

## Minutes of the Castlethorpe Annual village meeting held on Monday 4 April 2011 in the village hall from 6.45pm

Present: Parish Councillors Ayles (Chaired the meeting), Haynes, Hinds, Stacey, Keane & Markham, Ward Councillor Geary, PC Andy Perry, Parish Council Clerk, Karen Hill and 51 members of public. The Pre-school, First school, Youth Club, Short Mat Bowls club, Craft club, Womens' Institute, Cricket Club were represented as were the Village Hall and Open Garden's committees. The Chair welcomed everyone to the Annual Village meeting.

### 1 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Mr & Mrs Brown, P Markham, Cllr Russo, P Chapman, P Michael, Mr & Mrs Tate

### 2 TO AGREE MINUTES OF 12 APRIL 2010 & ANY MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:

The minutes of the meeting of the 12 April 2010 was accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.

### 3 PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Once again, the parish council has been very active with many achievements for the village over the past year. Residents will recall that the parish council directly manages two main facilities; the Village Hall and the Sports Ground. It then uses its influence particularly with Milton Keynes Council but also through other groups, such as the Hanslope Park Area Forum or the Parishes' Forum, to get other improvements to the village. Some of these are funded by Milton Keynes Council but we have to raise money, usually through grants, for others.

**Village Hall:** The refurbishment of the Village Hall was substantially completed in the previous financial year but the side gate has since been erected. This was funded through our Ward Councillor's discretionary fund from MKC. The parish council works closely with the Village Hall Committee and the new sign at the front is a great improvement. We have some new lighting along the footpath to the new entrance and we are planning to level the ground by the old entrance. Our thanks to the Village Hall Committee who work very hard to improve the Hall and also to run social events to keep the Hall the focal point of village life.

**Sports Ground:** We have had the new grass cutting equipment for a year now. We have had a bit of a learning curve but our new groundsman, Paul Stone, with help from Scott Pearson, has been able to keep the ground cut for the various matches and the ground is generally in good condition. Our thanks to Paul for all the hard work. The parish council has also had the woodwork on the Sports Ground buildings redecorated which was essential to prevent long term damage. The area behind the football pavilion has also been cut back properly and wood chippings laid to suppress weeds. Many thanks to Luke Stacey and to the Parks Trust who provided the chippings. The parish council has acquired three new large picnic tables which it has placed at the Sports Ground. Finally, the hard court area has been steam cleaned, repainted and repaired for the 2011 season and we hope that good use will be made of the refurbished facilities. **Play Areas:** The next big project for the parish council is the improvement of the Fishponds play areas. Although MKC maintain the play area, and we got them to re-seed and level the playing area, they will not provide new equipment – we did ask – and the climbing frame has now had to be cordoned off. The project has proved very complex. We started by getting MKC to prepare a design which is on the notice boards and village website. The cost of this work is about £50,000. The parish council decided to put together a package of funding; we had to fight for, but eventually got onto, the second wave of the Government PlayBuilder scheme and we also decided to apply to WREN (the Waste Recycling charity) for funding. Our thanks to all the village organisations which wrote letters of support for our WREN application. Finally, we had been successful in getting a small Parish Partnership Grant from MKC. The upshot is that we have got a £50,000 project ready to roll at a cost to the parish precept of only £2,700. The work will start in the next couple of weeks and should be complete by the summer. **Highways:** The parish council has been particularly successful in engaging with MKC to maintain our highways to a high standard though there are several areas where we continue to press for improvements. We are very pleased that, after several years of effort, we have got the parking area in The Chequers re-surfaced. The parish council have also erected, with match funding, to erect a

