

WOODCHURCH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

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MINUTES

Minutes of the Woodchurch Annual Parish Meeting, held on Friday, 11 April 2014 at the Memorial Hall, Woodchurch at 7.30 pm

ATTENDANCE: 12 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 and Mrs Aline Hicks and Mr Peter Davison,

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An Apology for Absence was received from County Councillor Mr M Angell, Parish Councillors, Mrs G Davies and Mr A Faiers and PCSO Carr.

MINUTES OF 2013 MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2013 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.

We have had inspections undertaken on the trees on The Green and the Pine tree opposite the hall has had a dangerous branch removed.

I hope you have seen our new bus shelter opposite the Doctors surgery. This came about following a request from a member of the public.

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

The council would like to thank Mr Brymer for organising the litter pick in again last year.

I would also like to thank, on behalf of the Council, David Fogden for his hard work over the last 2 years. Dave has decided to hang up his coat, so we now have a new litter champion, Robert Harris. If you see him please make a point of talking to him.

We would also like to thank Dave Grabham for helping to keep The Green looking so good.

I would like to thank the Councillors for their support over the past year, not forgetting Judith who is a mine of information and a great support for any Chairman.

Thank you

PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The receipts and payments summary for the year ended 31 March 2014 was circulated.

The accounts book and the minute book are available for public inspection on request. The balance at bank as at 31 March 2014 was £46579.22.

The Precept for the year 2014/15 has been set at £20,000. We are also to receive a Concurrent Functions grant of £ 1910.00 and a Council Tax Support Grant of £1420.00 making a total of £23330.00

A VAT claim for the year ended 31 March 2014 has been submitted for £1532.35.

REPORT BY CLLR MIKE ANGELL – KCC

As you may know KCC is required to cut the budget by £270 million pounds over a three year period. This is an amount of money that is difficult for people not involved in local government to understand. However it has resulted in a major transformation of the council and that is in progress at the moment. Phase one of three phases has been completed with a reorganisation of the strategic director level and has reduced the number of directors and areas of responsibility. This means that they are doing more for less. It should not and must not affect the efficient delivery of high quality front line services, such as Highways, Social Care, Education, Youth Services and Libraries.

I normally each year report on the Iceland issue and this year I can report that £42million has been returned to KCC and the remainder of the £50 million is trickling in monthly. It is expected that there will be interest earned on top. Details can be obtained on the KCC website.

We are all concerned about the situation on the damage to our roads following on from the dreadful weather in the winter. Our partner company (Enterprise, owned by Amey) has the job of fixing the potholes and repairing the damage. KCC has allocated an extra £3million, plus a grant from central government of £8million to do this. It does mean that Enterprise can now put extra gangs on the 5000 miles of roads in Kent and you will notice that there are a lot of temporary road closures to ensure that it is being done as quickly as possible.

For my own part I am involved with Health Overview and Scrutiny. In this area there are concerns about Children and Adolescents Mental Health, Patient Transport and with the reorganisation of the NHS that appropriate services are in place for outpatients.

Also I sit on the KCC Planning Committee which is addressing Waste, Schools and KCC Extra Care facilities.

For the last three months I have been Chairing a Select Committee on procurement and Commissioning of KCC services which will report to County Council in May.

In addition, I continue to be a member of the board of the Kent and Medway Fire Authority and also involved with the rail partnership.

Parish councils are very important and may I congratulate and thank you all for the valuable voluntary work that you do.

Please contact me with any questions by email on mike.angell@kent.gov.uk.

REPORT BY COUNCILLOR ALINE HICKS AND PETER DAVISON – ABC

Councillor Davison reported that he had supported the project to turn the public toilet block in to the Woodchurch Information Centre and was pleased to see that it was an asset to the village. Woodchurch is a very important tourist area and ABC had to be persuaded that the public houses did not want members of the public going in merely to use the toilets.

Mr Davison said he had listened and tried to support the council's views with regard to individual applications.

There have not been any issues at Shirkoak Park recently.

The application at Glebe Farm in Shadoxhurst came before Shadoxhurst as it is close to the Parish Boundary and Mr Davison explained the major issues to those present.

Woodchurch is one of the very few 'Dark Sky' areas in the country and the Dark Skies project which is supported by ABC is very interesting and exciting.

With regard to Ashford, there has been a rebirth in interest in the railway museum. A committee was set up some years ago to make space on the old Klondyke Site for a museum. Following a delay due to financial problems, the project has been reborn and will now be an international centre for railways.

