



Fittleworth Parish Council

DRAFT Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting

held on 21st May 2019 at 7.30pm in the village hall.

Present: Chris Welfare (CW) Chair, Mike Allin (MA), Jane Claxton (JC), Ed Brookfield (ED), Tony Broughton (TB), Kerry Coughtrey (KC) & Lee Scott (LS)

Members of the public: Approx. 22 including, District Councillor Alan Sutton and the Clerk

1. Apologies for absence - Cllr David Brittain, Dr & Mrs Poole, Carolann Townsend & Pauline Gilpin

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 8th May 2018, were approved by the Parish Council at the Parish Council Meeting in September 2018. The minutes were signed by the Chairman. Copies of the minutes were available.

3. Matters arising from the minutes There were none.

4. Chairman's Report

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Chairman's report included an outline of the work undertaken by the parish council in the last 12 months. The key points of his report are as follows:

- Alison Welterveden, vice-chair, left in January 2019, due to her continuing commitment to the community shop. Robin Dunstan and Mick Foote decided not to stand for re-election in the May elections. Jane Claxton put herself forward at the election and Ed Brookfield was co-opted at the May Parish Council meeting.
- At the budget meeting in November the precept for 2018/19 was increased from £19,000 to £20,900. A lower increase would have threatened our ability to maintain our reserves at the recommended minimum level while continuing to meet necessary expenditure.
- Under an agreement with the Countryside Stewardship Scheme relating to Hesworth Common (which started in 2013), the Parish shall continue to receive £2400 a year for 10 years.
- Grants for specific activities during the year were secured. These included grants and donations for the new playground and its equipment, and the later components of the Operation Watershed grant for the work on drains in School Lane.
- Planning applications – a total of 74 applications (56 in 2017/8) had been considered during the year. The establishment of public, minuted meetings of the Planning Committee is a reform which the clerk encouraged; this has worked well, and given the public better visibility of the planning process.
- Management of Hesworth Common involved organising working days for volunteers.

Additional items included in the report –Working Groups update, Assets and maintenance, Neighbourhood Plan and Community Shop.

The full report is available on the website.

5. Financial Statement by the Clerk

Copies of the Income and Expenditure for the financial year 2018-19 were distributed during the meeting. The chairman confirmed that the draft accounts had been prepared by the Clerk as the Responsible Financial Officer, and had been finalised and signed off by the internal auditor. The Annual Return will now be submitted to the External Auditor.

The current financial position is a healthy one with £25,992 (2017/18 - £51,776) in the combined accounts.

Income

The Parish Council received £111,335.97 (2017/18 - £57,279) in income last year, most of which were donations and grants for the new playground and youth area - £65,874 (2017/18 – grants totalled £33,520 for the new playground and Operation Watershed) and the precept of £19,000 (2017/18 -£18,500).

It was noted that the licence from the Sports and Social Club is being paid at an agreed, reduced rate until the new licence is agreed in March 2020.

The Parish Council, via the Recreation Ground Charity, has started receiving rent from the Community Shop. Due to the level of donations received via the Charity account, the Recreation Ground Charity Accounts for the years ended 31 March 2018 and 2019 are required to have an Independent Examiners Report. The associated cost is covered by the rent from the shop. Once the Independent examiners fee for the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2019 has been paid, any surplus in the account and all future rents received will be transferred to Fittleworth Parish Council to be used towards the upkeep of the Recreation Ground.

Expenditure

The expenditure last year was£137,110 (2017/18 - £36,568) which was under budget (Budget £142,568).

The main expenditure comprises

- the new Playground and Youth Area (£77,234),
- Village maintenance £16,879 – The main elements being the remaining Operation Watershed work - £12,164, -and the maintenance contract - £2,916)
- Clerk’s wages (£11,756 (17/18 - £7,900)) – Increase year on year due to no clerk for 5 months in 2017.
- maintenance of our buildings;
- the upkeep of the Recreation Ground and other public spaces;
- insurance

Donations totaling £1,360 ((2016/17 - £2,500) were donated to the various clubs and societies around the village. Also, £60 has been given to the Parochial Church Council.

Hesworth Common

Hesworth Common is 100.5 acres of registered Common Land purchased from The Duke of Norfolk in 1979. The Hesworth Common account has a balance of 7605 (2017/18 - £7,797). £106 was received from SSE for the Wayleave Agreement for the year, and a rural grant of £2,400. Expenditure for maintenance, tree work and repairs to the carpark entrance totalled £2,165.

Birchwalks Wood

Birchwalks Wood account has a balance of £5,196 (2017/18 5,189) which was left in trust to the Parish Council and we cannot touch these funds for anything other than maintaining the woods. In 2018/19 there were no costs incurred. (2017/8 - £234).