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new 'heritage style' streetlight at the entrance to the village shop which has even now been switched on after a long delay and a lot of chasing. We have also put a 4<sup>th</sup> dog bin on North Street by the corner with Fox Covert Lane as requested by residents. The parish council actively participates in the Hanslope Park Consultative Area Forum with the parishes of Hanslope and Haversham. The Forum has been pressing for flood improvements at the 'Devils Dip' and a dry pond is to be constructed at Tathall End which will regulate the flow of water to the dips and should stop the frequent flooding. **The A508 – Yardley Road Junction:** We have been pressing for improvements at the junction for a long time but we were able to get a site meeting last year with both our MP, Mark Lancaster, and Andrea Leadsom, the MP for the constituency which includes the junction, plus representatives from Northants CC and MKC, our Ward Councillor and the four parish councils including Hanslope, Haversham and Cosgrove. At this meeting, Northants presented a design, funded by planning gain from the Thrupp marina, for widening the road on the east side (our side) but this would have cost £300,000 and, because there have been no recent accidents, was regarded as unaffordable. Northants CC and MKC agreed to do a second design on the west (Furtho) side which should be cheaper. However, they have since reneged on this commitment but MKC have agreed to do the design themselves which is pretty good as the junction is in Northants. Clearly, with funding constraints, any improvement is unlikely in the immediate future but the important thing is to get a design completed and ready to go as soon as times improve. **Public Transport:** MKC have produced a series of cutbacks for public transport as part of their spending review. The impact on the 33 service is the loss of Sunday services and the 6.30pm return service from the city centre. All of these were very poorly used. However, there is also a risk to the daytime 33 services to Northampton which are subsidised by Northants so, with our Ward Cllr, we attended the MKC Decision Meeting and obtained a commitment to look at other travel options for the 6.30pm bus and that MKC would fund the 33 service as far as Hanslope even if Northants pulled out. **Village Green 'Centre':** The next big project will be to make the area outside the Village Hall and Carrington more attractive, keeping the green and tree, of course, as well as providing a safe crossing to the village hall as requested by the school and nursery. Three options were formally presented by the MK Design Team before the meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> March and are available again tonight. They are also available on the village website. The parish council intends to have a long consultation period with residents – you can send you comments now to the MKC designer – and then get the selected design costed and start applying for grants. MKC have put some funding into their 2011/12 budget but we will need more. **Conclusion:** There are a number of smaller initiatives; after the spate of aggressive salesmen last summer, we have worked with Trading Standards and a leaflet explaining residents' rights and when callers have to go away will be issued to all households as soon as MKC have printed it. The parish council also applied for funding to create one of the government's new Vanguard Neighbourhood Plans. Our own Parish Plan expires at the end of this year and I hope that the new Parish Council will encourage the production of a new plan. I would stress that all this information is available as it happens on the village website together with all upcoming events and lots of other information. I'd like to thank Peter Haynes for his work as one of the webmasters over the past two years and to welcome Judith Goodger to replace him. The website is an important and valuable village facility which is well used and admired by other parishes. Finally, the parish council has set a precept which has increased by 1.99% which is an extra £1 a year for each Band 'D' household. With the loss of about £2,500 from the bond for the Sports Ground due to low interest rates, higher gas and electricity prices as well as other increases, we felt we needed this minimum increase to continue to provide good facilities in our village. This is the last Chairman's Report from this parish council as we have elections on 5<sup>th</sup> May but I believe that this council has achieved a great deal in the past four years and I would like to record my thanks to Councillors, our Clerk and to our Ward Councillor as this has been a real team effort.

### 4 WARD COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

I echo what the Chairman has covered in his report. **33 Bus service:** The sustainability of the Sunday 33 service could not be justified due to the lack of use. However MKC are looking

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into a pre-booked taxi service to cover if it can be proven that its use for work. **Playbuilder:**

After all the ups and downs of availability of funding from central government, Playbuilder funds were released but for a reduced pot. However Castlethorpe was one of only a handful of councils that didn't wait for government to possibly release funds but went ahead and sought funding elsewhere and was successful. Thanks to this PC obtaining enough funding through other sources, several other PC's have been able to do pared down play area refurbishments. **Wind farms:** There are several scopings for wind farms that while are not in Castlethorpe will have significant impact on the village. The visual impact of the Haversham cum Little Linford wind farm will be greater for Castlethorpe than Stoke Heights. There are to be meetings in the Haversham community hall on 6 & 7 May. **Devils Dip**

