

FLORE PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held in the Millennium Hall, Flore on
Tuesday 22nd April 2025 at 7.00pm

MINUTES

Tea/coffee and biscuits were offered at the start of the meeting.

Present Parish Cllrs: Mrs Kathryn Baines, Miss Freya Davies, Mr Geoff Fellows, Mr Tom Higginson, Mr Simon Levell, Mrs Chris Littlewood, Mr John Thomason
Unitary Cllrs Mr Phil Bignell, Mr Charles Morton
5 Members of the public

The meeting was chaired by the Chair of the Parish Council, Mrs Christine Littlewood
The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Apologies for absence had been received from Parish Cllrs Mr Andy Anderson, Mr Kev Beasley

2. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting on 23rd April 2024. These minutes were signed and agreed at the Parish Council's AGM in May 2024.

3. Any matters arising: Nothing arising, questions were answered at meeting.

4. Chairman's report – Cllr Littlewood read out her report

Firstly, thank you to all the councillors who have supported me this year.

John – All aspects of flooding in the village

Geoff - Technology - Police Matters, Flagpoles, Litter picking – with wife Lyndsey, to name a few

Tom – Neighbourhood Plan, Planning issues, High St chicanes.

Andy – Neighbourhood Plan, Planning issues

Freya – PC Messenger pages, Flagpoles

Simon – Highways issues in general, High Street chicanes

Kathryn – Vice Chair and wise owl!

Geoff H – Finance

Kev - Street lights, War Memorial, Social Media

Sue – Clerk, Special thanks; as the clerk who knows everything a chair needs to know.

The bypass has been very good for the village taking away the traffic, but there have been a few bad accidents which we have asked highways to look into. We have been active in ensuring that they replant all the trees/shrubs that died, we will be keeping any eye on this.

Flooding has been a big problem to a lot of properties, over this last year with heavy rainfall. John has been monitoring this and helping people where he could. John, Sue and myself met with the flood risk officers from West Northants Council to look at the problems affecting the village. John will enlarge on this in his report. We also met with West Northants Council to get some kerbs dropped at the top of Bricketts Lane – to make all footpaths in the village, more accessible for wheelchairs users and disability vehicles, they are hopeful that this could happen this year.

The painting of white lines was completed this year, when they fade its dangerous at some junctions, particularly Spring Lane/ Nether Lane area, for the children going to school. We also got the 'Slow' re-painted on Kings Lane, near the Orchard as there was an incident a couple of months ago involving a cyclist and a car. We haven't had much luck in getting the potholes filled in on Brington Road, but we are still working on it, it seems to be an ongoing problem.

The housing development on Brington Rd. goes to re-appeal in May and we hope that there is good news at the end of it! The trees in the memorial garden are growing very well and as the trees get bigger primroses and

bluebells can be introduced. The grass has been contracted out for four cuts in the year, and paths sprayed to keep the weeds down, and around the benches.

We have refugees living at the hotel, we have been told likely for about a year, but that is about all the information we have.

The Council now has a dot gov dot uk website address. Since taking over the Messenger, we have allowed local businesses to advertise. We have replaced the polycarbonate sheets in the bus shelter adjacent to the White Hart and installed a seat in the bus shelter at the top of Bricketts Lane. We replaced a flagstaff with one we had in stock and have carried out minor works throughout the year. A resident kindly donated money towards the re-enamelling on the war memorial, for which we were really grateful. We have responded to 31 planning applications, and helped adjacent villages with contentious applications that could affect us. We look forward to welcoming new Councillors, following the elections this May although this is my last meeting for the Council as I will be standing down after 20 years!!!!

This concludes my report for this year ending 31st March 2025.

Comments (C) Questions (Q) from the floor

C: Thanks were given to Chris for her 20 years as she is retiring from the Council at the elections

Q: Resident asked about CIL and S106 and mentioned that she was not happy that the S106 money gets returned if not spent in 5 years. Cllr Higginson advised of the process and that we are involved in these decisions early on. Cllr Bignell also advised that he is working with planning at West Northants Council to get parishes involved at an early stage.

5. Presentation: Women In the Land Army –Helen Frost

Helen gave computer based presentation with music on the Women in the Land Army during the Great War. Helen advised that this project to get her book published has taken 7 years of work.

C: Helen also thanked Chris for her time working for the village and also the people who fly the flags for commemorative days.

