

ASHURST AND COLBURY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 19th APRIL 2011 AT THE CHURCH ROOMS COLBURY

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

In Attendance: Parish Clerk L. Griggs, District Councillor D Tipp, PC A. White, PCSO Quinn and 3 members of the public.

Apologies for absence: Cllr Kershaw, County Cllr Mans and District Councillor Puttock

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting

1. MINUTES

It was noted that the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 20th April 2010, were approved and signed in May 2010

2. REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

I was very privileged to be elected once again as Chairman of Ashurst & Colbury Parish Council. The past year has been challenging, exciting and at times frustrating, but I do enjoy a challenge and working for our village.

The prime project this year has been the allotments.

From just a chance rather cheeky request from yours truly last April to ask the Barker Mill Estate if they had a field they could do without, a little more thrust by Councillor Frost, an enormous amount of work from our Clerk and the Allotment committee and the rest is now history. When the Clerk and I were called to the Estate Office we could never have imagined that we would be leaving with such fantastic news. I recall walking back to the car and neither of us spoke to each other for quite a while, we could not believe the generosity of the Barker Mill Trustees. The meeting we had with the Barker Mill Trustees was like a dream and since that time our Parish Clerk has put in many hours and great effort for funding for the new allotments and this village will never be able to thank him enough for the achievements he has made by sheer dedication to give this village their allotments. So when you happy gardeners till the earth bear in mind the work that this particular council and only this council has achieved for all of you. The enthusiasm by Councillor Bryant - the Parish Council and our Clerk - and of course the generosity of Barker Mill Trustees these allotments are no longer an aspiration but reality.

There are of course many other activities this Council has handled and succeeded with but time does not allow for me to go through them all, however I must mention the dragons teeth and other safety precautions put in at Foxhills. This was not entirely down to the work of the council but working alongside the

residents and Hampshire County Council. Hampshire County Council was very obliging and supportive towards our views and had several meetings with the residents to find the best way forward. The result is as you see today. So thanks to the HCC officers who listened and acted on our behalf.

The Village Design Statement Committee has this document now in draft form. Information received from the public has been most useful along with the views of local businesses and schools. The constructive comments provided at the village fete, have enhanced the work the committee have achieved.

We almost got through the year without any contentious planning applications then at the very last moment one popped up. The application for what is now commonly called 'garden grabbing' appeared on the Clerks desk. If it is decided by the amount of correspondence received against such a development then that ought to be enough to ensure this application is refused. Too many gardens are being built on, small spaces filled and large extensions granted and we will lose the country feel of our village.

This year has seen the new children's play area installed in our recreation ground, not without its problems, but common sense prevailed. We look forward to the further improvements for the recreation ground with the efforts put forward by the Friends of the Park.

I have to mention the good work done by our local Police beat team and the Neighbourhood Watch team, who regularly attend Council meetings to keep us abreast of what's going on in the village. Thank you all.

Thanks also to our District and County Councillors for their valuable advice and also financial help in several of our projects this year. The new notice board in the Recreation Ground has been provided with assistance from our two District Councillors. The display boards for the History Exhibitions were funded by our County Councillor along with the fire truck that Councillor Bryant was so desperate to get for his recreation ground. Thank you all and especially Councillor Mans who saved one of our councillors from deep depression for the grant for his fire truck.

To the community group who keep our pavements and ditches free of litter, for their social events – seed swapping and big lunch events which can be shared by the whole village and their walks that are regularly attended and for the setting up of the parent and toddler group. To the Moviola group for the monthly modern films and not forgetting their donation to the village - that being the beautiful daffodils that have added that special touch and colour along the A35.

Being elected as a councillor does not come with all the solutions to the village problems - I wish it did, but by working together as a team and combining our skills, this can only help to improve the quality of life for our residents. Having an active Parish Council that has a close relationship with its residents, must

surely benefit us all. Please be assured we do our very best at all times when acting on your behalf.