**flooding:** Work will be done to rectify the flooding at Devil's Dip but the cost was estimated over a year ago at £350k and there is only £120k to spend this year. So some work will be done. The hedge work done on Pineham Farm might look drastic but is in fact the correct way to coppice hedgerow. It will grow back in 2-3 years and be more manageable. There are some planning issues at the farm that the present tenant is having to contend with but suffice to say all work done there so far is correct. The tenant has changed the use of the land from grazing to arable and there is a planning request in to remove certain hedgerows to allow for larger arable field area. **Elections:** 5 May. Please all vote. There is not only borough and Parish Council elections but the referendum into an alternative voting system. I am up for election this year & may I thank everyone here and the PC for a very enjoyable 9 years as Ward Councillor. **Carrington Arms public House:** S Hill, as you may know, has bought the old Station Yard. The PC can have no direct interest or association with the pub development. However a group of individuals can look into ways to possibly get the development of the pub moving. Simon has on more than 1 occasion stated that he is waiting for the economy to pick up. The Pub Action Group have looked into grants available but so far Simon Hill has not acted on the knowledge given him. (Phil Ayles comment as Chair of PC) The designs for the village green are based on the significant focal view of the Carrington Arms and all the designs are dependant on improving the overall 'look' of the village green that includes the Carrington Arms. Simon has indicated that he intends to submit a planning application for townhouses on Station Yard 2 of which he intends to use for the pub B&B and for a manager's residence. He still appears to be committed to developing the Pub. Based on past experience in dealing with Simon, I believe if we press him too much he will stop communicating with us.

**Open Forum:** In answer to a residents comment about change of use Ward Cllr Geary stated that there are specific controls within planning policy that would prevent a change of use. Another resident asked about the safety of the chimney. Ward Cllr Geary stated that if there was any worry about safety with the chimney, Building regs could be brought in to investigate & survey. In answer to a residents query about the derelict look of the building & whether anything could be done just to the façade to tidy it up, Ward Cllr Geary stated that the PC and himself could speak to planning & see if there was anything that could be done. Cllr Geary stated that the hole in the wall 'protected' by the metal grids was Simon complying with planning and was a discharge of conditions. It was noted by one resident that he felt that despite Simon saying he cared about the pub it was obvious by his lack of action that he clearly didn't care at all. In answer to a query about wind farm policy Cllr Ayles stated that the Ward Cllr and the PC was pushing MKC to develop a policy on wind farms as the current policy guidelines were clearly out of date and did not take into consideration the heights some of these turbines reached. The PC was pushing Nick Fenwick as head of planning to develop a policy and that he had said it was a priority.

### 5 COMMUNITY REPORT:

#### **Policing: report & powerpoint presentation delivered by PC Andy Perry.**

PC Perry gave an overview of the area he covers when on duty and then talked about the Rural West Neighbourhood (the combined Parishes of Castlethorpe, Haversham and Hanslope) that Castlethorpe falls within.

He gave crime figures for the neighbourhood and compared those of 09/10 with 10/11,

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highlighting that although the neighbourhood figures had risen, Castlethorpe's had fallen and suggested that the neighbourhood rise was possibly due to the parish of Haversham having acquired 2 'new build' large housing estates along the Wolverton Road. He suggested that it stands to reason that with more people within the neighbourhood, more crimes will be recorded. PC Perry then talked about the Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) and its work on the 3 main areas of concern to residents (from public consultation) of 1) parking 2) dog fouling & 3) speeding. He showed 'Powerpoint' photos of Community Speedwatch deployments and explained the initiative and how it works to empower the community. He also showed photos of winning entries in school poster competitions that he had run to educate the village children about the dangers of speeding vehicles. PC Perry then spoke briefly about the comprehensive spending review and how it may impact on Thames Valley police with likely changes being that LPA's (Local policing areas) will replace the existing BCU (Basic command unit) structure and that there will almost certainly be some redundancies within the organisation. He stated that crime figures are now available on the MK Council website for download and viewing and thanked everyone for listening

### **6 VILLAGE SCHOOLS AND YOUTH REPORTS**

#### **6.1 Castlethorpe Pre-School: Report delivered by the treasurer Mrs Jacquie Ladyman.**

Pre-school is busy with healthy numbers at the moment. We will have 31 pupils on the books at the end of the Summer term. There is now need to recruit another member of staff. The September 11 intake is 17. Children from 2½ can register and more children are always welcome. The pre-school was lucky enough to obtain a grant and bought much needed ICT equipment. The pre-school have been busy this year so far: fundraising for Red Nose day (raised £50), writing poems some of which have been submitted into a national young writers competition. The pre-school continues to go from strength to strength thanks to the wonderful and dedicated staff.

