

Clerk to the Council – Julie Mason

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Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held 19th April 2021 virtually on Zoom

Present: Councillor G Bell who chaired the meeting, Councillor R Crookes, Councillor P Crompton, Councillor G Derbyshire, Councillor J Hardman, Councillor A Powers, Cllr J Wray - CE Ward Councillor (left at 8.00pm) and the Clerk.

Public: 9 members of the public

Apologies: Mr D Rigby and Ms C Moore

Minutes: The minutes from 29th April 2019 had been circulated and were signed as a true and accurate record.

Welcome from the Chairman.

The Chairman opened the meeting and summarised the past twelve months and all the activity which had happened in Somerford. The main asset gained was the land from the RSPB which was worth between £5m - £10m and now an open space for the Community named Rhead's Meadows. He went on to thank the Clerk for all her services to Somerford over the past twelve years and wished her well in her new role as Town Clerk in Bollington.

There would now be a presentation from members on current projects in the Parish.

Presentations:

Rhead's Meadows – Cllr P Crompton

The Rhead's family had been millers and owned over 20 acres of land ~~on~~ at the back of Blackfirs Lane ~~of~~ which was inherited by Ms Lavinia Rhead. On her passing she bequeathed the land to the RSPB hoping it would never be developed. After long negotiations 9 acres of the land was gifted to the Parish Council. Over the past two years the PC had spent over £120k on the site which include hard landscaping of footpaths and planting of the site. There had been monies gifted by the RSPB to complete this work and many other sources of income had been sort by the PC.

The open space for public access was now virtually completed and the feedback from the public had been positive.

Loachbrook – Bovis development – Cllr J Hardman and Cllr G Derbyshire

There was a power point presentation on the first housing development in Somerford as it still was not completed despite being started nearly seven years ago. Both Cllrs gave a brief ~~history~~ summary of the way Bovis left the site and sadly took very little accountability in its completion. There ~~was~~

were photographs shown to show the site over three years ago and now in its current state. There had been a residents committee established and a petition with over 116 signatures presented to Fiona Bruce MP for support. She had furnished to Parliament the petition in the House of Commons in 2020. There was now a fortnightly meeting with the North West Director of Bovis/Vistry and the PC. This had resulted in some improvements but the main issue of was the roads not being adopted still was the main component in the estate not being completed. This was due to a legal dispute with UU as they were not prepared to adopt the sewage pipes on site.

Cllr J Wray left at 8.00pm

Cheshire Wildlife Trust - Blackfirs Nature Reserve - Cllr Richard Crookes

When it came to the PC's attention that the site was not being cared for and maintained the CWT offered to transfer the asset to the PC for a nominal fee. The CWT were not prepared to spend any funds on the site. The PC had subsequently instructed solicitors but there had been long debate about the safety and maintenance of the trees on the site. It had finally been resolved that the PC were going to transfer lease the asset but acknowledging they would have to spend some monies on improving the site e.g., fencing and gates and ensuring its safety.

Cllr RC encouraged volunteers to come forward to assist in improving the site.

A member of the public did point out a tree recently had killed somebody a Dunham Massey and she encouraged the PC completed replanting.

New Housing developments in Somerford – Cllr Allan Powers

Blackfirs Park and the Barratts site – Somerford Grove Reach now had 147 homes occupied out of 170 one to five bed roomed houses and the estate was full of community spirit. There were examples shown of how the Facebook page (225 members) brought the residents together to complete exercise classes, litter picks and even resolve small issues of missing cats.

Cllr AP went on to explain how now the new Bellway estate was underway and already digging up Blackfirs Lane to gain utilities to site. He acknowledged the site would cause a great deal of disruption for the next two years. The lack of a footpath was also discussed but he admitted there would be safe route to school through the Bellway estate and then across Rhead's Meadows.

Congleton Link Road Wolstenholme Elmy Way - Cllr G Bell

The CLR had finally opened today after seven years of disruption and heartache for the Parish. The road was expected to alleviate emissions and traffic in the town and now we would see the results. GRAHAM had been good friends of the Parish Council and after many meetings the PC had been able to point out some errors/ improvements with footpaths/ kissing gates and access routes which they had listened to and thankfully resolved. It was with some happiness, after the parishes open countryside had been carved up, that the name of Somerford would continue as the new name of the Back Lane route was to be Somerford Lane.

Community Governance Review – Cllr G Bell

Even though the PC had been approached many years ago to become part of Congleton Town Council they never felt the CGR of 2021 would subject Somerford Parish to such harsh parish boundary changes and leave the parish almost gone. There had been draft proposals circulated in

February which alluded to the parish boundary moving to the CLR which left Somerford with little more than 100 electors. There had been a further meeting on 6th April where it had been indicated that the people of the Parishes should have a vote where they would prefer to live, and this was to be completed not electronically but on a paper format. SPC hoped this would be enforced. The feedback so far was that the many residents wanted to remain as Somerford and not become part of the town and many were asking how they could support the PC. The Chairman asked to watch the website and they would communicate through newsletters of actions to take to help. There was also an explanation of how Somerford had also expressed wishes to take the ownership of houses along the A54 which had their front door/garden in Somerford and their house in Breerton.

Points raised by the public.

- Cllr R Douglas (Congleton Town Councillor) explained how he would like the support of the Parish Council to vote against the closure of the Waste site in Congleton (he gave a very detailed report on actions taken so far). – it was noted all members of the public present were in support of this proposal. He wished to speak at a Cheshire East meeting in May against the closure.
- Many residents offered support with the Community Governance Review and asked how to help?
- One resident wished to ask if the speed limit of Blackfirs Lane can be reviewed and reduced to 30 mph.
- A resident had written for advice and support of the standard of the boundary of the fence hedge line of the Anwyl estate with A54.

Meeting closed at 9.10 pm