

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council.
Held on 15th March 2016, at the Church Rooms, Deerleap Lane, Colbury at 7pm.

Present: Cllr M Coaker (Chairman), Cllr Caroline Hubbard (Vice Chairman), Cllr Sally Arnold, Cllr Emma Lacey, Cllr Stuart Jenkins, Cllr Ann Sturgess, Cllr Mike Thomas, Cllr Clive White.

HCC; Cllr Keith Mans

NFDC; Cllr Derek Tipp.

Members of the Public; 17

1. Apologies for Absence.

Cllr Les Puttock, NFDC, Helen Klaassen.

2. Confirmation of the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 21st April 2015.

A vote was taken and the minutes were approved.

3. To receive a report from the Chairman of Ashurst & Colbury Parish Council, Cllr Max Coaker.

In the last year we have resolved some of our issues and I believe that we are on the way up but there is however still a long way to go. We have welcomed 2 new councillors who are still finding their feet, and sadly said goodbye to 2 old faithfuls and as you all know there is a lot of work involved to ensure we make the Parish Council run smoothly and harmoniously. Some of the biggest improvements are to make the Council more open and accessible, and to that end, since June of 2015 all Planning Committee meetings are held in public before the main Parish Meeting each month. Similarly, arrangements have been made to hold other Committee Meetings in public as necessary advertised on the notice boards with 3 days' notice.

One of the biggest single achievements is the opening of a Parish Office at the Church Rooms with the kind assistance of Paul Holley and Church members. Helen Klaassen our Clerk can now work on our behalf and be accessible to residents, normally with a Wednesday surgery.

For some time now we have wrestled with putting the books straight and understanding how the finances are and with thanks to the Clerk and the help from Charles Marchetti I believe we are now in a good financial position. In addition, last November we had a precept meeting to look at spending 2016/17 and not only could we make sound decisions on our finances, we could also hold the precept at previous levels. On the back of this understanding we have been able to invest money in projects that are long overdue.

Of the visible successes;

- 1) The fete which once again proved to be both popular and monies raised went to good charities. One of which, the defibrillator showed how generous the villagers are as they added £350 to the fete monies, this and £500 generously given by Cllr Keith Mans will enable this project to hopefully reach fruition soon.
- 2) An even better Parish Magazine with more suggestions for further improvements and some other ideas are in the pipeline.
- 3) Improvements to the drainage of the allotments has finally been approved
- 4) Improvements to the Recreation Ground, more of which later but hopefully more still to follow.
- 5) The Christmas lights in the parade were improved both with colour and extent of spread, I have no doubt that these will also be improved upon for this year. The Christmas Carols were a little disappointing with numbers; however, those that attended enjoyed themselves. This year we must ensure that the chosen date does not clash with other events.

In conclusion I would like to thank all those that have helped us throughout the year and encourage the residents to come along and participate in our regular meetings be they Planning, Recreation Ground or Magazine, the more suggestions and input the better.

4. To receive reports from the Chairs of the various Committees;

i. Allotment Committee – Cllr S Arnold

Although we have not divided plots for children, there are some parents who have made a space available for their children on their plots and the children's areas will be judged this year. We hope this side of the allotments will grow, to show young people alternatives to supermarket dependency.

We have also halved the larger plots and that is now encouraging more people to use the allotments. We have 49 allotments that are well worked. We do have one raised bed with access for wheelchair users or to be used for those persons with other disabilities.

One of our plot holders now has a regular spot in the parish magazine with a recipe and what they are doing on their plot. This has been very well accepted and the allotment holders have gone a step further by producing a recipe book and donated the profits to the advantage of the allotments.

The plot holders arrange judging for the best kept allotment in June and have a BBQ in July where the winners are announced and trophies presented.

Bee keeping has been requested, and the allotment holder has been given all the papers to read and digest before any operation of this sort is commenced. There are many rules that have to be followed for other allotment holder's safety. The allotments have been monthly inspected and to be fair to allotment holders one cannot judge their usage of upkeep because of the problems with flooding. There is just one allotment that must be made aware of the mare's tail growing on the site as this can soon encroach to other allotments causing great harm.

I take this opportunity of thanking the working parties - and special thanks to Ian Oliver and Chris Hemming - with their voluntary work it has saved a lot of council money.

Additional questions have led to the drainage system being delayed. However, the allotment holders well understand the response of the contractor in bringing in heavy machinery on very wet ground.

I am sure we will all be working together for the upkeep of the allotments that were so generously donated by the Barker Mill foundation

ii. Fete Committee – Cllr A Sturgess

This annual event was again a great success with over 2000 people attending and apart from a short sharp burst of rain it remained warm and sunny. All the effort that is put in by everyone is well rewarded by the fun and laughter is very evident on all the faces that you see running around. The charity this year was Riding for the Disabled Therapy Centre. They benefited with a cheque £1500. In addition, with a little help from HCC and £350 raised from residents using the welcome store we are able to purchase a life saving defibrillator which will be sited on the outside wall of the Co-op.

