

ASHURST AND COLBURY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 10TH APRIL 2007 AT THE CHURCH ROOMS COLBURY

Present: Councillors S. Arnold (in the Chair), S. Ardern, D. Bryant, A. Holdsworth, R. Judd, W. Kewley.

In Attendance: Parish Clerk L. Griggs, County Councillor M Kendal, District Councillors L. Puttock and D Tipp, WPC Karen Wright and 11 members of the public.

Apologies for absence: Councillor P. Sopowski

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting especially the County Councillor and the District Councillors and said it was very pleasing to have them attend our meeting when they had so many other meetings in their diaries.

MINUTES

The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 19th April 2006, having previously been circulated, it was Proposed by Councillor Bryant, seconded by Councillor Holdsworth and **RESOLVED** unanimously that they be approved and signed.

There were no matters arising.

REPORT from WPC Karen Wright

I am pleased to be able to meet the Council and residents and hope to be seen in the village more during the coming days.

The main change in policing is the introduction of a new beat being Beat 8. Currently Ashurst and Colbury is part of Beat 5 which includes Totton and since Totton has more criminal activity than Ashurst it obviously gets more attention. With the new beat it means that me and the new PCSO will be able to concentrate more on Ashurst and Colbury.

While this parish has an excellent record in regard to violent crime there is a growth in vandalism which we are tackling. Past Crime Statistics are not too helpful as they cover the wider area but with the new beat they will be more meaningful to residents.

I am discussing with your Chairman the possibility of re-introducing a 'surgery' if there is a requirement for it.

If anyone wishes to talk to me I will be here for a while and when I leave I will be outside if you wish to talk more privately.

The Chairman thanked WPC Wright for her comments and said she looked forward to a good working relationship over coming months and years.

REPORT from Reverend Tom Johns

The Chairman said that Rev. Johns was now on leave and asked the Clerk if he would read the report.

I'm pleased to report that the Village Church has, once again, had a busy year ministering to thousands of people who have passed through its doors over the last twelve months. We have managed to maintain three services every Sunday (a rare achievement for a village church these days) with modern and traditional services. Added to which there has been a

good number of baptisms, weddings and funerals. Members of the Youth Club have led us in two special services, and we have had large attendances at the Mothering Sunday, Easter, Harvest and Christmas services. We experimented with a candle lit service at Candlemas, and hope to have carols by candlelight at Christmas.

In the week before Easter four hundred children from Foxhills Infants and Foxhills Junior Schools came to the Church and asked some penetrating questions about the Christian faith. We would like to see some of them at Explorers on Sunday mornings where they can discover more about Christian living. The increasing number of teenagers who attend the Youth Club on Thursday evenings continues to give us joy. Instead of loitering in the recreation ground they spend a purposeful evening with dedicated youth club leaders here in the Church Rooms.

Since my last report to you new members have joined the choir and this often means that chairs have to be added to the choir pews. The Social Committee has increased in number and produced a number of impressive lunches and dinners which have been much appreciated. The Buildings & Fabric Team has doubled in size – they are responsible for providing our new car park, and they are about to re-lay the paving slabs outside the Church Rooms. In the coming year we hope to replace the heating system in the Church and renew the lighting. The Buildings & Fabric Team are planning to extend the Church Rooms.

Thanks to Bob Coundley our new organ is safely installed and we hope that you will support the concert that we are having on Saturday 19th May.

We join with the Parish Council in wanting the Hospital Chapel to be returned to the purpose for which it was created – the worship of Almighty God and the fellowship of the local community.

At the Annual Parochial Church Meeting last week Eileen Harris and Pattie Stevens were re-elected Churchwardens and five new members were voted on to the Parochial Church Council. We are urgently in need of a Treasurer and will value any help that villagers can give in finding a suitable person.

We value our links with the Parish Council and continue to pray for Councillors at the 8am service every Sunday. Thank you for all that you have achieved in the last year. We pray that God will bless your endeavours in the coming year, and we look forward to working with you.

REPORT from Parish Council Chairman Sally Arnold

I find these reports very difficult - as we achieve so much in a year it is very hard to condense into a few minutes.

With this team of Councillors and our two District Councillors support - Ashurst is known for being one of the finest parish councils in the district. This I am sure is due to the efficiency of our clerk and team work.

