

ASHURST AND COLBURY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 16th APRIL 2013 AT THE CHURCH ROOMS COLBURY

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

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

Apologies for absence: 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 17th April 2012, were approved and signed in May 2012

2. REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

An Annual Parish Meeting is a statutory requirement, and I will start by thanking all councillors for their work - which is voluntary - over this past year.

2012 has been a frustrating year with the unwelcome flooding; and a social year with the Queens Golden Jubilee and the 'Olympics. The Council has representatives on most local bodies, as shown on the Council's web site and Notice Boards and Councillors do attend these meetings.

Planning Committee

Councillor Peter Sopowski (Chairman) and his Committee - Councillors Coaker, Kershaw and Arnold. They have handled 28 applications for the year, and always consider the best interests of the village as a whole.

The Council has had a preview for the development of two fields in Foxhills, which already has approval from the Foxhills School Governors especially as the development will include parking for the School and a new cycle path. These will obviously alleviate some of the problems with parking in Foxhills.

Recreation Ground Committee

Councillor David Bryant (Chairman) and his Committee - Councillors Sturgess and Arnold, plus the Parish Clerk Mr. Len Griggs. In the last year there has been quite a lot of activity in the Park. Drainage being the main topic, and the specialised biennial survey of the trees.

Allotment Gardens Committee

Comprising Councillor Bryant, Councillor Arnold and the Parish Clerk Mr. Len Griggs. Flooding is the main concern of allotment holders but with a particularly out of the ordinary 2012 everywhere has the same problem. However the condition of the allotments continues to improve with allotment holders commencing spring digging and sowing. There is still a small waiting list of residents and also some waiting on the non-residents list.

Transport Committee

Two representatives Councillor Ken Kershaw and Councillor Max Coaker

Not only have they attended meetings, organised public meetings, written articles for our Newsletters, but have worked solidly for the whole Village regarding the Blue Star Buses. Unfortunately, as mentioned in the recent minutes, a group of residents have submitted a petition to HCC so Bluestar will now only deal with HCC so after all their hard work and such good progress we are now back to square one.

New Forest Association of Local Councils

Two representatives Councillor Sturgess and Councillor Arnold. NFALC meet four times a year with the 37 Parishes of the New Forest and Councillors have been able to obtain interesting and useful documents for the Parish Council with concerns to the localism bill, change in the declaration of interest, code of conduct and not forgetting the Districts and Counties investment to improve Broadband reception in areas of the New Forest. These informative meetings enable Parishes to be kept up to date with new policies etc.

Community Group

Two representatives from the Parish Council now attend meetings of the ACCG alternately, and report back to the full Council on proceedings. A third Councillor will stand in for the representatives if necessary

Village Design Statement

Three representatives from the Council. Councillors Hubbard, Frost and Arnold. Co-opted members came periodically from the community. This has taken nearly two years to complete, and after holding several meetings with the public is now with the National Park for approval.

The adoption of the VDS by the NPA will mean that planners have to take it into consideration when preparing planning applications. It informs planning authorities what the residents want Ashurst and Colbury to be like.

Newsletter

Editor Daniel Webb and the committee comprise of Councillor Arnold; Councillor Sturgess and the Parish Clerk. The newsletter is a vital communication connection for the village but we would still like to see more letters from the residents.

Village Fete

All the committee are Council members plus one Lady from the Village. It is an arduous task to arrange the day, but we do hope that it is appreciated by everyone and that it will continue long after we have all retired.

History

Last weekend saw a two day exhibition on behalf of the Parish Council. It could have been better attended, but from it came some very positive feedback, new material and genuine appreciation.

That is a report on each committee, but throughout the year we have an update from the Police Beat Officer P.C. Andy White and Mrs. Oliver representing the Neighbourhood Watch team. You will hear their reports later in the evening.

Listening to the police reports throughout the year; it appears that we are very fortunate in this village, with crime being relatively low. This is due to not only our local beat officer and our PCSO Lisa Quinn but also the eagle eyes of residents. Working together we can endeavour to keep Ashurst a blissful and 'crime free' area to live.

