

# MINUTES OF A MEETING



## Fradley Parish Council

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## Minutes of the Fradley Annual Parish Meeting (Parish Assembly) held at 6:30pm at Fradley Village Hall on 16 May 2024

### **Present:**

Cllrs Mike Ashcroft, Phil Beswick, Glen Bown (Chair), Paul Deathridge, Stuart Gilmour, David Leytham (Vice Chair) and Matthew Richards.

### **In Attendance:**

Claire Crompton (Clerk/RFO) and 2 Members of the Public.

### **24/01/PA – Chair's Introduction and Welcome**

The meeting was opened by Cllr Glen Bown, Chair of Fradley Parish Council, who welcomed everyone.

### **24/02/PA – Apologies for Absence.**

Apologies were noted from Cllr Dhillon.

### **24/03/PA – To confirm the minutes of the Fradley Annual Parish Meeting (Parish Assembly) held on 25th May 2023**

**RESOLVED:** *The draft minutes of the Fradley Annual Parish Meeting (Parish Assembly) held on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023 were approved and signed as a true and accurate record. AGREED: Cllr Bown only who was the only Cllr who attended the meeting. ALL other Cllrs abstained.*

### **24/04/PA – Annual Report of the Council 2023/2024.**

### **Annual Report of the Council 2023/2024**

#### **Introduction by Cllr Glen Bown - Chair**

I am very proud to have become Fradley Parish Council's first elected Chair. The first meeting was a coming of age for the village having its own Parish Council for the first time in more than 100 years. No more 'Alrewas and Fradley with Streethay', no more 'Fradley and Streethay', just simply 'Fradley'. At last our village is being recognised as an important centre of population in its own right with 1870 households and nearly 4000 residents. We live in a village which has enormous potential and the Council is determined to make Fradley even better at this key time in its development. Our agenda for improvements is lengthy and Councillors are working with energy, enthusiasm and tenacity to make our aspirations a reality. We wish to help boost Fradley's sense of community, refine Fradley's identity and promote Civic Pride.

It really has been a fresh start with no Councillor now remaining from the previous combined Council that was abolished last year. Cllr Leytham, our Vice Chair, brings significant experience as a former District Councillor and I served on the previous Parish Council for 2 years until 2022. This has been a fantastic opportunity for residents to take up the batten as Councillors. They have brought new ideas and a range of skills and experience from the worlds of business, education, haulage, commerce, law enforcement, and finance for the benefit of residents. Skills and knowledge which can be focused on our excellent Community.

What follows is a summary of the key objectives, actions and achievements of Fradley Parish Council in its first year.

- In September we were fortunate to appoint Mrs Claire Crompton as Clerk to the Council and our Responsible Finance Officer. As a local resident she is very aware of the challenges and opportunities which face Fradley. She has impressed all with her careful, friendly and common sense approach to the work of the Council. It is clear she wants the best for residents and has played a pivotal role in supporting, organising and administering Council business and aiding its Councillors.
- A set of working groups has been formed, each tasked with managing broadly themed aspects of our plans for improving Fradley. Each theme is explored below.

### **Environment**

The Environment Group is focused on improving the physical appearance of the village and its maintenance. A major aspect of its work this year has been identifying issues which require improvement and systematically addressing how they might be sustainably tackled. Key to this has been renegotiating our Grounds Maintenance Contract. This was a gargantuan task which involved drawing up a more detailed specification with more precise key performance indicators than was previously the case. The new arrangements began on May 1st this year. New areas of the village are now being cared for and a monitoring system to ensure the contractors comply with the contract has been devised. Residents should expect to see a significant improvement in the general presentation of the village and we hope that they will support us by letting us know should they find areas which downgrade Fradley's visual appeal.

The group also oversees maintenance, and a new fence has been erected at the Fradley Youth and Community Centre; the war memorial has been cleaned and the Christmas tree at Watersmeet better illuminated. Additionally graffiti has been removed from the Skate Park; new arrangements have been put in place to support the Beavers' mini woodland.

Drainage issues at Jordan Close and Church Lane, which have caused so much inconvenience, have been addressed with the Parish Council jointly financing initial investigative work along with Staffordshire County Council.

### **Projects**

The Project Group is tasked with exploring the practical implications and overseeing the implementation of Council projects in general. They have had a busy time, though the benefits of their work will not be apparent until later this year.

The Council decided to cancel the proposed £300,000 plan to put a roof over the Hay End Lane Park games court (MUGA) and the construction of an £80,000 pump track put forward by the previous Council. These projects were neither financially viable nor achievable. New plans and priorities have been established which will still improve recreational and sports activities without causing detriment to other projects which will benefit a greater number of residents.

