

PARISH OF COCKING

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF ELECTORS

HELD ON 14 APRIL 2015 AT 7PM

AT THE VILLAGE HALL, BELL LANE, COCKING

PRESENT

Parish Councillors Marks (Chairman in the Chair), Burgess, Imlach, Mrs Miles and O'Neill.
District Cllr J Cherry
15 residents

IN ATTENDANCE

G Burt, Clerk to the Council

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the 21 May 2014, previously circulated were agreed, proposed by D Imlach, seconded by P O'Neill, as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. VISITING SPEAKER

Richard Pailthorpe gave a presentation about the Weald and Downland Museum's plans for exciting new welcome, retail and catering facilities costing several million pounds and then answered questions.

3. REPORTS FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL

The Chairman, Cllr Marks, reported on a busy year for the Council. A successful Lottery application had been made for playground improvements, thanking Cllrs Imlach and O'Neill for their hard work in achieving this. He was grateful to fellow Cllrs for their continued hard work and support, particularly Chris Budd who will be leaving the Council this year, and also Gwen Miles, who had previously been clerk for 23 years. Although no longer a villager, she would continue to serve on the Village Hall Committee and hoped to take on an allotment. Unfortunately, only 4 people had put themselves forward for election for the 7 places on the Council, so the Council would be considering co-options at its Annual Meeting in May. Anyone interested should contact the Clerk. Progress had been made on reducing speeding through the village using static and mobile equipment. He thanked his wife and her team for preparing the refreshments being served afterwards.

The Council's **Asset Manager**, Cllr Imlach reported:

The bench at Heyshott had been repaired.

Verge at the Bus Stop opposite The Croft – the suspected water leak had been looked at, and residents were reminded that continued damage to the verge caused by parking could see them being pursued for reinstatement costs.

A successful meeting had been held with The Hyde Group regarding several issues at The Croft. As a result they were hoping to erect a low level rail around the green to prevent parking, speed humps and to take what steps they think fit to discourage the parking of cars on the sloping road leading from the A286 into The Croft.

The 30mph flashing speed sign was not working, due to it being disconnected when adjacent illuminated signs were replaced. Both WSCC and SSE were now involved in trying to resolve the issue.

Potholes in the road to Heyshott had been filled.

At Bumblekyte, an area of stream close to the War Memorial, local volunteers had done a superb job tidying the area. WSCC had promised new railings. A new bench had been installed thanks to Cllr Marks, and it was hoped to hold a Barbecue or similar in the summer to celebrate the improvements. The cleared ditch was now flowing well.

It was planned to paint the outside of the Village Hall this year with preservative, to include the benches outside. Thanks to the volunteers who had made good the loose manhole cover in the drive last summer; resurfacing of the driveway was planned for this year – quotes were currently being honed. It was intended to utilise the Parish's New Homes Bonus (NHB) allocation to do this, to be topped up with a CDC grant.

A proposal to relocate a no speeding sign in Bell Lane was still on a 'to do' list but was not a WSCC priority.

The Bus Stop at the play area was in need of repainting.

A tree had been planted by the play area, to mark the start of WWI and a plaque placed in the church, thanks to a WSCC grant.

The play area refurbishment was on course for the coming months, thanks for the £10k Lottery grant. Long-promised volunteer work by SSE on the site was still to be done.

The pavement outside 'Cobwebs' had been repaired.

A grit bin for Crypt Lane would be placed when grit was due to be delivered.

A sign pointing to the Church, by the Post Office, had been replaced, after the original one was discarded by SSE.

WSCC and CDC had continued to be very helpful towards the village and Cocking continued to be well represented at the various forums.

The Speed Indicator Device (SID) was being used to great effect but it had to be booked in advance, collection and return arrangements made, and was dependant on the availability of volunteers. They hoped to target motor cycles in the future.

He thanked Gill Buchanan for her hard work in editing until recently, the Village Newsletter for many years.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Imlach for all his hard work on so many projects and issues.

4. Village Hall Report

The Village Hall Management Committee Chairman, Gill Buchanan was unable to attend but had submitted the following report:

The hall is now over 4 years old and a small group of local volunteers continues to meet every other month to ensure that the hall remains well managed and maintained for the benefit of all in the village.

In 2014 £6,122.25 was raised in booking fees – both from regular weekly users and private parties and 2015 is anticipated to be as successful. The monthly Village Lunch Club continues to meet at the hall on the last Wednesday of each month and Passover and Harvest events have been held by Cocking Church in addition to the new Carol Singing evening with refreshments.