Golden Jubilee at Colbury Memorial Hall

This was very well attended and the emails, letters, cards that the Council received after the event confirmed that it was appreciated by the Village. It was a great day with no complications worth writing about and was financed by the National Lottery Board.

Finances

These are totally in the hands of our Parish Clerk. Each month a list of payments is given to every Councillor to approve or query. I must say that I have never known the latter to arise, but it is there if required.

To me the only disappointment this year was the Christmas lights in the precinct. Through no fault of our own, there were several problems to try and overcome and unfortunately even after hours spent lying on the cold concrete we could not achieve our normal standard. We have now purchased more lights so hope that Christmas 2013 will be better.

Before I close this report I express the appreciation of this Council to our two District Councillors and County Councillor for all their support throughout the year and of course their support for the History Archives for the Village.

3. REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

County Councillor Keith Mans.

This has been a year of consolidation for Hampshire County Council. The changes we made in previous years to our management structure which resulted in significant savings to our back office structure are now bearing fruit. We were able to hold the county precept at its previous level for a fourth year without significant effects on our services. We continue to spend increasing amounts each year on care for the elderly and we have brought forward finance from next year into this years highways budget to start to compensate for the damage done to our roads as a result of the recent heavy rains. My own devolved budget has been fully spent this year and all parishes in my Division have had grants from it. In the coming year the HCC has allocated funds to improve footpaths across the county. In addition my own devolved budget this coming year has been increased by £10,000 to spend specifically on highways and the environment. I am proposing to prioritise this budget on flood prevention in the local area.

In addition the County will be prioritising high speed broadband for everyone in the coming year as well as allocating £1m for capital expenditure on community centres and village halls.

District Councillor D. Tipp

I am delighted to begin my report by being able to report that the District Council has frozen council tax for a third successive year. This has been achieved through savings and not by using any reserves. This is a balanced budget and continued savings will be required for 2014 and 2015.

Council rents have risen by 4.1% in line with government guidelines helping to provide £14 million for capital investment in our stock. During the past year the council has built or acquired 30 additional homes and this increase in our housing stock is set to continue in the current year and for the foreseeable future, helping to ease the large waiting list for housing in the Forest.

The Council continues to try to increase the recycling rate by adopting sensible and cost effective means. This year we will be introducing a new kerbside glass collection scheme, having secured a £1.8 million government grant. This will be operational by this summer. Glass collection sites will remain in place, but will be monitored so that under-used sites can be removed.

Eling Tide Mill is to be enhanced as a result of a successful bid for Lottery funding including an improved visitor centre. Our Health and Leisure Centres continue to perform strongly with an income £150,000 ahead of target.

After carrying out extensive research and consultation the Council is proposing to introduce car parking charges for blue badge holders. There are currently 10,000 blue badge holders in the district and this is expected to rise significantly as the proportion of elderly residents increase. Blue badge holders will have an extra hour's parking and all meters and signs will be changed. The charges will not come in until all the statutory consultations and consents have been completed which is likely to take several months.

I have volunteered to be part of a Task and Finish Group of councillors to look at whether the Council should ask the Boundary Commission to undertake a review of the number of councillors at NFDC. I have also asked to be put on another Task and Finish Group looking at alternative powered vehicles for the Council's fleet.

The Council approved a 1% pay increase for their staff for this year in advance of a national settlement being reached. Should the national settlement be more than 1% then any additional award would also be paid.

The Council has agreed to bestow the honour of Freedom of the District on Dame Mary Fagan, Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire since 1994, who is due to retire in 2014. This is the first time the Council has exercised its power to do so since it was given it under the 1972 Local Government Act.

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

The Chairman Bryan Pass being unable to attend the report was given by Alastair Hutchin. I am pleased to inform the Parish Council that the Ashurst & Colbury Community Group is still running very strongly and has had a very constructive year with many issues being taken on with some successes being recorded. I will list a few in the following:-

Rat Baiting within the Village:-

Unfortunately, there was an increase in the rodent population during the wet summer last year and the NFDC were called in to place bait in affected areas. This proved to be quite successful; however, there was concern that some of the bait boxes were placed onto private property without informing the occupier. We spoke to the Environmental Health Department about this matter and they agreed to bring the subject up at their next meeting.