Finally I would like to thank all my Councillors' for their support, for the meetings they attend to ensure that Ashurst & Colbury keep abreast of current legislation, and last but by no means least our Clerk who makes everything run smoothly, efficiently and on time.

3. REPORT from District Councillor D. Tipp

For the past year I have been a member of the Environment Review Panel and the Planning and Transportation Review Panel. I am also a member of the Standards Committee.

This year all activities of the Council have been carefully examined for cost-saving potential as the Council faces a 16% reduction in government grant of £1.7 million for 2011/12 in addition to cost increases and income losses of around £1.3 million. The council tax has been frozen, leading to the Council receiving a grant of £284,000. The remaining shortfall of £2.7 million is being met by savings and efficiencies. Although some redundancies have been made these are relatively few and some have left by mutual agreement.

In the environment area the Council has carried out a review of the refuse collection rounds, resulting in a saving of approx. £80,000. The weekly collection scheme is to remain, along with the sack system which has proved to be popular with residents. Unfortunately the cost of implementing EU regulations, forcing us to use incineration instead of landfill has resulted in an increase in costs from £3.8 million per year in 2003 to £5.1 million in 2009. The cost of garden waste collection has had to be increased from £26 to £29 for this year to cover increases in fuel costs. The council has undertaken a number of projects to reduce its energy use and is encouraging residents to do the same. Some of this is being driven by the massive subsidies available to those who take up solar panels, the cost of which is being added, unfortunately, to our electricity bills.

The concessionary travel scheme has been transferred from District Councils to Hampshire County Council, resulting in the loss of concessions for the Hythe Ferry. Originally the County were only going to allow bus passes to be used after 9.30am, but this has now been changed back to 9am.

The Localism Bill has attracted a lot of attention as it could result in a number of changes to the planning system, such as powers for parishes and neighbourhood forums to develop neighbourhood plans. It is not likely to be passed before the summer and the detail may change as it goes through parliament.

Many of you may know that the Standards Board and the Statutory Code of conduct is to be abolished by 2012. It appears that the District Council will no longer be responsible for dealing with complaints about Parish Council members. It is not clear whether Parish Councils will have their own Monitoring Officer or if it will remain with the District.

Changes to the District Council's scrutiny arrangements will mean that the seven current panels will be reduced to three. This is projected to save £23,600 annually. Councillors allowances were frozen for the year.

Les and I would like to record our thanks to the Parish Council and Clerk for their support during the year and to congratulate you on the excellent service and value you provide for Ashurst residents.

4a REPORT from the Chairman of Ashurst & Colbury Community Group

Mr Bryan Pass said he wanted to thank the Council for the progress with obtaining allotments. The Groups usual activities, Moviola, Seed Swap, Litter Pick, Big Lunch, Walks had all proceeded again this year with good support from the residents but he would give a full report of the Group's activities at the Group's AGM.

4b REPORT from PC Andy White

PC White said his report covered Netley Marsh as well as Ashurst and Colbury as that was the way the system collated the information.

This year there has been an increase in Thefts from Motor Vehicles and also Assaults. A special squad has been set up to target vehicle crime and already has some good results.

The Beat Team comprises Inspector Douglas and Sgt Freeman, both based at Fordingbridge, plus 5 PCs and three PCSOs. He had been on the Ashurst beat for some 4 years and PCSO Quinn for 3 years and they had been able to develop a good relationship with residents.

Crime reports UK are on line which is the preferred way for our partners and also residents to access the crime records for their area.

Safety Net is still developing. Eventually it will be Public facing where the general public will see what we are doing with the Priorities that have been selected after public consultation. The team welcome any suggestions for other areas you would like them to look into.

Beat Reports will continue to be issued monthly.

4c REPORT from Mrs Karen Oliver - Ashurst and Colbury Neighbourhood Watch

In the absence of Mrs Oliver the Clerk read her report.

