

[.EAST BRENT PARISH COUNCIL](#)

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of East Brent Parish Council, held at the Village Hall on Wednesday 23rd April 2014. It commenced at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllr E. Champion, Cllr V. Rawles, Cllr J. Bowden, Cllr A. Gilling, Cllr W. Walker, Cllr N. Lloyd-Jones, Cllr J. Webb, Cllr B. Bees, Cllr B. Woodward, Cllr S. McGreavy and the Clerk to the Council, Mr Martin Shobbrook.

Chairman's opening remarks

The Chairman, Cllr Edward Champion, thanked the members of the public for coming to the Annual Parish Meeting and he welcomed them and the guest speakers, Mr Robert McDonald and County Councillor Mr John Denbee.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Y. Roscorla and Mr Bob Filmer.

Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 22nd April 2013 were agreed as an accurate account of the meeting and were proposed and seconded. The Chairman then introduced the first guest speaker.

Mr Robert McDonald from the Royal British Legion

Mr McDonald thanked the Chairman for inviting him to address the meeting, as it had given him the opportunity to tell the public about the operations of the Royal British Legion. It also gave him the opportunity to give East Brent the information it needed to re-establish its branch membership of the organisation, if that is what it decides to do. He said that as East Brent still retained its "Standard" it still exists as a branch of the R.B.L. and it could easily reform and once again become a full branch member.

Mr McDonald then outlined the necessary qualifying criteria, which are; it must have at least 20 active members; a Chairman; a Vice Chairman; a Treasurer; a Secretary and a "Standard Bearer". Once re-established, the branch would receive support and assistance from the County Holding Branch and it would need to set up a bank account to collect funds donated to the R.B.L. Membership fees are currently £14.00 per person per year and a one off payment of £5.00, for juniors to join. Mr McDonald said that the most important person in the Branch was the Secretary. Everything goes through the Secretary and he/she is the link to the national network. Each branch should hold four meetings per year, one of which must be the A.G.M. The most common perception the public has of the R.B.L. is the Poppy collection each year.

Mr McDonald then invited questions from the floor and he was asked by the Chairman if membership was confined to ex-service men and women only. Mr McDonald responded that membership was open to everyone and all would be welcomed.

Cllr Webb asked Mr McDonald to highlight the other works carried out by the R.B.L. in order to enlighten the public about this and to encourage those present tonight, to consider joining the R.B.L.

Mr McDonald said he would be pleased to do so and he then elaborated on the welfare work which the R.B.L. undertakes for the benefit of both presently serving and ex-serving military personnel. Since 2013, the R.B.L. has introduced its "Pathway to Growth Plan" and there are now separate entities of the organisation dealing with the general fund raising and the welfare side. The H.Q. of the welfare side is now located in Reading, with satellite offices all round the Country. Somerset was in fact leading the way in implementing these changes and these were now being adopted by branches all over the Country. Many dwindling branches were being saved from becoming disbanded, by help and intervention coming from the regional offices. A branch normally covers a particular Parish and all funds raised, go the central Poppy Appeal,

which in turn supports the local structure of the R.B.L. East Brent would therefore not need to join with another Parish, to form a branch.

If it receives a request for assistance from any service personnel, the R.B.L. will visit that person and decide what help and assistance it can offer. This can range from financial help, to physical and psychological help and to practical help. There are now "Poppy Vans" visiting ex-service men and women, giving practical help in their homes for repairs and various new installations of equipment. The public are invited to visit the R.B.L. homes where ex-service personnel are cared for and live. They will be surprised at how well these people are looked after and treated. The R.B.L. has teamed up with the "Help the Heroes" charity, to enable soldiers to go back to active service, or to live as normal a life as they can, after suffering both physical and mental injuries whilst on active service.

Cllr Gilling asked how many branches there were in Somerset and Mr McDonald replied that there were currently 77 active branches.

The Chairman asked the members of the public present at the meeting, to indicate how many of them were already members of the R.B.L. Three people indicated that they were members. When asked by the Chairman how many other people would consider joining, there were six further members of the public who said they might do so.