#### **6.2 Governors/First School: Compiled by M Spyrou (Chair of Govenors) read by Mrs C Ayles.**

We are pleased to report another successful year at Castlethorpe First School. There are 40 children currently on role. We have introduced a now annual open afternoon each Autumn term for prospective parents which has led to us being over subscribed last year and again this year.

We continue to work closely with Acorn Nursery who provide both our hot school lunches and before and after school care as well as supporting our after school clubs. This year we were successful in bidding for funding from Extended Schools which subsidised a sport after school club for two terms and funded the purchase of two basketball posts. Next term we will offer an after school basketball club and group cello lessons.

Parents, friends, pre-school and Acorn nursery were invited to our Harvest Festival and Christmas Nativity: 'The Landlord's Cat' which were both held in the church.

We continue to have a school council made up from children in year 2. The focus this year has been for the children to be more involved in organising events in school and events to raise money for charities. Last term the children met and discussed ideas for raising money for Children in Need and chose to ask everyone to return a Smartie tube with a donation after eating the Smarties! This was very successful and raised an incredible £175. School Council then met and put together some ideas for games and food for the Christmas party. They put some of their ideas in a letter to FOCS. School council also organised our Red Nose Day and raised £69.34. They are now hoping to organise a fund raising event to raise money for Diabetes UK in the Summer term.

During the summer holiday further building work took place in the school following the emergency ceiling work that had to be carried out last summer. The whole school has now been redecorated with new flooring, carpeting, lighting and cloakroom facilities. Those of you who have visited the school would agree that it is a much improved and brighter environment for the children and staff to work in. Although this was a worrying time for us, in retrospect the timing of this incident was somewhat fortuitous in light of the current economic

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situation. We would like to thank all the staff for their dedication and commitment to get the school up and running ready for the children, and their continuing commitment, which is a credit to them and the school.

If you've not had an opportunity to visit, the school will be open as part of the 'Open Garden's' weekend on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> July as well as for the annual school fete on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> July when the children will once again demonstrate their maypole and country dancing.

Our governing body continues to run at full strength. Governors regularly visit the school in support of their individual roles through monitoring and evaluating school priorities. The full governing body meet once a term, with committees meeting half- termly, or as a need arises. We are always interested to hear from individuals who are willing to be considered as governors. If anyone feels this applies to them please contact either the school or Milton Keynes Council for further details.

We are also very fortunate to have 5 regular helpers from the village who come into school each week to work with the children, hearing readers and working in the library as well as FOCS (Friends of School) who continue to help the school, raising money to support the curriculum and organising events for the children.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the village that supports our school. It is much appreciated, not only by the staff and the governors, but also by the children who benefit immensely from being a part of a thriving community.

### **6.3 Youth Club: Report delivered by Lawrence Chapman:**

Youth Club celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Numbers were down last year but there has been a steady increase in numbers probably thanks to the new equipment available for use during the sessions! The members of the YC decided that the money raised from the Carol singing in December was split 50/50 with Help the Hero's and the Youth Club. The YC received a good OFSTED report some years ago and have tried to maintain & improve on that standard by varied activities offered & ever changing equipment and facilities to use during sessions. The club enjoy heavy involvement from MK Rural Youth team & as ever the team of youth workers are a dedicated bunch who work hard to provide fun activities each and every session. It has to be said that the attendees are a super bunch of young people as well!. This year – based on the success of the last musical show – the major fundraiser will be a Las Vegas themed musical and buffet in November. Thanks to the Parish Council for securing money from a MK partnership grant for the YC & to Georgina who keeps the hall so clean for their use. There is a vacancy for a youth leader (work 1 in 6 sessions). Applications from all welcome.

## **7 LEISURE AND SPORTS GROUP REPORTS:**

### **7.1 Castlethorpe Short Mat Bowls: Report delivered by Glynnis King**

The bowls club currently has 16 members & are always open to new membership. Short Mat Bowls is suitable for any age from 12 – 112!. We meet Tuesday and Friday evenings in the Village Hall and take part in regular competitions on a league level. There is no need for any prospective member to have equipment – there are bowls to borrow from the club – so why not come along on a Tuesday and Friday night to try your hand at a game. All we ask is that you wear flat soled shoes or thick socks to prevent damage to the mats.

