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Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Ashurst Parish Council.

Held on Thursday 11th July 2024 at 7.30.

Clerk: Emily Simpson

Councillors present: Councillors Fischel (Chair), Hammond, Knight, Nicholson, Russell (Vice Chair).

Also present: Emily Simpson (Clerk), Victoria Finnegan (District Councillor) and 16 members of the public.

1. **Introduction and welcome by the Chairman.**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **To agree and sign the minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting**

The minutes from the last meeting were approved as a true and accurate record.

1. **Our two Horsham District Councillors, Victoria Finnegan and Nicholas Marks, will be providing us with an update and overview on their first year in office.**

Nicholas Marks, was unable to attend, but Victoria Finnegan was present. She updated residents about her work at Horsham District Council (HDC). This included attending planning meetings, vehicle acquisitions, working on a Development Consent Order for Rampion and plans for Gatwick. The purchase of Bramber Brooks had been a really positive development. Work on a river charter was ongoing. Other highlights were the adoption of the Climate Action Strategy as well as the refurbishment and decarbonization of The Capitol in Horsham. The Council had also been looking at reducing food waste and introducing a cost-of-living award for low paid council employees. She finished by saying it had also recently been HDC’s 50th anniversary.

1. **Rowley Gregg MC has kindly agreed to give us a talk entitled Today’s Soldier – Operations, Welfare and Beyond. This will cover his experiences in Afghanistan and his work since leaving the Army.**

Rowley Gregg MC had served for 8 years as a soldier and gave an insightful talk about his experience. He left the army in 2018 and, with his sister, set up a charity called Remembered. The aim was threefold: to highlight and showcase the charities available to support soldiers, raise money for them, and to provide commemorative merchandise. With a focus on the centenary anniversary of World War One, their campaign reached 5,000 communities, 24,000 schools, 82,000 homes and over 250m people through the media. The Royal British Legion took over Remembered and, to date, 900 veterans have been given employment help, new houses have been built and emergency accommodation provided.

1. **The Chairman’s Annual Report together with Reports from other Village groups and societies.**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the Councillors and the Clerk for their hard work over the past year. She said the local WhatsApp group and Newsletter continued to be great ways of communicating with residents.

She updated the meeting on the plans for the John Eaton Hut and Pavilion. It had been agreed that both buildings would be demolished with one sports building replacing them. The intention is to provide a simple sports building, as green and sustainable as possible, which is easy to maintain. Initial designs will be drawn up with costings provided. We will then need Ashurst residents’ support when it comes to fund-raising. We will keep residents updated.

Councillor Nicholson updated residents on SpeedWatch and said over 11,000 vehicles had been recorded over the past 3 years. The average speed of the vehicles which were speeding was 38mph and the highest speed recorded was 48mph. He said 263 vehicles had been reported to the police and the average number of vehicles passing per hour was 104. He thanked the 10 SpeedWatch volunteers but said more help was always needed. He encouraged others to get involved.

In addition to SpeedWatch, discussions with the police and WSCC had taken place: the police had erected signs requesting a speed reduction and WSCC had agreed to erect posts in the village so the Parish Council could purchase a portable Speed Indicator Device. WSCC had indicated that it would be in favour of a 40mph buffer zone approaching the village before it turns to 30mph.

Councillor Knight said broadband had been completed and BT Openreach had installed fibre broadband to 84 houses in the village. The last house was fitted with broadband in April. He said it was a community effort and thanked various residents for their efforts. Councillor Knight’s unstinting work on this was also acknowledged.

The Chair spoke of the success of the Village Clean Up in March and said a full trailer load of rubbish had been collected. It was agreed to make this an annual event.

The Chair said the hornbeam planted on Bines Green as part of the Queen’s Green Canopy was doing well, as were the trees in the Recreation Ground. Unfortunately, the large iconic oak tree was not in good shape, so she would arrange for the tree surgeon to visit again to see what could be done, if anything, as the potassium fixes did not seem to be helping.

Cricket Club

David Fischel reported on last year’s fixtures as well as those lined up for this year. (See Appendix 1 for the full report.)

Football Club

Luke Picket reported that Ashurst United Football Club had won their league last year and so had moved up to Division 2 - which was fantastic. They continued to achieve good results and ended up finishing second this season which had resulted in another promotion - to Division 1. They were in the process of recruiting new players as well as looking for sponsorship.

Ashurst CofE Primary School

Head Teacher, Mrs Smith, was unable to attend, so the Chair provided a summary, but see Appendix 2 for the full report.

Village Hall

A report on the Village Hall was read out by Peter McMullen, as reproduced in Appendix 3.

Church

The Chair said that St James’s Patronal Service was due to take place on 26th July at 4pm.

Jazz in the Church had not taken place this year, but hopefully would next year.

Flower Show

Mark Garnett said the Flower show would take place on Sunday 21st July. The website had further information. It promised to be a fun family event and he encouraged residents to enter.

WI

The clerk read out a written report from the WI which can be found in Appendix 4.

Flix in the Stix

Bob Harari said 11 films had been shown between June 2023 and June 2024 with 516 entries which had resulted in over £2,000 going towards the Village Hall. He thanked those who were regular visitors and said this November would mark the 9th year of Flix in the Stix. The next film would be on Saturday 27th July and was scheduled to be Wicked Little Letters.