Apple Press:-

The Apple Press purchased on behalf of the Group has been well used. It is fully insured and terms and conditions for the hiring of it have been published. It is amazing the amount of Community interest that this has generated, not only in our Parish, but throughout the Forest and Romsey areas. Our thanks go to Richard and Stuart for making this a success story.

Apple Day:-

Although the numbers of visitors were down this year, it was still deemed a great success, particularly in view of a very disappointing apple crop last year. Thanks go to the whole group who made this annual event and to Sue Arden for organising an excellent lunch.

Deerleap Lane:-

After several meetings with HCC representatives, traffic calming measures have been put into place along Deerleap Lane; although we were unable to put in physical barriers, we feel that the lineage and signage has been a vast improvement, with the agreement that we will meet with the Highways Department to monitor the situation. On one of these recent meetings, we were able to discuss the possibilities of pedestrian access to the church and Longdown Activity Farm. We are only too aware that this can be a long drawn out process. However, we do feel that we have made advances.

The Village Fete:

Once again we were delighted to be present at the village fete in September, and it's encouraging to see this event grow and grow, we would like to congratulate Ann Sturgess and her merry team for all their hard work making this day so popular, a true community event.

Ashurst Walks

This is another Community group driven venture that continues to flourish and has proved extremely worthwhile, with many residents enjoying these informative and social events. The children's walks have ceased during the winter months, hopefully these will be reinstated during the summer. We have put an article in the Newsletter and are hoping for some volunteers to help organise the children's walks.

Equipment in the recreation ground:

This is one project that Ashurst and Colbury have been left behind with, as more and more Parish's install fitness equipment into their Parks, making full use of their existing play areas and, at present, they appear satisfied with the results. We are keen to discuss this further with the Parish Council and if it's found that the village require this to proceed I am sure that we will be able to help.

Annual Litter Pick

It may be called bribery, however with the invitation to a breakfast before the start of this years litter pick, it certainly paid off, as Stuart and Sue prepared breakfast for the hungry litter pickers; again this proved a very successful event with a disappointing number of bags being pulled out of the ditches and the pathways through our village. It simply proved that some residents and passers -by simply have no respect for our village. It is encouraging that the team of litter pickers were still keen in tidying up other peoples rubbish, a very big thank you to them all.

AGM

We hold our AGM at Longdown Activity Farm on the 7th May 2013 at 7.30 pm, you are all welcomed to come and join us, and we may even find you a cup a tea or piece of cake.

4b REPORT from PC Andy White

Most crimes have remained static or have fallen .The most noticeable being the following.

Rowdy behaviour down 7

Dwelling Burglary down 3

Public Order down 7

Theft down 10

Theft from motor Vehicle down 5

(Full details are attached as an appendix)

Theft of metal is still an issue with persons driving around looking to steal metal .Our neighbourhood watch teams are remaining vigilant and reporting number plates etc of suspicious vehicles.

There has been a change to our Beat Team with the appointment of Sgt Towler as our new Team Leader .Also Rob Marrant has replaced WPC Dee Faulkner who has retired. He will be joining us at the end of the month.

As a Team we are still conducting patrols and operations along with our Vehicle Crime Team to tackle the ongoing problem of Cars being broken into in Forest Car Parks.

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

Madam Chair, Councillors, Members of the Public,

How often have we heard the comments; "Why do they have to change everything?" or "It worked perfectly so why is it being changed?" Changes to the way we live and work are not always governed by *our* choice but by influences beyond our control which sometimes means we have to tolerate and adapt.

The year from April 2012 has seen several changes, both within our Group and from factors that will guide the direction we may all take in the future. Some coordinators have retired, moved away, or have stepped down due to increased working commitments or health issues, but all have made a contribution to Neighbourhood Watch for which we have thanked them. Luckily, we have several new coordinators to succeed them thus keeping a continuity of our work. One very sad loss to us has been the passing away of Mr. Peter Ellis, not only a much respected coordinator, but a member of a number of groups in our Village.

Also we have seen the nationwide appointments of Police and Crime Commissioners. By these appointments, how we are to be policed in the future will undoubtedly change and we must try to meet and accept this new challenge to the best of our ability.