This year we have seen the creation of the parish plan. The questionnaire was well thought out and encouraged by the 76% return. I am sure residents are eagerly awaiting the results. We are now part of the National Park. If you recall Mr. Steve Trotter gave his report to this meeting last year. Difficulties have occurred - but - the National Park team are endeavouring to put matters right. One area they have covered well and that is the introduction of monthly updates on enforcements.

A small observation on planning - - since December 2005 there have been 11 new properties built in our village. You ask yourself how and where? But it has happened. There are 857 dwellings now in the village.

We were all very distressed to see that our campaign to keep Snowdon house for rehabilitation did not succeed. Maybe we will have more luck with the chapel.

Vandalism is still a major problem for our residents but with the new police system maybe together we can undertake and try to correct. We have always worked alongside the police force and endeavour to assist them in anyway. I wish to thank the residents who take the time and trouble to report these unpleasant incidents.. – and it is vital that you also obtain an incident number. This way the police can monitor the amount of anti social behaviour we have in Ashurst & Colbury.

The cycle path has been discussed and re-discussed over the past years and without doubt when the clerk and I met with highways in February of this year it was commencing in March -- however it **should** commence very shortly and should be completed in June, along with our long awaited gateway sign. The new safety barriers over the railway line will be designed and in place this year.

Speed and the influx of extra traffic on the A35 is still an ongoing problem and likely to be so for some time. We have just had the summary results of the re routeing trial in Summer 2006 which according to their statistics appear to make little difference. Although we as residents would beg to differ. This is not a closed agenda and can assure the public that this council will pressure HCC to get the best possible solution for our village.

On the leisure side we have celebrated the second Ashurst Olympics – this time reduced to the park but still most enjoyable. The hanging basket and the pumpkin carving competitions are still thriving and of course at the end of the year - the Carols in the dark with the Colbury Church Choir and the New Forest Brass band. It was unfortunate that some unpleasant person decided they could earn money from pretending to be a collector – but like the normal community spirit customary in Ashurst - we did not let this spoil our evening.

We are very fortunate to have our own Newsletter – Margaret Weston has achieved so much for us in the content and presentation. We are amazed how people contribute articles month after month for the newsletter for our enjoyment. Long may this continue.

Before closing and on behalf of the members of this present Council we wish to thank all residents who come to our meetings –

- it gives us encouragement to keep going when times are tough –
- it gives us confidence when residents support us. –
- it gives us the opportunity to listen and to act on problems that we may not always be aware of.

REPORT from County Councillor M. Kendall

I would like to talk firstly about our social care services which is our main area of spend. The Council has not and cannot cut Social Care services. It has a statutory obligation to provide Social Care for all who qualify for it. That is why last year it spent over £11.5 million extra on care services for the increased number of people that qualified for care over and above the number that were budgeted for this care, based on previous years turnover figures.

The Council has not only increased the budget for care services over the sums provided by Central government over the last three years but it has built 10 new nursing homes for the elderly and infirm and upgraded and completely refurbished 11 more existing homes to provide better accommodation for the people who need it and replace homes which are no longer fit for purpose thus providing many more beds for the elderly and infirm. The new homes provide some 500 beds. The total cost of the programme was £50 million in partnership with the NHS. It is providing new and innovative services allowing a range of choices for people who need care: Individual budgets for those who can, to provide the care services they need for themselves; 'Extra care' so that elderly couples or individuals, can move into rented sheltered accommodation, to look after themselves in warden controlled accommodation, and special innovative services to ensure that people are able to continue to live independently at home for as long as they are able to with adequate supervision. Efficiency savings across the County council as a whole of £25 million from procurement and back office functions have been made and will be spent on improving front line services and to contain increases in the Council Tax.

Secondly I would like to mention our continued investment in Highways, particularly maintenance. The squeeze on all our other budgets as a result of the extra requirements of Social Care, means that there is less than the inflation increase available for all budgets under this heading. However, we have protected the Maintenance budget as neglect of the asset of some 5000 miles of roads in Hampshire would store up trouble for the future. Potholes usually become very visible after wet weather and we patch these on an emergency temporary basis until a more permanent repair is done. Thus at any one time there will be a pothole visible somewhere for a short time after being reported, but the ongoing maintenance resurfacing programme is continual according to age and need. Our Maintenance contract runs to over £30 million per year.

