

HUNSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Hunston Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 25 April 2018 in Hunston Village Hall.

Present: Parish Council: Mr S Baker (Chairman), Mr D Betts, Mrs J Foster
Mrs S Gregory, Mr P Marshall, Miss A Smith
Parish Clerk: Mrs C Smith
Parish Residents: 16 residents

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm

1. Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed residents to the meeting and introduced the members of the Parish council. He asked everyone to stand and held a Minutes silence to remember Mr Ray Stenning, a resident who had been knocked over and subsequently died from his injuries last month.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 31 May 2017.

The Chairman advised that the Minutes had been on the Parish Council website since last year and if there were no objections he would sign the minutes.

3. Parish Council reports

Parish Council finances

The Chairman gave some background to the main factors that contributed to producing the budget for this financial year in light of the increase.

As the Parish budget is much smaller than other statutory authorities it makes any increase seem large in percentage terms. To put this into some sort of context the actual monetary increase for a Band D property (the average property type) equates to an extra £1.86 per month. As a daily charge the Parish precept amounts to £0.37 per day on a Band D property. Something mentioned at most Annual assemblies is the loan that was taken out to build the Village Hall. It is hoped that residents feel that it is a valuable community asset and it would be hard to imagine the village without it. The loan was taken out around 23 years ago with the Public Works Loan Board which was the only source for such loans. The interest rate for loans then was fixed at 8.35% which at the time was quite competitive.

There remains about another two years until the loan is fully repaid. The loan repayment represents just over £9,600 per annum.

Councillors are volunteers but an essential part of any Parish Council is the Clerk who is often the only employee. Hunston also has an administrative assistant. The decision to have an assistant was as a result of an increasing work load and it was more economical to employ an assistant rather than increase the Clerk's hours. Communications such as the newsletter are relatively expensive but it is important to keep the community informed. However, it is anticipated going forward that it may be possible to use electronic communications more although the Parish Council would ensure that no one is excluded.

The Parish Council is also having to contend with a reducing level of grant from the District Council to cover Council tax not being paid by those on Council tax benefit. This is a process that will be continuing. In this respect Hunston has the highest proportion of recipients of Council Tax Benefit in the district.

The Parish Council's General Fund or reserves are considerably below the recommended level and they need to be built up to satisfy the auditor. Reserves should cover expenditure for a period of 4-6 months in case monthly payments are not received from the District Council for any reason. The Parish Council's reserves should be about £20,000 but are only around £9,000 at present.

The reduction in reserves has come about largely because of significant spend on the Village Hall e.g. new flat roof, kitchen and new doors and windows. As the hall is as previously stated an important village asset there was little choice in the matter other than to close the hall. It has been an ongoing issue as the Village Hall is only able to cover the running costs and has struggled to put significant sums away for major works. The Parish Council is looking hard at ways to address this.

Consequently, the Parish Council has decided to provide a grant of £3,000 to the Village Hall maintenance fund this year.

Sums have also been allocated to other projects including highways issues, the children's playground and the hardcourt regeneration project. These amount to around £18,000 in the current year.

Fulfilment of just the basic statutory and other non-discretionary commitments accounts for about 80% of the precept so even if the Parish Council did nothing of a discretionary nature there is still a significant cost just to maintain a Parish Council.

Communications

Communications are mentioned constantly but its an important part of what the Parish Council does. Currently in use are the Parish Council website, Facebook, noticeboards, newsletters and leaflet drops. Communications becoming more electronic and the Parish Council would like to move along this route as a means of saving money but it doesn't want to exclude anyone. The Chairman asked for a show of hands to see how many residents would be happy to receive communications via email. Around three quarters of those present raised their hands.

A27 update

The Parish Council has been attending the Build a Better A27 (BABA27) meetings. Results of the recent survey are still being analysed. It is important that whatever happens there should be a consensus. This was proving difficult but one thing the participating groups had agreed upon is the separation of through and local traffic. The BABA27 also recognised that they were not Highways Engineers so the actual design or any agreed route will be down to Highways England. There was confidence from WSCC that timescales will be met. At the moment there is no budget.

