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Neighbourhood Plans : an Update

Two Parish Councillors recently attended a seminar in Towcester organised by South Northamptonshire Council (SNC) to discuss the emerging position on Government reforms to the planning system, in particular the introduction of 'Neighbourhood Planning'. Yardley Gobion is a national 'pilot' for the development of this new form of local community planning and is receiving close support from SNC who now have a new legal duty 'to co-operate' in such matters. Raunds, Oundle, Wootton and East Hunsbury are other national 'pilots' within the county.

In addition to experimenting with these 'pilots', the new draft legislation for 'Neighbourhood Planning' is subject to national consultation. It is clear that there are many uncertainties about the likely cost of such plans and how they will be financed. However, there is little doubt now about the amount of work required, over an estimated 12-18 months, to produce them to the standard required for acceptance by the local planning authority – in our case, SNC – to form part of the legal framework of plans.

In South Northants Council area, Parish Councils will be expected to decide whether their community should create a Neighbourhood Plan. If the answer is yes, then they will take the lead in the process supported and guided by SNC. They may choose to work jointly with neighbouring parishes for a wider area plan. However, producing any such plan would not simply be a project for the Parish Council alone. Although some Councillors would be involved, a group of volunteers from within the community would be needed with a chair or co-ordinator who is not necessarily a member of the Parish Council.

The point about Neighbourhood Plans is that they offer everyone the opportunity to have some say in the future development of their own village and community. Indeed, any Plan produced will need to show that it is representative of both the place and the people living there as well as conforming with the District Council's own Development Plans. If not, then it will not be accepted by the District Council to form part of the planning system and acquire legal status. So, in short, plans will involve a lot of time and effort even though the work will mainly be done by volunteers. They will involve lots of meetings, questionnaires, interviews, consultations, analysis and a community referendum. They will also incur significant costs.

The Parish Council is monitoring developments closely and deciding if, when and how it might commit to create such a plan for our village and community. SNC has produced guidance recommending that 'a community should consider carefully the reasons why it wants to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan'. The Councillors are using this in deciding what is best for the village in the short and medium term.

Very soon, SNC is going to be reviewing the extent and nature of existing conservation areas and 'village confines' (in simple terms the boundaries of the central village area outside which development will not be considered as the land is regarded as 'open countryside') across the District. This is something with which the Parish Council intends to have direct involvement and the outcome of this work may influence its decision on whether to create a Neighbourhood Plan.

For those of you interested in finding out more about Neighbourhood Planning follow the link below:

<http://www.southnorthants.gov.uk/2394.htm>

Parish Councillors

Unfortunately Gill Ager has decided to resign from the Parish Council as she is unable to make a regular attendance at the Parish Council meetings. Since joining the Council in 2006 Gill has made a significant contribution to all aspects of Parish work, taking particular responsibility for 'Highways' matters. She has made frequent checks on all Highways roads and paths around our village and been tenacious in following up the necessary requests for repairs. We thank her for all her efforts, and are grateful that she has offered to continue with the Highways work on our behalf until such time as a replacement can be found.

This now leaves the Parish Council with vacancies for **two Councillors**. If you are interested in finding out more about what being a Parish Councillor involves, please contact any member of the Council for an informal chat initially or contact the Chair, Gill Morgan, to make a formal application.

**Next Parish Council Meeting:
Monday 19th March at 7.30 p.m. in the Sargeant Memorial Hall Brafield**

Salt / Grit Bins

A further request has been made to re-instate the salt bin on the Billing Road at Lower End.

Horton Road Green Area

The Parish Council has received complaints about the state of this grassed green as a result of vehicles driving over and parking on this area. The resulting mud is unpleasant for everyone and causes a hazard on footpaths and highways. South Northants Homes has been advised.

Please keep vehicles off this area at all times.

Superfast Broadband

Northants County Council is making progress in getting high speed broadband to the rural areas. If they keep to the planned timetable, they should have two thirds of premises able to access superfast broadband by 2014 and 90% by 2015, with a 30mb/s speed.

Visit the NCC website and search for 'broadband' to access Newsletter No 4 and receive an update on the latest information.

E-petition

One way to support the bid and its progress is to sign the online 'e-petition'. This 'quick to complete' petition asks local residents and businesses to sign up and "Back the Bid" to deliver superfast broadband to Northamptonshire. This will help to strengthen the business case for enabling your area to access superfast broadband. You can sign the petition by clicking on the link in the NCC Newsletter, or by visiting

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/96W7GJ7>

Metal Theft : Regulation of Scrapyards

Prior to Christmas, you will be aware that Brafield and surrounding villages were seriously affected by the theft of underground cabling from the telecommunications network which disabled local telephone and internet connections for some time. This caused considerable disruption and distress to local businesses and residents.

A government petition now exists to promote tighter regulation which states:

'Let's put an end to criminal activity all over the UK by insisting that new legislation is introduced to make Scrapyards registered for business. Criminals are stealing metals from church roofs, hospital generators, railway cabling, drain covers and from headstones and monuments. If Scrapyards were regulated and forced to only take scrap from people that provide ID, have their photograph taken with their scrap items and paid by cheque, this problem would be eradicated'

To sign the petition visit : <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/25842>

Councillors Empowerment Scheme

The Parish Council applied for and has received a grant of £750 through the Councillors Empowerment Scheme from County Councillor Michael Clark. This will go towards the upkeep of the Alley Gardens Play Area on Church Lane.

Hare Coursing

Since 2005, hare coursing has been illegal throughout the UK. Despite this, it is on the increase locally. If you have any information please contact the Police. If dialling from Northamptonshire Tel: 101.

Village Information Booklet

The P.C. will shortly be revising this booklet which was first printed in February 2010. There have been a surprising number of changes in the last two years. If you are aware of inaccuracies or necessary amendments do please let us know.

Precept

The Parish Council has applied for a precept (the money allocated to the Parish Council from your Council Tax) of £13000 for the coming year 2012 -13 which is an increase of £500 on the current year.

JASON

The 'JASON' bus service which catered for members of the community who had difficulties with, or were unable to use public transport, was withdrawn at the end of 2011. Any residents who are experiencing transport problems as a result of this closure should contact Jennifer Sherrey on (01604) 364450. She is a member of the Travel Plan Team at Northants County Council and she will do her best to help.

Diamond Jubilee

The plans for the village celebrations are continuing and a leaflet will be delivered to every house within the next couple of weeks to let everyone know what is happening. We have had some generous offers of funding but we will also need to have some fund raising events over the next couple of months which we hope everyone in the village will support.

Our next meeting is on **Tuesday 28th February at 7.45pm at the Working Men's Club** – everyone is welcome to come along.

And a reminder that we plan to have a village **pantomime** as part of the celebrations; the first meeting about this will be on **Tuesday 21st February at 7.45 at the Working Men's Club** – please come along and join in.

Gill Ager 891488 gill@ager2.co.uk

**Members of the public are most welcome to attend any meeting
At the start of the Parish Council meeting, time is set aside for public enquiries**