As there were no further questions raised with Mr McDonald, the Chairman thanked him for his address and said that the Parish of East Brent should now consider if it wanted to re-join the R.B.L. The Clerk was asked to circulate a sheet of paper to which members of the public could add their names, addresses and telephone numbers, if they wished to join in.

Mr Edward Champion, Chairman of the Parish Council

Mr Champion started his address by apologising for his "croaky voice" and he hoped that it would last long enough for him to conclude his report. He said that this would be his final Annual Parish Meeting as Chairman of the Parish Council, since he would be stepping down from the post at the Annual General Meeting, in June 2014. He said that he felt the Chairperson should change after a few years in any organisation, as there is a risk that things could get "stale" and fresh ideas and blood should constantly be brought in.

Mr Champion then highlighted the achievements of the Parish Council during the last year.

He mentioned the building of the Affordable Housing at Rooksbridge and said that it was nearing completion. In addition to supporting the housing project, the Parish Council has led the way in creating a playing field for the use of residents in Rooksbridge. This has been achieved by the generous donation of a leasehold interest in a piece of land adjoining the housing development, by Cllr Gilling to the Parish Council. The legal documents are almost complete and the Chairman acknowledged and thanked Cllr Lloyd-Jones, for the immensely hard work he had provided in making this possible. The necessary planning application and various grant applications had involved many hours of work. All of which had been very successful.

The most important planning application the Parish Council had been involved with in the last year, was the wind turbine planning appeal at Pilrow. The Secretary of State will shortly announce his decision on this matter. The very extensive work carried out by Cllr Walker on behalf of the Parish Council was acknowledged by the Chairman. He said that Cllr Walker had spent a considerable amount of time studying various reports and statements and he had worked alongside the "No Pilrow" group, with Mr David James and Mr Martin Keegan.

In addition, Cllr Walker has continued to promote and advance the Parish Council's own website, which has become very popular and well used. It has proved to be a very good source of information for the community. His work on that project should also be honoured.

The Chairman said that during the previous year flooding in the Village had been a serious problem. However, due to the extensive works carried out by the Local Drainage Board, the previous problems have not re-appeared and they seemed to have been solved.

He mentioned the well run Cemetery the Parish has, under the leadership of its Chairman, Cllr Bowden. The area was an asset the Parish should be proud to have the use of, he said.

The setting up and commissioning of the first of two Defibrillators the Parish Council had purchased, has been concluded in the last year. The second unit is about to be sited at the

Medical Surgery and will be functioning very soon. The Chairman praised the extensive efforts made by Cllr Webb in organising the fund raising and all associated works carried out in connection with the Defibrillators. It is hoped that lives will be saved by this equipment being available to the communities of East Brent and Rooksbridge.

The Parish Magazine has continued to be given financial support by the Parish Council, the Chairman said. Its publication is welcomed by residents in the Village. There have been production difficulties during the last year, however it is hoped that a new structure for this will soon be in place, leading to improved production and circulation of the Magazine.

The Village War Memorial will shortly undergo cleaning and restoration work, with the benefit of a grant being obtained from the War Memorial Trust. It is hoped that this will be concluded long before the marking of the 100th year since the outbreak of World War One, later this year. Again, the Chairman thanked Cllr Webb for her extensive work in connection with this whole project.

The Chairman thanked the Clerk for the assistance he has given to the Parish Council, following his appointment to the position. He said that the transition between the last Clerk's resignation (due to him relocating to Scotland) and the "picking up of the reigns" by the new Clerk, had not been easy. The new Clerk has represented the Council "beyond the call of duty" said the Chairman. He also acknowledged the extensive support and help which Cllr Lloyd-Jones had given to both the Clerk personally and to the Council generally, since he had joined the Committee.

Finally, he thanked Cllr McGreavy and his family, for providing the cakes during the meeting; together with Cllr Rawles, who had organised the other refreshments.

He concluded his address by saying that the Parish should carefully consider the future of the Neighbourhood Plan. Unfortunately, the previous Parish Plan had failed, but the new scheme should be given serious consideration.