Q: It was mentioned that many women died – how? There were lots of accidents, women working in new industries building roads, working with hazardous materials and also naturally with illnesses.

Q: Whereabouts did the women come from? The first phase was primarily trying to get a new workforce in place, it was not worth taking people who naturally were farmers so they aimed their recruitment at professionals/university students – primarily the middle class

Helen Frost was thanked for her presentation.

Presentation: Flore Flood Mitigation Report – Cllr John Thomason

Cllr Thomason gave a slide presentation showing graphs with the difference in the rain. November and March were exceptions and stood out on the graphics. There was a lot of rain in such a short space of time. He recently met with West Northants Council flood team of 3 who are covering the whole county and having to put many Section 19 reports in place. He asked for a new drain/ditch to be formed on the corner by Mill Barn. John Campbell Close residents had helped by digging channels in the verge of Brockhall Road to take the water that floods in that area, this leads onto the bypass which was then closed on both occasions of floods.

Q: Flood report was done before and needs updated in view of the river, is this being done? Yes the Section 19 will be up to date and will advise where issues are although WNC do not do the work they get the relevant agencies to sort.

Q: The climate change is becoming increasingly concerning what is being done? It doesn't help with developments further up the Nene in Daventry/Long Buckby get the go ahead as run off gets into the river there increasing the threats to Flore. The planning system needs to be looked at.

Mr Thomason was thanked for his presentation.

6. Report by Northants Police. Cllr Fellows gave a summary of issues around the village.

CRIME IN FLORE PARISH

Reports and incidents of crime in the village have been very low indeed over the last year. There have been a few thefts from motor vehicles, 2 thefts of motor vehicles and 3 burglaries of various kinds.

TRAFFIC ON THE HIGH STREET.

Northamptonshire Police carried out their latest survey of traffic on the High Street between the 20th and the 28th March, 2025 at the request of the Parish Council.

Results of past surveys –

2017-08-29 for a week (before the bypass opened) - 118,414 vehicles in total – including 8,780 HGVs.

2018-12-14 for a week (after the bypass opened) - 38,278 vehicles in total.

2019-04-09 for a week - 29,939.

2020-02-11 for a week - 30,632.

2022-11-15 for a week (after the chicanes installed June/July, 2022) - 23,523.

Result of the latest survey –

2025-03-20 for a week - 30,645 – including 373 HGVs.

So you can see from the above figures that the chicanes initially had an impact on the number of vehicles but between 2022 and now the effect of that has "worn off", so to speak and we are back to the same level of traffic as that experienced after the bypass completion but before the chicanes were installed.

The figures for vehicles in each direction are –

Vehicles travelling from Northampton towards the Daventry direction - 13,937.

Vehicles travelling from Daventry towards Northampton direction - 16,708.

Total vehicles in survey - 13,937 + 16,708 = 30,645.

POLICE "BEAT BUS" VISITS.

The Daventry district PCSO "Beat Bus" visited Flore three times during the past year. The next scheduled visit is on the 1st May, 2025 at 14:30 hrs.

UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS.

Some villagers have expressed concerns about the "undocumented migrants" currently housed at the Holiday Inn just outside Flore. I can tell the meeting that there have been no incidents of crime reported in relation to them, either in Flore, Weedon or Northampton, although some residents have reported feelings of disquiet on a few occasions.

RURAL CRIME.

There have been quite a number of incidents of field slaughter (mostly of sheep) in the area in the past year. The Rural Crime policing unit is attempting to address this, but it is really difficult to police because fields are generally insecure by nature and not subject to surveillance or oversight. Please keep your eyes and ears open for suspicious activity. Sheep bleating in the night-time is a real clue!

Q: Fly-tipping – is this getting worse? Not as such, seems to go in phases of deposits left. Report these when you see them

Cllr Fellows was thanked for his presentation

7. Report by Unitary Councillors – Unitary Cllr Bignell gave West Northants Council's report

It has been a pleasure for the three of us to continue working as Ward Councillors for the Long Buckby Ward in the new West Northamptonshire Council. The Council has made significant progress on delivering new road schemes, additional highways repairs worth over £10m, town centre regeneration projects in Northampton and improving Children's Services. We have secured a nine-figure investment from the English Cities Fund in the area to the north of Market Square, and completed the renovation project at the market, as well as at Fish Street. The works to Abington Street are nearly complete.

