

# PARISH OF COCKING

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF ELECTORS

21 MARCH 2025, 7PM

### AT THE VILLAGE HALL, BELL LANE, COCKING

#### **PRESENT**

Cllr Miss F Russell. (Chairman in the Chair), 3 Parish Councillors and approximately 27 members of the public.

#### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Wayne Renney, Chairman, Village Hall Committee

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr Miss Frances Russell welcomed everyone.

#### **1. Presentation by Andrew Griffith, Member of Parliament for Arundel and South Downs**

The MP gave an overview of his role which he broke into three main parts: scrutinising and passing new laws; trying to ensure that his area got a fair share of government money, and standing up for local causes/helping constituents. He then answered questions about: the Angel Hotel and river bridge in Midhurst; the future of political parties; planning and the SDNPA. The Chairman thanked Andrew for coming.

*Short adjournment for refreshments.*

#### **2. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the 16 April 2024, previously circulated were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **3. Report from the Parish Council**

The Chairman Cllr Miss F Russell presented the following report:

*The Parish Council had a fairly quiet start to the year, continuing with our routine responsibilities*

- *Commenting on planning applications*
- *Ensuring the children's playground was well maintained and a safe space for children to play*
- *Keeping the sports field grass cut and maintaining the village hall*
- *Attempting to keep our pavements and footpaths clear and safe for residents to use.*
- *Monitoring the speed of traffic through the village and engaging with highways about the siting of two speed indicator devices on the A286*

*In November we were surprised to discover that Cowdray Estate had put forward two sites in Cocking for inclusion in the SDNPA Local Plan Review. Both sites were seen as having potential for housing development. The Parish Council held several meetings with residents and agreed to appoint a planning consultant to draft an objection to the inclusion of the site East of the A286/North of Mill Lane (CH199) We also agreed to seek further information about the site at Pitsham Farm. At our PC meeting on March the 10<sup>th</sup> we agreed to submit objections to the inclusion of both sites. The consultation process closed on March 17<sup>th</sup> 2025. Thanks to the many residents who supported the Parish Council in preparing our objections and to those who submitted their personal comments.*

*I would like to thank the Parish Councillors for their hard work through out the year. We are fortunate in having a full council with everyone contributing and sharing the workload. Thanks also go to Greg Burt our Parish Clerk for all his help and support.*

*The next twelve months promise to be interesting with the outcome of the SDNPA Local Plan Review consultation and the anticipated Local Government changes in Sussex.*

#### **4. Parish Council Accounts**

The Parish Clerk, Greg Burt reported:

*As the 2024-25 financial year has not yet ended, I have instead circulated the breakdown of the final approved accounts for 2023-24. Hopefully this is in the format that tells you most about where your money was spent.*

*In the year 2024-25 about to end, the Council increased the precept by just £844 or 5%. This equated to a rise in the Council Tax for a Band D property of 5% or from £80.64 to £84.68.*

*Two items to note in the current year:*

- a) Firstly the Council received its first ever share, totalling £10,300 of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money from the SDNPA. It is entitled to receive 15% of that paid by developers. It can in theory spend it on whatever it likes but Council has indicated that it will be spent on new Speed Indicator Devices for which it is currently receiving quotes, if no other funds can be obtained.*
- b) Secondly, as you will be aware the Council commissioned a planning consultant to draft its objection to an allocation in the Draft Local Plan. This has cost £3,062 for which there was no budget so reserves have been eaten into. This shows the importance of having reserves as some things you just can't budget for and Council will need to address again topping these reserves back up.*

*For the year about to start, because the Council Tax base had increased slightly it was possible to increase the overall precept take without increasing the cost to an average Band D council tax payer. Thus whilst the total precept rose by £966 there will be no change in the Council Tax for a Band D property due to that increase in the tax base.*

#### **5. Village Hall Report**

Wayne Renney, Chairman of the Village Hall Management Committee (CVHMC) presented the annual report of the Committee:

### **Purpose of the Committee**

*The Village Hall is a community Asset owned through the Parish Council, with a lease from Cowdray Estate for the land and playing field.*

*The Village Hall Committee works under agreement with the Parish Council, where, the Parish Council has responsibility for the building, car park and sports field, and the Village Hall Committee is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Hall, ensuring that it is properly licenced and operating in compliance with local authority regulations.*

### **Committee Member Update**

*The Committee is currently a team of 6 with the following changes.*

#### *Departures:*

*Peter Craig has been a Long-standing member has taken a well-earned retirement, after 9 years serving as Treasurer and Chairman.*

*Kate Pudlo stepped down after 8 years as booking Secretary. Kate is very kindly working with the committee to assist the transition with the new booking secretary, at which time Kate will step down permanently.*

#### *Joiners:*

*Gillian de Beaumont Joined as Treasurer beginning 2024*

*Gillian Young Joined as Bookings Secretary in January 2025*

*Wayne Renney agreed to be Chairman June 2025*

#### *Dedicated Committee Longstanding members:*

*Gill Craig Secretary*

*Nick Kayworth – IT and technical Matters*

*David Summerfield - Publicity and Parish Council Rep.*

### **Accounts**

*The Accounts are reasonably healthy with the balance currently at £23500*

*This includes £18,000 from the lottery fund, earmarked for the carpark repairs.*

*Unused finds must be returned to the Lottery fund.*

*A balance of approx. £6000 remains which is a little lower than the £7000 to £8000 we like to have available.*

### **Key Spending activities – outside of operating costs.**

*Laptop - We chose to purchase a laptop for use by the treasurer for £500.*

*Bluebell Donation - As a committee we agreed to donate £500 to the Bluebell Hub save the pub fund. We chose to do this as the pub is an asset to the community, and is also something else to offer those who hire the hall.*

*Water Leak - Over the last year, the ladies toilets developed a leak through the cisterns to the drain. This resulted in a £700 water bill, and then £300 for repairs. The leak has now been resolved. The Treasurer has been working on retrieving credits for the water bill.*

## **6. Questions from Electors**

*There were no questions for the Chairman, although a resident reported that celebrations were being planned at The Bluebell and Village Hall to mark V.E.Day on 11 May 2025.*

*Meeting closed 8.20pm*