

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH OF FROXFIELD AND PRIVETT

HELD ON THURSDAY 13th APRIL 2023 AT FROXFIELD VILLAGE HALL

Present: Members of the Parish Council, David Rymer, John Ellis, Teresa Brown, Phoebe Hiscock, Chris Skinner, Vanessa Christie and Norman Pitman. In attendance the Clerk and 11 members of the public.

1. The Chairman of the Parish Council welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming. Apologies were received from Peter Doyle
2. **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 14th May 2022** were approved
3. **Caulfeild Bequest and the Love and Beckford Charity** the accounts were available but not presented at the meeting. Joanna Farrell and Charlotte Bevis said they would be prepared to stand again as trustees and were duly re-elected.

Michael Orchard gave a short presentation, by way of an update, on renewable energy initiatives.

He had been putting together volunteers to look into funding for residents homes and the likely efficacy of various projects and the availability of public money along with charities to help residents. Energise South Downs are looking into premises funding.

Cllr Drew enquired if insulation was part of the scheme, Michael Orchard confirmed that this would be an important area. Cllr Drew also asked how residents could make contact but at present a facility isn't available.

Cllr Christie commented that Buriton was using a heat gun to test for unsatisfactory insulation within properties.

Robert Shepherd gave a brief Village Hall update, on behalf of the trustees:

But first, an introduction: I have been volunteering for the village hall, helping out with capex plans, grant applications and ongoing remedial maintenance works. As you may know, Kate Allen is standing down after a significant period serving as Chair. Fee Gibbon has already stood down as Treasurer and between them, they steered the Village Hall through some difficult times, particularly with the impact of covid, which decimated revenues.

Kate and Fee successfully obtained some Government support and a Communities Grant of £20,000. Jenna Samengo-Turner has also been involved for quite a time and more recently stepped up to take on the Bookings role when Fee stood down.

Together, Kate and Jenna recently came up with the popular Pop-Up Pub event, and have held 2 successful events so far, with the aim of making the village hall more of a community hub.

Later this month, the VH will hold its own AGM, to vote in new trustees and elect a new Chair and Treasurer. I am proposing to stand for Chair if elected to the management council and similarly Will Ismay as Treasurer.

The Hall needs a reboot; there are quite a few basic maintenance issues and improvements required, as well as a lot of opportunity if we can raise the funds, but first we need to solve for the shortfall in revenues vs costs. In round terms, the annual costs are £12k and the revenues are £6k, so at that rate it won't take long to burn through the reserves, and we would be facing the loss of the hall altogether. So, we need a plan.

We need to understand the current status of the fabric of the building and the systems in it. The electrical system has just had almost £6k worth of remedial works completed and has a clean bill of health from the 5-year inspection. Sadly, the same can't be said of the heating system, with an aging oil-fired boiler and inoperable controls. We need to reduce our energy and associated bills, by improving the fabric, systems and insulation to make the building altogether more efficient.

We need to establish a vision for what we want the hall to be and engage the community in that exercise. That's where there is an opportunity, too, to be more joined up with the Parish Council and other local organisations, to act together to support the community to flourish.

There have been exercises to develop an extension and possible façade improvements to help the kerb appeal of the building, but these will require funds and we need to prioritise works, identify revenue opportunities and fund-raising needs, to pull together and implement that plan to bring the village hall up to a sustainably successful, community facility.

Key to success will be the role of volunteers and the trustees. We need to make sure the Trustees know who they are and understand their obligations. It's likely that at least some of the trustees will require some training, so that they can exercise their duty of care. Some outside professional help will be required too. That said, we also need to make volunteering and the role of a Trustee as painless as possible, with clarity of individual roles and decent systems in place for bookings, invoicing and accounting, as well as access control and security generally.

The 1937 Trust Deed needs a review and an update and we need to get on top of the Charity Commission's latest requirements for reporting. The administration of the Hall needs an overhaul and a review of the key documents, which takes place annually, may have to go a bit deeper this year.

The Village Hall has joined the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) who provide access to information, guidance and other support services. This was free to join

given the small size of the VH charity and will help us with access to trustee guidance and training, from risk assessments to charity banking arrangements.

We were recently successful with an application to EHDC's Community Climate Action Fund, receiving an offer of £10k. However, the cost for the solar panels we wanted to put up and which we included in our application, was £20k. That was without battery storage, too, so we have some extra fund-raising to do and we still need to do some of the associated actions including removing halogen spotlights, improving the efficiency of the heating system with improved controls and insulating the main hall roof.

So, as I said, there is lots to do, lots of opportunity, but we need a co-ordinated plan, engaging the community and seeking help, to ensure the Village Hall not only survives, but helps the community to thrive.

