

ASHURST AND COLBURY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 15TH APRIL 2008 AT THE CHURCH ROOMS COLBURY

Present: Councillors S. Arnold (in the Chair), S. Ardern, D. Bryant, A. Holdsworth, R. Judd, K.Kershaw, A Sturgess, P. Sopowski.

In Attendance: Parish Clerk L. Griggs, District Councillors L.Puttock and D Tipp, and 16 members of the public.

Apologies for absence: None

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting especially the District Councillors, PC Andy White, Rev. Tom Johns, Mrs Ann Arscott and Mr Ian Oliver who were all here to give their reports on the past year, and said it was very pleasing to have them attend our meeting.

MINUTES

The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 19th April 2007, were approved and signed in May 2007.

REPORT from PC Andy White

PC White gave the following information relating to incidents in the village over the last year.

Burglary in dwellings	4
Burglary non dwelling	14
Criminal Damage	28
Assault	11
Theft of a cycle	3
Rowdy and inconsiderate behaviour	29
Inconsiderate behaviour in a vehicle	9
Road Traffic Incidents	14
Theft from a motor vehicle	14
Theft of a motor vehicle	1
Other theft	12
Arson	1
Drugs	5
Deception	1
Threat to kill	1
Robbery	1

In response to a question PC White said inconsiderate behaviour in a car was mostly loud music and wheel spinning. It did not include speeding offences which were handled by the Road Traffic Police. He said he would try to get information on the number of drivers caught committing speeding offences. He also said the threat to kill was related to a domestic dispute as were some of the assault and criminal damage offences.

The Chairman thanked PC White for his comments and said she looked forward to a good working relationship over coming months and years.

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

I summarise the school's activities since my last report in April 2007 as follows:

1. About the school

- **Number of children on roll in Sept 2007**

194 Boys, 171 girls, 365 pupils in all. Average class size = 25

In common with many schools in this area our school roll is decreasing. We have 29 fewer pupils this year, resulting in three Yr 3 classes instead of four.

Pupils come mainly from Foxhills and Eling Infant schools, also from other infant schools in Totton and the Waterside.

- **Staffing : we employ a total of**

19 teaching staff, plus the head teacher, Michael Espezel

18 learning support assistants

1 librarian

A Bursar and 4 administrative staff,

A site supervisor plus 3 cleaners

10 lunchtime supervisory assistants.

Peripatetic music teachers visit the school weekly

Team Elite provides sports coaching after school

2. About the governors

The full board consists of 15 governors and I list below the governors in post since April 2007. There are currently 3 vacancies which we hope to fill shortly.

3 Local Education Authority representatives appointed by the County Councillor

Gordon Fillis, Sheila Huckerby, Sally Arnold (resigned 03/08)

4 Community Governors appointed by the governors

Louise Llewellyn, Tom Johns (resigned 03/08), Ann Arscott (nominated by A and C Parish Council)

Rod Hickey resigned in November 2007 after some 20 years service as a governor.

5 governors elected by the parents

Anne Marie Datlen, Mark Harding, Brian Robinson, Steve Maddocks, Sue Snushall

2 governors elected by the teaching staff, and 1 non teaching staff governor

Gill Reader, Mandy Thomson, Lynn Start

Clerk to the governors - Helen Collins

I would like to thank Cllr.Mrs. Arnold for her support over some 10 years. She provided a valuable link with the local community. I would also like to thank Tom Johns, and wish him a happy retirement.

3. About the Curriculum

This is defined largely by the requirements of the National Curriculum. We continue to concentrate on consolidating and raising standards in the core subjects of English, Maths and Science, as well as in Arts and Humanities. We use a variety of teaching styles, tailored to match pupil ability. We have a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator who is responsible for developing work programmes (Individual Educational Plans) for children with a variety of special needs. We also have one teacher who is responsible for identifying able children, and ensuring that they receive teaching suited to their abilities. We use 'hands on' experience where possible to enhance the curriculum e.g. study of local communities, visits to art galleries and museums, and field trips to Beer, Devon, and to France.

