

WOODCHURCH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

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MINUTES

Minutes of the Woodchurch Annual Parish Meeting, held on Friday, 20 April 2018 at the Memorial Hall, Woodchurch at 7.00 pm

ATTENDANCE: 54 Members of the Public were in attendance and 8 Parish Councillors.

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, County Councillor, Mr Mike Angell and Mrs Judith Batt, Parish Clerk.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An Apology for Absence was received from Mr N Jones, Borough Councillor, Mr G Bradford and Mrs J Haynes.

MINUTES OF 2017 MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2017 were accepted and it was unanimously agreed that Mr West should sign them.

Proposed Mr Woods

Seconded Mr Wood

UPDATE ON WOODCHURCH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Please see attached.

BOROUGH COUNCILLORS HICKS TO TAKE QUESTIONS ON HER REPORT CIRCULATED PRIOR TO THE MEETING

Please see reports attached.

A resident was concerned that staving off the development in the centre of the village (off Lower Road) was at the expense of the land adjacent to Bridge Close.

Mrs Hicks explained that the decision not to include the land off Lower Road was taken by ABC, following receipt of a large number of letters objecting to the proposal.

Ashford Borough Council is concerned that they are not getting their message out to residents of the borough and are going to distribute a brochure entitled "Ashford You" to each property in the borough on a quarterly basis for the next year.

Mr West thanked Mrs Hicks and Mr Bradford for their work with the council.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR ANGELL TO TAKE QUESTIONS ON HIS REPORT CIRCULATED PRIOR TO THE MEETING

Please see report attached.

A resident pointed out that the work recently completed to the carriageway on Susans Hill has had to be repaired already as some areas are being ripped up by the tractors and trailers using the road. Mr Angell said he would ask KHS to return and repair the damage.

Residents questioned whether KHS gives value for money in the way its employees repair the potholes as the contractors don't prepare the potholes prior to repairing and the holes need repairing regularly.

Mr West pointed out that there are still areas of subsidence along the Shadoxhurst to Woodchurch Road.

It was agreed that the problems with the local roads are caused by the large lorries using them.

Mr Angell said that residents have to remember that Lower Road is a main trackway from Ashford to Tenterden. He said he was pleased to see people parking along the road as it reduces the speed of the traffic. He has discussed speeding problem with the Chief Inspector and his deputy and the police are having problems coping as some of their officers have been transferred to deal with immigration problems. We need to educate young drivers to drive within the speed limits.

A resident questioned why KCC can't delegate money to allow parish councils to organise pot hole repairs within their village. The reason is that the work has to be done to a certain standard by professionals.

Mr West thanked Mr Angell for his work with the council.

COUNCILLOR WEST TO TAKE QUESTIONS ON HIS REPORT CIRCULATED PRIOR TO THE MEETING

Please see report attached.

A resident asked whether the stumps of the hedges that have been cut down are going to be left and cut every year. Mr West confirmed that this was the plan.

PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The receipts and payments summary for the year ended 31 March 2018 was circulated.

The accounts book and the minute book are available for public inspection on request.

The balance at bank as at 31 March 2018 was £47178.25.

The Precept for the year 2018/19 has been set at £24,800. We are also to receive a Concurrent Functions grant of £ 1150.00 and a Council Tax Support Grant of £1080.00 making a total of £27030.00.

A VAT claim for the year ended 31 March 2015 has been submitted for £ 643.41.

Propose Mr Wood Second Mr Straton

ANY OTHER REPORTS

Please see report from PCSO Katherine Richards attached.

FUTURE OF WOODCHURCH POST OFFICE

Mr Dudman explained that there is a possibility that, in March 2019, Post Office Ltd might remove the retainer currently paid to Post Masters and increase their transaction fees. As the footfall in the post office is falling, the result of such a change would mean that the current business will no longer be profitable and Woodchurch Post Office will close.

Mr Dudman reported the situation to the Parish Council and after discussion it was decided that the directors of the WCIE should investigate the possibility of moving the post office into the Information Centre, provided there is no viable commercial interest. A business plan has been produced taking the fall in footfall into account. The directors are confident that they have taken all possible eventualities into account. Mr Dudman has offered to act as Counter Clerk for 3 months should the transfer take place.

The inside of the Information Centre will be remodelled to allow for a counter. Maximum use will be made of the wall space to allow for retail sales and an area will be available for use by the Information Centre, with plans for a storage area for parcels which can also be used in the event that a member of the Information Centre needs to have a confidential conversation with someone. The Post Office has exacting standards for the layout.

The sorting office will also be closed, and the postmen will sort the post in Ashford and bring it to Woodchurch.

In order to move the post office to the Information Centre, it will be necessary to increase the precept by up to £15,000 to cover the overheads.

A letter explaining the situation was sent to all residents and a separate letter was sent to 5 businesses in the villages asking whether they would be interested in running the post office from their premises.

Those present at the meeting expressed concern as to what would happen if the post office was moved to the Information Centre and subsequently made a loss. Councillors assured them that a comprehensive business plan has been put together.

Residents were assured that the public toilet would remain open.

Once residents were satisfied with the answers to their questions, Mr Christopher Dudman proposed that a request for a Parish Poll to ascertain whether the residents of Woodchurch would be prepared to pay a higher local tax to relocate and maintain the Post Office facility in the Information Centre, should be submitted to Ashford Borough Council. This subject to Post Office approval and provided that one of the businesses in the village does not submit an expression of interest (or if they do, that they are unable to satisfy Post Office franchise specifications).

The question to be asked of residents is as follows:

Would you support an increase in the parish element of your council tax in the region of 34p a week order to maintain a Post Office in Woodchurch, if there is no viable commercial interest?

YES NO

Mr West, in his capacity as Chairman of Woodchurch Parish Council, agreed to the request for a Parish Poll and will notify the Returning Officer of the following information

- the question
- the name and address of the proposer of the question
- the date of the parish meeting

OPEN FORUM

Mr Angell reported that a large number of events are being held across the county to commemorate the end of the First World War and offered to help with any events being organised in Woodchurch. Silent Soldier, Silent Sailor and Silent Active Person from the Commonwealth silhouettes are available to be purchased.

Funding is available if a third person submits the application.

There being no other question the meeting closed at 8.15 pm.

Signed Dated