It was noted that out of the total Cash Balance at the year end of £25,991, only £11,857.33 is available in the general reserve and the remaining balance being ear marked for various projects and specific reserves. This is 62% of the precept (2017/18 – 58%).

Good practice is that a Parish Council has general reserves of around 50% of the precept,

however it should never exceed double the precept.

2019/20 Precept

At the Parish Council meeting in December 2018 it was agreed that for 2019/20 the precept would increase from £19,000 (2018/19) to £20,900 (2019/20). This is an increase of 10%. The 2018/19 precept of £19,000 is the equivalent Council Tax Band D charge of £36.15 per annum. The £20,900 precept for 2019/20 results in the equivalent Council Tax Band D charge of £39.02 per annum.

6. Progress on the Neighbourhood Plan – Chris Welfare

The progress started in 2014.

The steps in the evolving Neighbourhood Plan since the Annual Parish Meeting in May 2018 are as follows:-

- The Neighbourhood Plan was put out for consultation in 2018. 13 individuals and 9 Statutory organisations submitted comments.
- The Steering group considered the representations and implemented of any changes needed.
- The Submission Version of the Plan was produced and submitted on 23 January 2019 to SDNPA
- Another 6 weeks consultation period followed after which the Plan was Submitted to Independent Examiner in April 2019.
- In early May the Independent examiner has come back with questions which are being answered by the Steering Group.
- The Examiner will issue a full report making recommendations for changes if necessary.
- It is hoped that the Referendum will take place in October 2019 – this assumes that the South Downs Local Plan is expected to be 'made' in July 2019 (but this may be slightly delayed).

7. Parish Council Strategic Plan 2017-2022 update

The Strategic Plan was produced by the Parish Council in 2017 and primarily includes the community Shop and new playground project. As these have successfully come to fruition, it is time to update the Plan. The Parish Council will be updating the Plan over the next 6 months.

8. Getting Involved

Kerry Coughtrey explained how the Parish Council, like the Community shop, relies on volunteers, not just the councilors, but members of the community to help get projects done. The Parish Council is always looking for people to help with projects that need to be completed. Please continue to help your community by answering the call for helpers when asked. Information will be put on the noticeboard, website and other platforms when help is needed.

District Councillor – Alan Sutton

Fittleworth now has a new District Councillor. Cllr Alan Sutton. Mr Sutton attended the meeting and gave the following report:-

"I am delighted to be elected as your District Councillor. After a long and varied business career this is my first political appointment. I hope you find me friendly, approachable and I am committed to be accessible and pro-active in my approach.

There has been a reduction to 36 councillors in the council, which means that each ward is now considerable bigger – Fittleworth Ward has approximately 2800 electors and about 1400 households.

The District Council now consists of 18 Conservatives, 11 Liberal democrats, 2 labour, 2 greens, 2 Selsey Alliance independents and one further independent. Tony Dignum the leader has stood down and a new leader and team will be confirmed at the full council meeting on Tuesday 21st May – I will give details next time.

As the major party it is our commitment to work collaboratively with all members to the benefit of the whole district and I am fully committed to that myself as I believe that is the best way to achieve most for our beautiful area.

I am determined to provide improved communications between all levels of government in support of our ward. In my role as one of the Elected Governors for Chichester at the Western Sussex NHS foundation trust I am also a trained “knowing me Dementia Volunteer and Research Ambassador. I also have responsibility for improving communication between the hospital and the local Primary Care providers (Doctors surgeries) in this area. The trust covers Southlands, Worthing and St Richards Hospital and I have set up “drop in centres at locations including our Village stores and pub. I am happy to meet any resident to discuss any issues when available, even if they are not my direct responsibility I will signpost and advise when I am able.”

Public Questions and Discussion

1. Communications Issue

It was felt by some members of the meeting that the Community are not kept informed on what the Parish Council is up to. Methods of communication need to be improved by using more social media tools. For example Next app and Facebook.

2. Traffic Issue

Large white lorries are now regularly using Lower Street at all hours of the day and night even though the road is marked as unsuitable for HGVs. It was suggested that photos of the lorries are taken, time and date also logged and all information emailed to the clerk.

It was suggested that a Facebook page similar to the “NO Trucks in Petworth” page be set up as a way to log offenders. The Highways and Traffic Working Group will look into this.

The aim should be to change the behaviour of the lorry drivers.

There being no other business, the Chairman thanked all present for their participation and closed the meeting at 8.50 pm.

APPROVED AT THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING on 17th June 2019

SIGNED

DATED:.....

