

SPALDWICK CIVIL PARISH

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held at 8 pm Thursday 8 May 2014 at Spaldwick Primary School

Present: Councillors B F Plummer (Chairman), S Jackson-Rimmer and G Rice, the Clerk (Mr D Stowell), and 5 members of the public

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from Cllrs Leach & Wakefield; and from Messrs. M Ager & R Haines.
2. **Minutes of Meeting** held 9 May 2013 were approved and signed
3. **Matters arising** - none
4. **Annual Report by Chairman of Parish Council, Cllr B F Plummer**

The past year has been a relatively quiet one for the village. There have not been any major events or issues but nevertheless it has involved a busy workload for the Parish Council. In addition to twelve ordinary general meetings, the Council has been required to participate, comment and advise on a wide variety of District Council initiatives such as the Local Infrastructure study, the Hunts Parish conference, the Local Plan 2036, bus service changes, and many others.

Much of the Council's time has been taken up by considering, commenting and advising on some 14 planning applications for small developments within the village and, in addition, on applications with a wider relevance such as the Ellington and Bicton wind farms, and Rushden Lakes Development.

As last year, a major focus has been on improving the village environment including additional flower planting, new trees in Cockway Lane, extending the grass cutting areas, maintenance of the play area and, well supported by the County Council, repair of footways, roadways and drainage. In recognition of the Queens Diamond Jubilee, a bench and small trees have been placed on Belton's Hill, giving views over Spaldwick and the whole valley. The chestnut trees on the Green are not in good condition, but the Council has still been reluctant to remove them until absolutely necessary. Refurbishment of the war memorial has been slow largely due to regulations and red tape.

There has been a wealth of village activities taking place including the very successful fete, scarecrow competition, Christmas Carols, and Burn's and St George's night dinners. Special thanks go to the hard working Social Group. The various organisations will report separately. Particularly welcome is the progress being made by the "Escape Group" for the youth of the village and by the gardening club. Once again thanks to "the George" and to the village shop - "No 12"- for their whole hearted support and contributions throughout. The Parish Council have done their best to give help and support and wish to record their appreciation of all the voluntary groups and individuals who have contributed so fully to making ours a friendly and vibrant community. Special thanks go to Mick Ager for his work as village paths co-ordinator and to Mark Heath for his work on the Spaldwick website, broadband improvements and village photography.

The Council has, as usual, distributed the annual Christmas charity money, from the rent of the Town and Poors Trust field, to selected residents. A new tenancy has been negotiated which will increase the income available.

Finally my thanks go to all of the Parish Councillors for their support and hard work throughout the year and to the Clerk, David Stowell, for his unstinting dedication.

5. Parish Council Financial Report

The Clerk presented the accounts for the year 2013/2014 summarised as follows:

	Parish Council Fund	Charity Fund
Balance brought forward at 1/4/13	£60472.93	£120.00
Receipts	£12670.35	nil
Payments	£11231.06	£120.00
Balance carried forward at 31/3/14	£61912.22	nil

The Parish Council balance at 31 March 2014 is allocated as follows

Village Hall & Playing Field project	£36000.00
Ferriman Road Grounds Maintenance Fund	£13878.09
Parish Plan Grant	£ 176.36
War Memorial renovation	£ 1000.00
Maintenance of property including trees	£ 2000.00
General Reserve	£ 8857.77

6. Other reports

Spaldwick Carpet Bowls Club – report by B Plummer

The club has enjoyed another successful year despite losing a number of members due to illness. It has had a full programme of internal competitions and winning six losing six and drawing one of 13 matches with local village teams. Social events held during the year included a summer barbeque and a very successful Annual Dinner. The club meets in the School Hall and Community Room every Tuesday evening at 7pm during term time. Vacancies now exist for new members who would be made most welcome.

Spaldwick Out of School Club - report by S. Jackson-Rimmer, Chair.

S-Club as it's known is based in the Playtimes building next to Spaldwick School. We provide working parents with a high quality, properly supervised, affordable childcare facility for children aged 4-11 years, after the normal school day has ended and a full day childcare facility during most of the major school holidays. The organisation is overseen by a committee of parent volunteers which employs highly qualified staff to carry out the day to day running.

Once again we've have had a very mixed year, with some highs and some lows and some very challenging situations. We started the year with low attendance figures, dwindling funds and our Manager was on maternity leave. The committee and staff worked hard to reduce costs; raise funds and manage the running of the organisation. We ran a very successful holiday club. We offered lots of activities (thanks to Spaldwick Parish Council for funding the bouncy castle visits) and we received a good deal of positive feedback from parents. We held a very successful musical fundraising evening during October which raised over £370!!

In November S Club gained charitable status, which now means we can access other possible opportunities of funding. Also, in November we saw the return of Sophie, our Manager, but we also saw the retirement of another key member of staff, Tracy Harris. Tracy had been with us for just over ten years but due to family and health problems she felt that she had to leave.

Since the beginning of the year we have seen an increase in our attendance figures and consequently we have seen a slight improvement in our finances, however, it will take us some time to recover from our decline. As for the next twelve months we are exploring the possibility of merging with Playtimes and becoming one organisation.

