MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD AT THE PAVILION, ALANS WAY, NEWBOLD VERDON ON 18TH MAY 1992

PRESENT

CHAIRMAN M. W. Preston
COUNCILLORS H. M. Francks, P. Chick, J. R. Watson, G. Law, D. Colledge
BOROUGH COUNCILLOR J. Crookes
COUNTY COUNCILLOR P. Casswell
CLERK E. A. Walsh
SECRETARY OF THE LORD CREWE TRUST M. C. Mould
PARISHIONERS 4

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from S. Spence, M. Mensley and A. Hurst.

MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 20th May 1992, having been previously circulated, were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

BEST KEPT ALLOTMENT

The Best Kept Allotment Award of a personalised shield and gift voucher was presented to Mr. Roger Wigston by Mrs. Francks.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Once again I must thank the Clerk for his sterling work and support during the past year. The work of a Parish Clerk becomes more and more complex and needs a great deal of time and effort to keep out business up to date. Most of this work, of course, is done in addition to his regular employment and I know that it can become very harassing when deadlines have to be kept and he needs to take a break at weekends and evenings. I do not know whether the computer has yet had any significant impact in assisting the Clerk. Once again my thanks.

I thank Helen, our Vice Chairman, and all the members of the Parish Council for their support, not forgetting the coffee team.

Our luck deserted us this past year - out village Quiz Team came third and then we failed to gain entry for 1992. We were only also-rans in an obscure Best of Winners section in the Best Kept Village Competition. Let us hope that we once again regain the winner's title.

We are still debating the whys and wherefores of spending any more money on playground equipment at the Dragon Lane Playing Field. Both this field and Alans Way continue to be used to a very high capacity and now that further use in the future is envisaged, we may have to look at extending Alans Way Playing Field before too long. The car park has now been completed and is indeed a great asset.

We still need to plant a hedgerow on the western border of the Cemetery.

Once again the Library has come to the fore. Since the mid 60s the Parish Council has continually canvassed the County Council for a permanent building. The time has come for this to be implemented. It is just not good enough to give us the old chestnut that there is no money available after nearly 30 years. I say, get your fingers out Leicestershire County Council. Why has Desford had special treatment?

Finally I come back to the Hall Farm Country Park. Since Mr. Miller came to our January meeting in 1991 the project has progressed towards full planning consent, two public meetings have been held. The usual objections, mainly based on the unknown, have been heart, but I firmly believe that the village as a whole can only benefit from this development and I look forward to the success of this venture. It is a bold, adventurous project to take us up to the 21st century. A heritage for future generations at no financial cost to the Parish whatsoever. Indeed it should generate much needed revenue back into the village which, in turn, will enable the Parish Council to implement more facilities for the general public use.

PRECEPT

The Clerk gave a report on the precept for 1992/3 and highlighted the major items of expenditure. The total precept was £27,748 which was equal to £10.71 per community charge payer, compared to £31,776 in 1991/2.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

The County Council (with a budget of some £600m it is the largest employer in the County) is a large organisation providing a wide range of services, and it is always difficult in an annual report to know which issues members of the Parish Council and parishioners want to hear about.

Consequently, I shall cover the following areas: (1) Items which the Parish Council have specifically requested, i.e. (a) permanent library and (b) application for landfill at Nailstone. (2) Major issues facing the County Council i.e. (a) Budget and (b) Single Tier Authorities and (3) County Council activities.

1. Items which the Parish Council have specifically requested.

a) Permanent library.

Further to the report I gave to the Council on this issue in 1990, I have once again made enquiries, particularly regarding the possibility of acquiring the premises on Main St. As a result of my letter, the Director of Libraries is getting the Property Dept to investigate the building, and he hopes to have the necessary information available to bring a report to the Libraries Committee on 5th June. However, while he appreciates that an improved

library provision in Newbold Verdon would be very welcome he does not feel able to recommend to Committee that it is given priority over the present capital projects for the 1992-95 period, (none of which are replacements for temporary buildings).

