

## MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

This meeting was held on at 6:00pm on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2024  
at The Church Rooms, Deerleap Lane, Colbury

In Attendance: Cllr Caroline Hubbard (Chair), Cllr, Trevor Jakeman, Cllr Keith Nutburn, Cllr Sue Robinson, Cllr Caroline Smith, Cllr Esther Sutherland, Cllr Clive White, Cllr Mans (HCC), PCSO Richard Williams, PC Mark Roberts, Karen Cramoysan (Clerk), 23 Members of the Public

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**01 Apologies – Cllr Bobbie Torkington, Cllr Joe Reilly (NFDC), Cllr Derek Tipp (NFDC),**

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**02 Public Participation –**

One other resident asked if the Parish Council had any further information about the development and when the building work will start. Cllr Robinson advised that as a Parish Council, there is no obligation for the Parish Council to be regularly kept informed, and that she is still waiting for an email response from Natalie Walter at NFNPA. Cllr Robinson advised that she will provide regular updates in the Parish Magazine and via Facebook and our website as soon as any information is received.

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**03 To Receive Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

**RESOLVED:** Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2022 were received and agreed by all Councillors as a true and accurate record. Proposed by Councillor Robinson and seconded by Councillor Hubbard. These were then signed by the Chair,

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**04** Talk given by;

**PCSO Richard Williams and PC Mark Roberts –** PCSO Richard Williams advised that generally Ashurst & Colbury are low crime areas but the main crime in our area is break ins of sheds and garages. Often this happens because the items are small (bicycles/garden machinery) and are easily disposed of and sold on and replaced by homeowners quite quickly. He urged residents to report any break ins as if they are not reported, then the Police don't know that a crime has taken place. He and PC Mark Roberts always check the crime logs when on shift and will follow this up if they can. Lyndhurst Police station is now well manned with the CID Department based there now. He urged all residents to sign up to the Hampshire Alert System as this gets any urgent information out to the public quickly.

PCSO Mark Roberts introduced himself and said that he has been a police officer originally covering the north of the forest area, but now covers north & south. His role is the Neighbourhood Officer and he is public facing so you may see more of him around the area. The main issues he encounters in the area is thefts from tourists. Cars left in car parks with items on display have been broken into and bicycles leaning against a fence whilst photos are taken. He advised residents only to use 999 if a crime is happening now, or 101/website if they've woken up and found that their shed has been broken into overnight.

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**05 Reports**

**a. County Councillors – Keith Mans – HCC.** Cllr Mans advised that this has been a particularly difficult year for the County Council. Costs for elderly Social Care and young people have risen steeply. This now accounts for almost two thirds of Council spending after the Education Grant from Central Government has been passed directly to Schools. Hampshire County Council has still found 173 million pounds for Capital Investment for the elderly. The County has sufficient experience and knowledge in-house to ensure that the contracts from private sector companies are good ones. This isn't typical across the country and the vast majority of other Councils have sub-contracted out their services to companies in the private sector.

90% of parents were given their 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> choices in schools this year. A reduction of 3% from last year. Overall, the County has sufficient places for children in schools. When Cllr Mans first became responsible for school transport the costs were 32 million pounds per annum, these have now risen to 65 million pounds,

Cllr Mans has a £8,000 budget which he can spread between the 9 Parish Councils in his area which will be available from the end of May 2024.

*\*Cllr Mans left go on to another Parish Council Meeting at 6:28pm\**

*\*Cllr Nutburn arrived at 6:28pm – apologies due to traffic issues\**

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Signed:

- a. **Derek Tipp – NFDC** - Cllr Tipp was unable to attend the Annual Parish Meeting but sent in his report;.

The District Council continues to be financially sound with a balanced budget for the coming year. The NFDC council tax for this year is £3.83 per week for a band D property. I hope you agree that is pretty good value! There is still concern over a shortfall in 2027, but that is expected to be addressed by increasing income from fees and charges and cutting the costs of service delivery through the use of IT. Our own assets, such as Appletree Court, are being appraised to see if they can be used to increase revenue by renting out a part of it. We are also purchasing carefully selected property such as the Salisbury Road Precinct in Totton, which is to be refurbished. There are other business premises like the New Forest Enterprise Centre at Hounslowdown with units for start-up businesses and Crow Lane industrial units in Ringwood as well as several more.

