

WOODCHURCH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

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MINUTES

Minutes of the Woodchurch Annual Parish Meeting, held on Friday, 15 April 2011 at the Memorial Hall, Woodchurch at 7.30 pm

ATTENDANCE: Twenty Two Members of the Public were in attendance.

The Parish Council Chairman, Jamie Robinson, was in the chair.

The Chairman opened the meeting by emphasizing the fact that the Annual Parish Meeting is for Villagers, not the Parish Council and that everyone is entitled to speak, but requested that the normal rules of debate be observed.

The Chairman then introduced the KCC Councillor for Woodchurch, Cllr Mike Angell, ABC Ward Member, Mrs Aline Hicks, Mr Tony Mobbs, Vice Chairman of Woodchurch Parish Council and Mrs Judith Batt, Clerk to the Parish Council.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Miss R Dewar, Mr P Davison, and Community Warden Chris Banyard

MINUTES OF 2009 MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2010 were accepted and it was unanimously agreed that Mr Robinson should sign them.

REPORT BY PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN

Please see attached.

Mr Robinson took this opportunity to thank Parish Councillor Mobbs, who is standing down after 16 years service, of which at least 8 of which were as Chairman, for all his work for Woodchurch. He presented him with a plate that he had made from the wood of an Ash Tree that grew in the village for about 50 years.

PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The receipts and payments summary for the year ended 31 March 2011 was circulated.

The accounts book and the minute book are available for public inspection on request. The balance at bank as at 31 March 2010 was £ 27516.66.

The Precept for the year 2011/12 has been set at £20,000. We are also to receive a Concurrent Functions grant of £ 2760.00 making a total of £22391.16.

A VAT claim for the year ended 31 March 2010 has been submitted for £ 2527.53.

REPORT BY CLLR MIKE ANGELL – KCC

Councillor Angell said he was always amazed at how much work Parish Councillors have to do.

This last year was the difficult year financially. KCC had to make savings of £95 million pounds and Mr Angell was fortunate enough to have been involved in preparing the budget.

Sadly from a workforce of 30,000, 1500 members of staff have or will be lost. The schools budget has been preserved as have the 110 Community Wardens. KCC would like to increase the number of wardens to help the PCSO's and Police in both urban and rural areas.

With regard to Kent Highways, KCC have made a pledge that they will concentrate on maintenance and repair.

Councillor Angell reported that he stood down as Deputy Cabinet Member to Kent Adult Social Services and KCC Older Peoples' Champion, in January. He now sits on the Local Children's Trust Board for Ashford along with an Ashford Borough Councillor. They meet with agency representatives and hold them to account for their actions in areas such as mental health for children, looking after children and children in need etc.

Mr Angell also works with the Crime Support Unit, liaising with the police, probation service and other agencies..

Councillor Angell is looking forward to the time after the Borough Council election because life is going to change. The Going Local Agenda is going to produce a Locality Board in Ashford consisting of 7 County Councillors and 7 Ashford Borough Councillors, chaired in the first instance by the Leader or ABC, although the Chairmanship may change each year. Below the Locality Board there is to be an Officer Delivery Board consisting of multi agencies tasked with the role of delivering the demands of the Locality Board.

Councillor Angell hopes that the Local Agenda will affect Parish Councils. At a local level he held a meeting recently with Parish Council Chairman in his area to enable him to hear of the problems in their parishes. He plans to hold another one in the near future.

The Members Community Grant will still be available this year as will be the £25,000 Members Highways Grant. Parish Councils are invited to bid for funds to help with their projects.

REPORT BY COUNCILLOR ALINE HICKS – ABC

Please see attached.

REPORT BY COUNCILLOR PETER DAVISION – ABC

I offer my apologies for absence due to Election pressures.

As your Borough Councillor I have enjoyed working with the Parish Council throughout the year and thank the Chairman for allowing me to submit a report.

You are all very fortunate to live in such a lovely village, above all a village with a great community spirit. I believe that one of my first responsibilities as I have often said is to help protect our environment and its ecology and preserve our village way of life. No one has disagreed with this.

It has been a busy year. At Ashford Borough Council I am a member of the Planning Committee, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Local Development Framework Task Group and the Environment Task Group, besides regular attendance at the Executive Committee and full Council. I have pressed for a more open and inclusive Council and better consultation with Borough and Parish Councillors and the public at large. I have asked for an early review of the Core Strategy as it is causing great anxiety to thousand of residents whose lives could be blighted. I have asked for the water shortage forecast by KCC and all the relevant authorities to be taken seriously. I have also pressed for a range of facilities and amenities to be provided from a Learning and Skills Centre to a popular multi-use performing arts centre.

In Woodchurch there has been much to do on Highways, including potholes. I have been and am involved in many Planning applications and related negotiations and supported the Parish Council in their attempts to control the size of the Stonebridge Care Home. I have liaised with the PCSO and village Warden to help ensure we have a safe community in which to live. I thank them for the work they have done for us.

I am on email and will be happy to answer questions. I have not only enjoyed working with the Parish Council, one of the best in the Borough, but would like to thank all its members for the work they do and the help they have given.

REPORT BY PC JUSTIN FARROW

PC Farrow and PCSO Welch updated those present on the work of the police over the last year. PC Farrow said he prefers to work the 12 – 10pm shift, he is therefore unavailable outside those times, but anyone needing to contact him can leave a message.

A lot of changes are taking place within the Police in Kent. The number of officers in this division should increase. The Senior Management Team has formulated the changes which have been put forward to Headquarters.

Crime has fallen noticeably in the Tenterden Area, although due to the high price being paid by some dealers, the theft of scrap metal is rife.

The theft of lead from the church roof was discussed and the possibility of floodlighting the church put forward as a way of stopping any more thefts.

PC Farrow reported that he has undertaken speed checks and anyone caught doing an excessive speed is taken to court.

There have been a lot of oil thefts in the area. Anyone seeing a flat bed lorry acting suspiciously should dial 999.

Operation Solar which involved multi agencies was carried out on the Brenzett Roundabout recently and resulted in a number of arrests for offences such as driving under the influence of drugs and running a vehicle on red diesel.

PC Farrow said he was involved with Kent Highways in getting the road resurfaced by the golf course and this had drastically reduced the number of accidents at this spot.

A parishioner asked whether there had been any problems recently involving the theft of lambs. PC Farrow said he had good links with the farming community and had not been made aware of any such thefts in this area.

A resident asked whether the call centre at Maidstone had been improved. There is now an Ashford and Folkestone Desk, but anyone ringing in should have as much information to hand as possible, i.e. postcode, telephone number and, if on the road, the name of the road and the nearest property, to enable the call centre operative, who may not know the area, to find it on the map.

PC Farrow and PCSO Welch both emphasised the importance of members of the public reporting anything suspicious, however minor it may appear as it gives the police an excuse for talking to someone and various arrests have been made as a result of the intelligence passed on by the public.

REPORT BY COMMUNITY WARDEN, CHRIS BANYARD

Please see attached.

Councillor Robinson welcomed Chris back and wished him a full recovery.

BYLAWS

Councillor Robinson informed those present that the Bye-Laws have been updated and are published on the website. There was also a copy in the hall for anyone who wished to look at if they wished to do so after the meeting.

OPEN FORUM

Residents of Rectory Close expressed concern at a Planning application that has been submitted for land east of the Rectory. They only received their letters on 11 April and the Parish Clerk was asked to contact ABC and request an extension on the time for consultation from 29 April to allow them time to prepare a case.

Concern was expressed at the problems with parking outside the school in the morning and afternoons. Mr Robinson will take this up with Chris Banyard in the first instance.

A resident asked about the money that KCC had invested with the Icelandic Banks. Councillor Angell updated him. A full update can be found on the KCC Website

Kent Highway Service's policy to repair potholes was questioned as it is felt that they are not being repaired well and are breaking up quite quickly, even when the new technology is used.

The problems with the development of Garden Close were discussed. The Parish Council corresponds with the planning department as necessary and will continue to do so.

The Contractors employed to roll The Green got bogged down and damaged the surface. They have repaired it and Mr Robinson says he thinks it will restore itself over the next few months.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.14 pm

Signed Dated

Woodchurch Annual Parish Meeting

Parish Council Chairman's Report 2011

1. Provision of facilities:

The Council has continued to use the village precept to maintain the Green and the village assets owned by the Council. The Green is an important part of village life and we try to ensure that it is maintained to the levels we all enjoy and that it will remain a central element of village life.

The adult exercise equipment was installed on the Green at the beginning of July last year and has received good feedback from all ages. It is well used and we wondered if we should have installed a coin operated skier, as this was particularly popular in the run up to the skiing season! I would again like to thank Mike Angell for the grant that he gave us towards the cost. Ashford Borough Council decided that the project did not meet their criteria for a grant but subsequently use us as an example of what Parish Councils can do...

2. The village precept has remained the same for the second year running. Woodchurch is midway in the league for the precept in Ashford Borough for Band D tax at £22.92, with Pluckley at £47.96 and Wye £40.74 as comparisons.
3. We have continued to liaise with Highways to report problems with the roads, obviously pot holes have been a big issue again this winter. KCC have extra money for Find and Fix and are hoping to commence operations on 18 April. They will proceed Parish by Parish.
4. Planning decisions have continued to be of major concerns in the village and the council has tried to maintain a consistent approach to planning applications following the Village Plan and The Village Design Statement. There have been many concerns expressed about the enforcement (mostly lack of enforcement) of conditions imposed on developments when permission has been given. We have tried to address these with ABC, sometimes with more success than others.
5. The Parish website has been extensively developed and we try to provide an up to date profile of the village, its services and events. However, the website depends on villagers and village organisations to provide information.
6. Our School continues to provide an excellent education for our children and the Head Teacher Mrs Patricia Hall sends her apologies for being unable to attend tonight. The Easter holidays have begun.
7. The Council carries out a 6 monthly revision of the Asset Register estimating the value of the property owned by the Council. This is required for insurance purposes. A full risk assessment of the assets as required by law is also been carried out twice a year.

8. We tried to ensure that footpaths around the village are maintained and a bridge across a stream has been repaired following complaints.
9. Village Clean Up Day Saturday 9th April
There was a good turn out, for the village clean up day and we are indebted to John Brymer for organising this yet again. A considerable mound of litter was collected, the vast majority of it rubbish thrown from cars.
Our Village litter picker and cleaner, Danny Norris, has done an excellent job keeping our village clean and litter free.
10. Finances see separate report.
11. Policing
The Parish Council has been actively liaising with the local police at a number of levels, including the Police Liaison Committee, our local Police Response Officer Justin Farrow, and our Community Warden Chris Banyard. There has been a few instances of antisocial behaviour in the village but thanks to various measures taken things have improved.

Dr Jamie Robinson
15th April 2010

Community Warden Report 2011

I'm sorry I cannot be here this evening, as I am currently still recovering from an illness. Some of you may be aware that I have been off duty since November last year, but I am pleased to say that I have returned to work on a part time basis, with a view to return full time soon. I have been back on area now for approximately two weeks and I would just like to thank all those that I have met since my return for their concern and warm welcome.

I have been working closely with many agencies including: Police, Environment, Education, Social Services and many more in dealing with issues in the village. The issues within the village that I have been involved with have ranged from anti-social behavior to returning lost pets. As community wardens our duties and remits seem to be limitless, but a lot of these is achieved through the help and support of other agencies and the people within the community. I've done many talks with groups and organisations, regarding everything from road safety, stranger danger, home security etc.

Richard Carley has kindly offered me a monthly slot at the community/scout hall to hold a surgery, allowing me to offer advice and information. This is to be the third Wednesday at two O'clock each month. Unfortunately since my absence from the village, the surgeries had ceased, but I hope to get them up and running again as soon as possible.

At last the Youth Club is up and running, and thanks to members of the community, who have made this possible, mainly Christine Saunders and the Bethersden Warden Kathy Carter. Unfortunately again due to my absence, I have not been able to give as much input with the Youth Club, but now I am back and I hope to get involved again.

If I could use this opportunity just to mention that overall, Woodchurch is a safe and happy place to live in, but we should always be on the look out for anything suspicious or unusual. Please do report anything that concerns you to the police or myself. I am in the village most days and some evenings, offering a visible presence and while on my rounds I am more than happy to pop in and say hello to any resident for whatever reason, whether it's for them to report something, ask advice or just to have a chat over a cup of tea.

Lastly I would just like to thank everybody on the parish council, who have always been supportive and make me feel welcome. I look forward to another year in the village.