I will repeat largely what I said on this matter two years ago. I am very happy to support the idea and lobby for a permanent library in the village. However, it will need the combined forces, not only of myself and the Parish Council, but also of substantial numbers of villagers; all of us must be prepared for a long hard struggle to achieve this. In this context, it may be useful for the Council to be aware that, apart from the matter being raised with me by the Council two years ago, and again more recently, no-one else in the village has ever brought it to my attention in the three years I have been on the County Council.

b) Application for landfill at Nailstone.

The first point to make on this issue, is that it is an application for landfill by a private company (H.J.Banks Landfill), not the County Council. County's role in the matter is that of being the Planning Authority which will determine the application, and it seems likely that this will come to Committee in August at the earliest, since a number of consultees still have to get their comments back to the County Council.

I have raised the question as to why Newbold Verdon Parish Council was not one of the original consultees.

and have been informed that only Parish councils likely to be directly affected by the proposals are normally consulted. I pointed out that, in terms of the traffic implications, particularly for residents of Newbold Heath, there would be an impact, and this was accepted. A consultation notice will shortly be sent to the Council to allow you to make comments on the proposals. To clarify one final point on this, the improvements to Bagworth Road are not associated with this development, but rather with the impending weight restrictions to be introduced in the village of Barlestone, where a very tight bend in the centre of the village has caused problems for many years.

2. Major issues facing the County Council.

a) Budget

The council will be aware, following my letter of 26th Feb, of the very difficult situation facing the County Council this year as a result of having to make budget reductions in real terms of over £7M, in order to produce a budget under the Government's capping limits.

One reduction which may be of retrospective interest to parishioners in Newbold, was that of cutting the grant to build new community centres (£58,000). You will be aware that last year, this grant was protected in the budget, and that Newbold Verdon was the main beneficiary, receiving 50% of the cost of the new community wing at the Primary School. This year the grant has gone, and it is a salutary thought that, had Newbold needed the money this year, it would not have been forthcoming.

b) Single Tier Authorities

While not wanting to go into all the possibilities arising out of the Government's proposed move to single-tier authorities, this is naturally a subject of interest to the County Council, and also I hope, to Parish Councils, since there may be implications for them too. There is no doubt that the present system of local government is confusing to many people not directly involved, but there seems to be little guarantee that changes proposed will improve matters. The alterations to local government structure of 1974, for example, were expensive and arguably no great improvement in provision of service for the general public which is the point of having local government in the first place. For the information of the Council, I have attached to this report copy of the Association of County Councils' Briefing Paper on the subject. Not surprisingly it makes the case for the retention of County Councils, yet there are many issues it addresses which are highly pertinent in the debate.

3. County Council activities

What I have tried to do this year, just to give an indication of the range, is to attach to my report summaries of committee decisions over a one month period. I would be happy to provide further information either at the Annual Meeting or at a later date.

QUESTIONS ARISING

1. Members expressed their concern at the lack of apparent movement on the provision of a permanent library facility for the village. Mr. Casswell replied by stressing the need for more public pressure to be brought in order to persuade the Director of Libraries to re-prioritise Newbold's requirements.

2. In relation to the proposed Nailstone landfill site, Mr. Casswell was asked what type of waste would be deposited. He replied by advising that no really noxious substances would be allowed to be deposited and that they would be Grade C deposits downwards. He advised members to contact the County Council's Minerals Officer for any details of the allowable waste.

BOROUGH COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

I have just completed my fifth year as Borough Councillor for the Newbold Verdon Ward. During the past 12 months I have served on the Health & Leisure Committee and the Housing Committee. I also serve on the Housing Benefit Review Board and the Appeals Committee.