**Waste** - Our waste collection service is undergoing a major change due to government legislation requiring us to collect food waste separately on a weekly basis. We are expecting to start this in 2026, provided the facility to dispose of it is ready. This year residents who sign up for garden waste are being provided with wheelie bins. Next year we will be changing from a sack collection to an alternate week wheelie bin service. One week is for recycling and the next week is for non-recycling.

**Litter** - The Council is trying to encourage people not to throw litter out of cars with a new “game approach” on the A35. There are two scoreboards one at the Lyndhurst end and one at Hinton displaying the “litter score”. The rating will be from A (good) to D (bad), with an overall percentage score on display based on how much litter is on the roadside. The higher the score, the less litter. The scheme is set to last until September.

**Grants** - A number of grant schemes have been run by the Council over the past year to support both community projects and local businesses. Much of the funding has come from the government. Funding is also being directed to improving our town centres, with a particular focus on Totton where £136,000 is to be spent on a number of small schemes this summer. A Partnership Board is looking at the possibility of putting forward more ambitious ideas for the medium and longer term, in the hope of attracting funding from the Freeport.

**Freeport** - The Solent Freeport has now been established and includes a number of key areas in our district called Tax Sites which are expected to attract new and expanded businesses with a range of tax advantages. The retained business rates from this growth can be used to benefit our district over the coming years.

**CCTV** - CCTV cameras have been increased and upgraded across the district. This will help the police as well as deterring criminal behaviour

**Apprenticeships** - Several schemes have been implemented to encourage businesses to start and grow using government funding. A new Apprenticeship and Skills scheme is free to all businesses who are looking to take on new apprentices. Information on the New Forest Apprenticeship & Skills Hub can be found at <https://newforest.gov.uk/article/3520/New-Forest-Apprenticeship-and-Skills-Hub>

**Planning** - Planning in the National Park is not the responsibility of NFDC, but it is worth noting that both are reviewing their Local Plans. Most new house building will take place outside the National Park, but it will undoubtedly affect us all in terms of increased traffic, pressure on health provision, etc. Our housing provision, as calculated by the government’s formula, is likely to increase substantially to around 1000 homes a year from its present figure of around 500. I hope that we will be able to reduce that by demonstrating that it is not realistic to build that many in such a constrained area. It is worth noting that BCP Council has just submitted its final draft plan which shows a 1200 a year shortfall on the formula number. It will be interesting to see what the Planning Inspector makes of it!

**06 Presentations given by;**

**Lunch Club - Jan Dougherty & Beverly Winch** – The club started in 2017 but had to stop during the Covid lockdowns. They raise about £100 every month and have donated £4k to the Church. The club runs on the first Wednesday of every month between 12-2pm. There are usually choices of 3 homemade soups and 3 puddings. At the moment membership is 41 people and attendance is usually 30 people per month. It's run by Bev and Jan and Nick is their voluntary driver. The club usually does something special at Christmastime.

**Foxhills Federation – Ann Arscott** – the federation made up of the Pre-school, Infants & Juniors is now in its 2<sup>nd</sup> year. The preschool is independently run and has 120 children (not all at the same time). The infant and junior schools share 1 Headteacher. It's been hard work setting this up but worth it as the children have a smoother transition going from infant school to junior school. The infant school has recently undergone an Ofsted inspection and was marked as good. This could change to outstanding if assessed again. There are 15 Governors of the Schools which are made up of parents, members of the community and staff. This year the Schools are looking to forge links within the community and are working with the Church and local care homes. They are interested in working with Parish Council and in particular giving their input into the new Playground Regeneration Scheme.