May I apologize for my absence as a commitment was made before the date of this meeting became known to me. I ask that my report be read to you by Mr. L. Griggs, Clerk of the Ashurst & Colbury Parish Council.

At our meeting in March this year, I was informed by a member of our group that - 25yrs ago, he helped organize the beginning of Neighbourhood Watch in Ashurst & Colbury and although the movement had become fragmented over the years, he is still a coordinator showing commitment in its' purest form. In 2001, Neighbourhood Watch reformed and it is with recognition of those earlier years that we have had such a good foundation to build on. I would like to thank the twenty-two coordinators who now form our group.

For the past year it has been "business as usual".....

APRIL 2010.

I attended a meeting of the Ashurst & Colbury Community Group and gave a brief talk about the role of Neighbourhood Watch with a question and answer session afterwards.

The village was warned of a bogus "Crimestoppers Survey".

Following the many ram-raids and attacks over recent years on a local convenience store in Ashurst, A & C N.W. group spoke to the Manager to give our support for any “defences” that he thought necessary. The local Safer Neighbourhood Team of Hampshire Constabulary was informed of this conversation and now – hopefully with our help – anti-ram raid barriers have been installed.

JULY 2010

I attended a presentation of the new “Crimereports” website. When it becomes ‘live’ it will enable the general public to find out about crime in their area though it will not give specific information as to perpetrator or victim.

SEPTEMBER 2010.

Our Group was in attendance with a stall at the Village Fete.

OCTOBER 2010

This month, three of our group attended a thought-provoking presentation of ‘Forest Watch’- alongside members of the Parish Council. We were made aware of the diversity and the ‘not so pretty’ face of rural crime. It is very easy to think our local Police Officers only deal with the problems within the village. In truth they are part of a much wider, rural response area. There are farmers, land-owners and various commercial businesses that have an equal right to Police response when crime is committed.

NOVEMBER 2010.

Over the past year or so there have been several thefts of bicycles in the village. Whilst “out and about” in the village, my husband Ian and I recovered one such cycle which was handed over to the Police.

Also this month, we learned that we would now have to pay to hire our meeting venue. The Parish Council has always been generous in support of our group but with this added expense, our funds would rapidly diminish so an application was made to Hampshire County Council through our local HCC. Councillor. We were successful and I am happy to report that our venue is safe for several years to come. I have written to both Parish and County Councils under separate cover but would like to re-iterate my thanks for their support of our group.

JANUARY to APRIL 2011.

There has been an increase of ‘scam’ telephone calls either promising great ‘offers’ or trying to obtain personal details of either the house-holder or security in the area. This time of year sees a slow increase of disreputable tradespersons who slowly cruise our village offering ‘cheap’ prices for work. Vigilance and reports to the Police are vital to reduce the number of residents being conned. We pass on any information to our Safer Neighbourhood Team who can then make the necessary checks. In certain cases, Trading Standards can also become involved.

This is the year of another Census. Information from the Hampshire Constabulary Force Coordinator has been circulated via our group not only about how to fill in the forms but also what - and what not - to expect from the activities of bona-fide field officers who will be collating information until the end of August. There are bound to be instances where these officers are impersonated by the unscrupulous in order to gain illegal access or information from householders. Fore-warned is fore-armed.

In addition to the above, the bi-monthly meetings of the Hampshire Neighbourhood Watch Association are attended throughout the year. Any information that may be relevant to our village is circulated as soon as possible.

I have tried to condense this report as much I can in order not to bore you or send you all to sleep so I will end three important 'C's that I feel are the essence of our work....Care, Commitment, Community.

5. MATTERS RAISED BY ELECTORS OF THE PARISH

The Clerk had received no notice of any matters for this meeting from the electorate that therefore concludes the APM for 2011.

The meeting was closed at 7.20pm

Signed S R Arnold – Chairman

Dated 17th May 2011