In agreement with LDC, monies from grants awarded by the District Council will now be focused on the following smaller but achievable and shorter term projects. We are currently awaiting the final funding agreement to be drawn up. The projects are ready for implementation and have been identified through lengthy and detailed discussions which have taken into account cost, value for money and benefit for the whole community.

Projects include:- Replacement benches and bins across Fradley; a new durable, safe non-slip surface on the Hay End Lane MUGA; new notice boards for the Council and local groups; exercise equipment for adults and young people at Hay End Lane; and flower tubs at all entrances to the village and at some other roadside locations - the latter is still being negotiated with Staffordshire County Council. The existing Skate Park will enjoy a much needed revamp improving safety and usability; and some swings and a bicycle rack will be added to the park. We are going to install finger posts at various locations across the village pointing out the direction of Fradley features for visitors. Three Speed Indicator signs will be installed in an attempt to curb speeding motorists. Finally in partnership with the Fradley Heritage Group, four information boards will be installed to highlight key aspects of Fradley's rich heritage.

Contractors have been approached, quotes raised, locations identified and equipment determined. There are a busy few months ahead for the Project Group and our Clerk coordinating the logistics of all of this. We are ready to go and we know that Fradley residents of all ages will see the benefit.

## **Engagement**

This group of Councillors has been tasked with finding ways to engage and build two-way communication with residents, businesses and local groups. This is a key group because the Parish Council's purpose is to represent, lead and serve residents. Therefore having a full understanding of the needs and aspirations of our community is central to our future success.

- The Council is forging links with local groups by inviting them to talk about their activities and aspirations at our Council meetings. So far we have heard from the FYCC and the uniformed youth groups; the Fradley AFC community football club; the Heritage Group; the Open Gardens group; and the Village Hall committee.
- A new engagement policy has been devised.
- We were pleased with the turn out at our first Councillor and Police Surgery, and subsequently the police have responded effectively and impressively to residents' concerns. More surgeries are planned.
- A new Small Community Grants scheme has been devised and will be launched at the end of June. Grants of up to £500 will be available to community groups big or small. The application process is very simple to encourage take up.
- A community newsletter will be published at the beginning of July promoting local groups and to keep residents up to date with the work of the Council. Thank you to the Scouts for agreeing to deliver them for us.
- The minutes of our Council meetings are very comprehensive but we are aware that the language and format is not always accessible to all. We have therefore introduced a Monthly Update document which gives an easy to read summary of the main points covered in the meetings. These updates are posted on our notice boards, website and popular Facebook page.
- Work has been done to improve our website which now has lots more information but really needs a full revamp. Residents may also have noted that our Facebook page has been significantly more active and we hope that the information provided has been useful. Again thank you to the Clerk for her sterling work in this regard.
- The Council continues to oppose the misguided Horner Avenue development that has caused so much distress for residents at Horner Avenue, Shaw Drive, Worthington Road and indeed across our village. We have supported residents in this and commissioned various reports to oppose the application.

- The Council has significant financial reserves which need to be channelled towards the most relevant projects and important services. We are planning a consultation exercise to gauge residents' reactions to a range of suggestions made by our Councillors and to give residents an opportunity to put forward ideas to help determine priorities.
- We have been liaising with developers to address local concerns and both Bellway and Barratt Homes have been very helpful. Safety issues at the Sheasby pond have been tackled and Barratts are now actively planning to properly surface the overspill car park at Hay End Lane and further improve access onto the park from the Fradley Manor estate.

Fradley Parish Council has had a very busy and fruitful first year and has made a productive start in its mission to make Fradley Even Better.

#### **24/05/PA – Open Forum for residents to ask questions, raise issues or make comment.**

A resident asked if all current Cllrs would be remaining in their positions. Cllr Bown responded that, yes, it is likely that all current Cllrs will remain in their current positions and that there is currently one vacancy. The resident also asked when the official minutes would be published. Cllr Bown advised that the draft minutes would be available on the website within the coming weeks but would not be officially approved until the Annual Parish Meeting next year. Additionally, the resident also enquired about the possibility of adding items to forthcoming agendas. Cllr Bown advised him to email the Clerk with his enquiries.

A resident raised the issue of visibility of the War Memorial and enquired if any action could be taken to address this. Cllrs Bown and Beswick informed the resident that plans are being considered to improve the visibility of the War Memorial, along with some additional improvements. Areas such as the lavender and holly are being reviewed as part of these improvements.

A resident expressed his appreciation upon seeing several improvements already made to the overall appearance of the village and is very excited to more in the future. The resident expressed enthusiastic and positive feedback about the work the newly formed council has done so far and wanted to share his appreciation with them.

Meeting closed at 19.01pm