

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 14th May 2018 in the Amenity Hall, Stone Cross

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors Tom Liddiard and Daniel Shing.

2. Welcome

The Chairman, Keith Stevens, welcomed the fourteen people in attendance and read from his report which was as follows;

'Well following on from my comments last year it is still a legal requirement for us to call an Annual Parish Meeting to discuss the Council's affairs and engage with you. The need for an Annual Parish Meeting has in many people's opinion diminished now that we have the internet and Parishes have their own websites. An interesting fact that I learnt from the Chief Constable last week is that of all the electronic data in the world 90% was created in the last two years.

Again in last year's report I mentioned that the new draft Local Plan should be approved by Wealden District Council in the next few weeks. 12 months down the line it is still awaiting approval! To be fair the plan has the attention of Government and many other districts across the land as Wealden is looking at the environmental and putting it before housing numbers. So the evidence has to be able to stand up to scrutiny and it is the collection of that evidence that is taking time as it has to be checked by all the experts. And it will come as no surprise that every expert seems to have a different view.

Planning remains an issue whilst we await the new Local Plan and we must continue to do all that we do to protect the "in-fills" between the various component parts of the Parish so that villages retain their own identity.

Our finances remain in good order. I mention this because it is really important for Parishes to be in a position to react in the light of Government cut backs and as the spending power of East Sussex County Council diminishes. I am lucky (perhaps not the right word) to attend the County's partners budget meetings and clearly they are having to cut back on all but their statutory duties in order to balance their books.

The simple example is grass cutting where the need for the Parish to step in was not evident to well after our precept had been set. There are a number of Parishes in the county that are not in the financial position to take on the cost of additional grass cuts. There will be more reductions in the services provided by County and District and in many cases we may have to step in to help. I'm sure our County and District Councillors will mention this in their reports. And here I want to thank our County and District Councillors for all they do for the Parish and indeed for their attendance at our meetings. I can assure you that not all Councillors take such an interest in their Parishes.

During the past twelve months we have continued to give financial support to local causes and again I suspect the need for our help will only increase as the County reduces or indeed withdraws its support to charities.

We have continued to keep the villages as clean as possible. Here again there have been a few problems because of funding issues but we were able to step in and arrange

extra sessions for our litter picker. I know that Westham villagers helped during the clean campaign so a thank to those who participated.

To conclude I would like to thank the Parish Councillors for all that they do. I know many people think they are paid and that they only meet up once a month but that just isn't the case. I would also like to thank them for "sticking together". Yes we have differences of opinion but let me assure you that by comparison to other Parish and Town councils that I come across in East Sussex and beyond this is a "happy council".

And finally a big thank you to Alison for all that she does in keeping us on the straight and narrow. And perhaps a special thanks for all that she has done in respect of GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations). It is partially due to the fact that she sits on NALC's smaller council committee that she is ahead of the game in completing our GDPR policies. Ok the start date isn't until the 25th of this month but I can assure you that a huge amount of work was undertaken last year to get us where we are now'.

3. Report from County and District Councillors

District Councillor Clark reported that;

- Wealden has increased its share of the Council Tax by 2.7%. Wealden no longer receives the revenue support grant from Central Government and has had to look at additional revenue sources. As a result it is in the process of building a crematorium at Horam which is expected to generate £900,000 a year and it has bought Vicarage Fields in Hailsham from which should generate another £600,000 a year.
- Wealden Councillors continue to lobby the police about parking and the crime rate. Sussex Police considers illegal parking to be a low priority. Wealden opted not to decriminalise because it would have to fund the enforcement.
- Work on the Local Plan is progressing and the Plan is expected to go before Wealden Full Council in July. Infrastructure remains a priority. It was also noted that developers must provide a Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS) when they build close to the Ashdown Forest to offset any effect their development has on the forest.
- 51% of waste in the District is now recycled and less than 1% is sent to landfill which means Wealden has one of the best recycling rates in East Sussex.
- The new Waste Contract comes into effect in 2019 and Wealden is continuing to pressure the existing contractors to litter pick the main roads in the meantime.
- The 'Have You Switched Campaign 2017 resulted in collective savings, to those who signed up to it, of £217,549.
- Customer satisfaction surveys showed 90% of residents who responded like living in Wealden, and 75% say Wealden District Council is doing a good job.

The Chairman then invited representatives of Clubs and Associations to make reports and the following came forward.

4. Reports from Clubs and Associations

Mr McMillian from **Foxes Hollow Residents' Association** read from his report which said;

'We started in 2002 as a Residents' Association looking after the interests of the newly completed Foxes Hollow estate in Stone Cross. Since that we have continued to attract the support of over 50 percent of the 175 households on estate in Foxes Hollow, with this year being our highest levels yet, just around the 67 percent. This is

not just pledging support but also financially paying a membership fee which helps us fund maintenance and improvements over the estate.