**The meeting closed at 9.30pm.**

Appendix 1 Cricket report - David Fischel, Chair

2023 - 3 games, 1 convincing win, 1 narrow defeat, 1 tie.

Steyning Ladies also played on the ground once.

2024 - master stroke not to have any games till end of June as ground barely playable till then.

First game end June - victory over Nuthurst.

Next game scheduled for 4 August v Preston Park, Brighton, needle match against the side who beat us last year.

If sufficient demand, another game later in August or early September.

Decent nucleus of players now that awareness is increasing.

Thanks - Parish Council for letting us play; Rowley Gregg and family, team raising ,playing and teas ; Steve Duffett from Steyning ( former Captain) help with team raising ; Mark Fischel team raising ,playing and organising fixtures.

Cricket square - now with a sign saying what it is for the uninitiated, new rope this year!

Generally in good condition, the odd rabbit scraping and hole from time to time but not too serious.

Over 40 years of cricket now at Ashurst, long may it continue.

All players welcome, ability or lack of it, not a barrier! Let me know if you know of anyone who might be interested.

Great setting for cricket, visiting sides always positive about rural setting and convivial atmosphere, usually want to come back - only condition is they have to let us win( just), we like exciting games and close finishes where everyone has had a chance to get involved.

Appendix 2. Ashurst School Report – Mrs Smith, Headmistress.

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 continue to use it for PE sessions and after school sports provision as well as at play and lunch times.  It is a wonderful space; the children have a strong connection with it and are always very excited after the winter months to be able to use it again.

We were especially pleased to have the use of the field and Pavilion for our ‘Ashurst Marathon’ which took place on Sunday 21st April, we ran an amazing 86 miles between us doing laps of a marked-out track. Last Friday we were inordinately lucky with the weather and were able to have our annual Sports Day and Awards Ceremony. We are also very much looking forward to being able to use the facilities again towards the end of term for The Y6 Rounders Match/ Tea party (18.7.24).

During the past year, we have continued to strengthen our links with the church, the parish and the locality and have joined with local people and families at St. James' Church to celebrate services including 'New Beginnings', 'Harvest', 'Advent’, Easter and are looking forward to our upcoming Leavers’ Service, (Wednesday 18thJuly 2.45).  We also celebrated a first for us by having a Rogation Service, in school time, in Mr and Mrs Garnett’s garden.

Many members of the local community were able to join us back in November when we began our yearlong celebrations to mark our sesquicentennial (150th) anniversary. We had a wonderful Victorian Day on November 3rd and were joined by members of the local clergy, Bishop Ruth, MP Andrew Griffith, and members of the Local Education Authority for a service of thanksgiving and a blessing of Kings Grove- our new woodland area adjacent to the playground. On Saturday 4th we opened up our school to many local people, past staff, pupils and their families. It was a lovely occasion; many memories were shared and friendships rekindled.

It is always lovely to welcome the 'Open the Book' team into school and the children enthusiastically participate in the drama and readings. I am delighted to report that further dates are planned for next year.

We have been further developing our 'Growing Partnerships' agreement with the local Parishes and this has been the subject of several discussions as to how the school and the community can support and work together for the common good. Our YAGs proposed that our Harvest donations be given to 'The Wholesome Warehouse' and a team of children visited them to help pack the produce into boxes for local families in need. The YAGs also proposed donating Christmas crackers and party food too. As part of our 150 Year celebrations, we set about collecting 150 Jars and jams to donate to The Wholesome Warehouse, and due to some very generous donations, were able to give nearly 200. These were gratefully received by Mrs Croft when she came to talk with our Squirrel Class about the work of The Wholesome Warehouse.

We have continued to support local care homes with Christmas and Easter cards made and signed by our children and currently send out just over 200 of these on each occasion. These are welcomed by the residents in the care homes and we often receive cards and letters in return.

We understand that there are plans for a new building on the recreation ground and would value the opportunity to be involved with any consultations. We would like to thank you once again for your support and we look forward to continuing the good partnership between Ashurst CE Aided Primary School and the Parish Council long into the future.

Appendix 3 - Village Hall - Report from Graham Timms, Chair of The Village Hall Trustees.

As was reported in the recent Village Newsletter, bookings for the hall remain sporadic. We rely heavily on our regular users for a steady income stream that goes a long way towards defraying the hall operating costs. These are: Clock repair club, Pilates, Yoga, Flix in the Stix.

Parties for younger children, sometimes including a bouncy castle take place fairly frequently and the hall was recently the venue for a Wedding reception.

Whilst the Hall Charity does hold prudent reserves, the income and expenditure so far this year are evenly balanced . Income has been £3194 and expenditure £3001.

The Trustees are grateful for the opportunity to remind residents that we have a fabulous hall on our doorstep and ask that they consider booking the hall for an event

It would be hugely helpful if villagers could spread the word regarding the hall, in particular that the meeting room is an inexpensive option for business meetings and briefings etc.

The Trustees are very much looking forward to hosting the Flower and Produce Show on 21 July, and the Harvest Supper on 12 October.