Despite problems with the agreement between ABC, Bretts and the developer, taster sessions for water sports are to be held at Conningbrook at the end of May.

A central cinema is to be built at the end of Elwick Road.

The Chilmington Green development is to go ahead and ABC is insisting that the development must be top quality.

The name of the Cheesemans Green development has been changed to Finbury.

Mr Davison is trying to ensure that the potholes are repaired.

Mr Davison reported that he has given the Royal British Legion a grant to help towards an event to commemorate the 1914-1918 War.

Mr Davison congratulated the Parish Council for doing an excellent job.

Mrs Hicks reported that ABC's portion of the Council Tax had not increased for the 2014/2015 year, although increases by other authorities meant it had risen overall by 1.9%.

Charities will still be able to claim rate relief.

There have been a few teething problems with the new waste collection but 95% of people seem to be happy with the scheme.

There has been a government consultation regarding the imposition of a nation standard for room size. ABC has its own SPD seeking better space and layout standards for new residential developments, which has been successful. Housing associations have different prescribed rules. If government policy changes it could mean that private residencies are smaller than council houses.

Ashford Borough Council has consulted with pretty well all parishes for their views following the call for sites.

Mrs Hicks reported that she went to a conference in London on the Duty to Co-operate. The Chief Planning Officer for the Government gave dire warnings that as localism devolves responsibility to the districts they need to have their own economic area and the cabinet has given authority to officers to start formal negotiations with neighbouring borough and district councils with regard to future development.

The Mobile Home Act of 2013 states that Site Rules need to be set out by the owners of sites in consultation with residents. Ashford Borough Council needs to set the fees and condition of the licence. Mrs Hicks' department arranged an information talk regarding this and a meeting with representatives from Residents Associations has been arranged for the beginning of June.

As Mrs Hicks' portfolio is housing, she said she was very pleased to report that the flagship project in Stanhope is proceeding well and includes the Dennes Building Academy.

Woodchurch Information Centre seems to be a good omen for the village, but Mrs Hicks advised councillors to secure a sound business plan for the future as grant funding will cease.

Mrs Hicks said she recently attended the draw which was held to raise money for the replacement of the asbestos hut at the Memorial Hall and this showed how involved people are in Woodchurch as the door to door collections raised £4000+. This lead her to say what a friendly village Woodchurch is, personified by the members of the Parish Council who are very much involved in local projects.

REPORT BY CHRIS BANYARD, COMMUNITY WARDEN

Mr Banyard was unable to attend the meeting.

REPORT BY SIMON GODFREY, CHAIRMAN OF WOODCHURCH SCHOOL GOVERNORS

Mr Godfrey reported that the School received a Good Ofsted report, which is a testament to all the hard work of the staff and governors but everyone involves is striving for an Outstanding Report at the next inspection.

Staff are trying to encourage more input from parents who do not fully engage with the education of their children.

Forty villagers now go into the school each week to listen to the children read and staff have reported that this has had a tremendous impact on the children’s confidence. The improvement in reading standards has been so marked that the school is running out of books. The school would like to increase the number of helpers. Anyone who volunteers is asked to pay the £10 fee for a CRB check.

Miss Hall has resigned her position as Head Teacher with effect from the end of August this year and her deputy, Miss Harrington has been appointed to replace her. Interviews will now take place for a replacement Deputy Head.

Mrs Hicks urged staff to claim the pupil premium.

A discussion took place on the size of the school, especially in light of proposed development in the village. At the moment there are 145 children on the role and Mr Godfrey said they could take 150 but no more as any more would mean another member of staff would have to be employed and that would not be financially viable.

OPEN FORUM

Mr West reminded those present that the Parish Council elections are due to take place in May 2015.

The condition of the notice board at the bottom of Front Road was raised and the meeting was informed that Councillor Woods is investigating a replacement board.

A resident put forward the idea of a Community Award and Youth Award, both to be presented by the Parish Council each year at the APM.

It was reported that Mr Loyns, had been invited to a Buckingham Palace Garden Party.

Mr Thorp reported that an exhibition was to be held in the Village Hall and Annexe on 18 October to commemorate World War 1.

A parade is to be held in Hamstreet on 13 April to commemorate Flight Lt Johnson, who crashed his plane at Johnsons corner, to avoid the village, 70 years ago to the day.

Signed Dated