HEALTH & LEISURE

This is a very busy, enjoyable committee which covers a varied section of services. The committee has continued with the policy of Educating Food Handling Personnel by running courses at Hinckley College of Further Education. A certificate is required by all food handlers in all establishments where food for consumption is prepared ie Shops, Factory Canteens, Schools, Hospitals, Cafes etc. The Council employ a team of inspectors to inspect over 1500 premises in the Borough.

The Refuse Collection Service run by FOCSA continues to give good value for money. During this financial year the Council hope to negotiate a 52 week collection service, this will ensure our bins are collected AT LEAST once a week, even during the peak holiday periods (a must in the rural areas).

Street Cleaning has improved during the year and the Council set a very high standard, this should be maintained throughout. If anyone feels this standard is not being met they should contact the Manager of Cleansing Services at the Council Offices.

Toilet Facilities in the Borough have been reviewed recently and unfortunately two sets of toilets have had to be closed. One at The Rock Gardens, Coventry Road, Hinckley and the other at Hill Top, Earl Shilton. The first was closed due to persons using the toilets for illicit purposes. The Earl Shilton Toilets were closed because they were so badly vandalised it was necessary to protect the general public. A new 'Superloo' is to be installed in the centre of Earl Shilton as a pilot project. This will provide 24 hour facilities. If this is successful further 'Superloos' will be installed in the town, close to the Bus Station. A new purpose built Toilet Block with baby changing facilities and an attendant service is proposed for Hinckley Town Centre. It is felt that a new large toilet block to replace the existing ones on Church Walk and the Bus Station, open between the hours of 8 am - 8 pm, would work out cheaper in the long run than the present system. The cost of repairing the toilets and cleaning twice a day (which is not sufficient in some cases) has risen out of all proportion. A new toilet block is also to be built at Burbage Common and Woods, this will be an extra facility to complement the existing toilets at the Visitors' Centre.

The Pest Control Service provides a free service to eliminate rats and mice, a charge is made for treating ants and bees as these usually return within a few weeks and require extra visits. Charges are made for both services in the case of business premises.

The Council have run a TIDY BOROUGH scheme during the year and extra litter bins in the urban areas have been provided along with window stickers advertising the Campaign. A TIDY SCHOOLS initiative is being held at this moment and judging is taking place this week and next. It is hoped to announce the results in "The Hinckley Times" shortly.

HOUSING

The Council sold 38 properties to tenants during 1990/91. This is the lowest number of properties sold for over five years, the highest number sold being 238 in 1988/89. Homelessness continues to be the biggest problem and cost the Council approximately £127 per person per week for bed and breakfast accommodation, although this is used as a last resort in cases of emergency.

The Council have advised the Hinckley Homeless Group in the various stages of obtaining grants etc to provide accomodation for homeless persons in the Borough. Building has now started and it is hoped that the first residents will be installed in the autumn.

The Councils plans to dispose of 'void' properties through a Housing Association has caused wide spread concern to tenants. The local Tenants Associations have protested by raising a petition. Several meetings have been held to explain how the council are to implement this decision. Two letters from the Principal Chief Officer of the Council have been circulated to tenants to 'try' to allay fears.

Maintenance of the housing stock continues, with uPVC windows replacing old and rotten wooden ones. All homes in the Borough have now been rewired and all have central heating of one form or another. The fencing programme still has to be completed as and when finances are available.

PLANNING

During the early part of 1991, various meetings were held to discuss the Rural Parishes Local plan. A Public Meeting was held in September at the Primary School in Dragon Lane. Local residents gathered to make comments about proposals for Newbold Verdon, the 'Hall Farm Concept' being the most controversial proposal. Because of the magnitude of this proposal it was decided that a further public meeting would be held to discuss the plan. (This has now taken place).

The Council have now been requested to formulate a'Borough Wide Plan' and so all the previous work has to be incorporated into this'new' plan which will be part of a much larger Leicestershire plan.

New planning guidelines have been set out in the form of a booklet. This is to help applicants with planning laws etc, and can be obtained from the Planning Dept at the Council Offices.