Although the following report will list a variety of meetings attended over the past year, they are of little consequence if they do not – in some way - eventually benefit the residents of our Parish.

In May 2012, the annual Hampshire Coordinators Day, hosted by the Hampshire Neighbourhood Watch Association (H.N.W.A.) was held at Alton. This annual event invites coordinators from all over the county to meet with each other, senior members of the Police Service and partner agencies to discuss and exchange ideas that can improve communication and the working of our network. Table-top displays were provided with

helpful information. In June this year, the event is being held at Sparsholt College, near Winchester.

Also in May 2012, I was invited by the Chairman of H.N.W.A. to be part of a working party to re-write and simplify their Constitution. Many meetings have taken place over the past year and the final draft has now been accepted by the committee. It will be presented for adoption at their E.G.M. next month and once passed; it will be the statutory document for all member coordinators in Hampshire. As usual, I also attend their bi-monthly meetings, both as the Ashurst & Colbury Group Lead and – (since November last year) - as the H.N.W.A. Treasurer.

In August 2012 we received reports of noisy activity due to motor-bike riders visiting one of our village pubs. This in turn was reported to our Safer Neighbourhood Team who ably and effectively dealt with the situation.

The 1st September 2012 we again manned the Group stand at the annual - and thoroughly enjoyable - Ashurst & Colbury village fete.

Also that month, a meeting took place in Romsey between the officers of the H.N.W.A. and Simon Hayes, one of the six prospective candidates for the post of Police and Crime Commissioner (P.C.C.).

On 15th October 2012 the autumn meeting of the Ashurst & Colbury N.W. Group took place. Among the topics discussed were; the appointment of the Police & Crime Commissioner, Nuisance calls, Doorstep Harassment, the takeover of Consumer Direct by the Citizens Advice Bureau, the bogus callers who tried to take criminal advantage of the public following the genuine 'Insulate Hampshire' initiative and other local issues.

I had stated an intention to re-face some of the more worn N.W. signs but - due to personal circumstance for both my husband, Ian and I - *and* the weather, that project has had to be delayed but will be attended to this year...when the weather is a little warmer!

In November 2012 Ian and I attended a public meeting of all six of the Police & Crime Commissioner candidates who gave a two minute presentation on why they were the right person for the job. It was interesting to see how their aims and objectives differed.

This year - in February - the committee members of H.N.W.A. met with the newly-elected P.C.C., Simon Hayes, who has keenly expressed his wish to work with Neighbourhood Watch.

Communication with N.W. schemes in neighbouring parishes has been ongoing for some time and an informal get-together took place at Lyndhurst Police Station on Friday 5th April this year between those coordinators and the Safer Neighbourhood Team. It was a relaxed but positive meeting including the District Commander - who had expressed a wish to meet us and we appreciated his contribution.

Last but not least, N.W. is represented at the monthly Parish Council meetings. The Parish Council has shown their support for our Group and we genuinely express our thanks. Madam Chair, my opening comments were about change. Sometimes it is beneficial, sometimes it is unwelcome but it is always.... inevitable. As previously mentioned, we have seen many changes within our village and respective groups over recent years, but I am sure that as a Group, we will resist *any* change that lessens our service to our community.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Oliver for all the good work she and her team carry out on behalf of the village.

5. MATTERS RAISED BY ELECTORS OF THE PARISH

The Chairman said the Clerk had received no notice of any matters for this meeting from the electorate that therefore concludes the APM for 2012.

The meeting was closed at 7.29pm

Signed – S. R. Arnold - Chairman

21st May 2013

Appendix to the minutes of the Annual Parish meeting 2013

**CRIME REPORT AND BEAT UPDATE FOR
NETLEY MARSH AND ASHURST**

Year to 01/03/13

Arson 0

ASB Rowdy 8

Assault 18

Burglary Dwelling 7

Burglary non Dwelling 24

Criminal Damage 22

Drugs 3

Making off without Payment 1

Deception 6

Public Order 1

Rape 2

RTC 21

Theft 28

Theft from Motor Vehicle 8

Theft of Cycle 3

Theft of Vehicle 2