

PARISH OF COCKING

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF ELECTORS

HELD ON 25 APRIL 2016 AT 7PM

AT THE VILLAGE HALL, BELL LANE, COCKING

PRESENT

Parish Councillors Imlach (Chairman in the Chair), Burgess, Craig, Keefe and O'Neill.
District Cllr Mrs Neville
25 residents

IN ATTENDANCE

G Burt, Clerk to the Council

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the 14 April 2015, previously circulated were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. Visiting Speaker

Phillip Jackson MA FRBS FRSA a Sculptor with a studio in the village, gave a most interesting illustrated presentation on his work, entitled "Making History in Bronze" including those pieces he creates for sale in his gallery, and those that are commissioned. The audience very much enjoyed his talk.

3. Report from the Parish Council

The Chairman, Cllr Imlach reported:

Overall a very good year with few negatives.

The Council started the year with only four Councillors for the seven seats available. Then Peter Craig, already serving on the Village Hall Committee as Treasurer, came forward bringing a wealth of business experience. Then came Adam Keefe volunteering to run the fireworks night with assistance from his wife. He is also designing a new council web site and chasing better broadband provision for the village. We hope to fill the remaining vacancy shortly.

All the councillors share going to forums and other meetings such as Pendean Gravel Committee, Midhurst Cycle Group, SDNP meetings where appropriate and several others when needs arise.

It is a good team with plenty to do!

Highlights of the year include conclusion of playground improvements including the painting of the bus shelter and all seats nearby; the Village Hall has been repainted outside and the driveway to the hall surfaced.

The disappointments of the year include the end of the allotments due predominantly to a lack of interest; WSCC dragging its feet over the repairs to the Bumblekyte barriers and not progressing very fast on the Bumblekyte bench.

Other matters of interest:

A Speedwatch team has been gathered and we have started to use the device regularly.

Comments have been made that we should have been consulted on a Drone event.

We are maintaining a watching brief on the future of Post Office and we will look at anything we can do to ensure a continued service.

We are conscious that many residents are concerned about footpaths being kept clear; again we will do what we can.

Other projects in the pipeline include a repaint of The Croft bus shelter; improvements to the Village Hall Car Park; further improvements to the playground and completion of the new website.

4. Parish Council Accounts

The Clerk, G Burt, presented the following report:

Copies of the Annual Return for 2014-15 have been circulated. Whilst not very informative, these are the way the law states that local councils must set out their end-of-year financial information.

I am happy to take questions on these but the salient point is that the Council finished with higher balances than it started with, even taking out the £10,000 grant that was being held pending the playground improvements.

As to the year just ended on 31st March, these should reflect the ongoing concerted efforts to continue to rebuild these balances. Three main areas that have enabled the Council to do this were by changing its insurance provider; by reducing the number of grass cuts at its two sites, without any loss in the quality enjoyed by users and a slight increase in the amount that the Council collected from Council Tax Payers from £12,309.71 to £13,000.

Looking to the year just started, the precept will remain the same, and the Council will make further savings by changing contractor for the mowing of the Recreation Field.

The Council continues to only undertake significant projects where all the funds can be secured from grants and other sources.

The measures outlined above show that the Council continues to prudently manage its finances to ensure that it is able to continue to afford to provide local services on your behalf, for the very best value possible.

5. Village Hall Report

The Village Hall Management Committee Chairman, Gill Buchanan presented the following report:

Now over 5 years old, your village hall continues to be well used with very positive comment received from all users and visitors.

The Management Committee, which has representation from Cocking Parish Council, Cocking Parochial Church Council and the wider community meets bi monthly on the second Monday of the month. We have key roles and responsibilities in place for some committee members covering finance, bookings, operational matters and projects/events. I chair the committee, David Imlach is Vice Chairman; Peter Craig, Treasurer; Frances Russell, Booking Secretary and Gwen Miles and Naomi Barnett share the Secretary role.

The total income generated for January to December 2015 from hall bookings was just over £6,200.00 with 61% of the income generated by our regular users. They offer Pilates, Yoga and

Qi Gong to both villagers and those from outside Cocking. Private and one off bookings included children's parties, weddings, elections, Duke of Edinburgh and pre expedition training camps, Pony Club courses, Christening parties and photography groups. The hall also hosted the monthly Village Lunch Club each month in 2015, although now to be relocated to The Blue Bell, as well as many Church events including the Lent and Harvest suppers and the Christmas Fair.

Monies continue to be ring fenced for hall maintenance and we are currently investigating a small extension to the rear as storage is in short supply. Despite all hirers being responsible for cleaning the hall fully after their bookings, a cleaning contract remains in places with the floors and the toilets being cleaned and checked every Monday morning so the hall is set for the week ahead. We remain committed to ensuring that the hall remains a clean, tidy and high quality environment for the benefit of all in the village.

In 2015 the only Village Hall Committee organised event was the Children's Christmas party and, despite the number of young children in the village being very low at the moment, fun was had by all who attended. Special thanks go to Gwen Miles, Naomi Barnett and Shelagh Hanrahan (and of course Father Christmas!) for delivering such a great party. After 11 years of organising and running the Bonfire and Fireworks I made it clear after the 2014 event that that would be my last. Despite newsletters and messages asking for new volunteers no project group came forward and therefore no event was held. I am however delighted to confirm that new committee member Adam Keefe and his wife, Alessandria, are leading a new bonfire and firework event for 2016 which will be held on Saturday 29 October.

Overall all I am pleased to report that the hall continues to work well for the village and is comfortably self-financing with strong demand.

Please be reminded that there is a special discounted parish booking rate for those living in the village.

Lastly if anyone is interested in joining us, whether as a full committee member or a partner on specific projects or events we would love to hear from you. We work to be fully representative of the village and welcome input from all.

The Chairman of the Council thanked the Village Hall Committee for their hard work.

6. Questions from Electors

A resident was concerned that the village could be left without a Shop & Post Office and suggested that a Community Shop might be worth considering, following the example of other villages. A brief discussion followed and the possibility of registering the existing facility as a Community Asset was suggested, along with visits from a Mobile Post Office. Lodsworth already had a Community Shop (*Lodsworth Larder*) and advice was widely available on the subject.

Tom Kidd explained that the name Bumblekyte meant Blackberry.

The meeting finished at 8.40pm