**MINUTES OF THE ASHURST RECREATION GROUND TRUST AGM HELD ON**

**THURSDAY 24th NOVEMBER AT 7.00PM HELD AT ASHURST VILLAGE HALL**

**Trustees Present:** Cllr Fischel - Chairman

Cllrs Russell, Hammond, Hedley, Jesse, Knight and Nicholson

**Also Present:**  David Fischel - Chairman of Ashurst Cricket Club

Luke Pickett - Ashurst United Football Club

Daniel Pickett – Ashurst United Football Club

**In attendance:** Emily Simpson – Clerk

Three members of the public were present.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

None received as all councillors were present.

1. **Declaration of Members’ Interests**

None for this meeting.

1. **To Approve the Minutes of the Meeting of Thursday 2nd December 2021**

The minutes were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting.

1. **Update on actions since the last AGM**

* The Chair advised that the new bench for the Recreation Ground would be purchased in the Spring.
* The 420 saplings received from the Woodland Trust last year appeared to be doing well, as were most of the larger, donated trees. They had been watered a few times this year but now needed to be weeded.
* The large oak tree in the Car park of the Recreation Ground has had a severe pruning so it was hoped that this would give it a new lease of life.
* It was agreed that the potassium injections for this oak tree should continue.

1. **Accounts**

The previous Clerk had completed the Annual Return for the Charity Commission for **2021/22**. The income for the year was **£5,250** and expenditure **£2,809.80.**

Income had been received from West Sussex County Council on behalf of Ashurst Primary School, Partridge Green Football Club and Ashurst Parish Council for the financial year 2021/22.

The principal item of expenditure once again was the grass cutting at £1,612.80. Water and electricity came to £115.65, the play equipment inspections (including annual inspection) were £417.60 and the deer fence totalled £380.25. The electricity for this year has been billed at £4 per month as the Trust has been in credit.

1. **Reports**

**i. Primary School - See Appendix 1 attached.**

**ii. Cricket Club - For a more detailed report, see Appendix 2 attached.**

David Fischel, Chairman of Ashurst Cricket Club, was pleased to report that, after 2 lost years lost to Covid, cricket had returned to Ashurst in 2022. Ashurst had played twice and a visiting Steyning ladies’ team had played once.

The plan for 2023 was to increase to 4 or 5 games against suitable opposition, and encourage the Steyning Ladies to play more regularly at Ashurst.

He thanked those who had helped to get Ashurst cricket going again. He also thanked the trustees for letting the Club use the ground, which provides such a picturesque destination for village cricket.

**iii. Football Club**

Ashurst United Football club representatives reported that the season had gone well so far and that they had not yet lost a match in the League, although they expected to face some difficult teams in the rest of the season. They had played 7 games out of a total of 18 league games. The season was due to finish in March/April time. They were in Division 3 as they are a new team. In terms of players, they had 16+ available every week which was a fantastic amount. 5 of their squad were local players who they had met in Ashurst.

They really enjoyed playing at the Recreation Ground and said that the drainage on the pitch had been excellent. They also confirmed that the changing rooms were adequate, but the showers would probably be needed for next season, if possible. They thanked the Trustees again for allowing them to play at the Recreation Ground.

Lastly, the representatives commented that the contract looked fine, but they just wanted to confirm a point on grass cutting which the Chair said she would look into with them.

**iv. Tree Warden’s Report - See Appendix 3.**

1. **Update of Ground and Buildings**

**The Ground** -

The Chairman advised that the Trustees had had a tidy up of the Recreation Ground and the Pavilion earlier this summer, including the substantial cutting back of brambles, some paint work to the pavilion and the slide.

In the summer, it was good to see the return of our Cricket Club and then this Autumn we were pleased to welcome Ashurst United FC.

**Buildings**

The buildings had had their EICR safety tests carried out and all remedial work had been completed satisfactorily. The electrical equipment had also been PAT tested.

As far as the new/replacement building is concerned, the Council has decided that it makes sense to combine the two existing buildings into one, on roughly the same footprint of the John Eaton Hut and on that site. This coming year the Council will be firming up on what its exact requirements are before embarking on any building work.

The requirement is a simple Sports Building which is easy and inexpensive to maintain, and as environmentally friendly as possible, as well as meeting the needs of Ashurst Cricket Club and of our new Football Club.

1. **Questions from the floor**

There were none.

1. **Any other business**

No other matters were raised.

1. Date of the next Recreation Ground AGM: Thursday 14th or 21st September 2023

**Action points:**

Cllr Fischel to confirm with the tree warden when it is best to do cut back the blackthorn.

Cllr Fischel to follow up the two outstanding issues – use of the showers and the Football Club’s additional grass-cutting requirements. Once these are resolved to agree and sign a final contract with the Football Club.

Councillors Russell and Hammond agreed to fix the fence around the oak tree.