Parish Council projects

Hardcourt & playground regeneration

The Chairman referred to the hardcourt and playground consultation sessions that had taken place. There had been a positive reaction to the proposals and residents have made contributions to the detail. Funding will be sought and the preferred supplier is helping the Parish Council with the funding process. There will be further consultation sessions and residents will be able to make further contributions to the final design.

Highways issues

The Parish Council is hoping to get a better crossing for the village hall. There are a number of issues with highways that we are working through. It is also looking at speed reduction at southern end of village with an application to turn the 50mph into a 40mph limit. Issues with the bus stop opposite Oakview, making it difficult to cross the road have also been identified. The Parish Council has with Highways Officers to discuss the possibility of having a short path from stop north to allow for safe crossing.

Freeschool

The Parish Council is aware there will be a reduction in the speed limit near the school, provision of bus stops and a new cycle path to the school. It is hoped this will also benefit the local community.

Disabled toilet for village hall

The Parish Council is looking to provide a disabled toilet facility for the village hall. This would most likely be situated in the area currently used for referees changing room. The Parish Council is currently trying to find a way to incorporate this in the new toilet.

Village Tea Party.

Cllr Foster gave a report on the Village Tea Party which had exceeded all expectations. There were more people in the hall than there had been for 20 years. The main aim had been to bring the community together, the side issue was to raise funds. Cllr Foster gave thanks to everyone who contributed to the day including making food, serving, setting up, washing up and clearing away. It was proposed to do the same thing next year and anyone who had any ideas was asked to make contact.

The issue of traffic jams was also mentioned and it was thought that this might have been an issue with people trying to access the car boot sales. The Parish Council understood the difficulties balancing the benefits of the car boot sales against the disruption when they were on.

4. Residents Questions

Residents raised several areas of concern.

There was widespread concern about the effect that the Free School will have on traffic congestion when it opens in September 2018.

There were also comments about the increase in traffic coming through the village to access the beach at West Wittering.

A resident asked who was responsible for clearing the ditches through the village.

The Rife through the main road was the responsibility of the Environment Agency, others through the village were the responsibility of the landowners.

Some further work has been done on the pond in Church Lane.

A resident complained about the state of Church Lane itself. The Parish Council agreed to look at this and raise with the relevant authorities.

A resident raised a query about the damage outside the Spotted Cow.

This was the responsibility of the Brewery to sort out.

A resident asked if the Parish Council was intending to create a community feel in the village, could the event on the playing field be resurrected.

The Parish Council confirmed there are things in the pipeline and it was looking at holding another event in August. There was a strong desire within the Parish Council to explore opportunities to bring the community together.

A resident commented that the biggest issue was speeding through the village. The road is a designated 30mph limit. The perception is that many vehicles come through faster than 30 mph. There is not enough signage.

Organisations – traffic calming – have reminders and additional signage. Do need to do as much as possible to make people understand.

There was widespread support that the Parish Council was looking positively at disabled facilities. The Hall was a good facility that was under utilised. The Parish Council should be creating more revenue, encouraging bookings. It was hoped that adding disabled facilities would help.

A resident asked if there was a priority for the Parish Council to the list of projects on the go. The Chairman explained the issues relating to the crossing and that the Parish Council very much want to do this in conjunction with the playing field improvements.

A resident asked what was the best way to stop speeding given there was no regular Police presence. The Parish Council thought it was only way to stop speeding and it will look at asking Police to come and carry out speed checks.

A resident asked if it were possible to have another 30mph flashing sign at the other end of the village.

Referring to the Free School there had been an opportunity to get speed limit reduced along the village, the Parish Council was still pursuing this. It was not clear what plans are south of the school.

A resident asked if the Free School had grown, there were 500 pupils when application went in but the planning application was for 1200 pupils. It was noted that the application for the Free School had come about because the pupil numbers were growing.

There was some further general discussion on speed related issues.

There being no further questions the Chairman thanked everyone for coming and invited all to stay and have refreshments.

Signed :.....
Chairman

Dated: