

ASHURST AND COLBURY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 20th APRIL 2010 AT THE CHURCH ROOMS COLBURY

Present: Councillors S. Arnold (in the Chair), D. Bryant, M. Coaker, P. Frost, C. Hubbard, K. Kershaw, P. Sopowski and A. Sturgess.

In Attendance: Parish Clerk L. Griggs, County Councillor K. Mans, District Councillor D Tipp, and 11 members of the public.

Apologies for absence: District Councillor Puttock

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting especially the County Councillor, District Councillor, PC Andy White, Mr Bryan Pass and Mrs Karen Oliver who were all here to give their report on the past year, and said it was very pleasing to have them attend our Annual Parish meeting.

The Chairman added "before we commence these two meetings this evening I wish to make a presentation. Over the past few weeks the papers have been full of people saying what they will do if elected. However we have a Councillor who not only said "I will" but can honestly say "have done". I speak of course of Councillor David Bryant. This year marks 20 years of continuous service on this Council. Thank you, David, for all you have done, and all we hope you will continue to do for us and your village". She then presented him with a framed print of a man working in the forest.

MINUTES

It was noted that the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 15th April 2009, were approved and signed in May 2009

REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

I do not intend to bore you all with a long lengthy report. No major issues have come up since my last report, but as ever the work of the council continues for the benefit of our village. I will briefly touch on some of the subjects that we as a council have been successful with and the statistics, which appear a must for reports these days.

The year commenced with the talk of affordable homes. The parish council gave its views on locations and would not oppose developing the railway site with two storey buildings as previously discussed with the developer and the NPA.

The Parish Newsletter under the guidance of the new editor has progressed and the new formats are acceptable. The Newsletter started in 1997.

The Community Group for their comments taken into account. I have been given the remainder of the canvas bags designed by Foxhills school children. These will go with the next batch of welcome packs or could be used for the Village fete.

The new play equipment for the park will be installed at the end of this month.

The speed limit change is in place. This initiative, started by the parish council in 2004, but taken over by Hampshire County Council, was included in tranche 2 of the village 30 speed limit programme as part of a county wide initiative.

The toucan crossing at Colbury Memorial Hall was first lobbied for in 2006 and was finally in place last year.

There is less vandalism and graffiti, thanks to the work of our local beat officer Andy White and our PCSO Lisa Quinn.

History records and artefacts continue to grow. Started in 2004 and still increasing after two exhibitions. The next exhibition will be at Colbury Memorial Hall on the 11th December 2010.

A book is to be produced by John Cockram at the end of this year on the life of Ashurst & Colbury during the war years 1914-1918 and 1939-1951. This has been collated with the assistance of the Parish Council and local residents and the printing funded by the Parish Council.

A successful village fete last year raised £1,196 for the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance Service. This year's fete will be on 4th September and the chosen charity is the Royal National Lifeboat Institute.

Allotments for residents are an ongoing issue with the Council searching for possible sites. Shared gardens were suggested by District Councillor Derek Tipp in 2008 but there was no take up. We have an active parish plan. Published in 2008 it set out actions put forward by residents – including a cinema – picnics in the park – litter picks – parish walks – toddler group - right of way behind New Forest Hotel – and other ideas which, as set out above, have been processed.

A vigorous group called Friends of the Park was set up in 2009 and have now been assured that their grant application for the improvement of the Recreation Ground, mainly for drainage and the overall good of the area, will be accepted.

A dynamic Foxhills action group were able to convince Hampshire County Council that dragon teeth placed on the north side of this road would assist in preventing vehicles parking on the verges and help the school parking congestion problems.

The Council has started preparing a village design statement which it hopes to publish this year. Last but not least the problem with drainage in Peterscroft Avenue and Woodlands Road. This was taken up with land drainage authorities and Southern Water and following several site meetings we expect the matter to be resolved..

The Parish Council never stops working for its parish, and I thank all the Councillors for their achievements and commitments. We have some set backs but we do not give up - we have a strong team on the Parish Council supported by our parish clerk Mr. Len Griggs.

We will go on working as a team and solely for the good of our village and residents.

REPORT from County Councillor K. Mans

The main issue which the County Council has had to face since the County Election in June was the very severe winter which hopefully is just about ending. As a result of the winter the state of the roads has deteriorated with a number of potholes appearing across the County. These are now being rapidly fixed using new equipment. In the longer term the Council will be examining ways of devoting more resources to road maintenance in the coming years.