The Chairman of the Trustees closed the meeting at 7.25PM

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 1. Primary School (Sent in absentia)**

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to contribute to tonight's meeting even though we are not able to be there in person. We have really enjoyed continuing to develop our links with the church, the parish and the locality. We have been able to bring the school and community together at our Leaver’s Service in July and New Beginnings service at the start of this term. Our friends who provide 'Open the Book' have been able to come into school already this term and we really welcome this opportunity to meet with members of the community in a different way. Our 'Growing Partnerships' agreement with the local Parishes has been finalised and we meet regularly to discuss how the school and the community can support and work together for the common good.

We are looking forward to a fundraising event on Saturday 12th December at St Andrew’s Church in Steyning. The wonderful Southdowns Concert Band will be performing and our children and families will be taking part- we are hoping to sing a Christmas carol with lyrics by our Worship Warriors! We would be delighted if any of you would be able to join us.

We are, as always, grateful for the opportunity afforded to us by the Parish Council and the residents of Ashurst to use the recreation ground. We are pleased to report that the school is continuing to enjoy our time on the field using it for in-school sports provision as well as for after school sports clubs. The children love to be on the field for playtimes as it affords them a wonderful amount of space. We were fortunate to have the use of it for our celebration of our late Queen’s Platinum Jubilee last term, it was a truly memorable occasion and enabled us to continue the school’s long history of celebrating key national events. We are looking forward to celebrating King Charles III coronation when the time comes!

It was lovely to be able to have a proper sport's day last term and be able to welcome spectators too. The recreation ground is a wonderful space and the children have a greater connection with it following the tree planting; they often spend time locating ‘their’ trees and doing a little gentle weeding.

Next year Ashurst CE Aided Primary School will celebrate its sesquicentennial anniversary- 150 years! We plan to hold an event to celebrate this remarkable occasion and hope to let you know more details.

We at school hope that this good partnership between our school and the Parish Council will be able to continue long into the future.

*with kind regards Mrs S Smith. on behalf of everyone at Ashurst CE Aided Primary School*

**Appendix 2. Cricket Club**

I am pleased to report that cricket returned to Ashurst in 2022.

We played two games, with one narrow loss in the last over and one comfortable victory.

Encouragingly we succeeded in fielding 11 players, nearly all with local connections, on each occasion.

We also provided a venue for Steyning ladies cricket team for one of their matches.

So hopefully the two lost years of COVID lockdowns and the year before that (2019) when we struggled to field a side are behind us.

The square was maintained over the last few years despite no cricket and the pitches were fine in 2022, with rabbit damage a bit of a nuisance but still manageable.

Our plan for 2023 is to increase to 4 or 5 games against suitable opposition, a level of activity we think manageable, and encourage Steyning Ladies to play more regularly at Ashurst.

We would like to thank the trustees for letting us use the ground which provides a picturesque destination for village cricket.

Also thanks to Rowley Gregg and family for producing splendid teas for the two games as well as finding some extra players. And to former captain, Steve Duffett, who provided the opposition for the first game to get cricket going again. David Fischel. Chairman

**Appendix 3. Tree Report at November 22** Pernille Harari (Tree Warden – Ashurst)

Storms and Drought

Recent storms occurring both last winter and this autumn highlight the importance of maintaining trees which are close to public roads.

It is the legal obligation of the landowner to protect public road users whether cars, walkers, horse riders, or cyclists.

I have seen a few examples locally of lower branch shedding in large, fully leaved old oaks over the last few years. This tends to happen during dry spells when the tree is stressed by water shortage and the loss of a branch limits the impact of drought. On footpaths this is especially hazardous. So, in particular, lower branches hanging over roads or paths need assessment and action on the part of the landowner.

A lot of ash trees are now struggling or dead from attack by*Chalara virus*near roads. Symptoms of leaf and branch loss are not difficult to spot and affected trees should be ideally be removed.

School Lane

Overhanging oak trees have now been made safe by tree surgeons. This includes the tree in the recreation ground car park which is clearly in dieback and this has progressed over the summer.

Young Trees

The recommendation for newly planted young trees is to ensure they are watered in dry periods for the next three years until better established. Despite the heat this summer the larger trees planted on the recreation ground, though monitored, only needed watering once. There were one or two losses where these trees had too much competition for water and light from established trees.  I think that the soil on the recreation ground (which is greensand rather than clay) is very fertile  and contains a lot of organic matter which offsets the problems of rainfall and shading. There were more losses among the smaller trees scattered around the recreation ground probably due to the need for weed removal and watering.

Wildlife hedge

The wildlife hedge planted by the children at Ashurst Primary school has established extremely well. However I am quite concerned about the inclusion of so much blackthorn in the mix, which has grown boisterously with very long prominent and sharp thorns. I think the Council should consider ways of keeping this under control especially as this is near to the children’s play area, and therefore the thorns are more likely to be at a Childs eye level.