

# **Minutes of the AUST PARISH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY**

Held on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at 7:00pm at Elberton Village Hall

## **Present:**

Cllr. Steve Meredith, Chairman of Aust Parish Council – in the chair

Cllrs. Matthew Riddle & Keith Burchell – Severn Vale ward members, South Glos. Council

Emma Pattullo – Clerk

12 residents

## **1 Approval of minutes from the previous parish meeting held on 12th April 2022**

Cllr Meredith welcomed attendees to the meeting.

The minutes of the 2022 parish assembly were presented, agreed as a correct record and signed by the chairman.

## **2 Speakers' presentations**

No speakers.

## **3 Annual report by Steve Meredith, Chairman, Aust Parish Council**

Cllr Meredith gave the following report:

“During the past year, the parish council has continued to meet most months, though we had to cancel the planned meeting in September 2022 due to the mourning period for HM the Queen.

At the annual meeting in May 2022, I took over as chairman with Ian Jenkins as vice-chair. Anne Wiseman was co-opted to fill the vacant council seat.

The council is represented on a number of outside bodies including the Oldbury Power Station Site Stakeholder Group, the Severn Vale Flood Defence Group and the Town & Parish Forum.

It has been another busy year for planning matters, with 22 planning applications discussed over the year. Councillors also attended site visits and SGC committee meetings for two applications.

Residents will know that the parish council owns the Woodwell Meadow nature reserve in Littleton, which is managed on our behalf by South Glos. Council (SGC). This year after lengthy discussions between the parish council, knowledgeable residents and SGC we have finally approved a new management plan for the site, which will be put into place over the next five years.

You may also have noticed our shiny new noticeboard in Elberton. The noticeboard in Littleton has been refurbished, which should keep it going for a few more years.

The parish council has been active in lobbying SGC over numerous matters, including pot holes, litter, ditch and grate clearance, pavement clearance and similar. Many of these discussions are still ongoing!

We have also been in contact with National Highways to discuss the issues of congestion at Aust roundabout, and the ongoing closure of Sandy Lane. It is hoped that a solution for the latter problem will be in place soon.

We also tried to persuade Royal Mail to change addresses in Elberton, as residents have had a lot of problems due to the word “Elberton” not being part of the official address. Not only does this often cause problems with deliveries, but it is a shame that the identity of the hamlet appears to be being eroded. Unfortunately this approach to Royal Mail was not successful, but we did try!

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee was celebrated in June and the parish council was successful in getting grant funding to encourage the celebrations. The grant was distributed equally between the three communities. Littleton village hall hosted a coffee (and prosecco!) morning whilst a community picnic was held in Elberton. Aust's share has been donated to the village hall.

You may also notice that various parts of the parish are looking tidier recently. The parish was allocated a week of work from a Streetcare team who got lots of jobs completed such as pavement clearance and replacing missing signs. Thanks to those residents who suggested areas for work.

Lastly, I must thank councillors Catherine Collinson and Claire Hawkins, who are standing down at the next local elections in May this year. Catherine has served as councillor for 8 years and Claire for 5 years."

*Catherine and Claire were presented with flowers as a token of gratitude for their service as councillors.*

#### **4 Annual report by Matthew Riddle, Ward Councillor, South Glos Council**

Cllr Riddle gave the following report:

"Thank you for the invitation to attend, I would also like to introduce Keith Burchell who is my fellow ward councillor for Severn Vale ward. Between us, we try to attend all parish council meetings across the ward area. We want to listen to the issues which residents are facing, particularly those which concern South Glos. Council but also wider matters.

We have recently supported the development of Village Agent roles, who are now working in rural areas including Aust. They aim to support residents in accessing other services when they are needed and have a particular focus on helping older people to stay in their own homes.

We know it has been a difficult year for many, with the war in Europe leading to higher inflation and reduced spending power. Many problems related to the Covid pandemic are still hanging over us as well. In February, SGC managed to agree a balanced budget with 2% of funding ring fenced for services for older and vulnerable residents, many of whom have been hardest hit by the recent financial situation.

Waste and recycling remain an important part of SGC services. The green bin charge has been kept at the same level (and may in future be funded by central government.) The pilot project of collection of soft plastics with the weekly kerbside recycling has been well received and will hopefully be rolled out across a wider area eventually. SGC remain committed to reducing the cost and environmental impact of waste management and have managed to increase recycling rates to 60% of total waste generated.

Capital projects in the local area include refurbishment of both Castle and Marlwood secondary schools.

The lack of bus services in the area has been addressed through introduction of the Westlink on-demand minibus service. Journeys can be booked via the Westlink smart phone app, or by phone, and can be made across the northern part of the South Glos. area including to Thornbury and Yate.

Lastly I wanted to mention the Community Engagement Forum, which has recently trialled a new group focussed on the villages of the Severn Vale. These Forums include updates from SGC officers, the police, emergency services and other local bodies and I would encourage residents to attend a future meeting."

#### **5 Open Forum**

Residents raised the following matters, which were answered by Steve Meredith and Matthew Riddle:

Q. What is happening at the Whale Wharf site in Littleton?

A. We don't currently know, though it is rumoured that the site may be put up for sale. The current planning permission, for a children's activity centre, has not been progressed.

Q. Traffic levels continue to cause problems around the Aust roundabout / M48 junction. What progress has been made on completing the new M49 junction, which will hopefully relieve traffic levels around Aust?

A. The new junction will serve the Severnside industrial area and should mean that much of the HGV traffic uses that to access the motorway network, rather than the A403. As you know, the developer who was supposed to build the road to join the junction with the wider road network did not fulfil his obligations. SGC has now taken over, with funding from central government. A planning application for the new section of road is in progress and there will be compulsory purchase of the required land. It is hoped that the work will be completed within the next two years.

## **6 Close of meeting**

Cllr Meredith thanked all for attending.

The meeting was closed at 7:32pm.