Escape Youth Club – report by Mark Sturdy

The Escape youth group has been providing a youth club in Spaldwick for 4 years. It is run by a team of six volunteers and one professional youth worker. This year has continued to be very successful with regular attendance numbers in the 40's, with record attendance of 54 this year.

We have also had a successful year with fundraising, and would like to thank the parish council again for their support and donation of £450 this year. PSA Peugeot Citroen have donated £500 via their charitable trust, and a further £450 has been raised through other activities and donations over the last year. We have sufficient funds in the bank to support the cost of providing a professional youth worker for the next 12 months. We also made a donation of two weeks entrance takings to Asthma UK at the request of some of our members last year.

We will be in attendance at this year's Ellington Gala and Spaldwick Fete and look forward to providing the youth club for the remainder of the year and into 2015.

Spaldwick website (www.spaldwick.com) – highlights from report by Mark Heath

Launched over eight years ago, the Spaldwick website has changed out of all recognition from the one-page, rarely visited site back then. Now, there are 570 separate pages indexed by Google; the site was visited more than 6,000 times last month and information is now accessed more on tablets and mobile phones than conventional PCs. The majority of villagers are 'signed up' to receive news alerts. Many villagers now access the Spaldwick News magazine online every month.

Reflecting the profound change in the nature of devices that people use to access the Internet, the website has recently been changed to a new "responsive" design – which means that it adapts its form to suit the device it is being viewed on – whether it's a PC with a wide screen or an iPhone with a high-resolution retina screen. Similarly, Spaldwick photos have been migrated to a dedicated site with a responsive design that supports the very latest high-resolution displays.

Facebook and emails have become critical to alerting people to news on the website. Now the majority of Spaldwick residents are 'signed up' to receiving news alerts, either through Facebook or email. Currently, there are 320 people signed up to email alerts and 186 people that have 'liked' the Spaldwick Facebook page. The alerts have helped fuel traffic levels and the impact of the website.

This year, early online advertising of the St George's Day celebration event helped to sell all tickets about two months before the event itself. The review of the evening (which included photos) was viewed over 400 times within 24 hours of it being published.

Even how people read the Spaldwick News magazine has been changing markedly over the last 12 months. Within two hours of it going live, over 120 people had viewed the May 2014 edition of the Spaldwick News – well ahead of it being delivered by hand. The News is now going beyond our village boundaries to interested people in other villages.

The diary page remains one of the most popular pages. Dedicated pages have now been added for the Social Group, the Welcome Club, the Gardening Club, Spaldwick Church and S-Club, which are provided with an easy email address rather than having to use personal email addresses.

Photos of events remain hugely popular. Very recent examples of photographs include St George's Day and the Pudding Club, with the Open Gardens and Spaldwick Fete just around the corner.

The annual traffic peak for the site occurs around the time of the Scarecrow Competition and Spaldwick Fete. Last July, online voting for the scarecrow competition was introduced with an amazing response for the first year. About half of all households voted, and this year it is hoped that involvement will be much higher. The interest in the scarecrow competition was incredible. Regular posts of new scarecrow appearances on Facebook typically reached between 1500 and 2000 people.

It's important to note that the website also supports our local businesses, and a free page is currently provided to businesses, including The George and Number 12. The George page is visited over 500 times every month

Looking forwards, two major content initiatives are development of a history of Spaldwick section, working with Stuart Dixon; and development of video content.

There has been a huge amount of interest shown in the history of Spaldwick – both in terms of the number of people providing information and images and the number of people accessing this information. We already have over 600 images, with many more to come. Thank you to everyone who has contributed so far. The feedback has been amazing.

Rather than trying to amass a huge collection of photographs, we are focused on bringing the history alive, by capturing the memories of villagers (in written and video form); and sharing our information with as many people as possible. Having secured a broadcast-quality video camera and studio lighting, an important focus is the development of video content. The very first video, which captured Father Christmas in Spaldwick, proved to be immensely popular, and the website now contains many video slideshows. Last week Edie and Tom Adams were interviewed as part of the history project, with many history videos to come. This month, Trevor Cooper will be producing a video on how to make a scarecrow to encourage more people to take part in the scarecrow competition.

Thank you to everyone who supports the website. If you haven't done already, please sign up with your email address so you don't miss the fun!

Superfast broadband by September 2014

Over ten years ago, when Internet access was via dialup, there was no realistic prospect of Spaldwick getting broadband. The breakthrough came with a registration scheme introduced by BT to prioritise which exchanges received broadband. I worked with Alconbury's Broadband Champion to secure the necessary number of registrations, and broadband was successfully introduced at our exchange in July 2004.

Almost exactly ten years later, we have faced a similar challenge with superfast broadband. Since the beginning, I have worked closely with the Connecting Cambridgeshire project team. Importantly, a demand registration scheme was launched that would help to prioritise roll-out. As a result of local campaigning, and

working with Broadband Champions in villages such as Alconbury (which are connected to our exchange), Spaldwick achieved one of the highest registration totals in all of Cambridgeshire (with 211 registrations), and our exchange achieved one of the highest registration totals on an exchange basis.

