

HALE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Hale Annual Parish Assembly held at 7.30 pm on Tuesday 23 April 2019 in Hale Village Hall, Hatchet Green, Hale

Draft Minutes to be approved at the Annual Parish Meeting 2020

Present:

Cllr Lucas – Chairman, Cllrs Aitken-Sykes, Harrington, Hartas, Mangan and Templeton

In attendance:

Miss K Cleary – Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer

28 members of the public

5 Speakers – see below

The meeting was recorded by a parishioner.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1 To receive apologies for absence – Apologies for absence received from G Babey

2 To consider and approve the Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 17 April 2018 - The Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly were approved by all Members and signed by the Chairman.

3 To receive the Chairman's Annual Report for 2018/19

The 18/19 year

- A very busy year dominated by two major issues of the National Grid Visual Impact Project and Affordable Housing discussions.
- Parish Plan largely complete; Village Design and Affordable Housing sections remain outstanding
- Cemetery improvements ongoing; central bed replanting has started and work on upgrading the path is planned for early summer
- Repairs to the Village Hall car park funded and completed including a robust new edge between the road and the car park and installation additional drainage to help protect the surface in future
- Ongoing tasks - footpaths, general maintenance

Thanks to parishioners for support and contribution to village life:

- Ian Gemmell – joining the Council team following the by-election
- Parish Plan working party – particularly to Sloan Hickman for pulling the document together
- The Housing Consulting Group for time and research on affordable housing matters, particularly Ian Winson for Chairing
- Hale Community Land Trust directors and members
- Steve Whitmarsh, Parish Council Tree Warden
- James Stewart for help with temporary car park repairs
- Sharon Barnett – Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator
- Paula Downard – her design work on the car park repairs
- Transition Group – their £400 contribution to car park repairs
- Susan Witt – her work to plant the central bed in the cemetery
- Cllrs Hartas – her work Chairing the Village Hall committee and also sourcing funding for both the Village Hall extension and the Car Park repairs
- Hale Social Committee – for refreshments for the APA and arranging events through the year
- The Clerk

Work outside the village – representation on or work on behalf of parish with:

- New Forest National Park
- Western Escarpment Conservation Group
- North West Quadrant group
- Downton Link
- National Trust
- Other town and parish councils
- National Grid

2019/20 – major projects include

- The Housing Consultative Group – to look at the issue of affordable housing, all volunteers welcome
- Working with the school regarding the verges and traffic management
- Car park repairs
- Cemetery improvements
- The Visual Impact Project

4 To report on finances for 2018/19 (unaudited accounts) – a copy of the unaudited accounts was available. The RFO reported

- HPC is in generally robust financial health.
- A large percentage of the precept is spent on ‘non-discretionary ‘existence’ costs of the Parish Council. The %age increased in 2018/19 to >66% as a result of unbudgeted by-election costs.
- Other, non-essential work such as the website overhaul, consideration of village noticeboard needs was deferred to accommodate the time demands on the council of the VIP project and affordable housing and this will be a focus of 2019/20.
- Major car park works were funded (the bank balance at 31 March reflects funding received with work carried out in April). These plans had to be scaled back as a result of the general unavailability of public funding for such a project. Cllr Hartas did a great job obtaining lottery funding, but the RFO recommends that the Council consider new ways of funding the medium-term maintenance costs of the car park.

There were no questions on the finance report or the unaudited accounts.

5 Representative Reports from Local Organisations

- i. Inspector 22457 Scott Beney; New Forest Neighbourhood Policing – the police service has faced funding cuts of c£90m per annum since 2010. This has led to a reduction in staff from 6500 to 4900 and tough operational decisions taken – the police simply cannot deploy to every request and calls are prioritised.

Residents were encouraged to use the online version of 101 online to report non-urgent crime/ suspicious activity rather than the telephone service.

The police precept has been raised and this provides investment opportunities for one extra officer to be recruited in autumn/ winter of 2019 – a 100% increase.

Speeding is a big issue in the forest; the CDA (via Tony Hockley) is helping to coordinate community speedwatch programmes.

- ii. Jake White – National Trust – the NT has continued its rotational annual management programme including coppicing of the gorse and some young birch trees to the North of Ladies Mile. A successful litter pick was held along Forest Rd and Ladies Mile. No specific land management is planned for the summer, work will focus on furniture and access audit and crossings work.

There remain plenty of opportunities to volunteer with NT:

- hydrology volunteers to help with soil and water quality monitoring
- Volunteers to help with bird, butterfly, reptile and bat monitoring
- volunteers interested in archaeology are needed to help with a full 3D map survey of the forest.

