

CHEDDON FITZPAINE
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
held on Tuesday 9th May 2023 at 6.30pm
in the Memorial Hall, Cheddon Fitzpaine.

Present: Parish Cllrs Isaacs, Batsch & West.

In attendance: Mrs S Millard-Jones, Clerk, and approximately 3 members of the public.

1. Cllr Isaacs, Vice-Chair, welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting.

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 10th March 2022 were accepted as a true record and signed by the Vice-Chair.

2. Matters Arising

None

3. Report of the Chairman – Cllr Isaacs

Again, been an interesting year as of 21/22, we are very pleased to still be working closely with, West Monkton Parish Council with the neighbourhood plan & country park, and I am sure that this will continue with our great working relationship.

The community governance has moved forward with the Taunton Town Council being set up, which has seen our parish being split although there is still a judicial review action being taken with no final outcome at present, so can't comment on this any further at this time but sure we will keep the Parish informed when any decision is made.

We have worked with the shadow Taunton Town Council on its setup over the last six months or so, we will need to be able to work with this neighbouring parish going forward as we have common interests.

With the future still uncertain it does look more likely as time goes on that Cheddon Fitzpaine will be this greatly reduced Parish in size with, corresponding funding, so as in last year's report is unlikely, we will be able to fund the country park to the levels we are currently are or what we would like.

Again, the neighbourhood plan is still in place and continues to apply as is, the Town Council is well aware of this so would recommend that the Clerk Donna Ford and her assistant are involved going forward.

I would like to reassure all Cheddon Fitzpaine residents within the new boundaries, that the council will work tirelessly to do all we can on their behalf going forward.

The new Taunton Town Council came into being on 1st April 2023 at this time we lost our Councillor for the Maiden Brook ward Mr Lee Baker, I would like to thank Lee over the last five years for all his efforts in being a Parish Councillor and wish him well for his County Council position.

Finally - We would like to thank all the great effort's from the combined efforts of Cheddon Parish, West Monkton for the coronation weekend, which was a great success even though the weather was not favourable, special thanks to Kate and the West Monkton team and Mike Batch who lead the Cheddon Parish input.

4. Reports covering:

Hestercombe House & Gardens

Phillip White -CEO gave the following update:

Last March I reported that the previous two years had been difficult as a result of the pandemic but that we were looking forward to the new season.

But as they say, there is no such thing as a free lunch. In February Ukraine was invaded, suddenly fuel prices escalated and by April we were in a 'cost of living crisis'. Visitors did return to the gardens but were clearly anxious about the economy and that continues.

On a happier note the restoration of the Water garden was completed on schedule at the end of September and is now one of only a handful of C17th Water gardens to have survived and to have been restored. This brings the number of complete period gardens at Hestercombe to four, which is unique, and confirms Hestercombe as one of the most important historic gardens in the country.

In December we were pleased to have completed negotiations with the tenants of Hestercombe Farm that will enable the trust to restore the formal Lutyens garden to its full extent by reclaiming a strip of field, restoring the original Ha Ha boundary and replanting the missing avenue of trees.

The verge on the drive will be reinstated and a safe access path for pedestrians created and we now have the opportunity to restore the remaining section of the Portman Drive beyond Middle Lodge and across what was the park to create a new, permitted pedestrian and cycle access route.

Our woodlands continue to suffer greatly from ash dieback which has meant that a large number of trees have had to be felled and although we have a replanting programme it will be some years before we will see the benefit of this work. An exciting discovery made last year was that there had once been an avenue on the far side of the Landscape garden starting at Gotton Copse that was originally terminated by an obelisk. The avenue will be replanted this autumn using varieties of sweet chestnut as we believe these were the trees that had been originally planted. We anticipate that planning permission on Hestercombe House, which has been held up by concerns about phosphates since 2019, will shortly be determined and will provide the trust with the opportunity to begin the long-awaited restoration and development of the house.

This will be my last report to the Cheddton Fitzpaine annual meeting as I shall be retiring at the end of September this year after 32 years at Hestercombe. I hope that we will be able to arrange a meeting of the Community Advisory Board before my departure as we have not managed to meet since the beginning of the pandemic. I am delighted that the trustees have asked Marcia Hill, who was until recently a trustee of Hestercombe Gardens, to continue in her role as chair of the Advisory Board and to report its discussions back to the trust.

PCSOs Tony Wearmouth & Lyndsay Smith

No report

Cheddton Fitzpaine Church School Paula Goodchild

No report

Nerrols Primary School Rhian Locker

No report

Church of Cheddton Fitzpaine Rev Mary Styles

No report

Memorial Hall Malcolm Lown Chairman of Trustees

Mr Triggol – MH Treasurer gave the following update:

The MH has finally had confirmation of ownership of the land that it is sited on, meaning that the committee now owns just under one acre of land.

Income has depleted significantly since Covid, bookings are now on the increase although as are electricity costs. The MH was opened in 2002 and the boiler is now over 20 years old and in need of repair. The Committee are looking to hold various fundraising events to generate some funds. The Cheddtoners are back for the first time since Covid and both shows have been sellouts. New post and rail in the car park to define the land. The financial position of the hall is looking stable. The projector has been sent off for repair.

Maidenbrook Country Park including the Somerset Wood Mike Batsch Country Park Project Manager

Mike Batsch – Chair Country Park Working Group gave the following report: Kings Coronation event; The weather was unfortunate and the ground was muddy and sodden, but the rain held off for the celebrations. Eventbrite tickets were 700+. By the end of the event, it was believed to have had circa 500 guests. West Monkton mostly funded the events and have the Community Clerk who made the arrangements, funding wasn't granted. Both PC's need to do some fundraising to facilitate future events. The forecast requirements of £10k spend will finish off some of the work currently in progress. Plans are being discussed for a downsized visitor centre which is likely to be a third of the initial plan.

5. Close of meeting

The meeting formally closed at 8.54pm.

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Date: