

WOODCHURCH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Page 1

MINUTES

Minutes of the Woodchurch Annual Parish Meeting, held on Friday, 12 April 2013 at the Memorial Hall, Woodchurch at 7.30 pm

ATTENDANCE: Ten Members of the Public were in attendance.

The Parish Council Chairman, Julian West, 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 ABC Ward Members, Mrs Aline Hicks and Mr Peter Davison, County Councillor Mr Mike Angell, PCSO Gary Carr and our Community Warden, Chris Banyard.

Prior to the start of the meeting Chris Banyard showed a short film made by another Community Warden and entitled Beat the Bogeyman, accompanied by role play undertaken by 2 young residents of the parish, showing us how to deal with cold callers.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An Apology for Absence was received from Mr A Faiers.

MINUTES OF 2012 MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2012 were accepted and it was unanimously agreed that Mr West should sign them.

REPORT BY PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN

Councillor West reported that the members of the Parish Council have discharged their responsibility regarding the village precept to maintain The Green and assets owned by the Parish Council to the best of their ability.

We continue to liaise with the Planning Department to register our views on development within the village. We are currently working with the Borough Council exploring the possibility of low cost housing.

We would like to thank Mike Angell, our County Councillor for keeping us informed of County news and Aline Hicks and Peter Davison our Borough Councillors for supporting the Parish Council and also for putting our views forward to the Borough.

The Council carries out weekly inspections of the Play Area and twice a year we carry out a full risk assessment on all our assets, as required by the insurance company.

The Diamond Jubilee was held in June and went better than anyone could have hoped for. We had a perfect day and it was wonderful to see so many of our community on The Green. We

were lucky to receive an Arts Council grant of £10,000 which paid for Ragroof who came into the school twice before the event and taught the children how to dance the Jive. The event was captured on film by Nathan Wood from Homewood School who is a local lad.

Hopefully you have seen the DVD. Please have a look afterwards.

There are just so many people that need thanking. I would like to record the council's thanks for all the hard work that was put in before the day and also on the day. It was a credit to our village.

Since the last Parish Meeting we have seen the cleaning and re-dedication of the War Memorial. Our branch of the Royal British Legion launched a fund to refurbish the Memorial and raised over £2000, which paid for the work. There was an amount leftover which has been given to the Parish Council and earmarked for mowing and maintenance of the Memorial.

We were approached last year by Ashford Borough Council and asked whether we would be prepared to take responsibility for them. If we were not they would be closed from the end of March 2013.

I am sure we would have just have continued as normal keeping them all open and increased the precept to cover the cost, but Rob Woods spoke up and suggested keeping one toilet as a unisex/disabled toilet and using the remaining half of the building as a village hub. Since the parish council agreed to do this Rob has worked tirelessly towards the refurbishment and you can see work is now well underway. Rob will update you later in the meeting.

The council has purchased a set of mini goal posts which are on the lower part of The Green and are already being well used.

We were able to help the Memorial Hall with their planning application for the erection of building to serve tennis club.

We continue to pay for the annual maintenance of the Village clock.

The Village has looked a little brighter this year and we are grateful to the school for planting more crocuses on The Green,

The council is grateful to Mr Brymer for again organising the litter pick in Woodchurch and we would encourage everyone to come along and help as the more people who help the more of the Village we can clean up.

Finally I would like to thank Dave Grabham and David Fogden for their hard work keeping the village looking so good and my fellow councillors and Judith for their support over the past year.

PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The receipts and payments summary for the year ended 31 March 2013 was circulated.

The accounts book and the minute book are available for public inspection on request. The balance at bank as at 31 March 2012 was £46938.92.

The Precept for the year 2013/14 has been set at £20,000. We are also to receive a Concurrent Functions grant of £ 2300.00 and a Council Tax Support Grant of £1840.00 making a total of £24140.00.

A VAT claim for the year ended 31 March 2013 has been submitted for £ 1883.86.

REPORT BY CLLR MIKE ANGELL – KCC

Thank you for inviting me to speak and report on the year.