Last summer we took up additional gardening and maintenance work over and above the levels carried out by both the Parish Council and East Sussex Highways / County Council and this has made a noticeable difference to the estate. We are balancing the funds we hold in reserve and the membership monies we receive in against the extra cost of the work to come up with a suitable schedule of planned work.

Our brief winter spell of snow and ice caused us no problems, aided by the parish council salt bins and an additional one we installed a couple years ago at a particularly steep part of the estate.

We liaise with the developers building the new Wells estate beside us. There are a few issues that come to light occasionally but we generally manage to get them sorted. We were in discussion with them some time before the original plans went in and managed to get concessions that were concerning some of our residents so we feel that has worked as well as we could have expected.

Our website at foxeshollowestate.com continues to be a useful way for residents and those outside the estate to contact us which seems to be peoples preferred option, but our committee is always available for suggestions and queries.

I am joined by 3 excellent committee members, Peter O'Neill, Jo Rich and Bob Mitchener who share out the tasks we come up with at our committee meetings and it makes being involved with a local residents' association such as ours a pleasure and a good way to get to know many of the faces on the estate.

We thank the Parish Council for their assistance over the last 12 months and continue to support and attend parish council meetings as an informative way of hearing what is happening in the parish and if there are ways we can help'.

Councillor Saxby read from his report from **Hankham Village Society**, which said;

'After a Meeting on March 30th 2017 at Hankham School a group of residents got together to organise a Cream Tea on June 15th 2017 in memory of the M.P., Jo Cox.

The party was held at Peelings Manor Barn thanks to the generosity of Sorel Blessington who let the Barn be used free of charge. The Parish Council donated £150 for the hire of porta-loos for the afternoon. This grant was much appreciated and was essential for the afternoon's celebrations. The Party was very successful and guests included Jane Gow and Hugh Merriman M.P. and family, plus some 200 residents and friends from Hankham. A very enjoyable afternoon was had by all.

As a result of the success of this Party the group of volunteers formed a committee and launched Hankham Village Society. Another meeting of villagers identified interests which could be followed and made it essential for the HVS to have a means of communicating with residents in addition to the foot-slogging delivery of paper information. Once again the Parish Council has been a vital part in this by granting £180.00 to launch a HGV website which is now established as;
www.hankhamvillagesociety.org

Planned events for the future include a Summer Fair, Carol Singing and a Christmas celebration. The Society was disappointed the local school cannot be used because it would have provided a good central point.

Members of the Hankham Village Society wish to place on record their thanks to the Westham Parish Council for its support in launching the Society designed to draw Hankham residents closer together into a viable community.

Ms Rowe from **Pevensey and Westham Community Forest Garden** read from her report, which said;

‘The community group started to develop the site in Pevensey three years ago. The former allotments had been untouched for at least 12 years. Trees and shrubs such as willow and buddleia had self-seeded. Some of this growth crowded out the existing apple trees. Wild shrubs on parts of the site have been cleared and a wide variety of fruit bushes and trees planted. A herb garden has been developed. Last autumn we had a bumper apple harvest.

The site is rich in wildlife, ongoing management aims to enhance this. Advice has been received from the Sussex Wildlife Trust.

Most volunteers live in Westham, Pevensey or Stone Cross. Some are people with special needs who may visit with their Carers, some have communication problems or need exercise following a stroke or if living with diabetes. There are drop in sessions every Tuesday and Thursday. Some people like to choose a gardening task while others just want to sit and watch the newts, bees and birds. There are around 4 to 10 people attending each day. There are also weekend work days and open days. Over the last year we have organised 8 adult education days at the site.

Events planned this year include a composting workshop with support from Wealden District Council Recycling Department. There will be an Apple Day with juice pressing at the end of September.

The Group is busy raising money to fit out the wooden cabin on site.

Other Community Groups such as the Gardening Club and the Women’s Institute will be visiting. At least 250 people visited the site last year. All are welcome.’

Ms Carolyne Ball, Secretary and Treasurer of the **Westham Village Hall Committee** reported;

- The previous year had been difficult and the accounts showed a loss of nearly £2000 because there were some unplanned large expenses and some long standing groups closed.
- The Committee decided therefore to raise hire fees (all groups, except one that was closing anyway, stayed) advertise more, run their own fundraising events and draw up a list of necessary repairs, renovations and refurbishments for the hall and work towards achieving each phase.
- This year has been much better. The caretaker is more pro-active and wider advertising has resulted in more parties and events being booked. The Committee has also successfully organised its own events.
- Regular hall users cover a wide range of interests, Bingo, Flower Arranging, Caged Birds, WI, Postcard club. Group sizes range from 6 to 60+, but the majority of hall users are older residents.
- Westham Village Show is, this year, on Saturday 11th August. It has become a regular social event in the Village Calendar, it is well supported and has a wide range of classes. 25 cups will be handed out which have been donated by local businesses or in memory of villagers.
- The Committee offers grateful thanks to the Parish Council for support and its

grant which enabled the first planned phase of work to start, although we still have a long way to go! The Committee also offered thanks to Councillor Garner for his continued support and attendance at all events, and the Westham Pop In want to thank Councillor Stevens because his attendance and interest at their meetings was much appreciated'

Mrs Barbara Molog , Chair of **Stone Cross Mill Trust** read from her report which was as follows;

'Thank you for inviting Stone Cross Mill Trust' to the Annual Parish Assembly.