**Ladies Probus – Marion Quantrell** – in 2022 the member numbers stayed the same and increased in 2023 to 28. The club meets at The Happy Cheese and the dates are advertised in the Parish Magazine. This year membership is slightly lower at 23 members, but the members are coming from a wider area. The membership cost is £25 per year. Marion advised that most of the speakers that have been booked for their meetings have put their fees up lately and now charge mileage, so she has been looking at booking more local speakers to attend. They have a program scheduled up to next February which includes a talk from Cyber Champion Trevor Brookes, a talk about Pine Martens, Dentaids and a visit to the New Forest Fruit Farm in August.

**Mens Probus – Beverley Winch** – Beverley spoke on behalf of her husband Malcolm who was unable to attend the meeting. The group was established 30 years ago and is for newly retired men to meet up. Meetings happen at Dibden Golf Club.

**Totsplay - Claire Hampson** – The group has been set up for new mums as a safe place to meet new friends and also participate in baby yoga, sensory massage. It does fundraise for PANDA (Post Natal Depression), Ronald McDonald House and has a close-knit relationship with the village.

\*\* Clare asked if there could be a space set aside on the noticeboard in the precinct for businesses to advertise their groups \*\*

**Ruth Dingley – Brownies & Guides** – The groups meet on a Tuesday evening at Colbury Scout Hut. They do a range of activities which usually include food! Cooking on an open fire, canoeing at Beaulieu river. They are currently raising funds for Foxy's Future to enable them to purchase the residential Centre at Foxlease. They are always on the look-out for new volunteer helpers or leaders.

**New Horizons – Ann-Joy Coombs** – The group was established in 2012 by the Reverend Kate Wilson. They meet on the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of the month and is for widows or females suffering personal loss. There is always tea and cake, lots of laughter and chat, sometimes cream teas as well. Occasionally they have a speaker. Next month is the Bobby Scheme which is safety in the home. PCSO Richard Williams has spoken to members about scams. The membership costs £1 per month. Mandy's details are in the Parish Magazine for anyone wishing to join them.

**New Forest Rotary – Clive Rutland** – Rotary Club is a worldwide organisation. The club is based in Lyndhurst and covers the northern part of the New Forest. The club raise funds for people less fortunate than themselves and have helped flood victims. Latest projects include fundraising for; The Garage Project at Eling, Kids Out, Marwell Zoo, Food Banks, Defibrillators within the New Forest – the latest one being installed at Colbury Hall, Honeypot, Maggie's Cancer Charity, St Michaels Church, Minstead Trust, Heartbeat & Heartbeat House, MIND Solent New Milton & Hythe and Naomi House/Jacksplace. This year's fundraising events are a barn dance which raised £800, Quiz which raised £1500, Wine Tasting in May, Car Fun Run in June for Classic/Modern Cars, Golf in September, St Michaels Church and ongoing collections for the Foodbank. They also collect money at Asda & Morrisons and attend the Brockenhurst Street Fair as Santa. New members are always welcome and their details can be found at <https://www.rotary-ribi.org/clubs/homepage.php?ClubID=664>

**Outreach – Judith Studdert-Kennedy** – The Outreach Group was established in 2016 and helps the lonely, carers who people that live alone. Before the covid lockdowns they had 60 people on their books but this has reduced to 30 people now. The group has received funding from Ashurst & Colbury Parish Council and Hampshire County Council. They used to do large tea parties but found that it was easier to do smaller tea parties for 6-8 people. In 2023 they held 5 meetings and 2024 they have 6 meetings planned. At the tea parties there is often entertainment & singing, games and lots of chat. Their waiting list is full for volunteers to help out. The club is only open to Ashurst residents unless the person wanting to join is a Church member.