- **Extra curricular clubs and sporting activities**

The majority of children take part in extra curricular clubs and sporting activities. Our football team was 5th nationally in 2007, and the football, netball, rugby and cross country teams distinguished themselves in meetings with other schools.

Team Elite are contracted to provide extra curricular sports tuition in addition to that undertaken by Foxhills staff

- **Our annual production**

This year 'The Jungle Book' attracted capacity appreciative audiences. As ever the childrens' performances were impressive, especially as two of the lead players were away sick the day before the opening!

4. Parents' support

This is vital to the school and School Association fund raising activities have enabled us to equip all classrooms with interactive whiteboards, and to fund visits from theatre groups and children's authors. The recent visit of Jeremy Strong, a well known childrens' author, concentrated on encouraging children to write creatively. I enjoyed it very much!

5. Supporting charities

Children raise money to support a charity of their choosing during Charity Week through a variety of sponsored and other activities e.g. handicrafts and games.

We support the annual Shoebox appeal for children in Eastern European countries who have suffered as the result of war or civil unrest, and charities for the homeless in Southampton.

6. Standard attainment tests (SATs)

All children take these tests in Science, Maths and English in Year 6, their last year in Foxhills. Our SATs results for 2007 were above the national and local average and were the best we have ever achieved, putting Foxhills in the top third of schools nationwide.

7. Inspection by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)

Schools are inspected every 3 – 4 years. They are given 2 or 3 days notice of an inspection, much better than the previous system of 6 weeks' notice. Schools are required to maintain a Self Evaluation Form (SEF) in which they review all aspects of teaching and learning and school management. The SEF must be evidence based, and the evidence must be available for inspectors. This includes the governors' management of the school, and its role as critical friend.

We were delighted that our school was rated as a Good school, the second highest grade the inspectors can award. Inspectors found children made good progress, with achievement levels above average by the time they left, and their behaviour was good. The full report is accessible through our website www.foxhills-jun.hants.sch.uk and a more detailed report will be sent to the Ashurst News.

8. Healthy Schools Award

This national award recognises the school's achievement in promoting and understanding the need for good and nutritional food eating and healthy exercise.

9. Silver Artsmark award

Awarded for our work in art, drama and music, it is a nationally recognised award.

10. FA Charter award

This was awarded for our achievements in football coaching and competitive football

11. Involvement with 'Plastic Bag Free Ashurst' campaign.

Children learn about sustainability and the environment. This initiative by Richard Barnett included talks on sustainability, and though focussing on a tangible goal, children considered the wider issues of environmental pollution and providing work for poor communities affected by global disasters. This work was commended by the Ofsted inspectors. Children have submitted designs for a cotton bag to be distributed to all Ashurst residents, this was a very popular project, and judging it will be difficult!

12. Pedestrian Crossing on the A 35 at Colbury Hall

Pupils and parents joined in vociferous protests supporting the A35 crossing. We would like to thank Cllr. Mrs. Rita Judd, the A35 Crossing Committee and the Parish Council for their support for a crossing, and congratulate them on the success achieved. All who need to cross the A35 at Colbury Hall will benefit from their efforts, and the children at Hounsdawn and Foxhills most of all.

13. Kidz Club

Government legislation requires all schools to provide pre school care for children from 8.00am, and after school care to 6.00pm. We opened a Kidz Club in February 2008 for Foxhills Infant and Junior School children. It is currently attended by some 15 children.

14. Parking in Foxhills

We appreciate that parents parking in Foxhills and adjoining roads causes some disturbance to residents. This is a problem common to most rural schools. The Foxhills schools were opened some 35 years ago for children in Eling, Hounsdawn, Rushington and Ashurst. At that time a large proportion of children lived within easy walking distance on the Bratcher estate. There was no provision for parents to park on the school campus. Today our pupils come from a much wider area, including the new West Totton developments, there is increased car ownership, and working parents tend to drop off and pick up their children on their way to and from work. Bus fares have increased to such an extent that driving to school is often a cheaper option. About 30% of pupils in the infant and junior schools arrive by car, and for many there is no other transport. The children largely favour cycling to school; understandably parents are loathe to let them do so bearing in mind the traffic and lack of a cycle path.