Questions?

4. Chairmans Report

Another year in the Parish Council calendar draws to a close and it's one of my duties as Chairman to deliver an overview of what has happened during the preceding twelve months and reflect on procedure and objectives in moving forward.

Before moving forward, I wanted to thank you all for your commitment in serving the Council and as you all now know as no other prospective candidates nominated themselves the council will continue unchanged for the next four years excepting of course any changes brought about by other reasons in the meantime.

Hopefully we will all be able to enter the next term with renewed enthusiasm and a willingness and drive to continue to represent the interests of the community to improve the quality of life and the local environment. Further, we must look to influence other decision makers and deliver services to meet local needs.

Being a Parish Councillor is a significant responsibility and commitment however it should also be an enjoyable and rewarding position providing we all work together to share the workload and take ownership of any number of subject headings in addition to the standard list of responsibilities. We also need to have the drive to bring others forward and fulfil your duties in the interests of the local residents that we serve.

So, to reflect on the last year.....

Members - During the last year we have welcomed **Vanessa** and fairly recently **Norman** both of whom have made a very positive impact. I will refer later to specific projects.

Teresa very kindly took on the role of Vice Chairman in addition to a raft of other things she has helped out with. Once again, I will go on to refer to specific subjects she has been involved

John is one of the longer standing members and continues to make himself available to residents on a daily basis and bring matters forward to the PC for discussion and resolve. He has also worked on the grass cutting and ground maintenance contracts to ensure the PC buys in such services competitively and who continues to assess works undertaken.

Peter stepped down from the Chairman role in May of last year. He had served for two (possibly 3) years in the role and in particular through the Pandemic which had a significant impact on all of our lives. He continues to assist with various projects as and when his unequalled knowledge and wisdom is required.

Phoebe is just entering her second term in service having joined the PC following the last local elections. She continues to represent local residents and draw attention to all manner of subjects. Over the same period Phoebe has taken on the responsibility of dealing with Public Rights of Way issues and generally resolves issues direct with landowners to achieve a speedier outcome.

Chris is also about to commence his second term of service and took on the responsibility of looking after the Children's Playground and special projects concerning the recreation ground. He has also continued to be the PC 's representative on matters concerning the Lengths man albeit with limited success as despite continued representation the appointed contractors appear work to the own objectives. None the less we thank Chris for his persistence.

Helen - A big thank you to Helen who keeps us all in check. Most of the work Helen does goes unnoticed but obviously she is the main contact point and fields all representations to the council. It is a huge task in trying to maintain good notes from meetings and then an even bigger task having to write those up accurately.

Verge Cutting - During the Spring of last year both Teresa and Peter worked alongside Helen and Russell in bringing about changes in arrangements to the way in which road verges in the Parish were maintained.

In previous years, verge maintenance had been undertaken by Hampshire County Council. Bearing in mind the hundreds of miles within the county it meant that some verges had to be cut at inappropriate times namely when wildflowers and alike were growing and coming into flower. This, not surprisingly lead to much local anger and dismay.

Members discussed this with our County Councillor, Russell and ultimately it was resolved to absolve the County of the commitment and for the PC to employ its own contractors to undertake the works during periods of inactivity. To this end that is what Teresa and Peter achieved and all residents should thank them along with Russell for the revised arrangements. It is hoped the other parishes may follow suit which will ultimately be to all of our benefit when we pass through the surrounds.

Planning Committee - Earlier last year we managed to establish the Parish Council Planning Committee.

Following a call out to local residents we secured the services of eight volunteers that usually meet on the third Thursday of each month to debate current planning applications. Unfortunately, local residents are not able to take part in a vote on particular applications following debate, but it is hoped that each member has an opportunity to voice their opinion and assist in influencing decision making. The PC should thank all of those that serve on the Planning Committee.

At least three serving members of the Parish Council have to ultimately vote on a particular application, and it is that decision that is submitted to EHDC working on behalf of SDNP

The arrangement is such that we ask PC Members to volunteer their time to attend such a meeting. If we cannot secure continued support in this regard, then it may be necessary to bring consideration of planning applications back onto the PC's normal Agenda which will be a shame as I feel the Planning Committee has the ability to focus on applications and as time passes all members grow a far more detailed knowledge of planning policy.

It should never be forgotten that the PC always makes decisions based on Planning Policy and whilst some of the decisions may not sit well with all, members should come together to assure local residents that our primary objective is to protect the surrounds in which we all live from inappropriate development.

