

NUTHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting
held on Wednesday, 12th March 2020 at
St Andrews CofE School, Nuthurst
commencing at 7.30 p.m.

PRESENT:	Cllr O Hydes OBE (Chairman)	Cllr N Bryant (Vice Chairman)
	Cllr J Assassi	Cllr D Cotton
	Cllr R Carmichael	Cllr D Livingstone
	Cllr J Chaytor	Cllr T Nelson

The Clerk, Sarah Hall, District Councillor Toni Bradnum and two members of the public were also in attendance.

APM001-19/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was **RESOLVED** that the apologies for absence from Cllr C Kenny and Cllr J Mercer be **APPROVED**.

APM002-19/20 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes from the [Annual Parish Meeting](#) held on 13th March 2019 be **APPROVED** as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman. **PROPOSED** Mrs Val Court and **SECONDED** by Mrs T Bradnum. All the matters arising from the meeting have been dealt with during the last twelve months.

APM003-19/20 PRESENTATION BY BEN STARNS, HORSHAM PREVENTION INSPECTOR

Inspector Ben Starns has been in the Police Force for over 20 years and has been an Inspector for the last 12 years. Also, being a Horsham resident the Inspector is passionate about the area.

Horsham has seen the recruitment of three additional Sergeants and PCSO's during recent months and policing is changing with Response and Prevention teams now working closer together. Response Officers work 24/7 where as Prevention Officers working set hours.

There have been issues with anti-social behaviour in Horsham Town Centre and Inspector Ben Starns is working closely with Greg Charman from HDC to resolve the problems.

Early intervention projects are actively being worked upon and effective legislation has been introduced to help control anti-social behaviour. The aim is to help make the district a better place.

Austerity has created apathy and the Inspector stressed that the public must start reporting incidents again, the Police Force are 'only as good as the intelligence they receive.'

Questions

- Q) Use of illegal substances in Horsham Park?
- A) Through intelligence received, the warrants issued are already in double figures this year, difficult to totally stop the use, however, the Police Force are cracking down on suppliers and growers. HDC Park is regularly patrolled by officers.
- Q) Drug situation in local schools?
- A) Schools work closely with the Police and have safeguarding policies in place. Out of 1,500 students at Millais only 4 have been identified through an early intervention project.

Inspector Ben Starns works Monday-Friday, runs the Joint Action Groups (JAG) monthly meetings, has access to the Prevention Enforcement Team (1 sergeant and 6 officers), if there is a critical situation this number could rapidly be increased.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Ben Starns for his presentation and he left the meeting at 8.00pm.

APM004-19/20 REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN ON PARISH COUNCIL BUSINESS 2019/2020

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr Owen Hydes, addressed the public;

Changes on the Parish Council

Last May, we said farewell to five, long-serving Councillors who decided to retire. The Chair, Mrs Valerie Court left after 29 years; the Vice Chair, Mrs Gina Dixon also left; and they were joined by Mrs Ann Gaffney, Mrs Janie McClean and Mrs Frances Boulter.

Being a Councillor is entirely voluntary and many Councillors give up untold amounts of their time to serve the community. So, these five ladies were very fulsomely thanked.

New Councillors

Four people immediately applied to replace them, were elected and Dave Cotton, Norman Bryant, Dennis Livingstone and Colin Kenny took up their positions as councillors. Subsequently Rob Carmichael was co-opted to fill the remaining vacancy. Steve Turner took over as Chair, with myself as Vice Chair.

Nine months later, Steve Turner and his wife decided to relocate to Cornwall and so in February, I was elected Chair with Cllr Norman Bryant as Vice Chair.

Whilst all the changes since last May might have seemed daunting, they seemed to have an invigorating effect. Councillors quickly became proactive and more meetings became necessary in order to action their ideas. At the same time, the Council needed to maintain all the standard items that fall within any Council's remit such as bus shelters, street lights and so on.

The Clerk

None of the work in the Parish would have been possible without our very efficient, knowledgeable and effective clerk, Sarah Hall. As a token of the Parish Council's appreciation the Chairman presented the Clerk with gift.

Planning

Since last May the Parish Council has had some healthy debate about various matters, much of it about planning because this forms the major part of our tasks.

Planning Applications

The number of Planning Applications continues to rise each year. Since last April, we have had 86 Planning Applications to deal with, and the year isn't quite finished! This is over 10% more than last year. That is equivalent to about 7 each month, which is quite a workload given that virtually every site is visited and often, the neighbours are asked for their views.

Some planning applications are for simple extensions to existing houses which are usually quite straightforward. Some, however are for new homes and they can become very complicated with many amendments.