### **7.2 Castlethorpe Craft Club: Report delivered by Carol Wray**

The craft club is a friendly group of like minded people with a passion for crafting. We have had a successful year for new membership but always welcome new faces. Unfortunately 2 of the long standing members of the group passed away and in their memory a Craft day will be held on 25<sup>th</sup> June in the village hall with proceeds going to the Marie Cure Car home. So popular was this event that tickets for tables were sold out in 2 weeks. We continue to host craft days in support of fundraising for the Village Hall and our chosen charity the Cardiac unit at MK hospital. We meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday evening & the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday afternoon in every month.

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### **7.3 Castlethorpe WI: report delivered by Joyce Markham**

Castlethorpe WI is 80 years established officially celebrating the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding next year. We are certainly not a Jam & Jerusalem group & gentlemen are most welcome to the meetings! There are a regular 29 members but we are always keen for new membership. We are keen on receiving enquiries from younger members of the village community. Remember you don't have to be in your dotage to join! Our annual program of events is always in the village newsletter from the beginning of the year & we have been fortunate to have some lovely guest speakers with varied & interesting topics that most people will find exciting & we offer food & drink at each event. Thank for your support.

### **7.4 Castlethorpe Cricket Club: Report delivered by Mick Lee (Chair)**

The cricket club play games on Saturdays and Sundays as the teams belong to the South Northants league & the MK Sunday league. This is a general invitation to the entire village to come along and watch a game. There are several vacancies – Umpires are always needed and that special someone to provide teas for the players and those watching. Both positions are paid. This season the club will be hosting a bar for home matches. With the picnic tables the PC have provided and refreshments available, it will make a nice outing for the family in summer. We run several fundraisers during the year (cricket is an expensive pastime!) and the next one is on 23 April and will be a Quiz and (Dina) curry night in the village hall for 6pm – 10.30pm. Teams of 6 welcome. All welcome. Please come along to games or the quiz night to support your club.

## **8 COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

### **8.1 Castlethorpe Village Hall: Report offered by John Foakes (Chairman)**

It must be claimed that the VH committee had a good year. Once the gritty floors, fire regulations and entrance use had been sorted out, good & honest working relationships were achieved and everyone has worked well together for the good of the hall. User groups remain strong & there is a new group starting (Friendship group) that hopes to gain regular user status. The VH entertainments group have operated as a sub committee of the VH committee to organise fundraisers: Halloween party, New Years party to name a few. This year due to the success of that team of people enough money was raised so that no subsidy from the PC has been needed. The committee have adopted a DIY policy where applicable and have managed to maintain the hall for minimal outlay. The hall has a lovely new sign courtesy of the donation from Open Gardens and new solar lighting down the side of the hall. Despite the coldest winter for a long time the hall remained warm & cosy (no doubt this will be reflected in the utility bills!). Utilities remain the largest outlay for the hall and so the rate charge for all users was increased & has been met with understanding by the regular users who's pockets it will affect. The VH committee has also during its term of office agreed a new constitution with the PC. Geraldine Sweetland has stepped down as Vice Chair of the VH Committee & my thanks to her for all her hard work & a special thanks to my wife Ann for keeping all matters administrative up to date & me in order.

### **8.2 Castlethorpe Open Gardens: Report offered by Geraldine Sweetland**

In 2009 a very successful Open Gardens weekend resulted in over £3000 being raised. This year on 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> July we will again run the event & encourage anyone who wishes to open their gardens to the public to get in contact with me. Plans are already in hand & organisation is well advanced. We have 17 confirmed gardens taking part – more are welcome. The event will be village centered & this year we will have – courtesy of funding from MK Historic Trust – a booklet FOC to attendees which will detail the participation of Castlethorpe in the history of England through the ages. This booklet is being put together by Ann Foakes. Please accept this as a general invitation to bring along friends and family for a fun weekend.

## **9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING :**

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2012.

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There being no further business to discuss the meeting closed at 9.15pm