Generally speaking, the Parish Council continues to actively involve itself with planning matters and during the course of the year submitted comment in respect of a TAN (Technical Advice Note) concerning Equine related planning applications. The councils understanding of planning procedure and interpretation of policy continues to grow and its now interesting to note that Planning Officers appear to concur with many observations the PC makes makes. This compares to years gone by when many of the opinions submitted were dismissed as not being relevant

During the last year the PC has considered 21 applications as well as involving itself in approximately 12 Compliance issues.

Public Image - During recent debate I believe it was conceded by all that members that the PC's image in the eyes of local residents offered what could be described as being a confused picture.

Teresa and Vanessa very kindly took responsibility to design and circulate a brief questionnaire designed to establish how the PC could better communicate with all including by what medium. The results were limited however I guess that was possibly a reflection on the problem accordingly we must remain focused and continue to try and improve and find a workable solution to the problem.

Part of the overall Public Relations initiative included the design of a logo which was again headed up by Vanessa and Teresa. I think I am right in saying that following previous debate we have shortlisted a couple of preferences and hopefully we will be able to decide this evening on a preferred route and commence using the logo when production is completed.

Our thanks should go out to Teresa and Vanessa but also Philip Chung who offered to take on the logo design task for a very competitive rate to assist the community.

The Recreation Ground - The recreation ground is the Parish Councils most significant asset and one that potentially demands most in terms of time and monies.

Our thanks should go out to Chris and John who took on the responsibility of dealing with ongoing maintenance and improvement works which I believe has resulted in the grounds looking the best they have in a very long while. Such work includes grass maintenance, hedge cutting, tree management and cutting back undergrowth to reclaim land within the boundaries. Fence replacement works are planned to further enhance the asset.

Members will also be aware that we have worked with the Froxfield Firework Committee in making use of the agricultural field to the west of the recreation field for the annual bonfire. Sadly, the landowner, Hannah Stanley passed away recently hence we will have to open discussions with the new landowner once title has passed on. In the meantime, The PC remains keen to establish as to whether it might be possible to purchase at least some of the adjacent field for community use which would include additional planting and re-wilding, the annual bonfire and other recreational space.

Community Integration - We have discussed on many occasions' greater community involvement and cohesiveness. We are not alone in thinking that over the years the sense of community has been eroded by a number of factors not least the loss of many key residents who have either moved away or have sadly passed away.

I believe it should be paramount in our objectives to do whatever we can to reintroduce community spirit and cohesiveness. This, I believe is going to come from far greater involvement with other organisations within the Parish but namely Privett and Froxfield Village Halls as they are both the hub of the parish.

We should all actively involve ourselves in organised events and look to assist the committees and trustees of both facilities.

With the foregoing in mind, I would like to thank Norman for the work that he has already done in trying to involve new residents with events that have been staged recently. There is lots more work to do but we have made progress.

I would also like to thank Rob Shepherd who agreed to attend this evening to bring us all up to speed with plans moving forward for Froxfield Village Hall. Rob is due to be taking over as Chairman of the Village Hall and is currently working with other trustees including Kate Allen and Jenna Samango Turner on a number of initiatives to encourage greater community involvement, greater use of the Village Hall and works to address issues with the building that have come to light over the last few years.

Litter in the Parish and Surrounds - Litter continues to feature as an issue for residents. Why people cannot take litter home to bin it is one of life's mysteries.

EHDC has recently launched its own clean-up campaign and we should look to do the same. Norman very kindly agreed to resurrect the Literati Campaign with local residents signing up to commit to clean up litter along specific roads local to them. I know Norman is frustrated by the lack of commitment thus far therefore if members could either volunteer or know others that could then please let Norman know ASAP.

Additionally, if you are out and about and see other litter hot spots within the East Hants District then please do not hesitate to report them to council who as part of the campaign will mobilise resources to clean up.

It remains a real shame that we have to rely upon others and upon valuable resources to have to commit to such a problem but until the offenders decide to behave then it remains a sad fact of life.

Green Initiatives - We have received representation from various members of the public over the last few months concerning alternative energy. This led to Mike Orchard attending a recent PC meeting to introduce himself as the person who had volunteered to head up a focus group to look at such matters.

This clearly is an important issue for us all hence we should look to assist Mike and the group wherever possible to ultimately deliver on green objectives.

During Mike's presentation you may recall that focus had been placed on wind turbines however this only came about because of the initial approaches by residents to the PC. Mike went on to make it clear that as a group they were looking at all alternatives and members wished to encourage a green movement and to consider anything that might affect Climate Change not just alternative energy.

Mike agreed to attend this evening to update us all on progress to date although to be fair not much time has passed between now and the previous presentation.

Grants - During the last year the PC has sanctioned financial grants for the following.