Enforcements

When householders or developers are suspected of flouting planning permissions, HDC can investigate and, if necessary, take enforcement action against them. But, HDC seems reluctant to do so unless pressed. Since April last year, HDC has investigated 24 cases, sometimes at the Parish Council's request, but it has rarely taken any enforcement action, as such, usually because action has been deemed "not expedient" to pursue.

Appeals

Householders and developers are increasingly appealing to the Planning Inspectorate when HDC refuses planning permission. There have been 10 appeals since April of last year and the Parish Council always submits a document upholding its own earlier objection and supporting HDC's refusal of planning permission.

Open Spaces

The Parish Council has continued to improve the designated open spaces in the Parish, principally by sowing wild flowers to aid biodiversity. The daffodils and bushes planted by the Council on the green space at Church Road have been enjoyed by so many residents and the Council has received a number of thanks for its work. A resident in Gaggewood was so impressed that daffodil bulbs have now been planted there. Recently, the Council liaised with HDC over land to the rear of Woodlands Walk that is in the ownership of HDC and designated as an "informal public open space". However, the Parish Council assures nearby worried residents that no decisions have been made by either HDC or the Council about what, if anything, will happen on the field.

The children's playground at Mannings Heath

The Parish Council is grateful to Dave Cotton for keeping an eye on the safety of the moving play equipment on Mannings Heath Village Green and doing a formal monthly inspection. Finance permitting, it is envisaged that an upgrading to the equipment may be necessary in the future.

Maintenance of Parish Council Assets

The Council's Assets include bus shelters, some of the street lights, village gateways, trees etc and these need to be kept in good order. The Council is grateful to residents for reporting any defects and the clerk for being so assiduous in organising repairs.

Support to Local Groups

It is good that local groups feel that they can turn to the Parish Council for help and support. Recently, Paddy Bullen organised the project to plant trees in the six settlements in memory of those who died in the two World Wars. The Parish Council was happy to support this venture by acting as banker and must give great thanks to Paddy and others for all their work on this project.

The Council also gave some assistance to the Save the Dun Horse Action Group by applying for the designation of "Asset of Community Value", thereby giving the group time to put together a business plan. The application was not successful although it is understood that the Action Group will be reapplying.

Flooding happened recently in various parts of the Parish but it was worse in Monks Gate, possibly because the drainage system at the Coolhurst Close development is not functioning properly. There is also sewage discharging into peoples' gardens. The Parish Council was asked by the Monks Gate Residents Association for help and will be taking these matters up with several agencies.

The Council has been pleased to support the Community Group's Speedwatch campaign and several Councillors and the Clerk have been trained to use the speed camera and to help. The Council

congratulates the Community Group on its work to try and lower speeds and make the Parish safer for all residents.

Other services provided by the Parish Council

The Council provides a monthly article for the Link magazine. It also organises circular walks in the Parish, usually 2-3 miles which are free and open to everyone, including dogs. This is a good time to advertise our special wild flower walk on the first Sunday in May. It will be led by the very knowledgeable Jonathon Simons.

Special thanks

This year has seen three major achievements in the Parish and the Parish Council would like to thank the leaders of these projects, and everyone who worked on them.

Firstly, we now have a new cricket pavilion on Mannings Heath's green. It has hugely smartened up the village green and our congratulations go to the cricket club.

Secondly, we have a splendid kitchen and new disabled toilet facilities in the Mannings Heath Village Hall. This upgrade has benefitted many people and the Parish Council would like to say "well done and thanks" for all the hard work.

Thirdly, we wait in anticipation, but Copsale Hall is also about to have a major make-over. Congratulations to the Hall Committee for raising all the necessary money and planning the work.

So, this year, there have been a lot of people, both Councillors and residents who have given willingly given of their time to make things better for everyone living in this Parish. We also need to thank Toni Bradnum, our District Councillor, Nigel Jupp, our County Councillor, and Jill Chaytor, Penny Bullen and Paddy Bullen, our tree wardens.

This is what makes a thriving, vibrant community. Ideas, enthusiasm, hard work and people getting along with each other in a constructive way. The Chairman will do all he can to try and make sure that this continues.

APM005-19/20 REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Finance Committee, Cllr Tom Nelson, addressed the public;

2018/2019 Accounts

The audited accounts were signed off and everything was in good order, the External Auditor did not make any recommendations.

The precept was £40,500.00 with a total expenditure of £44,600.00, the overspend was primarily due to legal fees (Micklepage application) and the Clerks hours increasing from 20 to 25 per week.

2019/2020 Accounts

The precept was £46,000.00 with the expenditure to date totalling £50,000.00, the overspend is primarily due to the cost of treating the Chafer Beetles on the village green.