In response to specific questions:

- a. A number of turkey oaks, firs and other invasive tree species had been felled

- at the back of Mays Firs as part of a general programme of heathland restoration. No further intervention was planned for the area, the stumps would be left to rot down and provide habitat for insects such as stag beetles.
- b. There were no plans to move the piles of logs in Hale valley. The wet ground conditions made it difficult to remove them and so they were to be left as a wildlife habitat. Deteriorating 'do not climb' signs would be retrieved.
 - c. Dogs off lead were a huge problem across the whole forest particular. Rangers had been seeking to directly engage with dog walkers and recent focus had been on Rockford Common, where the problem is more extreme.
 - d. The poor condition of the gravel edges on the Western Edge of the Purlieu was noted. There were no current plans for any verge protection measures or passing places.
- iii. Kirsten Davies, Hale Primary School PTA – the school supports 65 families and over 100 children. The PTA is currently focussed on fundraising to allow redevelopment of the playground space; using tiers to allow running space and ball games whilst retaining the vegetable patch and reinstating the pond. Paula Downard is generously helping with design. The project will cost c£20K which is a large target to raise. Forthcoming events include a Bingo evening in Woodgreen and an auction of promises. Residents support of these fundraising events would be much appreciated.
 - iv. Stephen Roper, Hale Social Committee – the committee has organised a number of popular events this year including a trip to Exbury Gardens in May, a welcome return of the "Opera Dudes" in October and organised a Christmas tree at the local Christmas Tree Festival. A recent 'Secret Spitfires' showing was a sell out and an additional date has been added in April (also sold out, with a waiting list). Other forthcoming events include a trip to Kingston Lacey on 11 June and 'A Twist of Limelight' in the hall on 23 November. Thanks to all who help. Suggestions for events welcome.
 - v. Jacqui Hartas, Hale Village Hall Committee – the Village Hall continues to be well supported by residents and local clubs and organisations. The hall recorded an operating surplus of £12K in 2018, although the full financial impact of the closure of Hale Pre-School will be felt next year. Trustee initiatives and clubs have provided income of >£7K this year. The downstairs room has been refurbished in the year and a two-zone HIVE system and superfast broadband have been installed for energy-saving remote control of heating. There are ambitious capital plans for next year including an extension downstairs to provide kitchen facilities and increase the range of potential hire uses for the room. Funds of £35K have been raised against an estimated cost of £39K. Volunteers are sought to look after the garden and manage a potential recycling centre.
 - vi. Written report – Sharon Barnett – Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator – summarised by Cllr Lucas. An unfortunate increase in the level of break-ins and thefts from outbuildings this year. 101 online is the most effective way of reporting matters to the police, step-by-step details are available from NW coordinator. A community meeting with the police in attendance is proposed, any thoughts and ideas should be forwarded to the Clerk or NW coordinators. Thanks to the ongoing local NW teams, contact details are available in the report and will be posted on the Parish Council website.

6 To take public comments and questions

- a. A parishioner expressed surprise that no formal mention had been made of the National Grid proposals to underground cables on Hale Purlieu. The parishioner felt that no one on the Stakeholder panel openly supported those residents who did not agree with the noise, traffic and disruption that would affect the local population and

wanted to publicly express her thanks to the Protect Hale Purlieu Movement for their work in actively opposing the project.

Councillors noted that the Parish Council (whilst deliberately not taking a formal position in advance of receipt of an actual planning application) did proactively engage with National Grid to identify and communicate both resident and commoner concerns and to facilitate information flow about the proposals. Councillors acknowledged that the project had been divisive for the village and it was hoped that now the project had been shelved that residents and Councillors could work together to heal divisions in the village. Cllr Gemmell specifically thanked the Protect Hale Purlieu Movement.

The Chairman of the Protect Hale Purlieu Movement accepted the parishioner thanks and expressed his thanks on behalf of the PHPM to those residents and groups who had supported their opposition of the project including Desmond Swayne MP, RSPB and Hampshire Wildlife.

There being no further business to discuss the formal meeting closed at []. A large number of residents left the meeting.

Local resident Sarah Delves gave a fascinating talk on her social media work to support the 'Secret Spitfires' film, which set out to highlight the extraordinary achievement of those ordinary people who built Spitfires in and around Salisbury in World War II. Social Media played a key role in publicising the film and helped to get the film national distribution through the Odeon chain.

The Chairman thanked the speakers and everyone for attending. Those remaining enjoyed refreshments and an opportunity for informal discussion

Signed:
Chairman

Date:

Clerk: Miss K Cleary Valley Mews, Fordingbridge, Hants, SP6 1FB
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