Proposal to utilise a field on the corner of Kneller's Lane (currently used as a storage area for the gas pipeline) for school parking.

I received the details of this possible solution from the Parish Clerk a few days before our January meeting. The terms offered by Barker Mills were identical to those put forward for a different field several years ago, and I discussed these with the head teacher, chairman of governors of the Infant School and other governors prior to the meeting. The consensus opinion, subsequently confirmed by both junior and infant school governors, was that the proposition was not viable for much the same reasons as those recorded at the PC meeting in January, i.e.

- lack of funding - HCC refused a previous application as it is not policy to spend public money on car parks used for short periods only during school terms
- practicality - car park some distance from school, unlikely to be fully utilised
- concern that such a car park would be a target for illegal parking and tipping as well as being out of keeping with the rural surroundings

I trust the Parish Council, and those affected by school parking, will understand the schools' reasons for not pursuing this option. Our primary function is to educate the children in our care. It is not within our remit to lease land for car parks, or raise money do so. We are currently corresponding with HCC concerning parents' parking, and would suggest that any complaints concerning parking be directed to the County Council.

Finally....

I have resigned my position as community governor nominated by A and C Parish Council w.e.f 07/04/08, thus ending 23 years formal association with the Parish Council. I was one of the 8 Councillors elected to the first parish council in 1985, serving 2 terms of office, and I have since represented the council on the Foxhills Junior School Board of Governors. I will be continuing as a governor representing the LEA. I would like to thank the Parish Council for their interest in the schools in Ashurst.

I must also thank the headteacher, Mike Espezel, all the staff, pupils and their parents for making Foxhills an interesting and exciting school in which to learn, and of which I am proud to be a governor

REPORT from Reverend Tom Johns

The Chairman said that Rev. Johns was retiring this month and thanked him for all his contributions to village life and also to the Newsletter. She said he would be much missed.

Rev. Johns reported:

Thank you Madam Chairman for inviting me to give a report on the life and activities of the village church during the last year.

I am pleased to report that attendances at divine worship during the last twelve months have increased and this has enabled us to continue with three services every Sunday – a rare feature of country churches in this day and age. This time last year we were desperate to find a treasurer. We appealed to the readers of the Newsletter and Jenny Cromar, a trained accountant volunteered. She has been an excellent treasurer in the last twelve months.

We were also in need of more people to join the buildings and fabric team, and the response to our appeal was greater than expected. They have arranged for the church and the porch to be painted, re-laid the paving stones, renewed the lighting in the church rooms, laid a path in the church yard to the remembrance garden and arranged a working party to tidy up the churchyard. They have replaced the tables in the church rooms, and arranged to have the church rooms rewired. Plans are in hand to repair the church tower where the shingles have been displaced and to have new heating and lighting in the church. In the course of the year we have had two benches donated for the churchyard, made a compact disc, had two concerts on our new organ, had a visit from the Madding Crowd who sang festival evensong on Easter Sunday, bought one hundred hymn books, and had inscriptions placed inside the front cover of each one by the donor, and been given a new altar cloth.

The Social Committee excelled themselves in providing us with a memorable Harvest Supper, Christmas Dinner and Fish & Chip Supper – this last event attracted over 90 people. As well as the Sunday Services I have conducted eight baptisms, nine weddings, a blessing on a 30th wedding anniversary and 32 funerals including burial of ashes.

We have been pleased to welcome Foxhills Junior and Infants Schools on day visits to us – and an account of the latest visit from the Infants School will be found in the next edition of the village Newsletter. Our work with children is mainly centred on activity days in the summer and just before Christmas. We have Explorer Leaders in place to teach children on Sunday mornings but few children come. However if work with children is disappointing, the work with the teenagers is most encouraging. Forty teenagers are registered as members of the youth club and they are led by a dedicated team every Thursday evening here in the church rooms.