This expenditure has seriously depleted the Parish Council's reserves and they now stand at 25% of the annual precept. The Parish Councils 3 year plan is to return the reserves to the recommended 50% of the annual precept.

2020/2021 Budget/Precept

The Parish Council have set the 2020/21 precept at £49,842.00, this equates to an 8.35% increase.

HDC have provided data on the [annual precept of Parish Councils](#) in the district, Nuthurst Parish are at the bottom of the % increase scale.

The Parish Council are continuing to be fiscally prudent and are trying to balance the 8.35% increase against expenditure cutbacks.

Grants 2020/21

£800.00	Cricket Club
£400.00	St Andrews PCC
£300.00	Link
£250.00	CPAD

The motion to support the 2020/21 grants was **PROPOSED** by Mrs Val Court and **SECONDED** by Mr David Meares.

APM006-19/20 NUTHURST PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Chairman, Cllr Owen Hydes, provided the following updates;

Neighbourhood Plan

The fact that we have a Neighbourhood Plan is thanks to the concerted efforts of very many people living in the Parish. It is now nearly five years old and this Parish has been much better off with a Plan than without one.

The benefits of the Neighbourhood Plan

We have not been threatened by developers with any large-scale building proposals. As we drive around and see the huge developments at Broadbridge Heath, Billingshurst and Henfield for example, we can give thanks that our Neighbourhood Plan has protected us from this scale of building.

There is another reason for us to be grateful that we have a Neighbourhood Plan. HDC's Draft Local Plan has to provide many more new houses and some of these will be in non-strategic sites, that is, sites for less than 500 houses. HDC has allocated these non-strategic sites to a number of parishes, but not to Nuthurst because we have a Neighbourhood Plan. In contrast, places without Neighbourhood Plans like Ashington for example, are going to be hit hard with new developments, some of them up to as many as 500 new houses.

Our Neighbourhood Plan is not against new houses

At some time in the past, we all needed a first home. In the future, some of us will need a smaller home in which to downsize. Our Neighbourhood Plan recognised that, and chose to plan for about 50 new homes in our Parish, with the majority of them being small, manageable and cheaper than our existing stock of houses. We thought this was a reasonable stance to take.

Developers have challenged our Neighbourhood Plan

Micklepage in Nuthurst springs to mind where we had endless difficulties with the developer. He wanted to build larger homes than 3 bedroom ones and played a long game until eventually, he got the bigger 5 bedroom, more profitable houses that he wanted.

This was not the only developer who challenged the Neighbourhood Plan. At Coolhurst Close in Monks Gate, the developer said that the number of houses was only guidance rather than policy and that therefore, he could exceed the number of houses the Neighbourhood Plan allocated to that site. Unfortunately, HDC did not contest this and we ended up with more houses than was planned for on the site.

In the future

We are waiting for HDC to tell us how many houses we will have to provide through our Neighbourhood Plan in the future. The Government requires HDC to do this. We expect them to do this when the new Horsham Local Plan is in place. This is probably two years off. If the number of houses is higher than already provided for in the Neighbourhood Plan, then we will need to review the Plan.

Parish Design Statement

This is an advisory policy. It carries some weight but realistically, not a lot. It seeks to persuade rather than insist. It reminds developers and householders that what they do affects other people: that hedges are better than close-boarded, tall fences; that garages should not be sited in front gardens; that gardens should not be covered with hard surfacing; or trees sacrificed. It seeks, in other words, to keep the Parish looking as pleasant and as rural as possible for everyone's sake.

Parish Plan

The current draft plan covers the three year period from 2019 to 2021. It has eight projects. Some of them involve improving the attractiveness of green open spaces by leaving areas of longer grass, planting bulbs and bushes and sowing wild flower seeds. In this way, we are aiming to increase biodiversity by encouraging insects such as bees and butterflies. We will also try to increase the number of open spaces in the Parish.

Other projects involve reviewing and upgrading the play equipment on Mannings Heath Village Green and reconsidering the byelaws.

Some residents have requested that the Parish Council gives thought to providing some facilities for older children. We are investigating what, if anything, might be possible.

In order to enable us to improve the Parish, we will also investigate what grants might be available. We have received some comments on the draft Plan which are being considered. The final Plan will be put to a future Parish Council meeting for approval.

APM007-19/20 PUBLIC FORUM

Mrs Val Court advised that there had originally been a play area near Oakway, this was dismantled and residents raised the funds to purchase new equipment to go on the village green.

How can members of the public comment on the Local Plan?

The consultation response form can be found on HDC's website, the form is difficult to navigate and the Parish Council have prepared a leaflet with instructions, there were also hard copies at the rear of the hall.

District Councillor Toni Bradnum commented that only 1000 representations had been received to date, considering the number of sites and residents in the District the response is very low.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.30PM