It only seems like yesterday that I was standing up in front of you. This has been a very difficult year for the county Council. KCC is now in the third year of its biggest every cost reduction programme and has made savings in the region of £270 million and reduced posts by over 1500. In this new year 13/14 we need to make further savings of £94 million. The Coalition Government needs to reduce spending to affordable levels and local government is expected to make a big contribution to this. There is an additional requirement to make further reductions in 14/15 of another 2%.

However this has been done without affecting the front line services such as Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Highways, Libraries and Education and Youth Services. KCC are not closing any libraries.

I am always asked about Iceland. So far we have made a full recovery from Glitnir, 75% from Heritable and about 50% from Landsbanki. So far £37.7 million has been recovered and the remainder including interest is expected back over the next 2 years.

For my part I am a member of the Cabinet Community Services Committee, Chairman of the Ashford Youth Advisory Group, Ashford Locality Board, Joint Transportation Board, Kent and Medway Fire Authority, Sports, Leisure and Culture Panes and the Ashford Local Children's Trust Board.

I have left the Children's Trust to the last on the list as it is important to note that the serious criticism by OFSTED in 2010 has now been taken up and the matters put right. The Board was set up to make sure by scrutiny and oversight of all the agencies and to monitor the performance. This has been a successful move.

Do I have time to devote to Ashford? Yes I do and I now work mainly from home and am able to react quickly to any queries which come my way. For example highways problems, School Appeals, planning issue. This is a major change in work style whereas I was previously expected to spend 4 days a week at County Hall! It is so important and pleasurable to be able to help where it is needed.

The Olympics and Paralympics played a largish part in my life in 2102, helping to support the School games and our competitors. Fortunately the Leader has been convinced that this panel will continue with the Rio Olympics in mind.

I am mindful that there are a number of improvements needed for the local community and I hope that I can offer support in one way or another.

Attending Parish Council meetings is an excellent way of keeping in touch and I must congratulate the chairman and his team for the excellent service to the Parish. It is a pleasure to be able to work together.

REPORT BY COUNCILLOR ALINE HICKS AN PETER DAVISON – ABC

Councillor Hicks reported that this is a joint ward served by herself and Councillor Davison.

Councillor Hicks is the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Policy and Housing Services which allows her to attend any meeting of concern to these issues in the Borough. She is also the Borough Trustee on the Leisure Trust and represents ABC on the Marsh Link and River Stour IDB.

The Mash Link could be facing interesting times with the forthcoming Lydd Airport expansion.

The new recycling scheme in the Borough is underway and Councillor Hicks is arranging to meet with the organiser to discuss the project. Two hundred and fifty residents have assisted collection in the Borough.

The new Bedroom Tax does not apply to anybody of pensionable age and residents with children in the armed forces. Information regarding this issue has been published in the Ashford Voice.

Mrs Hicks reported that she was pleased to have been invited to attend a tea party arranged by the Housing Department for Ashford's Oldest resident who was celebrating her 103rd birthday.

With regard to sheltered housing we have 450 bungalows and flats and 750 dwellings for older people. Luckley House in Wye and Farrow Court, Stanhope are undergoing refurbishment.

Mrs Hicks said she was very pleased to have been involved in getting a just and reasonable settlement for Woodchurch with regard to the takeover of the public toilet block.

The proposed development in Front Road has gone to appeal and we await the outcome.

The officers in the Planning Department at ABC are looking into concerns that people other than those named on the Planning application have moved onto Cob Tree Meadow.

Councillor Hicks said the New Homes Act gives greater protection to residents of mobile home parks. The Legal Department at ABC have studied the act. We have 3 sites in the Borough.

Councillor Hicks thanked the members of the Parish Council for their work over the last year.

Councillor Davison reported that he is on the Planning committee and had helped the villages where he was able with contentious planning applications. He is also on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and he said the officers at ABC welcome the input of this Committee as they feel it enables them to improve their service.

Following the death of the Council Leader, the Borough is waiting for the confirmation of the election of his replacement. It is expected that there will be some changes with the Cabinet being increased from 8 to 10 members, with changes amongst the officers.