Much use is made of the intercession board at the back of the church, and people whose names are on there are remembered by name every Sunday. There have been some remarkable answers to prayer, not least today when my churchwarden phoned to say that a cancer that had been diagnosed had not spread.

In January I announced my retirement and will be conducting services for the last time this Sunday. You will be most welcome at the services. I have expressed my feelings about leaving you in this months edition of the Newsletter.

REPORT from Ian Oliver on Ashurst and Colbury Neighbourhood Watch

First I would like to say that I am standing in for my wife, Karen, who is the Ashurst and Colbury Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator but who is unwell and unable to be present. The Ashurst and Colbury Neighbourhood Watch Group has existed in Ashurst in its present form, since 2001. Neighbourhood Watch was in the village before that time although it was somewhat fragmented; there seemed to be no communication within that Group. When PC Jill Sinkinson became the Beat officer, Karen asked if all of the coordinators could somehow become known to each other. At that time there were 7 coordinators and now there are 20, and 12 Link Coordinators who cover 505 of the 799 homes in the village. The Group holds two meeting each year.

The “Ringround” system has been devised and is a very effective method of advising all of the coordinators throughout the village of a problem. When there was a particular issue a year or so ago, the ring round was achieved in 25 minutes.

For two and a half years, the Group has been affiliated to the Hampshire Neighbourhood Watch Association who hold meetings bi monthly with an AGM in June at the Hampshire Constabulary Training Headquarters, Netley. These meetings are attended by a Chief Inspector from Police Headquarters and the Hampshire Constabulary Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator. We have access to CADDIE (Crime and Disorder Data Information Exchange) and Karen has spoken in support of the 101 non emergency help line. We have excellent links with HCC Trading Standards officers who provided the packs on home security and safety information which we distributed to every property in Ashurst in 2007. We maintain close contact with our beat Officer, PC Andy White and also with the area sergeant, PS Brian Goodall, to help ensure a safer neighbourhood.

Our group has visited the Houses of Parliament with the help of Dr. Julian Lewis MP, and another trip is being planned for 2008. Any items that may be of interest or help to residents that we become aware of are reported in the Ashurst and Colbury Parish Newsletter under the specific heading of “Watchword”. As a Group we thank the Parish Plan Committee for inviting us to the Parish Plan Launch.

REPORT from Parish Council Chairman Sally Arnold

Major issues this year have been the A35 crossing, the safety barriers over the railway bridge, some remedial work needs to be carried out on pavements in the village but generally the determination and drive of this council appears to be working.

Speed of traffic continues to be an issue in many parts of the village and at present cannot see this improving with the Lyndhurst By Pass being refused. Discussions have taken place with the police and spot checks will happen especially when we have our own system of speed indicating devices.. It is however the responsibility of every car driver to maintain a safe travelling speed within the speed limit of the village.

The Planning committee has commented on 54 planning applications and 12 tree work applications over the last year, but with the new IAPP formation of the National Parks Authority Planning department this council will have to seriously re think the way that plans are circulated and processed.

From April 1st free travel is being offered to retired and disabled people on public transport throughout the district, and in England. There have been some changes to the bus route timetables, but still seems to be a good offer. I have put this in to remind villagers of this service.

The Community Plan Steering Group has launched their plans based on a questionnaire This committee was made up of local residents who are interested in producing a proposal. It involved finding out about what the villagers want. Although the Parish Council has two representatives on this committee it has no connection with the body of this Council. The Steering group came together in response to an advertisement in the newsletter. The plan will eventually form part of the supplementary planning guidance for the District local plan.

We regularly review our website and our newsletter which is still in great demand. I know that the Editor would like more stories for the newsletter. These must be of interest to the community and not a crafty way of getting a free advertisement. The newsletter committee have had reports that residents disagree with some of the write ups and I quote their words - "blatant advertising to which we object".

Councillors also represent the Parish Council on several other organisations both locally and at the National Association of Local Councils. This gives feed back and a partnership with other Parishes.

The Parish Council has continued to give grants to a number of local groups and organisations. The most recent being the new Scout Hut and St.Josephs.

