

Chair's Report to the Parish Meeting 12th April 2021

Welcome to new residents of the Parish – Gem, Sohail & family. Also Fabienne and Andy Herbert and Melissa and family - back to the village. Welcome to Jag who owns land on Wistow Road. Hopefully it won't be too long before we are able to meet at the Reading Room again to reconnect & meet each other for coffee & cake and maybe quizzes!

I did attend a Zoom for Parish Meeting leaders in February and it was made clear that whilst Parish Meetings via Zoom have been allowed, this will change after 7th May and will revert to physical meetings. There is also new government guidance for the reopening of village halls & so the next meeting should be at The Reading Room. Jo, Chair of the Reading Room already has preparations for re-opening in hand.

The training informed us that a Parish Meeting is deemed **quorate** if at least two people are present but a minimum of three is needed if an agreement is required for a document / decision. Decisions are taken by the majority of those voting who are present. Chair has the casting vote but is also allowed to abstain. If the Chair is not present, the meeting can appoint a Chair (who can be any elector of the Parish.) A vice-chair cannot automatically take the meeting – hence we don't have one.

Also, we are only obliged to have two Parish meetings a year. The first between 1st March and 1st June which will need to be the AGM, for the election of officers **and then the second** can be in November, for the purpose of agreeing the precept. In view of the fact that we have a very good system in place for Parish Updates via email plus our social media platforms – Facebook and Whatsapp, we feel that two physical meetings a year is adequate with an option of calling extra ones if something important crops up which residents need to discuss.

With this in mind, I would like to propose that we move to two Parish Meetings a year. Does anyone want to comment on this or can I formally propose this?

All those in favour ... against?

I also attended a Rural Crime Zoom in February which I thought was going to give advice to rural residents, but was really aimed at farmers. Police and Fire Service gave tips and advice for preventing & reporting crime. [Crimestoppers.org.uk](https://www.crimestoppers.org.uk) is a means to reporting crime anonymously and has an 0800 line running 24-7 (0800 555 111.) They receive nearly 600,000 reports a year and much information they have received and shared with the police - leads to a conviction. If you see or hear something suspicious but don't feel it's enough to ring the police directly, let Crimestoppers decide for you. The online form allows you to write as much as you know without you having to give your identity away.

The emergency services also highlighted an app called 'what3words' Every 3 metre square of the world has been given a unique combination of **three random words**. Used for e-commerce and delivery, navigation, emergencies and more. It helps emergency services get to you quickly, particularly if in a dark, rural setting but I was also thinking how useful it would be for deliveries in our area!

I attended another Zoom in March – Parishes Nature Network. It's a support group for planting wildflower verges (97% of meadows have been destroyed since 1930), more trees and helping the ever-declining hedgehog population. There will be four meetings a year and if you would like to join in or have anything you want me to share – please let me know.

Although village groups have not been able to meet or organise social events this last year, volunteers have still been busy in Newton Harcourt. Benches have been sanded and repainted, wildflowers have been planted along Wistow Rd, Kissing Gate and in the churchyard, and volunteers have been litter picking. Cards and Easter Eggs were generously delivered to all the houses in NH. Thank you to our Easter bunnies and all who help to keep Wistow and Newton Harcourt looking neat and pretty. The fact that so many walkers incorporate the Parish into their daily circulars means it is important in restoring people's health and well-being.

As you know, there are vacancies on village committees for a Chairperson and Treasurer of the Reading Room committee. The Reading Room committee are responsible for the running of the village hall building. Friends of Newton Harcourt (FNH) arrange social events and fund raise for the upkeep of village assets. They require a new Chair and Secretary. All the vacant posts are vital to keeping our community connected and strengthening the ties within it. The people retiring from the roles have committed a lot of time over many years but feel it is time for new energy and ideas. Anyone thinking that they could take on a new role in the parish shouldn't worry about stepping into someone else's shoes but can shape the roll to suit them and the time they can give it. The important thing is to keep the spirit of a village community going.

Ongoing correspondence with HDC regarding overflowing litter bins. Jordan Smith (Environment Officer) at HDC -initially upped bin emptying to twice a week. This sounds good on the face of it but it was a Wednesday and Friday – and couldn't be changed. However, he has recently agreed to add a wheelie bin by the side of the bins in Wistow and by St Luke's church.

Update confer of powers – The Reading Room has now had planning permission passed to replace the roof. Grants will need to be sought to help finance this but these can't be applied for until the committee knows exactly what is in their own account. Historically they have received £2000 a year from the Parish Meeting, but last year we discovered that this had been an unlawful transaction. We are still awaiting specific advice from the solicitor at HDC to see if they can confer powers to our Parish Meeting so that it can continue to support our only community building. Nada (Parish Liaison) will be asking the solicitor at HDC to make our case a priority.