**Friends of Ashurst Station – Andy Austin** – The Friends of Ashurst Station is part of the Ashurst & Colbury Community Group. The group tends to the grounds in Ashurst Station and has recently received a £1,000 grant from Councillor Keith Mans. This money has gone towards installing 3 noticeboards. The group are hoping to plant bulbs and wildflower seeds in their planters. They are always looking for more volunteers

**(Report sent in by Brian Pass for the Friends of Ashurst Station and Ashurst & Colbury Community Group but arrived too late to be read out at the meeting).**

Our main project this year has been improving the appearance of the railway station. We have installed a number of planters which we keep filled with seasonal flowers. We have also, with help from the Scouts, cleared a large area of undergrowth which is now blooming with wild flowers. We have planted spring bulbs around the station in the grass covered areas. We have had some nice comments from travellers who appreciate what we are doing. We have asked for new seating and a new shelter. We are about to install a specially designed map, which the ACCG commissioned, to welcome visitors new to the area. At present there is no information about our village and its surroundings to guide people on arrival. The map has been designed by a local artist, Simon Chadwick. One of our members, Andy Austin, also arranged to have the path from the station to the shops renovated. It is now looking very good and is a great improvement. This year we recently held our annual litter pick for the first time since lockdown. The village looked much cleaner afterwards. Thank you to the volunteers who helped out. We are still pursuing the HCC to register the path from the station to the New Forest as a Right of Way. It is much used by people who want to avoid the busy main road.

**Longdown Dairy Farm – Brian Pass (report sent in via email but arrived too late to be read out)**

Firstly, please accept my apology for not being able to present this personally although I am sure that you will be delighted that someone else will speak more clearly than me! One thing that I can confirm is that running a tourist attraction/ Open farm certainly does not get any easier, sometimes I believe it would be less stressful to run a theme park, certainly the insurance would be less complicated there is only one insurance company that will cover the activities that we offer such as bottle feeding the goats and calves therefore they are able to put their own price tag on the policy, last year's electricity hike hit us hard from a £1500 per month demand to the current £4250, yes we have considered solar panels and wind turbines but with a 15 – 20 year pay back tag on them we have not been convinced that is worth the investment at our age. The other worrying issues is how much society and visitors expectations have changed, during the forty plus years that Longdown has been open to visitors never have we witnessed such disrespect both to our staff and towards the animals, the recent theft of a rabbit which was too young to leave its mother and the destruction of the play equipment, and theft from the farm in general sometimes makes us wonder why we continue, well the truth is that we really do enjoy the 95% of our visitors who do not fit into the above category. Well now that I have had my whinge let's get on with what you really want to hear, I am pleased that the farm has now recovered from the few years of Covid disruptions and our visitor numbers are now back to the pre 2019 levels, we learnt a lot from Covid and have used the online booking system which was put into place to our advantage during busy school holidays, this has enabled us to restrict numbers of visitors on busy days, which in turn has stopped the parking of cars along Deerleap lane, during wet periods we have hired in mats to place in the overflow car park when the ground has been so wet, as long as drivers use them we are fine but many of the drivers decide it's best to park on the grass and use the mats to keep their shoes clean. Last year's investment of an all-inclusive playground complete with a wheelchair swing with a pathway around all the equipment certainly helped this year with the wettest spring and easter that we have ever encountered, I often stand and watch children and adults who are wheelchair bound using the swing, the smiles and laughter from them really does justify the investment. Longdown was originally set up as an Educational unit to teach children about animals and where their food comes from to me that is what we are still about, and when I see the coaches turn into the car park I know that the majority of the children do not know the difference between a cow and a horse, it's quite scary really, yes we do get the comments about the smells and how noisy the animals are, after all these

years it is still so rewarding to see the expression on their faces when they hold a chick or bottle feed the calves and goats. We are basically fully booked for this season's school groups which means that over 12,000 children will benefit from the hands-on activities rather than learning from a screen in front of them, what is worrying though is the number of schools that are cancelling their bookings as the parents are unable to afford the coach trip.

Our work encouraging the less abled adults is still very popular with several individuals who were classed as 'unemployable' have now found work in the outside world, unfortunately due to lack of funding we are no longer able to host the Mencap group due to the cost of the transport to bring them to the farm despite us waiving any fees, this is a great shame as these students did gain so much from working and communicating with the animals.