The fete seems to be something that has grown over the years; this year will be the 8th year and one would think the more you do the easier it gets, but that is not the case. We strive constantly to improve it, making it a day for everyone. This year's charity a donation will be going to Headway (the brain injury association) and Honey Pot (a charity that helps young carers that care for their families at home). We always find people are reluctant to offer any help, but if anyone is thinking of coming forward, we cannot tell how much your help would be appreciated even if it is selling draw tickets in advance, please don't be shy, put your hands up tonight. Thank you.

iii. Magazine Committee – Cllr C White

Cllr White presented the Annual Report for the Magazine Committee, which he explained covered communications generally, including internet-based communication.

He advise that all of the objectives identified for the current year were either complete, or well in hand, with exception of "market testing" the production of the magazine, which will be accomplished during this coming year.

Advertising rates are going to be held at current rates, and the year end forecast is estimated at £700 profit. The Terms and Conditions have been amended to reflect a more flexible approach, the village distribution list has been checked and updated, and a new Parish Council Facebook page will be coming on line very soon.

Attempts to establish close working relationships with other organisations within the village have continued, as have the other methods of attempting to get more articles of interest to residents. The next issue will have a section which will attempt to generate engagement with younger residents, a "top tips" section and a competition for a new Parish Logo.

During the last team meeting it was felt that the Notice Boards could do with smartening up, and also changed to allow any communications of interest to the Village to be posted, rather than just charities. This will be done in the coming months.

Cllr White on behalf of the Committee and the Council, expressed very grateful thanks to all those who helped to distribute the Parish magazine, without whom the magazine would flounder. He also thanked the members of the Committee for their commitment and hard work.

iv. Planning Committee – Cllr M Coaker

The biggest single change over the past year is to realise our non conformity with regards the way we conducted Planning Applications and from June last year all applications were discussed and decided in public. Most importantly it allowed members of the public with a vested interest to participate in the process.

Since March 1st 2015- February 29th 2016 there have been;
33 applications for planning permission
30 decisions made, of which
22 were granted/raised no objection
7 were refused/raised an objection
1 withdrawn.

The disparity between applications and decisions is that some were in the pipeline either side of the defined period. All figures kindly supplied by NPA.

With the given figures it is interesting to note that not all applications are successful and hopefully our voice is heard.

v. Recreation Committee – Cllr M Coaker

Very little expenditure has been made within the recreation ground over the past year for a variety of reasons, however that is set to change with;

1) Installation of a new piece of multi-use toddler play equipment

2) Installation of a new metal hooped fence on the Lakewood Road perimeter.

Both items were approved at February Full Council Meeting, the orders have been placed and it is hoped completion is set for 6-8 weeks.

As already mentioned the installation of a stone with a plaque dedicating the recreation ground to Queen Elizabeth Trust is being progressed and latest thinking is to install and dedicate on the Queen's birthday in June with a fun-day to celebrate.

All through this last year we have been assisted with the ongoing brush clearance by community payback team who come in at least 1 a month and have cleared the brush and scrub back from around the timberline play area and the fence line to the south side and also outside the fence in Whartons Lane. As it comes under the recreation ground, the team have also agreed to look at the bus stops as well as clearing the public footpath to the railway in Foxhills.

Looking forward we have already spoken with the NFDC tree expert as part of the annual survey in the park and we are looking to re-evaluate the trees with a view to prune some and replace with a better more suitable variety. There is more money in budget to extend some equipment and we will look to consult and discuss to see where we progress.

5. To receive reports from County Councillor Keith Mans and the District Councillors for the Parish, relating to the activities of the Hampshire County Council and New Forest District Council on matters affecting the Parish.

Cllr Keith Mans;

It has been a difficult year for HCC facing large grant cuts from Central Government of £40million and it has meant that they are trying to find more efficient ways to save money.

There will be a council tax increase of 4%. Although from the current paperwork available it is not easy to work out how that will be allocated.

Broadband facilities continue to improve, but more slowly than HCC would like. The target of 95% will hopefully be achieved by 2018.

Devolution. The local government reorganisation, delegating powers to 'grass roots' level, should not mean that Hampshire ends up with two tiers of local government.

The Ashurst to Lyndhurst cycle track is now complete and people need to be encouraged to use it as it is a great improvement of what was there before.

Cllr Mans devolved budget is practically spent amongst his seven parishes. He has requested that any local groups that would benefit should apply from June 2016 when new funds will be available.

Cllr Coaker asked Cllr Mans how we could encourage HCC to allow the footpath through Ashurst to be moved to the South side of the road.