- The installation of an external power source and associated equipment to allow external events to use electricity.
- Tree management works and the purchase of oak bollards to assist in the re-naturing of the pond at the junction of Floud Lane and Broadway.
- Assistance with The Privett Flower Festival
- Assistance with the Privett Coronation Party
- Assistance to the Butser Home Start charity

Good Councillor Guide and Standing Orders - I have asked Helen to re-circulate a copy of the Good Councillor Guide and our own Standing Orders because as we enter a new term, I think it is relevant to re-familiarise ourselves with accepted code of conduct and be reminded of our own Standing Orders.

In particular it should be expected that all members make themselves available to meet on the Second Thursday of each month and if necessary, the Third Thursday to sit on the Planning Committee. Attendance should not be dependent on other commitments it should be a priority in all of our diaries.

Can I also quickly ask that you all re-familiarise yourselves with meeting protocol to ensure that our meetings run smoothly and importantly look to achieve the most from your valuable time each month.

We are committed to hold no less than TEN meetings per annum and will always look to establish whether we can avoid meeting in August and December.

Individuals - Lastly, I would like to thank all of you once again for your commitment to the Parish Council and I look forward to continuing to work with you during the next term.

5. **Selecting a Logo for the Parish Council** Cllr Christie and Cllr Brown had been working on a logo as a way of making the Council more noticeable. Philip Chung had kindly offered his graphic design services and produced a clear design by taking the idea of an oak tree and oak leaf. The final designs will be available to use shortly for the Councillors to make a selection.

6. **County Councillor Report** County Cllr Russell Oppenheimer said this year was dominated by the Monarchy and Ukraine. The jubilee followed by the sad death of Her Majesty the Queen. A book of condolence had been organised by HCC. Hampshire had taken the third highest number of Ukrainian refugees and the County Council had provided funding, language courses and help with integration.

Roads are not in a good condition with severe weather taking its toll. HCC will receive £6m from Jeremy Hunt's pothole fund which will make a difference. He asked everyone to be patient and continue to report the potholes.

For BOATs a new policy is coming in with a reporting platform, we are lobbying Government as it shouldn't be so difficult to protect the BOATs.

HCC has introduced a Parish and Town Investment Fund to support partnerships between local communities and the County Council. Capital funding from £1,000 to £30,000 will be available for schemes which enhance existing or provide new infrastructure and equipment to support a local community. Revenue funding to support local needs that enable communities to be more resilient. Investments for up to £10,000 to provide appropriate training in the local community.

HCC has increased the Council Tax by 5%.

The County is working on a plan to put solar panels on all schools in Hampshire.

7. **District Councillor's Report from Nick Drew**

- a. Litter continues to be an issue in the parish. With more people visiting the National Park and leaving litter. EHDC has grants for litter pickers and high visibility clothing. At present, litter enforcement officers are working in the towns with funding for more officers in the pipeline.
- b. Planning continues to be the most time consuming for EHDC Officers.
- c. This hasn't been a good year from the point of view of BOATs. EHDC is committed to driving harder with SDNP.
- d. EHDC's proportion of the council tax has only increased by 2% this year. This will go to a welfare fund for people suffering hardship.
- e. 56k trees have been planted by EHDC who continue to work towards planting 100k trees in the district.
- f. Councillor Drew thanked the parish council for the amazing job they have done, "the planning submissions are second to none which constitutes an astonishing amount of work."

8. Open Forum

Mr and Mrs King said that the 2026 deadline for recording on the definitive map the unrecorded footpaths and bridleways. This process takes too long. so shortly applications will not make the deadline. Cllr Oppenheimer said to contact him if you have an application that takes too long. He stressed that the research required by officers was a lengthy process. Cllr Oppenheimer thanked the residents for raising this as it is an important issue.

They also commented on the Parish Council's verge cutting that plants will not get going as motorists keep driving on the verges and suggested more passing places on the lanes.

The Parish Councillors listened to a video recorded by representatives of the C18 Road Group showing the continuance of bike noise and excessive speed. 20 sports cars were using the C18 as a racetrack early on Sunday mornings and the residents asked Cllr Oppenheimer when his next meeting with the Police Commissioner and the Member of Parliament is going to be arranged. Information on an AutoSpeedWatch solar powered speed recording device was distributed to the councillors as an alternative to Police speed traps as the Police say the stretch of road in question is too dangerous for Officers. Cllr Oppenheimer said he had sympathy with the residents adding that people need to change the way they drive. The meeting referred to will take place but action was happening behind the scenes for the installation of average speed cameras. HCC is also going to expand a suite of items available for traffic calming. The Chairman commented on the slow speed of officers to implement traffic calming. Cllr Oppenheimer said that they recognised they are slow and need to increase capacity. He would give them a nudge.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.25pm.

SignedChairman Dated