Staying with the winter conditions the Council's supply of salt ran very low partly as a result of the Government rationing supplies which had already been earmarked for the County. Whilst main roads were cleared on a regular basis this did not always happen to minor roads which did result in a number of schools having to be shut during the very severe weather partly because teachers could not travel to their school. Again the Council will be examining ways in which this situation can be improved in future years. What has already been agreed is the provision of grit bins to Parish Councils to enable local snow clearance and in particular reduce the number of icy patches on roads and footpaths.

Turning to other matters, the County Council, as promised, kept the Council Tax increase to 1.9% for the coming year and has further agreed to maintain this level of increase (or below) dependent on the support provided to the County from central Government. It is worth recording that Hampshire already receives one of the lowest per capita levels of support from Government for any County in the country.

Following the County election the Council re-established the Hampshire Action Teams (HATS) which now include a budget for each HAT and as the Cabinet member responsible for Communities I also have responsibility for the HATS.

HATS are designed to improve the quality of life in their area by identifying local needs. Parish Councils will have a role to play in this initiative.

Finally Hampshire remains one of the top performing Counties in terms of value for money following the latest report by the Audit Commission.

REPORT from District Councillor D. Tipp

The recession has made life difficult for many of us and the District Council has had to work hard to achieve substantial efficiency savings of £4 million pounds over the year. £600,000 of this has been achieved by restructuring the management of our Health and Leisure Centres. At the same time the Council has introduced free swimming for the young and elderly, generating over 30,000 extra swims in 9 months. This has attracted £200,000 of external funding, which has meant no extra cost to taxpayers. I am also pleased to report that although the budget allowed for £1 million to be used from reserves, this has not been necessary, leaving a strong financial situation for the coming year.

The Audit Commission has confirmed that New Forest is amongst the best authorities in the country for financial management. In the recent assessment only two District Councils in the country scored better. This has meant that we have kept the council tax rise down to 2% which equates to £3.05 per year for a band D taxpayer, equivalent to 6p per week.

The Council has extended CCTV coverage to New Milton and Hythe to complete coverage in the main towns. We have also secured funding to build the first new council houses for over 20 years (9 in Pennington). We were also the first authority in Hampshire to have its planning Core Strategy document approved.

It is very encouraging to note the much improved spirit of co-operation between the Council and the National Park Authority under the interim Chief Executive, which we hope will continue under the new permanent replacement. There are currently negotiations with the NPA to provide office accommodation at Lymington Town Hall. This would be a very good deal for taxpayers.

I currently serve as a member of the Environment Review Panel, the Planning and Transportation RP and the Standards Committee.

I am also part of a working group looking at how the Council should exercise its powers under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. The Act deals with issues such as litter, fly tipping, dog fouling and vehicles for sale on the highway. As we are all aware, we live in a society where litter is a real nuisance. I believe we will only tackle this problem if citizens can be empowered to take an active part in dealing with those who drop the litter.

I am pleased to have been able to use part of my annual grant to go towards replacement notice boards for the Parish Council.

Cllr Puttock and I have continued to represent the views of residents on planning applications to the NPA planning committee. We both support the Parish Council in trying to get the best outcomes for the Village and for the District.

I will end by saying how much I admire the work done by the Parish Council, and I wish to particularly pay tribute to your chairman, Sally, who gives so much time for the benefit of the community.

REPORT from the Chairman of Ashurst & Colbury Community Group

For those who are still unsure what Ashurst and Colbury Community Group is about, please let me explain, we are the group that was formed to create the Parish Plan for the village. We reformed after the launch of the plan to achieve as many of the actions as possible. The entire group are keen to assist the Parish Council and other bodies to improve the environment that we live in. Some of the successes that have been achieved are the Moviola cinema club that has had 30 showings, and donates to local projects, and the walking club which not only acts as a social gathering but also helps locals find out more about their own area. This now includes walks for younger children as well.

The Welcome Pack was a joint effort with the Parish Council, though it must be stressed that the current prototype will need to be updated to keep up with new ideas currently being put forward to the Community Group.

The recently formed Toddler Group is a typical example of community spirit. A couple of young Mums had an idea - took it forward to several authorities, had a hard time when presenting it to a few bodies, but these girls would not give up. I congratulate them and all those who helped as now a much needed group has been formed and running very successfully.

To increase public awareness of this group we have formed a web site

www.accg.hampshire.org.uk to date with over 400 hits. We are delighted and would publicly thank Sue and Natasha for all their their hard work in setting this up.