We have worked closely with the local Community Safety Portfolio Holder and the Police resulting in a local lad being summoned. Unfortunately after all the Police Officers good work and the lad in question pleading guilty the Criminal Prosecution Office decided that it was not in public interest to press charges, and so the case was dropped. Very disappointing

for those trying to keep law and order. Our local Beat Officer provides the Council with a beat analysis of the crimes committed in the village to which we are most grateful, and when given are always printed in the newsletter.

The Church Youth Group continues to work closely with all the local organisations that are involved with young people, and are a thriving part of our community.

Our Recreation ground has had new furniture installed and surfacing has been repaired. It is well used and a popular addition to the facilities on offer in our village. There has been a great change in the parks landscape with the killing of the bamboo canes. It is a great shame that this had to happen, but with the drug abuse and other items of entertainment found in amongst the bushes it was felt by this Council to remove the bamboo completely, and so far this has had a good effect. It assists the Police on their patrols, with a clear view from Lakewood Road through to Whartons Lane.

In an effort to make ourselves available to the public we continue to run public participation at the commencement of each meeting. This gives residents the chance to put forward issues that concern them. It may not be possible to give a complete answer on that evening but the matter will be taken up with the Clerk.

I would like to thank all the residents who take the time to attend our meetings and to the volunteers who deliver the newsletter, as well as a personal thank you to the Clerk and Councillors who put a great deal of effort into maintaining our village, providing admin support and advice to assist the residents.

And I must not forget the work that our County and District Councillors carry out on our behalf and then still find the time to attend our Parish Council Meetings. Thank you.

REPORT from District Councillor L. Puttock

Yet another year passes us by without thankfully too many major issues affecting our rural parishes.

The creation of dedicated conservation areas within our parishes by the New Forest National Park Authority appears to have received considerable support from residents and should ensure many of our Historical Buildings and Features are retained and any proposed future residential development is limited.

The main area of concern for our residents continues to focus on traffic (speed and volume) throughout the area, localised flooding issues and anti social behaviour by a small minority. Changes to the licensing laws and the smoking ban within licensed premises, shops and offices, has resulted in an increase in noise levels outside these premises but hopefully this can be controlled to an acceptable level by enforcement over a period of time.

The District Council in co-operation with Hampshire County Council are seeking to lower speed limits on roads within designated village areas and the first tranche of these measures should be in place shortly. We are all aware that reducing speed limits is one thing but enforcing it is another and we will require all agencies to work together to provide a

satisfactory solution. Indiscriminate on street parking creates annoyance to residents affected by these actions but the painting of yellow lines, erection of signs etc. tends to urbanise the rural street scene and again enforcement becomes an issue.

Regretfully plans to deal with localised flooding have stalled as the Environment Agency responsible for these issues have no financial resources to deal with them at present. We will closely monitor the situation and press for these works to be carried out as soon as funds are available.

Domestic waste remains a big issue with many councils now carrying out an alternate week collection. We at NFDC continue to carry out our weekly collection of waste and recycling materials using the plastic bag collection system which many of our residents prefer. It is apparent however that the agency that sorts and disposes of our refuse would prefer us to use the Wheeled Bin method used by the majority of councils in the South East. Many of us feel this would again urbanise the area with unsightly bins left on grass verges and in some cases difficult to remove from the property to the collection area over gravelled driveways. No change is envisaged at present and hopefully if we can increase our recycling rate by just a few percentage points this will not be forced on us in the immediate future.

Changes have been made to my duties since last years local elections. I now chair the General Purposes and Licensing Committee, serve on the Leisure Review Panel and Appeals Panel and represent NFDC on three outside bodies.

In closing my report I would like to thank the electorate for their support in re-electing me and the Chairman, Clerk and Parish Councillors for inviting me to participate in their meetings.

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

MATTERS RAISED BY ELECTORS OF THE PARISH

The Clerk had received no notice of any matters for this meeting from the electorate.

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 9.25pm

Signed S R Arnold – Chairman Dated 20th May 2008