He then invited any questions from the floor.

Mr Colin Loader asked what efforts were being made to improve the Broadband speeds in the area? He said that his own property received a low download speed, whereas a neighbouring property had a higher download speed. At this point County Councillor John Denbee offered to answer this question during the address he would shortly be making to the meeting. The Chairman thanked him for this and formally introduced Councillor Denbee.

Mr John Denbee, County Councillor

Mr Denbee said that he apologised for arriving after the meeting had commenced, but he had attended a similar function at Brent Knoll Parish Council, earlier this evening. If there should be a similar clash of events next year, he will attend East Brent first, on that occasion.

He started his address by saying that the problems East Brent had experienced with flooding last year, had fortunately not re-occurred. However, other areas in the vicinity had experienced serious flooding problems during the early part of 2014. He said that the problems on the river Parrett were partly caused by the lack of a sluice gate barrage. Plans were in place for one to be built and the preferred location for this is at Chilton Trinity in Bridgwater. Other rivers needed to be widened and deepened, especially at Dunball.

He wanted to ensure that the area is not thought of by the public as being, "under water". The holiday trade for the area, is very important and efforts must be made to promote the holiday business and to fully restore it.

Farmers and riparian householders should all assist in ensuring that the ditches and drains adjoining their properties are kept clear, so that the rainwater can flow away freely.

He repeated the comments made by the Parish Council's Chairman that no decision has yet been made by the Secretary of State regarding the wind turbine planning appeal, but this was imminent.

The traffic usage along the A38 was increasing and efforts were being made to encourage traffic to use the M5 instead. Improvements are scheduled to assist with this.

He said that he has received good reports regarding schools and health centres, in the area. However, there has been an epidemic of Measles in Glastonbury, where some parents are

refusing to have their children vaccinated against it. He said that he has also heard that Scarlet Fever is on the increase. Children used to be vaccinated against TB, but this has stopped, as it is thought that this disease can now be treated with antibiotics.

Council taxes had been kept as low as possible during the setting of Precepts this year. Cllr Denbee acknowledged people on fixed incomes were struggling and efforts were being made to assist them.

He said that he had been told that the Parish had a problem with completion of a pavement at East Brent, where the developer of the housing adjoining it, has possibly gone bankrupt. He said that Somerset County Council might be able to assist with the completion of these works, as there are funds available under a "Health and Safety" type budget, where repairs are urgent. He will look into this on behalf of the Parish.

He apologised for the non arrival of a cheque for £1,500.00 he had promised towards the Parish's Defibrillator fund costs. It should have arrived by March 14th, but he will chase it up.

With regard to the Broadband connections in this area, he said that BT has been awarded the contract to carry out the cabling required. An award of £30m has been made by the Government to install fibre optic cables in Somerset and Devon. He could not say when work will be carried out in this particular area, but every effort will be made to develop this. The connection of the area to Superfast Broadband, is a priority.

He concluded by saying that his Ward was still a good place to live in and he continues to do all he can to keep it so. If any Parishioner wishes to contact him, they should do so using his personal email address rather than contacting him through Somerset County Council. His direct email address is sal.denbee589@btinternet.com

He then invited questions from the floor.

Cllr Webb said that she believed that it was a decision made by Somerset County Council, not to inoculate children for BCG. This was ten years ago, and the County Council should perhaps review this and possibly re-instate it.

Cllr Champion said that he found it strange that East Brent should have slow Broadband speeds as it was very close to all main communication trunks crossing the Country." Why was this area not, top of the list"? He suggested that the reason was perhaps that the area had not, "shouted the loudest" for improvements? Cllr Denbee replied, saying that he had faced similar comments from other parts of his Ward and he was doing all he could to get the work done.

As there were no further questions from the floor, the Chairman again thanked the two guest Speakers for attending and he declared the meeting closed at 8.55pm.

The next Parish Council meeting will be on Monday 12th May 2014, at the Village Hall at 7.30pm.