Thirdly I should like to report that the amount of waste now going to landfill has been reduced to only 18%, due to the high recycling rates of over 30% with the balance going to incineration to provide electricity to over 40,000 homes. This has taken considerable investment over the last 6 years but is now bearing fruit as Landfill taxes start to cost Local Authorities dear.

Finally, could I mention the refurbishment of one of our staff office buildings in Winchester. It is not, as alleged, a £43 million building for Conservative Councillors containing a luxury office suite for the Conservative leader. A new building is not being constructed. Ashburton Court is being refurbished using capital from the sale of unwanted assets to save on repair bills impacting on the Council Tax. Repairs to the building would have to be made on annual basis and would need a budget of many £millions per year and be a charge on the Council Tax. So dilapidated is the building that it is valued at zero. Selling off unused assets pays for the refurbishment out of the Capital receipt without impacting on Council Tax. The refurbishment of the building bringing it up to 21st Century standards of building and sustainability values it at over £30 million and the extra accommodation for another 400 staff allows leases on other office accommodation to be relinquished thus saving on annual rental and reducing this charge on the Council Tax. The refurbishment is not costing £43 million. It will not have a new "luxury office suite" for the Council leader,

neither is it to provide accommodation for Conservative Councillors. It is to provide office accommodation for 1,000 council employees, 600 of whom currently work in Ashburton Court and the other 400 will come from accommodation that is currently being leased, in order to save on rentals - thus saving Council tax.

REPORT from District Councillor L. Puttock

The past year seems to have flown by and brings to an end my first four year term as your District Councillor. I am often asked by my friends and residents how I view my time as a District Councillor. My reply is perhaps similar to many in my position in that there is a degree of satisfaction when the result of a project is favourable but an element of frustration when progress cannot be made quickly enough on projects that at first seem simple, logical and straightforward.

The major local issues this year appear to centre on planning decisions, traffic, both speed and volume, and the increase in vandalism. You will not be surprised to learn that similar situations apply in the adjoining parishes which Derek and I represent. The good news is that all three of those areas of concern are under review at national and local level and hopefully changes will be made in due course to address these matters.

I have been pleased to assist residents with a number of planning application queries and issues and have supported your Council in its negotiations with Hampshire Highways over the motorway signage pilot scheme and in its protest to the Primary Care Trust over its decision to close the Stroke Unit at Ashurst Hospital and replace it with a Birthing Unit. Regretfully overspends by these trusts have resulted in a considerable cut back in local health provision which I am sure we will regret in the future.

The proposed controversial cycle path between Ashurst and Lyndhurst has again suffered further delays and we have yet to see any proposals from the developer for affordable housing near the Station.

I serve on four committees within the New Forest District Council and also on three outside bodies which tend to keep me out of mischief most of the time. The District Council tax rise this year of 1.9% is well below inflation and indicates prudent housekeeping for yet another year. As to the future I can only foresee inevitable increase in legislation covering the use of the motor car, higher utility charges and stricter controls on waste and other green issues.

My thanks to your Chairman, Clerk and Councillors for all their excellent work and support once again this year.

District Councillor Tipp added the following comments

The Examination in Public of the South-East Plan has just been completed after four months. Nearly 1,000 people from a wide range of organisations gave their views on the Plan during hearings held by a panel of three independent planning inspectors in Woking, Chichester, Maidstone and Reading. The Panel will publish a report with their recommendations on the Plan. This is expected in July 2007. The Secretary of State will consider the Panel's recommendations and publish proposed changes for consultation, probably in September. I have a fear that the inspectors may recommend increased housing numbers in line with proposals made in a report commissioned by the government.

Once again the District Council's rural grant scheme has enabled me and Les to support the community in the village. This year our combined total of £333 has been put towards the new scout HQ in Ashurst.

Finally I would like to thank the Chairman, Clerk and all Parish Councillors for their excellent work and support throughout the year.

The Chairman thanked both Councillors for their continued support and regular attendance at the parish meetings.