On advice the Stone Cross Windmill Trustees decided to change the constitution and become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. This has resulted in a new Charity Commission Registration number.

Over the years Stone Cross Mill Trust has seen steady decline in the number of members resulting in one of the main reductions of income. This is compensated by the generosity of the existing members and visitors donating extra money or purchasing souvenirs. The Windmill like all organisations has seen the insurance premium increase as there is a need to have public liability of £10m.

Last year's Spring, Summer and Winter Fairs welcomed a large number of visitors who enjoyed the raffle, tombola, home-made cakes (produced by the volunteers and of such high quality), jams and eggs. The Harvest Festival at the Windmill in October and Carol Service at St Lukes, both conducted by Father James Vine, were enjoyed by many members and visitors and will be repeated this year.

May 12th and 13th was Mills weekend and the Trust was lucky that on Sunday 13th May the Long Man Morris Men attended this event.

The new gears are working well helping to produce best quality wholemeal flour which can be purchased from the Windmill. At the end of this season the Trust hope to re-paint the tower which is beginning to look rather 'sad'. This will involve the hire of a cherry picker (at a cost of (£700) so that the work can be completed by the trusted band of volunteers who manage to keep the windmill in such condition.

The AGM in March approved the accounts for the last financial year and this was followed by a well supported social evening for members where there was an opportunity to meet the Trustees and enjoy refreshments.

The Windmill is open every Sunday 2-5pm until the end of September for tours, refreshments and the opportunity to purchase wholemeal flour or climb the tower.

The Trust are also recording in this report to Westham Parish Council their continued concerns regarding the new housing estate that has developed beside the Windmill. This is due to the overall effect of the proposed tree planting and the close proximity of the houses that could cause turbulence and possible harmful effect on the Windmill in years to come (so adequately reported by the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings) and ignored in the planning process. As a point of interest the Windmill receives no grants/donations from the adjacent newly built estates although I am sure that the iconic Windmill is used in the marketing materials!! Extract from Bellway Brochure just a couple of minutes' walk from the development 'the restored Grade II Listed Stone Cross Tower Windmill is open every Sunday for tours. The adjacent grain store is now a café and flour produced in the Mill – as well as cakes and biscuits made from it – are sold here'.

Many thanks to Alison and her prompt response in always placing information about the Windmill on the Parish Council website with such speed and the Parish Councillors for their support and grant.

The website stonecrosswindmill.co.uk contains future dates and events'.

Councillor Blaker reported that **Stone Cross Memorial Hall** recently lost its Secretary and is currently in a state of flux. It does however have some new Trustees and the hall is well used, but a considerable amount of refurbishing is needed.

The Chairman thanked all the Clubs and Associations for their reports and for all the work they do which, like Parish Councillors, is unpaid.

5. Open Forum

Mr Costick asked why nothing appears to be being done about the dog bin in Pevensey Park Road. The bin has recently been replaced by the District Council with a smaller one and is being emptied twice a week but he says it needs to either be emptied more, or the bigger bin needs to be reinstated or there needs to be an additional bin there.

The Clerk said the dog bin was reduced in size because there were manhandling issues with the larger bins and the bigger bins do not fit on the contractors' lorries. A new bin would cost the Parish Council £750 and just under £6 each time to empty it, and a licence would be needed from the County Council. Councillors had therefore agreed to monitor the problem to see if the expense was justified. An article has also been submitted to The Pump to remind residents they can dispose of bagged dog waste in litter bins. The Parish Council is also considering putting stickers on its existing bins to remind them too.

Mr Milne reported parking problems in Westham. He asked;

- For bollards to be fitted in Peelings Lane
- For more disabled parking in the Village Hall car park
- Why those who park on double yellow lines are not prosecuted
- Why parking seems to be allowed on verges.

Councillors had previously chosen not to put more bollards in Peelings Lane because they felt it would move the parking problem on. They will decide whether to request an additional parking space in the Village Hall car park and whether to reinstate the verge on the corner of the High Street at the June Full Council Meeting.

Parking on verges is understood to be not illegal but any parking on double yellow lines or any parking which is dangerous should be reported to the police on Operation Crackdown (operationcrackdown.org).

The Parish Council will also ask Pevensey and Westham School to put an article in their newsletter asking parents and carers to park more considerately.

There were no questions from the public and the meeting closed at 7.50pm.