Connecting Cambridgeshire was able to secure a fibre broadband target with BT of 97% of the population – significantly higher than the vast majority of counties in the UK. Furthermore, Spaldwick was included in a provisional list of villages being considered for the very first phases of the roll-out.

I am pleased to report that our fibre cabinet will go live between the end of June and the end of September this year. So, we definitely will be one of the very first villages to benefit. This is wonderful news and will ensure that Spaldwick remains an attractive place to live and work.

Spaldwick Welcome Club – report by Maureen Vickers, Chairperson

The Welcome Club is for the over 55s and has fifty full time members. We meet on the first Friday of each month (term time only) in the community room. At our monthly meetings a two course meal (main/desert) is provided by volunteers (committee members) a brief club meeting is held to discuss any matters from previous months. Normally we arrange for a guest speaker who gives a small talk on their subject. From this a club competition takes place either relating to the subject or another topical issue. Yearly prizes are awarded to those members who make the most successful contributions to these competitions.

In August our meeting was replaced by a mystery trip, in the past it has been a day out at the seaside. We also have numerous other outings throughout the year. December's meeting is a two course Christmas Lunch usually held at a local establishment, and is paid for either out of club funds or from funds raised through the year.

In March of this year the club organised a very successful 5 day holiday to Bournemouth.

We have a committee that meets once a month and from the matters raised and issues discussed there is a monthly newsletter produced and delivered to members. Over the year we collect loose change (coppers) which is given to the clubs nominated charity of that year.

Spaldwick Social Events Group – report by Lucy Frain

The Spaldwick Social Events Group has a formal constitution and is set up to "initiate and organise social events to enhance the social life of the whole village community". The AGM took place in March and the committee members are: Lucy Frain (Chair), Trevor Cooper, Yasmin Chopin, June Dixon (Treasurer), Alison Heath (Secretary), John Blatch, Raine Thompson, Lisa Hunter, Bernard Plummer.

The next big Spaldwick double extravaganza is Scarecrow week (29 June - 6 July) and the Spaldwick Fete on Sunday 12 July 2014. We welcome ideas, thoughts and suggestions from our local residents; such as our recent successful Burns Night Supper and St George's Day meals held at The George in January and April.

We bring together enthusiasm, experience and skills that we hope will contribute to making the social life in Spaldwick a pleasure for everyone for many years to come.

Gardening Club – report from Roger Haines

We are a small group who meet once a month to discuss gardening matters, exchange plants and sometimes go on garden visits. Our main effort this year will be the Open Gardens on the 22nd June with 8 gardens opening plus a flower festival in the church, plant stall, raffle and afternoon teas. All proceeds to charity.

Footpaths and Byways - Report from Mick Ager (Footpath Coordinator)

Footpath right of way maps for village notice boards for Spaldwick have been provided. These have now been laminated and will be displayed when notice board space is available.

Two new metal kissing gates and a bridge have been installed on footpath 12 (from behind Ivy Way, towards Easton); Long Lane (Browns Lane) has been redressed with 60 tons of street planings to reduce the flooding and mud that has been a feature of Browns Lane during the winter season; The footpath which is part of the Three Shires Way (midway between Mount Pleasant and Little Catworth) has been levelled and scrub cleared and at the end of August 2014 will be dressed to make it more robust to resist rutting; The stile at the southern end of footpath 17 which is one of the footpaths through the field south of the primary school has recently been replaced with a pedestrian gate; and within the next 6 weeks or so four rather old/decrepit footbridges north of the A14 are to be replaced. Three of these are on the path between the Ellington Brook and Belton's Hill and the last one is where the footpath divides and heads off towards Woolley.

The Cambridgeshire rights of way officer (Simeon Carroll) has continued to give me 100% support and the above work would not have been possible without his considerable efforts. Not only has he helped with above but has provided guidance on numerous issues affecting pathways in the area, from Bulls in fields to the spraying of crops and the responsibilities of farmers from a H & S perspective. I would like to put on record our appreciation for his support of Spaldwick.

Village Hall – report by Greg Rice

These last twelve months have seen little progress on our project. Although we have been in contact with the relevant parties both in the planning office and with various landowners in the area other pressures have kept attention away from the new Village Hall. We have a committee in place to kick into action as soon as resources are available to rekindle the project, hopefully in the near future.

Open House – report by David Stowell

This is an informal gathering over coffee and cake, where you can get to know fellow villagers and help raise a little money for good causes. It is hosted by a different person each month in their own home, usually on a Monday afternoon from 1.30 to 3.30. Locations and dates can be found in Spaldwick News and at www.spaldwick.com. So that you know you are at the right house you will see a sign outside on the day. Newcomers to the village are especially welcome.

7. **Open Forum** – In reply to a question about the possibility of allotments being provided the Chairman explained that when this matter was last considered no suitable site could be found. However if someone can identify a suitable site this matter can be revisited by the Parish Council .

In the absence of any further business the meeting closed at 9.10 pm