POLICY & RESOURCES

The level of community charge was reduced slightly this year due to the Council over estimating the number of non payers for the 1991/2 year. The collection rate for the Borough is one of the highest in the country at approx 98%.

Community charge and housing benefit claims are still the most difficult area for staff to deal with. Late claims and loss of form's etc being the most common complaint from residents in the Borough. Council staff have been working on a scheme to issue applicants with a receipt for all forms remitted, but this is easier said than done.

The committee have put £500K in reserves for the proposed Crematorium. But this looks unlikely to be used in the near future. Land has been designated for the scheme but at this point in time no company has shown interest in running the facility.

END OF REPORT

May I just add that I am to continue to serve on the Health & Leisure and Housing Committees and also the Housing Benefit Review Board and Appeals Committee, and I will continue to serve the residents of Newbold Verdon to the best of my ability.

REPORT FROM THE MONTAGUE TRUST

As with our usual practice we have for this year (that is 1991), not paid out any charity money in order that we can consolidate the funds on a 2-yearly cycle which seems to be the most advantageous and beneficial way of distributing the charity (if that is what it can be called in 1992).

The bog allotments seem to be the most popular, but I have recently let four allotments at the top close. The rents will be increased to £4 per allotment per annum for 1992. The Water rate now takes almost a third of the annual income.

The winner of the Best Kept Allotment for 1991 is Roger Wigston. A gift voucher (£5) and a plaque has been presented to him this evening.

REPORT FROM THE LORD CREWE TRUST

A Meeting was held at the Newbold Verdon County Primary School on Wednesday 18th September, 1991.

Present: Mr D. Wilkinson (Chairman)
Mr M. Preston
Mr R. Watson
Mr A. Hurst
Mr M. C. Mould

The Trustees were shown the ledgers and bank statements and noted that the total money in both bank accounts had now accumulated to a total of £1004.84.

The Trustees gave considerable time to discussing the present condition of the school playing field. Mr Mould reported that. following a series of accidents during the spring and summer term. a visit from the Health and Safety Executive's Chief Inspector in June. had instructed that the field be taken out of use immediately. He also instructed that no use of the field be permitted until the remedial work be undertaken. Sadly - no money

from central funds at County Hall is available at present for the work to be financed and Mr Mould said that the estimated cost for the work to be carried out by Technical Services (of the Education Department) would be 4,800.00.

A local farmer, Mr Henry Mumford of Wellsborough, had already been approached and had said that he could do the work for less than a thousand pounds.

Eventually, it was proposed that £1000.00 be made available to finance the levelling of the school field subject to the written (Mr Mumford's) estimate being approved by the appropriate departments at County Hall. This was carried unanimously.

The Trustees were thanked by Mr Mould on behalf of everyone at the school, for so generously seeing that the school field be kept in use. The meeting ended on a reflective note: that it seems ironic that, the Lord Crewe Trust was very instrumental in purchasing the field in the first place all those years ago, should now in 1991 be responsible for enabling the upgrading of it to be carried out.

The cost of ploughing levelling and sewing seed, etc. in fact was a total of £875.00. The work was completed during a 10 day period between 5th and 15th October.

The present state of the field is excellent. It has already been mown for the first time this year and the grass is now growing rapidly again.

The Health and Safety representative from County Hall has been to examine the field and has given his approval for it to be brougnt back into use in 3 weeks time. (By which time the grass will have really thickened out).

There is no doubt that we all will be thrilled to be able to return to using the field - most of all the children - who can't wait for the big day: 27th May, 1992.

With a recent increased payment into the Charity of £350.00, the total amount in both accounts now stands at £634.21.

Finally, you may be interested to know that over the last 20 years, the Lord Crew Charity has donated a total of £5172.04 towards providing resources, materials, improvements etc. for the benefit of the children at the school.

We are greatly indebted to the Trustees for their continuing care and generosity.

THERE BEING NO OTHER BUSINESS, THE CHAIRMAN DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.43 p.m.