**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 12th July 2023 at 7.30pm at**

**Ashurst Village Hall**

**Present:** 7 members of the public, 4 Parish Councillors, District Councillor Victoria Finnegan, and the Clerk to Ashurst Parish Council.

Refreshments were served.

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

Councillor Susie Fischel, as Chair to Ashurst Parish Council for 2023/24, welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated how good it was to be holding another Parish Meeting as the last one had taken place in 2019 due to coronavirus. The Chair introduced the guest speakers and congratulated the recently elected District Councillors, Victoria Finnegan and Nicholas Marks.

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

The minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting held on 14th May 2019 were approved as a true and accurate record.

1. **Green Party District Councillors, Victoria Finnegan (and Nicholas Marks) discuss their green objectives and initiatives**

Victoria Finnegan thanked the Council for inviting her to the Parish Meeting and spoke about the changes at Horsham District Council as well as the recent motion for a declaration of a climate emergency which was passed in June. This effectively meant that, at the heart of what everyone does, the climate and ecological aspects must be considered. Water neutrality, the Local Plan and the River Adur Landscape Recovery Project were also discussed, as well as the status of Bramber Brooks, which were subject to ongoing negotiations with Horsham District Council, despite a previous sale falling through.

The District Councillor finished her presentation with the suggestion of a range of initiatives which the Parish Council could undertake in a bid to become more environmentally friendly. These included options such as hot bins, teracycle bins, litter pickers, wild flower verges, swift boxes, EVC points and bug hotels. The last proposal sounded particularly appealing to Councillors as it could involve the local school children.

1. **Richard Black, Landowner advisor for Wilder Horsham District, discusses the partnership between Horsham District Council and Sussex Wildlife Trust**

Richard Black gave an insightful presentation on the Wilder Horsham District initiative and spoke in detail of the species and habitats which were in decline. He described the current situation as a global crisis but also a local crisis and discussed the ways in which Wilder Horsham District aimed to change this by creating a Nature Recovery Network. Working closely with landowners, Richard hopes their work will enrich the natural environment and reverse the decline in species and habitats.

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

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and thanked her fellow councillors for the great job that they do for the Parish. Particular thanks were also passed on to previous District Councillors, Tim Lloyd and Bob Platt, as well as previous Parish Councillors, Chris Jesse and George Hedley.

The Chair advised there were two vacancies on the Council so if anyone was interested then to please get in contact with Ashurst’s new Parish Clerk, Emily Simpson. The Chair introduced Emily - she had taken up the position with the minimum of fuss and was doing a great job. She also thanked Liz Leggo, our previous Clerk, for her hard work over the previous 5 years.

Councillors then spoke about the work they had been focusing on during their term and this included Speedwatch, BT OpenReach, Rampion 2 and the oil spill in Church Lane.

The Chair referred to the Queen’s Green Canopy initiative and said that a Hornbeam, provided by HDC, had been planted in Queen Elizabeth II’s honour on Bines Green.

**Ashurst Public Recreation Ground (Chair)**

* The Chair spoke about the planned replacement of the two current buildings on the Recreation Ground with one building on the John Eaton site as the services were already there. Quotes from architects had been received and further information was being sought.
* The Oak tree, located at the corner of the car park, adjacent to the main road, was due its potassium fix and it had been cut back as recommended.
* Despite the extreme weather in the last few months, the most recently planted trees appeared to be doing well and all had taken except for one.

It was wonderful to have the Recreation Ground being used again for sport.

**Cricket Club**

* David Fischel, Chairman of Ashurst Cricket Club, reported that two games were played last year and so far there had been one game this year which was a tie.
* Steyning Ladies had also played and had two further games were lined up in August.
* This was all very positive in terms of the level of interest with one match being oversubscribed - which was unheard of!

**Football Club**

* Dan from the Ashurst United Football Club said they had won their league last year and had been promoted for this season, which was fantastic news.
* 18 games had been played across the season: they won 15, drew 2 and lost 1 game.
* They were looking forward to the new season and had signed up some more players but would love to encourage more local players from Ashurst.

**Ashurst C of E Primary School**

Mrs S Smith, Head Teacher at Ashurst C of E Primary School, gave her apologies, but had sent a report (see Appendix 1) which the Chair summarised as follows:

* Mrs Smith thanked the Council for giving Ashurst school the opportunity to use the Recreation Ground. The school used it for PE sessions and after school sports as well as at play and lunch times.
* It was a wonderful space which the children have a strong connection to. They are careful to monitor the growth of the trees they helped to plant a few years ago.
* The field was used to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III earlier this year with a 'Crowning Glory' parade and afternoon tea. The school’s annual summer events including Sports Day (14.7.23) and The Y6 Rounders Match/ Tea party (18.7.23) were fast approaching.

**Church (Susie Fischel)**

* A pet service took place recently - it had been a great success. This was one of a number of well supported family services.
* The church was looking at starting up bellringing and invited volunteers.
* It was also looking to renovate the war memorial. The memorial is now registered and the church was looking to apply for a grant.
* Communications were much better with the Newsletter and the Village Whatsapp group.

**Village Hall (Sandra Taylor)**

* Bookings were currently down - this was most likely due to the time of year as well as the current financial situation.
* The regular users of the hall – pilates, yoga, shop repair club, Flix in the Stix, were thanked. This regular fee income covered the bulk of the Hall’s running costs.
* They were looking forward to hosting the flower and produce show as well as the Pantomime in December!
* The Dog Show remained an important event. Profits from this year’s show should cover the last repayment to HDC which would mean the Village Hall account would be debt free.

**WI (Vanessa Timms)**

* It was reported that the WI was flourishing and now had 20 members.
* They meet on the second Monday of each month in the Village Hall and have interesting guest speakers as well as go on outings including garden visits and most recently a bowls taster session in Steyning.

**Flix in the Stix (Bob Harari)**

* Flix in the Stix takes place every 5 weeks in the Village Hall.
* It made almost £1,000 last year.
* Some very good films had been shown including a lot of foreign ones.
* Anybody who was interested was invited to come along. Thanks were passed on to everyone who had previously attended.

 **Other matters from the Floor**

It was reported that it was the School’s 50th anniversary in October so any memories, photos etc. were invited to be shared with the school.

 **The meeting was closed at 9.30pm**

**Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Appendix 1 Report from Ashurst CofE Primary School.**

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to contribute to tomorrow's meeting even though we are not able to be there in person.

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 careful to monitor the growth of the trees they helped to plant a few years ago.

We were especially pleased to have the use of the field to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III earlier this year with a 'Crowning Glory' parade and afternoon tea, we are looking forward to our annual summer events including Sports Day (14.7.23) and The Y6 Rounders Match/ Tea party (18.7.23).

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 19th July 2.45).

Several members of the local community were able to join us for our first in school Eucharist earlier this term; it was a lovely occasion; the service was led by Fr Mark and Revd Caroline and feedback was very positive.

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 to 'The Wholesome Warehouse' in addition to the 'Reverse Advent Calendars' which each class contributed to. We have plans in the new year to further support them with the help of Mrs. Treasure and 'Easy Lunch' to prepare and cook food to be included in the food boxes.

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

Mrs S Smith

on behalf of everyone at Ashurst CE Aided Primary School