibrillator and in that time we have managed to have this unit fitted into a temperature controlled enclosure that is now permanently fixed to the wall of the Greyhound and is checked on a weekly basis by Jan. Thank you Yan. It is also registered with the British Heart foundation which we have subsequently found out that they maintain a register these devices for the ambulance service.

Being portable by their nature these devices are battery powered which, as I'm sure most people are aware of, have a limited life span. Their batteries had surpassed their lifespan and with the gel pads needing replacement it was decided that a new defibrillator was purchased by the parish council as a more cost effective solution to its remaining in service. The alternatives were replace the battery which are more than 50% of the cost of new and still have a 5 year old device or rent from the ambulance service which over the same 5 years would again be more expensive.

Airband

Airband have been sending out emails to who have registered an interest with their company to say that they are on the second of their five phases to being able to supply fibre broadband to the parish. The next phase will be to produce a detailed design document followed by a second round of on-site surveys after which Airband will create instructions for engineers and buying equipment. I have been in contact with Airband and they are still in the design stage and are looking at completion spring 2023, survey likely July/September at the moment.

So if you have not already registered an interest with them please do so, it does not mean you have to take their service however it does indicate to them the level of interest in their service.

Neighbourhood plan.

It has been over ten years since the Neroche Parish Plan was completed and it's time for an update. The Parish Council is looking at producing a Neighbourhood Plan. This is a document that puts in place planning policy for a neighbourhood area to guide future development. A neighbourhood plan is about the use and development of land and may contain a vision, aims, planning policies, proposals for improving the area or providing new facilities, or allocation of key sites for specific kinds of development. It may deal with a wide range of social, economic and environmental issues (such as housing, employment, design, heritage and transport) or it may focus on one or two issues only.

Once the plan has been completed, it will have to be submitted to the local planning authority and then be subject to an independent examination to ensure that the proper legal process that has been followed.

A neighbourhood development order is a means for parish/town councils or neighbourhood forums to grant planning permission for certain kinds of development within a specified area.

Curland Green

The parish Council recently carried out a survey of Curland residents asking for their feedback on the layout of the road around the green. There were four choices;

Widen the current one way side of the green to make that lane two way.

Erect signage to direct heavy traffic away from the green.

Increase the North East corner of the Green to allow larger vehicles easier turning.

Leave the junction as is and rely on road users to use the junction appropriately.

The initial response has been 59% leave the junction alone, 25% increase signage and increase the corner to allow better turning 15%. The response to the survey was 65% distributed questionnaire returned.

Precept

The Parish Council's precept makes up a very small proportion of the council tax bill, in the region of 1%. It is considered each year by a finance advisory group, who meet in December and review the Council's expenditure in the last year and expected financial liabilities in the coming year. Using this information they decide what level of precept to advise the Parish Council to set at our January meeting.

This year a decision was taken that in view of concerns over the level of services the County Council may be able to provide in future the Parish Council should look to strengthen their financial position, by a significant increase in precept. Until now our precept has been one of the lowest of Somerset Parish Councils when ranked by level of precept. The new level will lift us to 'mid table' and although it looks a large increase in percentage terms in real terms it is quite small, amounting to a £7 increase for a band D property, on top of the existing precept of £18.48.

We realise this will not be a welcome increase but believe it is a necessary safeguard in view of the uncertain future. In the short term it will help us support the finger post restoration but should also put us in a better position to do things like replacing the defibrillator and possibly getting involved in things like ditch clearing.

Mark Palmer