Mr Davison was involved with the planning application for the Care Home as it was contentious due to the size of the development.

Councillor Davison complimented the members of the Parish Council on coming up with an imaginative solution for the use of the public toilet building.

The proposed Chilmington Green and Sevington developments will not affect Woodchurch directly but they will have a tremendous impact on the Borough as a whole. Chilmington Green will increase the amount of traffic in the area and the proposed warehouse at Sevington will cover 30 acres with a massive building which will be taller than Ashford Parish Church. The employees will not be allowed to speak during their shifts and they will have to be tagged whilst working so that they can be traced. They will also be employed through an agency so that they can be easily hired and fired.

Councillor Davison thanked Mr and Mrs Mitchell of Shirkoak Park for their hospitality during meetings to discuss problems being experienced by residents.

REPORT BY PCSO GARY CARR

In the past month the following crimes have been recorded in the ward:-

In Shadoxhurst there has been articles reported stolen from a shed, theft of agricultural gates and criminal damage to a house and car.

In Woodchurch there has been a burglary to a property and an incident of a break in to an unlocked outbuilding. A trailer was also stolen from outside an address in the village.

In Hamstreet, oil was stolen from a domestic tank in a residential garden and a mobile phone taken from the recreation ground when left unattended.

There has been a burglary and robbery at Stubbs Cross Post Office and theft of logs from a farm in Warehorne.

There have been two incidents of fly tipping at Birchett Lane and Hamstreet which have been passed to environmental health at Ashford Council. Nuisance vehicles have also been reported around Hamstreet and Shadoxhurst's byways.

Reports of anti-social behaviour in Fagg's Wood have been followed up and a male spoken to about his actions. After reports of youths throwing stones in Redbrook Street, two youths were stopped and catapults taken off them. Their parents were spoken to and the catapults destroyed. Please make sure that outbuildings are secured with good quality locks to prevent theft during the spring months. Serial numbers recorded can help in recovery of items if they are stolen.

REPORT BY SIMON GODFREY, CHAIRMAN OF WOODCHURCH SCHOOL GOVERNORS

Mr Godfrey reported that the main concern of the Governors is the education of the children in the school and their role is to hold the teachers and Head Teacher to account and ensure that they provide the best service possible. The Governors try to stretch the teachers who in turn help the children to achieve the best they can depending on their individual ability

He said the school is doing well and they are hoping for to receive a positive OFSTED report in the next few weeks.

The amount of funding received by the school depends on the number of children attending and so it is important that the numbers do not drop. The school has the capacity for 140 children, with a maximum class size of 30, but some of these have to come from other villages and Ashford, as there are not village children to fill the places.

The parking outside the school continues to be a problem.

Parental involvement is not a given and some parents do not spend time helping their children with their homework and reading. Forty villagers give their time helping the children with their reading, but more people are needed and Mr Godfrey asked anyone with spare time to consider helping.

The Governors do not intend to apply for Academy status at the moment. They are waiting to see what other schools do.

REFURBISHMENT OF THE PUBLIC TOILETS

Mr Woods updated residents on the project to refurbish the public toilet block and turn part of it into the Woodchurch Community Information Exchange.

He is currently applying to Company’s House and it is hoped that the company which will run the project will be set up by 1 July.

The Shadow Board is due to meet to establish the ongoing budget for works and oversee the appointment of a co-ordinator, website, purchase of office furniture etc.

A cleaner has been appointed on a trial basis until June.

Mr Woods emphasised that the members of the Parish Council did not take this project on lightly. A lot of thought was put into it before councillors finally agreed to take the toilets over from ABC.

The key drivers were:-

Localism

Value for Money

Cost to Local Tax Payer.

It was estimated that if the Parish Council had simply taken on the toilets and run them as they had been by run ABC it would have resulted in a 50% increase in the precept.

OPEN FORUM

Mr Thorp thanked members of the Parish Council for their help and support with recent planning applications submitted for work to the Memorial Hall.

Signed Dated