The Village Hall Management Committee organised the last Fireworks/Bonfire and a Christmas Party for all the younger children in the village, which included a visit from Father Christmas himself and rounded off a great year for the hall.

During 2014 all internal areas were redecorated and a local cleaning contractor employed to clean the hall every Monday morning. In addition a keysafe system was also introduced, meaning that the pressure was off the small committee who had previously had to lock and lock for every booking which was unsustainable

After many years' service to the hall as Treasurer, Tony Smith has stood down but we are pleased that Peter Craig, a new resident of Cocking, has volunteered to join the committee and become Treasurer. We are also delighted to announce that Frances Russell has joined the committee and will be Bookings Secretary.

Regular user fees continue to make up two thirds of the hall's income and the village has pilates, yoga and qi gong classes over nine hours every week. Good reserves are being built to ensure that the hall continues to be maintained to a high standard and we are pleased that Cocking Parish Council, which is responsible for the external areas of the hall, have confirmed works to the driveway.

Like all things, the hall can only continue to be available for all and enjoyed by all if there are people prepared to volunteer to help and support the committee. We would be delighted to hear from any villager wishing to join us.

5. Accounts

The Clerk, G Burt, presented the following report:

Copies of the Annual Return for 2013-14 have been circulated.

Whilst I am unable to really comment on these, as these were prepared prior to my arrival last July, I will do my best to answer any questions.

I can though comment on not only the financial year just finished but also the year ahead.

The amount that the Parish Council will be collecting from Council Tax Payers in this new financial year has been increased from £12,309.71 to £13,000

Members felt that an increase in the precept was necessary in the light of the reduced Council Tax Support Grant from CDC and the advice from CDC to budget for elections, which we now know will not be held due to there being less nominations than positions.

Also, last year grass was being cut more frequently at the play area at the request of residents; this year, members have decided that grass cutting at sites must remain within budget.

The Council's reserves were still quite low, and needed to be gradually brought back up to a reasonable level.

The Council hopes to make savings in the coming year, inter alia, looking to combine the separate insurance policies for the Council and Village Hall.

This year the Council plans to treat the outside of the Village Hall with preservative.

Whilst the increase in precept is 5.6%, this equated to an increase on a Band D property of 3.2% for the parish element. This was due to an increase in the Tax Base for the parish caused by new house-building completions.

The Council is only in a position to undertake significant projects where all the funds can be secured from grants and other sources, the forthcoming play area improvements being such an example.

The measures outlined above show that the Council is prudently managing 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.

6. Questions from Visitors

Jeff Mableson asked why a grit bin had been placed in Crypt Lane and not places such as High Meadow? Cllr Imlach advised that when an appeal for grit bin site suggestions had been made, the only request had been was from a resident in Crypt Lane. Stocks of grit in builders' bags would continue to be filled/placed.

Cllr Mrs Miles read out the following:

Tonight is the last meeting I will be attending as a Cocking Parish Councillor

I would like to take this opportunity to wish the new Council all the very best and know that I leave the Council in good hands and Greg Burt our Parish Council Clerk who joined us last year is a great asset to the team.

Having spent 23 years as the Cocking Parish Clerk and 2 ½ years as a Councillor I have had the pleasure to work with many people in the village including the following Chairman, Tom, Bill, Alan, John, Jack, Aubrey, Frances, Peter and our current Chairman Richard Marks.

I have been reflecting on my years with the Parish Council and every Chairman has made their own unique contribution to the council to highlight a few.

John Whitehorn I believe put Cocking on the map and spent a tremendous amount of time and energy working with his Vice Chair Jack Dalglish to ensure that the views of Cocking residents were heard and taken into account. Also during this time there seemed to be an endless supply of consultation documents to review.

Jack Dalglish for his tireless efforts working with the police and local authorities to address the severe ASB problems that blighted our community which was focused mainly in The Croft.

Richard Marks for his thoughtful and considered approach to the work of the Council.

Finally to Frances Russell who had numerous meetings with Hyde Martlet and CDC to come up with a workable solution to the unsatisfactory situation regarding the flats in The Croft, which took years to resolve and with the help and support of John Cherry eventually an acceptable planning application was submitted which saw the flats being demolished and replaced with Cherry Close which was built last year.

I would like to express my appreciation to Frances for her leadership, dedicated and commitment that Frances demonstrated working with the Parish Council to turn the dream of replacing our very dilapidated sports pavilion into a reality with a brand new village hall which is very well used and has a steady stream of regular bookings which makes the village hall such a valuable asset to the Cocking Community.

Although Steve and I decided not to return to the village, Cocking will always have a very special place in my heart.

Thank you.

The meeting finished at 8.12pm