

**PARISH OF COCKING**

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF ELECTORS**

**15 APRIL 2019, 7PM**

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

**PRESENT**

Parish Councillors Imlach (Chairman in the Chair), P Craig, Mrs J Jackson, R Marks and Miss Russell. County Cllr D Bradford. Approximately 16 residents.

**IN ATTENDANCE**

G Burt, Clerk to the Council

**1. Presentation on the Wey and Arun Canal Trust by Tony Pratt.**

Tony gave an overview of the history of the whole route which is often called *London's Lost Route to the Sea*. The canal links the navigable parts of the Rivers Arun and Wey. The Trust are restoring the canal in sections as land and funds become available. They receive little public funding bar the occasional grant, relying solely on donations and income from the members and cruises which operate from the Trust's HQ at Loxwood. Tony then answered several questions and was thanked for attending.

**2. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the 19 March 2018, previously circulated were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**3. Report from the Parish Council**

The Chairman, Cllr Imlach presented the following report:

*The Council*

*During the last year we have experienced a couple of meetings which have attracted large turnouts and covered the road accident at the Chichester end of the village and the other occasion was the question of the future of the Bluebell. Both meetings were difficult to Chair but people wanted to voice their concerns and I am the first to say they were badly chaired.*

*The year has also seen the Council being one councillor short although at the latter part we welcomed Jean Jackson but at the same time Peter O'Neill was too unwell to attend. Some villagers make the comment that the Council is not worth joining or else it doesn't do much. Well come and join and make it worthwhile. It is not fair to criticize those who are willing to represent the village. Look out for when the Council are looking for recruits and apply. I intend to list over the next couple of pages where we are at with various activities. As well as a councillor having to attend eleven meetings per year there are several organisations that we are represented on and they are: --*

*Midhurst Area cycling group; Pendean Gravel Group; Footpath group led by SDNP; CDC Forum; WSCC Forum; All Parish Meetings – CDC.*

*We say farewell to Peter O'Neill who has decided to discontinue as a Councillor, and we thank him for his many years of loyal service.*

*We are missing from the list of Councillors for 2019:*

*Richard Marks, who could not manage the time to register his papers due to the lambing season, and we hope to see him being co-opted in the future if there is a requirement.*

*Lastly Peter Craig did not re-apply as he is pursuing other interests. Many thanks to him for his service*

### *The Clerk*

*We have had another year with Greg Burt as our Clerk; we are lucky to have this position filled as so many councils these days cannot fill this position. Thanks, Greg, for your hard work and the knowledge of council procedures you bring to us. We just hope you will continue to be with us for many years to come.*

### *Traffic Speed in our Village*

*We have now had speed strips positioned at both ends of the village. The entrance to the village from Midhurst, we hope, will have a reduced speed limit as currently the limit is derestricted into a 30mph zone. We are awaiting feedback on the measurement at the top of Cocking Hill, but we know it is definitely a dangerous area for people to cross the South Downs Way. We are still registered to use speed indicators, but we are lacking volunteers who have found it disheartening to stand and watch all drivers brake to come through the area at 30mph.*

*I am looking for any volunteers who would like to discuss future ideas to reduce speed and currently I am in touch with Singleton Parish Council to find out where they have obtained their portable speed indicator from. We are arranging a **gateway at the** Midhurst end of the village which has been funded by a villager, leaving us with a healthy budget for any other devices.*

### *Footpaths*

*Firstly, many thanks to Peter Craig and Richard Marks for sitting on the SDNP committee dealing with footpaths and rights of way. With regards to the footpaths around our village, we have taken an attitude of not being dependant on any council cutting as it seems non-existent and have kept them clear of overgrowth this last year. We have also cut back considerable the area around the History Column thanks to finding a new contractor with appropriate cutting equipment. A healthy budget figure has been allowed for 2019 and part of our maintenance recently has been to cut back the edges of tarmac paths of weeds, especially around the entrance to The Croft area.*

### *Cycleways*

*This year our village hall hosted an exhibition by SDNP of the Centurion cycleway which currently is shown to terminate at the car park at the top of Cocking Hill. When complete this will definitely bring more riders and hikers to Cocking. The stage that has to have (plans approved and costed) is to drop down from the South Down's way and on to Midhurst. The initial thinking is to cross the A286 from the car park and proceed along the South Downs Way, turning left just before Manor Farm, and dropping down into Cocking by Bumblekyte, then progressing past the post office and following the path to the Heyshott turning, and then crossing later to Pitsham Wood.*

### Playground

£800 has just been spent on upgrading the swings, as well as replacing rotten wood on the climbing frame. This is the final part of a complete overhaul of all the equipment, as a few years ago with a £10,000 big lottery grant and a community team from SSE, several pieces of equipment were replaced, including a new roof for the climbing frame, and the replacement of sand in the Petanque area. I'm still carrying out some minor works which will not impede the use of the playground.

### Newsletter

Again, this year two issues have been printed and the last issue number was number 27, which shows how many years the newsletter has been going and still is well received with no negative comments. We try and avoid such items as chairman's or editor's address and make it as informative as possible. Over the last several years, we have used Kerry Type for printing and layout, and although we pay them commercially, we thank them for the interest they take in making a good job. We are grateful to CDC for a grant of £170 which covered the cost of the insert we put into the September issue detailing the names and background of those men who did not return from WWI.

### Village Hall

Although there is a separate report, I must, on behalf of the Parish Council and the village, thank Perter Craig and his team for running such an efficient organisation, and recently, being featured on Google, with a very high number of enquiries on the subject.

### Remembrance Weekend

This year we remembered the anniversary of the end of WWI and the Council donated £250 to the Poppy Appeal to purchase a SILENT SOLDIER which was placed by the central bus shelter. Not everybody agreed with this location but the reason for this spot was that it was under the CCTV coverage from the garage. We also saw a record turnout at the Service around the War Memorial. For the first time the Council laid its own Poppy wreath. The village also saw large Poppies hung from various poles and thanks for the sponsorship of the Village Hall Management Committee who paid for the Wreath and large Poppies. We also managed a bonfire in the evening as our alternative to a Beacon. This fire was in a field at Manor Farm and thanks to Malcolm Woods and Richard Marks for organising.

### Village Maintenance

| <b>Item</b>  | <b>Description</b>                               | <b>Comments</b>                                  |
|--|--|--|
| <i>Bell Lane</i>                                     | <i>Road surface investigation</i>                | <i>WSCC highways asked to look at this issue</i> |
| <i>Clearance of old fencing by Malthouse Carpark</i> | <i>Dilapidated fencing needing to be removed</i> | <i>Hyde actioning</i>                            |
| <i>Old Willow tree</i>                               | <i>Located by the playing field</i>              | <i>Cowdray to inspect for safety</i>             |

|                       |  |                                      |
|-----------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| <i>History column</i> | <i>Cleaning of bronze plaques</i>            | <i>By sculpture studio</i>           |
| <i>Worn footpath</i>  | <i>Footpath running alongside Bumblekyte</i> | <i>Currently under investigation</i> |

*Thanks*

*Several businesses who supply either goods or services on a chargeable basis have carried out certain works on a good will basis to support the village. I take this opportunity to name them, thank them and apologise if I have missed any: --*

*English Woodlands Timber LTD, Milestone Garage, MR Woods Property Services, James Shaw, The Sculpture Studio, Stanley Plastics.*

*Lastly, thanks for tonight's catering to the Marks and Woods Families*

**4. Parish Council Accounts**

The Clerk, G Burt, presented the following report:

*Copies of the Annual Return for 2017-18 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. However, to assist, I have on the reverse side shown the breakdown of these global figures. As you can see, the opening and closing balances are the same!*

*I am happy to take questions on these but the salient point is that the Council's long term policy of increasing its net balances is clearly being reflected in the accounts. This is being done by careful management of all expenditure.*

*I would like to highlight the following:*

*Whilst the precept increased in 15-16, there has been no increase since.*

*However, the Council has budgeted for an extra £420 in the year just started. The Council took this decision as it felt it was prudent just in case the recent election was contested which can be quite costly.*

*In addition, it is moving forward with village gateway features. Whilst these are being sponsored, the installation cost is as yet an unknown. Rather than precept for an unknown, the Council has decided to meet the cost of this from reserves and then top up the reserves by a commensurate amount next year.*

*The good news though is that whilst the Council will be collecting more money, it will be taking exactly the same amount from a Band D property as last year, £61.03. This has been possible due to a rise in the Council Tax Base i.e. the amount required by the Council was spread over more properties.*

*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**

Cllr P Craig, Chairman & Treasurer of the Village Hall Management Committee (CVHMC) reported:

Accounts.

I attach a copy of the accounts for 2018. These have been reviewed by an independent examiner with no untoward findings and her letter is also attached.

Looking at the year as a whole, the total income was £9,128.66. This was less than last year by £3,663.32. The principal reason for this is that in 2017 we received a considerable sum in grants to build the extension to the Village Hall. It is also fair to note that our takings from bookings were down in 2018 by £1,250.70. We were, however, very fortunate to receive a large donation from the accounts of the Cocking Sports Club of £2,262.38.

Expenditure for the year was up from £12,071.76 to £13,316.49. Although we had completed the extension it was decided to upgrade the radiators in the Hall at a cost of £2,244.54 and to redecorate at a cost of £2,079.75. Further improvements were made which included the construction of storage cupboards and boxes costing £982.51 and the installation of an automatic mechanism to start the clock again after a power cut. The cost of this was very kindly reimbursed by the Parish Council. Expenditure on village events was also increased with the re-introduction of the summer weekend at a cost of some £550.

We started the year with a cash balance of £11,101.18 and ended the year with a cash balance of £7,013.35.

Activities.

Regular bookings declined in the year largely as a result of Shani's Pilates classes ceasing to operate and Canine Partners returning to their own base in Heyshott. To balance that Jane Menon started regular twice a week Yoga classes. Outdoor camping by True Adventure continued to grow and some new customers emerged such as the Perfect 10 film crew and another puppy training group. SDNPA have started to use the Hall for various events. Village occasions such as the Bonfire Night and the Children's Party continued to be a great success. The Summer Weekend went well and should thrive in the future. The Parish Church continues to hold village events as well as their own specific sessions. Overall in 2017 we had 252 bookings in total. In 2018 that figure was 291.

The Committee.

Frances Russell and Adam and Ali Keefe resigned during the year to be replaced by Kate Pudlo, David Summerfield and Gill Craig. At the end of the year we remained at eight committee members, as required by the constitution.

The Future

Now that a lot of the physical improvements to the Hall have been completed we are modernising our website, our bookings system and publicity outlets. We hope to see the benefit of this in 2019. Strenuous efforts are being made with publicity and other means to attract a wide range of customers. This is beginning to pay dividends

**6. Questions from Electors**

None.

**The meeting finished at 8pm**