We continue to take a prudent approach to managing the Council's finance, with over £115m saved across the first four years and the budget balanced. We are starting to realise some of the benefits from the use of information technology, artificial intelligence, and other service transformation projects resulting in cost savings and service improvements.

Plans to invest an extra £1.35 million into services for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those in need of alternative provision were approved by Cabinet. The investment will help address a significant and ongoing rise in service demand, which in the last three years has seen a 40% increase

An independent review of how our Council is working three years after inception highlighted our strong positive start as a new unitary authority with 'much achieved at pace'. Feedback from the Local Government Association's (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge also emphasised the 'positive culture' and 'tangible upbeat energy' of staff at WNC, who it said took a 'thoughtful people-centred approach' to engaging with residents. Additional funding of £10m for Highway repairs was approved at Council. It followed on from the £2.8 million investment in new machinery in 2023, which has already increased the efficiency of road maintenance and repairs in our area. We understand that the state of our roads is extremely important to residents and we're

keen to make sure we're doing everything we can to maintain and improve them. This additional investment will allow us to carry out even more much needed resurfacing and repair works and explore innovative new technologies that will improve our service.

Our Council and North Northamptonshire Council partnered with four other authorities in the South Midlands on an expression of interest to Government toward devolution for the region. Unfortunately later in the year some of our neighbours backed out of this expression of interest to pursue an alternative geography.

Recycling centres across West Northants were confirmed to be opening 7 days a week from April 1. It's one of a number of improvements being made as part of a new contract with FCC Waste Services, who have taken over management of our six recycling centres at Sixfields, Ecton Lane (Northampton), Daventry, Towcester, Brixworth and Farthinghoe.

More than 270 people joined us to mark the opening of the first Family Hub in West Northamptonshire. Based at The Forum, the Towcester Family Hub, offers services for children, young people, and their parents from pre-birth to 19 years, and up to 25 years for those with additional needs, providing a variety of bookable and drop-in sessions. Following the successful opening, we will be consulting this May on proposed locations for additional Family Hubs.

It has been a pleasure working with the Parish Council and the residents over the last year, thank you.

C; Thanks were given for both Phil and Charles Morton who have represented Flore and come to the majority of Flore PC's meeting.

Unitary Cllr Phil Bignell was thanked for his presentation.

8. Reports by Village Charities

The Flore Charity. This Charity is made up of the merged Muscott & Sears Town Close Charity and the Flore Widows (Cartwright & Curtis) Charity.

The Trustees of the Charity administer the money. These are made up of no less than 5 competent persons. Three are nominative Trustees – one each from the Parish Council (Chris Littlewood), Parochial Church Council (Sue Raven) and the United Reformed Church (Liz Nye), one ex-officio (Revd Stephen Burrow) and 2 co-optative trustees (Wendy Pittman & Paul Minton).

The income for the Charity derives from investments and the leasing of two areas of agricultural land in Flore. In 2023/24 two student grants of £400 each and one relief in need grant of £100 were given out totalling £900.

Richard Capell Educational Foundation. The income from this Charity derives from investments made through the Charities Office Investment Fund. The Capital comes from the sale, many years ago, of land and property in the Parish. The grants paid out are limited to improving education and the beneficiaries include the School and the two church youth programmes. For 2023/24 the grants totalled £2,300. The Trustees are – 2 persons are nominated by the Parish Council (Mike Penn and Chris Littlewood), 2 persons are nominated by the Parochial Church Council (Sue Raven & Ann Maud), Ex-officio (The Revd Stephen Burrow) and 1 person nominated by the Local Education Authority (Unitary Councillor Dan Lister).

9. Financial Report. The Clerk informed the meeting that the Council had received £49,412 income (£40,870 Precept) and spent £43,281. Money in the bank totalled, at the year end, £43,787.42. Bank Statement was available if anyone wished to view it.

10. Issues raised:

Q: Resident asked about the solar farm. U/Cllr Morton advised that the company were assessing whether it was a viable option or not, we would hear shortly.

Q: Are WNC U/Cllrs going down to two seats instead of three? Yes, and Flore is moving to the Campion Ward.

Thanks were given to the Council for the continued help with the mowing of the Brodie Lodge playing field.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 8.25pm.

The Chair thanked all for attending and advised that tea/coffee and biscuits are available.

Signed: Chair
13th May 2024