REPORT from Mrs Ann Arscott, Minor Authorities Governor of Foxhills Junior School

I am pleased to be giving this annual report as the Parish Council's representative on the Board of Governors of Foxhills Junior School

I summarise the school's activities since my last report in April 2006 as follows:

- Total number of pupils in September 2006, 209 Boys, 185 Girls, 394 pupils in all. In common with many schools in this area our school roll is decreasing, we have approximately 30 less pupils this year than last year.
- We employ a total of 21 teaching staff, plus the headteacher, Michael Espezel. There are 17 learning support assistants, 5 administration staff, a site supervisor plus 3 cleaners, and 9 lunchtime supervisory assistants. School dinners are provided by Hampshire Caterers.
- Pupils come mainly from Foxhills and Eling Infant schools, but also from other infant schools in Totton and the Waterside
- We continue to concentrate on consolidating and raising standards in the core subjects of English, Maths and Science, and to review and develop cross curricular links e.g. use of good English to describe scientific procedures, write recipes and letters. We are very pleased that the hard work of all staff resulted in good Standard Attainment Test results in 2006, particularly in writing.
- We have installed interactive whiteboards in 8 classrooms in the lower school, and hope to extend this facility to the upper school. These enable teachers to use computer and internet facilities for classroom teaching, and the governors will shortly be attending a classroom session on their use. We are grateful to the School Association for raising funds for this project.
- We continue to use field studies to support the curriculum, both locally and further afield in Devon and Normandy, France. Theatre groups and children's authors visit the school, the latter in association with Book Week
- The school's recent production 'Aladdin' attracted appreciative audiences. The children's performances were impressive – no missed cues or forgotten lines - and were a tribute to the hard work of all involved. Rehearsals start in the Autumn Term and continue weekly up to the production at the end of the Spring Term.
- Extra curricular clubs and sporting activities involve the majority of children. Our football team has done particularly well by reaching the national finals for this age group.
- Parents' support is vital to the school through School Association fundraising activities, helping in school, and encouraging their children to make good use of the excellent facilities and teaching in Foxhills.

The Board of Governors is comprised of:

- Three LEA governors appointed by the local County Councillor
- Four governors representative of the local community (one appointed by the Parish Council)
- Five governors elected by parents
- Two governors elected by the teaching staff
- One governor elected by non-teaching staff
- The head teacher and deputy head attend all meetings

During the last year governors have undertaken the following activities:

- Shared committee work, including performance management, budget setting, health and safety, and special responsibilities such as governor for Special Needs, and for Able Children
- Worked with the head teacher to complete the School Self Evaluation Form
- Attended training sessions run by HCC Governor Services
- Helped in the classroom, and on school visits and sports days
- Revised and updated the School Prospectus
- Written the School Profile. This is an on line document which replaces the Governors' Annual Report to parents, and outlines key school activities and results and may be viewed via our school website
- Reviewed school policy documents

Pedestrian Crossing on the A 35 at Colbury Hall

We would like to thank the Parish Council for its representations to the County Council concerning a traffic light controlled crossing for children attending both Foxhills and Hounslowdown Schools. We hope that the combined representations from schools, parents, and the Parish Council may result in a favourable outcome.

Traffic in Foxhills Lane

The governors are well aware that the twice daily traffic problems in Foxhills Lane impinge on local residents, as well as presenting a hazard for children going to and from school. New Forest Council refused our request to implement a limited parking restriction on the north side of Foxhills Lane in the vicinity of the school entrance. We had hoped such a restriction would improve safety for children, maintain clear access through Foxhills, and spare residents the problem of cars parked on the grass verges.

We frequently remind parents of the need to drive and park safely in Foxhills lane, and our new Community Police Officer, Karen Wright, is present in Foxhills Lane as often as her duties permit.

Finally....

I would like to thank the head teacher, Mike Espezel, all the staff, pupils and their parents for making Foxhills an interesting and exciting school in which to learn.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Arscott for her report and for her work on behalf of the school and village.

MATTERS RAISED BY ELECTORS OF THE PARISH

No matters were raised by those present.

The Chairman thanked everyone for coming to the meeting, and added that the village was well served and linked together by the Church, Schools, Councillors – Parish, District and County - but most of all by you, the residents who support us so well.

Thank you.

The meeting was closed at 9.08pm

Signed S. R. Arnold Chairman

15th May 2007