

# MIDDLETON PARISH COUNCIL

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The Annual Meeting of the Parish was held on Tuesday 19th May 2015 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall Annexe, Cottingham.

Present: Cllrs Brant (Chair), Cole, Bradshaw, Freeman and Skipwith and Mrs Medwell (Clerk).

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence: Cllr Cross.

2. Minutes of 2014 Meeting: These had previously been unanimously approved and signed by the Chair.

3. Chair's Annual Report 2014-2015 – The following report was presented by Cllr Brant.

## **“Councillors**

December 2014 saw the resignation of Dryden Phillipson from the Chair of the Parish Council as he left the village for the South of France. Dryden had chaired the Parish Council for 8 years. He was a fount of knowledge on all aspects of local government and was well respected within both Corby Borough and Northants County Councils. His selfless contribution to the work of the Parish Council and village affairs was greatly appreciated.

During the year, four new councillors were welcomed onto the Council, bringing fresh new perspectives and giving us a full complement of councillors for the first time in many years. We will endeavour to fill any vacancies that arise as quickly as possible and to encourage representation from all areas of the village.

## **Planning**

In this period the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy was published for consultation. This strategy includes plans for the development of Corby, one of the areas for growth being the West Corby Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) which falls within the Parish of Middleton. This has significant implications for the villages of Middleton and Cottingham and the Parish Council ensured that it considered the plans in detail and submitted comments on the plan, to the Planning Unit. The next stage of this process will be for Corby Borough Council to develop a local plan which will flesh out the principles in the Joint Core Strategy and the Parish Council will contribute actively to the planning process.

The Parish Council has spent quite some time this year considering whether it should develop a Neighbourhood Plan, which once in place would have statutory status for planning purposes. The process of developing a Neighbourhood Plan is significantly time/resource - consuming and would require significant involvement of residents. We have agreed to revisit the topic of Neighbourhood Planning following the General Election, once the grant funding framework has been confirmed.

The most significant local planning application in the last year has been the consideration by Corby Borough Council of a Planning Application for 57 houses outside the village boundary on land off Bury Close in Cottingham. The majority of Middleton residents were opposed to the development, as was the Parish Council on the basis that the site was wholly unsuitable for development, being a special landscape area falling between the Jurassic way and Grade 2\* listed Cottingham Hall. Had it proceeded the development would have had a significant and negative impact on the village in terms of traffic and pressure on local services and infrastructure. Along with Cottingham Parish Council and members of the local action

group, personal representations were made at Corby's Development Control meeting and the Committee rejected the application.

In considering other planning applications during the year our deliberations have focussed on supporting change while maintaining and enhancing the characteristics of our attractive village and the setting of the historic buildings in our conservation area.

**The Street Scene**

During the year we have been able to access funding to make some improvements to street furniture in terms of litter bins and village signage. The Orchard on Main Street is developing well with the older fruit trees having survived significant pruning. The Orchard is well used and is a welcome resource for the whole village. One of the benches is sponsored by a local family in memory of a relative and the other 2 benches are also available for that purpose. The area in Glover Court behind the Orchard needs attention in the coming year once the knotweed problem in that area is finally resolved and the ground maintenance contract has been amended to include upkeep of the culvert in future.

A well supported community litter pick has recently taken place and a dog fouling campaign which involved leaflets delivered to every household and a campaign of surveillance by Corby Council officers seems to have improved the situation.

**Village Hall**

A planning application for the new Village Hall to be located on the Cottingham and Middleton Recreation Ground is in its final stages, discussions with the many stakeholders having taken longer than was initially anticipated. The shared ownership of the playing field makes a development in this area more complicated than usual. As part of the project a revamp of the sports facilities is planned, a multi-use games area is being considered and plans include the Skate Park, which has been the subject of consultation with younger residents within both villages over the last year.

**Parish Website**

The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 set out a new audit framework for local authorities and subsequently a Transparency Code has been developed recommending what information should be published by Parish Councils. Most of the information that we will be required to publish is already in our minutes which are posted on the Parish Notice Board. We acknowledge however that this doesn't meet many resident's needs in the digital age and therefore we have taken the opportunity to develop a new Parish Council website on which minutes, agendas, expenditure, financial and audit reports and details of councillor responsibilities will be published. This will be launched in late May and will improve communication of the Parish Council's activities to a broader audience.

**Traffic volume and speed through the village**

Discussions have been commenced with Northants County Council Highways Department regarding our concern over the speed of traffic and volume of traffic (including heavy agricultural vehicles) passing through the village. The Highways Department is considering whether there are traffic calming measures appropriate for the width of the road and its layout which includes a right angle bend and poor sight lines along the length of Main Street. On-street parking will no doubt remain a feature of the village and in endeavouring to help traffic flow, drivers often park partly on the pavement which is a problem for pedestrians and over time is detrimental to the state of the footway. This is a matter that we will be returning to in the course of the coming year.

After careful consideration, the Parish Council has supported a Traffic Regulation Order from Northants County Council proposing double yellow lines on the west side of a small portion of The Hill. This will restrict parking; provide a safer environment for

the residents of The Hill leaving their driveways and give improved sight lines at the three way junction with Ashley Road and Main Street.

**The Precept**

Finally but very importantly, the Parish Council decreased its precept demand last year by 11.5% in recognition of the state of the Parish Council finances and the competing pressures on residents' pockets. We will continue to ensure that the community resources that are the responsibility of the Parish Council are put to good use for the benefit of all parts of our community.

4. Presentation of Financial Statement 2014-2015 – The Clerk referred to the statement of financial accounts and reported that the balances as of 31st March 2015 totalled £63,481.

5. Meeting Open to the Public: There were no members of the public present.

Signed as a true record:

_____	Chair	1905 Page 3 of 3
_____	Clerk	
_____	Date	

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