Should you like to find out more about what the group has been up to please join us at our AGM on the 11th May at Longdown Activity farm where our guest speaker will be ECO Joe, a ten year old environmental expert.

REPORT from PC Andy White

Reported Incidents 344 from 29/03/09- 29/03/10

Assaults – There were 11 - 1 of which was a police officer

Some of the incidents had insufficient evidence to continue with arrests

Burglary in Dwellings- There were 13 reported 3 of which were attempted –disturbed by owners

Some arrests were made and charges laid/ some were undetected

Burglary other than in dwellings 23 – some arrests were made –some undetected

Criminal Damage 15 incidents

Theft 45 of which quite a large number are connected to a local convenience store. There were mainly 2 people connected to these thefts, 1 is in prison and the other is on a community order and is tagged

Thefts from Motor Vehicles 12 - 9 were undetected 3 are new cases

Theft of pedal cycles 6 - 1 arrest – the cycles were stolen between 12/06/09 – 30/08/09

Theft of Motor Vehicle 2- 1 new 1 undetected

Some of the incidents reported have had insufficient evidence to continue with arrests.

Beat Reports will continue to be issued monthly.

REPORT from Mrs Karen Oliver - Ashurst and Colbury Neighbourhood Watch

The Ashurst & Colbury Neighbourhood Watch Group has passed another successful year. Although there have been one or two movements within the Group, our coordinators now number 21 and there are only twelve roads (or parts of roads) in the whole Parish that are not covered. This year we will strive to encourage those to join our group.

In June of last year, I was invited by the Safer Neighbourhood Police Officer, who covers Copythorne, to attend a meeting of their coordinators. It was informative and I was able to meet coordinators from neighbouring parishes. As a follow-on from that, and after waiting for certain changes of leadership to the structure, I have organised, with the help of our own S.N. Team, a meeting between myself and my opposite numbers - which will take place later this month - to form a network whereby safety information that may be of interest to our respective areas, can be exchanged.

At our own meeting in March this year, we discussed and agreed a proposal to use the web-sites of the Parish Council and the Community Group, in addition to the Newsletter. This will maximise our efforts to warn residents of any impending incidents or problems. We need to get information to people as soon as possible. However, the Newsletter has a vital role to play in our village which remains undisputed. Since April last year our group submitted 5 items in total for publication and we will continue to use this valuable service.

It was also agreed at that meeting – by way of a letter from our group to the National Park Authority's planning department– to support the application by 'The Welcome' (Coop) convenience store for a protective grill or shutter to be used outside of trading hours. We hope to encourage them to reconsider their refusal of the stores' request, apparently on the grounds of aesthetics, as it would only be in use between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

We still attend the bi-monthly meetings of the Hampshire Neighbourhood Watch Association to whom we are affiliated. Occasionally, the items you read in the Newsletter come directly from information given at these meetings –the most recent being Domestic Abuse. They have also organised a meeting for all coordinators in the county to be held in Farnborough. It is a chance for all "ranks" to get to know each other and again, exchange information and/or practices that may be of use in their own districts. A representative(s) from Ashurst & Colbury will be in attendance.

Our plot has been booked for the forthcoming Village Fete in September. Last year we spoke to many people and, as a direct result, we were able to enrol another coordinator, which was an excellent result.

Lastly, four excerpts from "Chineham Chat", a similar publication to our Newsletter.

- 1) "Following up on the discovery of a cannabis factory inClose, I will be giving a presentation on how to identify drugs factories in our communities"
- 2) "An unusual month! The typical ASB reports have been almost non-existent this month, only to give way to "The Snowball." We have received numerous reports of groups of youths throwing snowballs at people, houses and, more dangerously, moving vehicles."
- 3) "I would ask parents who have children at Four Lanes School to consider how they are parking at drop off and pick up times. The roads around the school are extremely busy at these times and is often made worse by some parents who gather at the school to meet and chat with each other, thus extending the amount of time that the roads are clogged with parked vehicles.
- 4) "Abandoned shopping trolleys around the village continue to cause an eye-sore. Should you see one that needs returning, please either email myself or contact the store directly."
"We are not alone!"

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 all those who had given reports and added "before I close this meeting I would like to thank all the voluntary groups that are working for our village, in particular the Neighbour Watch team and the Community Action group. On behalf of the Council I give sincere appreciation to our County and District Councillors who are always at the end of a line for help and assistance, but most of all to the residents of our Parish who come to our meetings each month".

The meeting was closed at 7.50pm

Signed S. R. Arnold – Chairman

Dated 18th May 2010