Wayne and his team in the farm shop have worked very hard to bring an increase in local customers in fact the footfall to the farm shop has increased by over 25% in the last two years, his ability to source quality products as well as his friendly, helpful approach to all his customers is a major factor to the increase, even though he can be a little cheeky to some of his regulars, he tells me that it is good old fashioned humour.

Anyone who keeps chickens will most likely agree that they make great pets and that is the main reason that our Chicken Shack has been so popular, we now sell the full range of poultry related products including the birds themselves, we have customers coming as far afield as London and Oxford to choose their girls, this side of the business is one of the fastest growing and looks as though it will continue that way for a while.

As we enter into our forty first year of being an Open Farm, both Dawn and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the residents of Ashurst and Colbury for all the support that we have received during these years, as you may know it certainly has not always been easy and sometimes we have considered giving it up, however I can assure you that we intend to continue for a few more years yet health allowing.

May I use this platform to seek the support of The Parish Council to support us in our efforts to reduce the speed limit along Deerleap Lane to 30 MPH as much as we appreciate the road being resurfaced this in turn has encouraged some motorists to use excessive speed along the Church and Farm entrances, I am only too aware that the speed limit will not deter all drivers however it will assist us applying for some form of crossing eventually, I will be happy to discuss this with the Council or any Councillors should this be considered.

Many thanks to whoever had the pleasure of reading this out this evening and to all of you have listened. Bryan and Dawn Pass

**Neighbourhood Watch – Mandy Evans** - I have been a Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator for over 35 years covering the top of Ashdene Road and Pine Close. It was my privilege to take on the role as Lead Coordinator last year and build on the hard work of Karen and Ian Oliver. With over 800 homes in Ashurst and Colbury covering the area from Ashurst Lodge to the A326 south of the railway line, including Pound Lane and part of Deerleap Lane, there was much to do to raise the profile of Neighbourhood Watch together with our Coordinators who do a great job looking after their residents. Ashurst and Colbury Neighbourhood Watch come under Hampshire and Isle of Wight Neighbourhood Watch and ultimately Ourwatch which is the national Neighbourhood Watch organisation. There are many benefits to joining both Ashurst and Colbury Neighbourhood Watch and Ourwatch.

Our aim is to encourage residents to get to know their neighbours and look out for each other, to raise the alarm if they had any concerns about suspicious activity give them details of who to contact. Hopefully this makes everyone feel more connected. Neighbourhood Watch strapline is 'Together We Can Make a Difference for a Safer Neighbourhood.' Over the last year our activities have increased the number of members by 210. Information is usually by email but residents who are not online get hardcopies. We pass on the monthly Beat Report from our PCSO Richard Williams and PC Mark Roberts, Neighbourhood Alerts from Ourwatch, Action Fraud, Which? Scam Alerts, NFDC Updates and local information.

In the past few months Neighbourhood Watch has joined the monthly Police surgeries and we have been alternating between daytime at the Happy Cheese one month and early evenings at St Joseph's on alternate months for those who work during the day. These are short half hour sessions where anyone can come along to speak to PCSO Richard, PC Mark or a Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator.

Our first social evening in January was held at the Happy Cheese in January with Coordinator and Cyber Champion Trevor Brookes who gave a talk on cyber security. PCSO Richard Williams gave an update about his role in the community at our second social evening and quiz recently held at the New Forest Hotel and also gave an update on what Hampshire Police are doing at Lyndhurst and Totton.

I am happy to talk to anyone who would like more information on how they can benefit from being a member of Neighbourhood Watch. My contact details can be found in the Parish Magazine where you will find regular Neighbourhood Watch items

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**Playground Regeneration Event – Councillor Esther Sutherland** – Councillors on the Working Group have been very busy meeting with suppliers and obtaining plans and quotes for the potential new equipment. There have been articles in the Parish Magazine, meetings with school children from Foxhills. The Council is looking to obtain funding in the region of £80 to £100k. The public engagement session held this afternoon was well attended and residents gave some feedback on the new plans. There will be regular updates in the magazine.

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**Meeting Closed at 7:22pm**