

DRAFT

Please note that these draft minutes have not yet been approved and are subject to correction

AUST PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AUST PARISH ASSEMBLY

Held at Elberton Village Hall on
Tuesday 13 April 2010 at 7.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Gwyther, Deputy Chairman (in the chair)
Councillors Dobbins, Ellis, Meredith and Pullin
Ward Councillor Matthew Riddle

3 Parishioners

T E Pyper, Clerk

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from the Chairman, Councillor Hawkins, and from Councillor Alway.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2009 were read and approved. The Chairman signed them as a correct record.

3. Matters arising

Councillor Dobbins noted that matters had improved at the Row, largely through self help by residents: a fence had been put across the lawn, plants planted. The result was that more drivers were stopping to think.

4. Chairman's Report

The Chairman, Councillor Hawkins, had prepared a report which was read to the meeting as follows:

It has been a momentous year in a number of ways, but particularly for the retirement of our clerk, Tom Fothergill. Long service seems to be a characteristic of Aust Parish Council (APC), and Tom's 24 years was no exception. So, with gratitude for the considerable contribution over the years, farewell Tom, and welcome Tim (Pyper, renewing a family connection with the Council).

The Council seems to have been busier than in recent years, and now meets more or less monthly. Additionally, its activities are documented in the Olveston and Aust website. An opportunity for those who can't make meetings to keep up with events.

Inevitably a number of familiar subjects dominate agenda. Greenacres, where despite progress towards the required return to agriculture, difficulties are being created for neighbouring properties, including by the deposition of mud on the road, contravening the conditions established by the planning approval. Ongoing discussion with contractors and South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) is intended to remedy the situation.

Whale Wharf remains an issue, the current manifestation being a desire to operate a residential adventure school on the site. Currently negotiations with SGC are in progress, with attempts being made to determine the legality, or not, of the concept of "operational development". Needless to say APC oppose the concept, having serious concerns with traffic issues in Littleton and area, intensification in the Green Belt, and perhaps, most importantly, safety concerns in an area of serious flood risk.

Flooding in Aust Village has not been resolved, although a number of significant actions have been taken. SGC has increased the diameter of the Cake Pill Gout, which allows water from Fosse Ditch and Lords Rhine to escape to the estuary. Other, relatively minor changes have been made to drains in the village, and Fosse Ditch has been cleared of unnecessary weed growth. APC is grateful to SGC and the Lower Severn Drainage Board for their input. However, we remain deeply suspicious that the flood water has its origin within the Highway Agency 's responsibility, and that the actions taken by others will not fully eliminate that risk. We have therefore requested that an engineer's report be made to determine the cause of this flooding, and to recommend a solution. This request has been made under the Sustainable Communities Act, and, having passed its preliminary levels of approval we await the final confirmation from the appropriate Secretary of State.

Woodwell Meadow. The Meadow, overlooking Littleton, has been purchased by SGC, and will be owned by APC. This is a site of high environmental interest, containing a number of rare flora species, and will be maintained for the benefit of the public. The site has been newly fenced, new hedges have been planted, for eventual laying. Kissing gates have been installed on the footpath entries, as well as new gating at the Field Lane entrance. Incredibly, the new fencing has been cut, at the top of the field, and not far from existing gates! Who – Why??

There are many other issues currently under consideration. They concern a range of local planning requests, footpath concerns, traffic and road, both surface and roadside issues, National Grid changes and more. Too many to detail. However, one point must be made. Our SGC member, Matthew Riddle, has been assiduous and very supportive in all of our concerns, most perhaps with respect to the Aust flooding problem. He is always an effective interface between APC and SGC, whether it be relatively minor, signage or potholes perhaps, or major, such as Aust flooding. In the latter regard, as well as Whale Wharf, we have planned a "show and tell" with senior Environment Agency officials, seeking support for these, and other major concerns.

Oldbury New Build Power Station. Horizon have recently announced that they will be re-addressing their proposals for Wylfa and Oldbury, with Wylfa first and Oldbury later. They now hope to submit their planning application in 2014, rather than 2011, subject to both being included in a new National Policy Statement.

Sadly the year has seen the loss of several parishioners, David Watkins, too soon, and Mrs Betti and Cyril Meachin, both following long and fulfilled lives.

To conclude, my thanks to Council members, thanks again to Tom, for his years of service, and to Matthew for enormous and continuing support, and my hope that the three major issues in this report will not be present next year.

5. Report by the Ward Councillor, Matthew Riddle

Councillor Riddle thanked the Parish Council for its invitation to this and its regular meetings. He had been able to attend many Council meetings, but with their increased frequency, not all of them.

Councillor Riddle reported that Council Tax would rise by 2.5% this year, although the overall tax receipts would rise by 2.7% because of the increased number of houses. This increase is the lowest annual increase since the establishment of South Gloucestershire Council in 1996. The Council had been able to achieve savings, and would achieve more over the next 3 years by losing about 300 posts out of the current 3000. There was a continuing review across all departments. Although a large amount had been spent on building the new offices at Badminton Road, this building was on Council owned land and its use would result in savings because the Council would be able to give up leases of 16 other sites. They were also saving on space usage by equipping staff to work from their cars or homes in appropriate cases.

This year the Council was adding an additional £2m to the existing £2m budget for road resurfacing.

For older people – Councillor Riddle's own area of responsibility – the Council was in the process of closing its 8 current homes, with 260 beds, and building 2 new modern, purpose built homes, with much higher standards. They will have larger rooms, so that residents can bring their own furniture, each will have en suite facilities, compared with the current arrangement where lavatories are shared between 4 or 5 residents. Extra care facilities will also be provided so that more residents will be able to stay for longer, with the additional social and medical support provided on site. Each resident or couple will have his or their own flat and there will be optional communal dining facilities. More support will also be given to enable elderly residents to live for longer in their own homes.

The Council had also reviewed its plans for new homes in the area in the period to 2026. The Government had set a target for the Council of 33,000 new homes which the Council considered far too high. The Council was proposing instead to plan for 21,000, which would be the subject of a core strategy document to be published for consultation shortly. The new homes would largely go on the Filton airfield site, and on the east side of the Bristol ring road at Emersons Green. The strategy would mention Aust in connection with a possible park and ride, or park and share, scheme. Other areas mentioned for such schemes were Tormarton and Falfield. The strategy envisaged some continuing barn conversions and infilling, but otherwise no general increase in housing in villages.

Councillor Riddle also noted that the Chairman had arranged a site meeting with the Environment Agency to discuss flood risks at Whale Wharf and in connection with the power stations.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Riddle for his report and invited questions and comments.

Mr Fothergill asked if the new elderly person flats would have 2 bedrooms, and how the flats would be allocated. Councillor Riddle replied that they would, and that allocation would be by reference to health and care needs. Initially all would be for rental, as the residents would mainly come from social housing. However, the Council will build some units for sale.

Councillor Ellis asked how they would be managed. He noted that with management contracted out the onsite warden was lost. Councillor Riddle said that this was largely the result of an Audit

Commission Report which had said that the use of wardens did not provide best value for the public expenditure involved.

6. Other matters

Mr Fothergill said that there were still a number of street direction signs which were redundant, such as that to St Augustine's vineyard, and the AA sign to the Old Down Country Park. Councillor Riddle said that he had been in touch with the planning consultants to the latter who were intending to arrange for permanent signs.

7. Conclusion

The Chairman thanked all those who had come, and closed the meeting at 8.10pm.