Cllr Thomas enquired about the cuts to the bus services and asked Cllr Mans if he would be able to raise the point with the appropriate section. Cllr Mans agreed.

Cllr Derek Tipp

NFDC were increasing Council Tax by 1.7%, which would equate to £2.60 pa for a d band property.

There had been a restructuring in senior management, which had resulted in 9 posts being reduced to 4 saving approximately £300,000pa.

The New Forest Partnership held their Brilliance in Business Awards which was won this year by Greenclose Hotels Ltd which own Carey's Manor and the Montague Arms.

New affordable homes were being built to replace those that had been lost to 'right to buy'.

Requests for grants should be submitted in the next month. Each district councillor has £200 available for the benefit of the community.

6. To receive the following reports;

i. from the Chairman of the Ashurst & Colbury Community Group

We have been kept busy this year with our annual events, ongoing projects and discussing new ideas. We are always open to suggestions.

One of our annual events, the litter pick, is about to take place this Saturday morning. Details are on posters around the village and on our Community Group Website. Last October we ran an anti-litter slogan competition which was won by a resident. The NFDC have agreed to print posters with the slogan which should soon be on display. We also ran our annual apple day in the autumn when people can bring their apple crops to be pressed into juice thus saving waste. Our garden shredder co-operative whereby residents can have the use of a shredder when needed is popular and we are also looking into extending the scheme to include other equipment.

We have various projects ongoing. We have been campaigning to have the Woodlands Road 40mph speed limit reduced, working with the Parish Council in getting the cycle routes clarified, and trying to establish a right of way into the Forest from the station. Our regular walks and cycling events are popular. Our new website works well and is interactive so people can leave suggestions and comments on it. Do encourage your friends and neighbours to have a look at it and join in. Our aim is to improve the village to make it a nice place to live and to work with the new Parish Council to this end.

David White

Reported that there would be a guided cycle ride of 7.5 miles, starting at 10.30am on Friday 18th March.

ii. From PC Rachel Gallimore

(report not given at the meeting but included in these minutes for information)

I am happy to say that I have now been the beat officer for the whole ward now for about 11 months and have really enjoyed my time getting to know local residents and working with great organisations like the local Neighbourhood Watch, small businesses and the local schools.

I have worked with the school at Foxhills to try and target offending vehicles that park illegally and inconsiderately. Whilst nobody has been fined or sent to court at this time I have sent a large number of letters out to the registered owners of the vehicles concerned and I am told that this is having some affect. Of course the issues near to the school are long term and will not be resolved overnight but I am happy to help where I can.

Over the past year the parish of Ashurst and Colbury has, I happy to say, been a safe place to live! A summary of incidents shows the following:

Dwelling burglaries: One house burglary has occurred in November. A suspect is currently on Police Bail for this matter

Non Dwelling Burglaries/Shed breaks: There were 7 in the parish during the last year which also includes a break in at a car garage and a shop on the parade in Ashurst. A series of three in August appear to have been linked but unfortunately no persons were arrested for this.

Criminal Damage: There have been approximately three or four incidents of damage in the area in the last year. These seem to be opportunistic and include a smashed window, and damage vehicle.

Theft from vehicle: Two incidents have occurred which are not linked. One where tools have been stolen from a van and one where the bonnet of a 4x4 has been stolen.

Officers from the Roads Policing Unit continue to conduct speed enforcement in Ashurst and issue a high number of tickets as well as arrests for drink driving.

My message to residents would be to re visit security measures to all outbuildings/sheds/garages, record serial numbers and take photos of an items of value and consider lighting and CCTV if possible. I would also encourage all residents to engage in Local Neighbourhood Watch.

iii. from the Neighbourhood Watch Group Co-ordinator, Mrs Karen Oliver

Mrs Oliver reported that the Neighbourhood Watch Group has helped to maintain the status quo this year. The Village Fete was successful for the NW as it gave people the opportunity to find out more about the group and about becoming a co-ordinator outside of the area.

They aim to get more young people involved in NW schemes over the next year and an article would appear in the parish magazine in the next few months.

7. To Hear From Rev. Paul Holley Regarding Outreach Amongst the Elderly and Isolated in the Community.

Rev Holley spoke about his interest in health and wellbeing, particularly amongst the elderly in the community. There is deep-seated loneliness and this impacts on people's health. Although there is a group that meets monthly in the village there is more that could be done and the community (e.g. Church, ACCG, Parish Council) need to see if they can look at it together to move things forward in 2016. There is a meeting on 4th April to discuss what we already know and how we can proceed.

8. To consider any matters raised by electors of the Parish of Ashurst and Colbury, affecting the Parish.

None.

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.22pm.

Signed:

Date; 19.04.16