



Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting (formerly Annual Parish Assembly) of Sandleheath Parish Council (SPC) held on Thursday, 17th April 2014 at 7.30pm at St Aldhelm's.

PRESENT: Chairman Mr S. Daykin
 Vice Chairman Mr R Fenn
 Councillors Mr B. Martin and Mr D. Wright
 Clerk to the Council Mrs V Eden

Also in attendance were District Councillor Ann Sevier, District Councillor Roxanne Bellows and County Councillor Edward Heron. There were 16 village residents in attendance.

Nigel Lunt of Fordingbridge First Responders was also in attendance as the guest speaker.

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed all to the Annual Parish Meeting.

14.11 Apologies for absence

Received from Cllr Stockton, Cllr Maynard and village resident, Sarah Schomberg.

14.12 Presentation by Mr Nigel Lunt, Fordingbridge First Responders

The Chairman introduced the guest speaker, Nigel Lunt, from the Fordingbridge First Responders. Mr Lunt gave a talk covering a brief history of the voluntary organisation to the challenges that the service was facing in the present day. Sandleheath Parish Council was thanked for its continued donations to Fordingbridge First Responders and Mr Lunt advised that the service was always looking for more volunteers. Further information and posters were given to the Clerk. Mr Lunt was then happy to take questions from the parish councillors and villagers. The Chairman thanked Mr Lunt for his informative and interesting speech.

14.13 To Approve Minutes of Previous Annual Parish Meeting (formerly known as Annual Parish Assembly) held on 18th April 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th April 2013 were read, approved and signed as a correct record.

14.14 Matters to be Raised by the Public

No matters were raised by members of the public.

14.15 Chairman's Report to the Parish Electors

The Chairman advised that he had the privilege of leading the Parish Council for the final year of his 5-year period as chairman. As well as the normal council business, he said that a number of initiatives and issues had been progressed throughout the year.

It was with great sadness, however, that the village learnt of the passing away of Councillor Derek Dean in February 2014. The Chairman acknowledged that Cllr Dean had played an active role in the council and would be greatly missed by the local community.

It was also highlighted that one of the major changes to the Parish Council over the last year was the retirement of its long-standing clerk, Brian Shemmings, after 20 years of service. The previous clerk had served under every single chairman of Sandleheath Parish Council and carried a wealth of knowledge and experience. The new Clerk, Vicky Eden, was appointed in August 2013 and worked together with the outgoing clerk to ensure an orderly transition, which is still continuing as the new clerk goes through her first year with the council. The Chairman again thanked Brian Shemmings for all his work during his time with the council and for all his support to the chairman.

It was also noted that the new clerk has the task of picking up the running of a parish

council, including all the procedures, systems, and routines, along with the extensive legal requirements that need to be met. The council has been supporting the new clerk in formal training and benefits are starting to be seen. The new Clerk has made an extremely positive and rapid impact, driving positive change to processes and particularly electronic records. The Chairman believes that the new Clerk will be a real asset to the council.

The future of St. Aldhelm's has been a issue for the council and the community ever since its closure as a place of worship in 2011; last year the parish publicly asked for formal expressions of interest to take the building on. The Parish Council was instrumental in catalysing the formation of the Sandleheath Community Association (SCA) and thus was very pleased to support the SCA in a bid to take on St. Aldhelm's. During the summer the Chairman of the Parish Council and the SCA Chairman, Mark Ward, convened two public meetings to build a proposal for the church, culminating in an extensive formal and impressive document submitted to the church at the end of August. This proposal included a number of options for a special purpose vehicle under the banner of the SCA and with the support of the Parish Council to take on St. Aldhelm's as a building for a variety of community uses. Later in the autumn the Chairman of the Parish Council and the SCA Chairman were invited to meet with the church's steering committee and were delighted to be informed that the proposal that had been drawn up had been selected as the preferred option. A steering committee was formed chaired by the Chairman of the Parish Council and the SCA Chairman and the matter progressed to the next stage with a model proposed to the church - formal feedback is currently awaited on this. Members of the steering committee are currently working up plans, costs and funding options to mobilise once next steps are understood.

It was highlighted that the SCA have continued to have a hugely positive impact on the local community, with a highly successful calendar of events including the summer fete and November bonfire, as well as supporting major initiatives such as the St. Aldhelm's project. The Chairman thanked both the committee and members of the SCA for their tireless contributions throughout the year.

Mark Ward has been the Chairman of the SCA since its inception, and has provided careful leadership through its formative years. He has now decided to step down from this role but will still remain involved, particularly with the St. Aldhelm's project. The Chairman thanked Mark for his contribution and collaboration during this period, and advised that he looked forward to continuing to work with him on the St. Aldhelm's project. Keith Bennett was welcomed as the new chairman of the SCA and it is hoped that a close relationship between the parish council and the community association will continue. The new chairman of the SCA has already proved to be a driving force in a number of projects and will be a great asset to the association.

It was noted that, as with the Parish Council, the SCA requires people to give their own time and commitment to make events happen - any support members of the community can offer are gratefully received, and the Chairman thanked the small band of members that give so much.

The Chairman then spoke about another community-supported activity, 'Speedwatch', as this is effectively led by the council and primarily supported by councillors. Whilst the Parish Council is not the authority for speed limits or enforcement, it does continue to do everything it can to address the problem. The "community speedwatch" scheme enables the village to directly support attempts to ensure speed limits are adhered to through the use of Speed Indicating Equipment at approved sites to inform motorists of their speed. This is not enforcement, but part of an overall method of dealing with speeding and can be used by police to target their own visits. The success of this has been seen in 2013 and 2014 with multiple visits by police camera vans and officers, gaining Sandleheath a reputation as a village regularly enforced. Anecdotal evidence suggests this is having a positive impact on the speeding within the village.

A further highway enhancement driven by the Parish Council was the modification to the junction of Scats Lane and Main Road, with additional kerbing and a wooden post

altering the junction quite significantly. Results appear to have been positive with a number of residents commenting on it reducing the speed of traffic turning off main road into scats lane.

Further works have included improving the footpath on the main road at the border with Fordingbridge, and repairing the surfaces after the particularly wet winter.

The Parish Council has continued to participate in the Hampshire County Council Parish Lengthsmen trial. This provides access to a funded person able to perform basic maintenance tasks in the village and although not on the highway itself, this can be tasks at the side of the road such as cleaning road signs. This has provided limited benefit to the Parish to date, but the council will continue to make use where it can and whilst there is no cost.

Last year the Parish Council reported the change of plan regarding the village entry sign since the erection of the particularly large sign by the highways authority. A parishioner and member of the council, Cllr Wright, kindly produced some sample designs for a new village centre style sign for the common, and was now looking at options for building and erecting. It is hoped that 2014 will see the conclusion of this long running project.

Another major project for the council relates to the proposed cycleway between Sandheath and Fordingbridge. The council has secured the use of the developers contribution (section 106 monies) of more than 30,000 to fund the creation of a new cycle path between the back of the industrial estate and the existing cycle path on Marl Lane. This has the potential to be a huge asset to the community providing a cycle path to the heart of Fordingbridge, avoiding the difficult roads and traffic conditions near the border with Fordingbridge. The land owners have been very supportive and are on-board, and confirmation of the scheme is now awaited from New Forest District Council. It is hoped this scheme will be implemented later in the year and initial feedback from the community has been very positive.

The Parish Council's biggest asset, The Common, has been used for a number of events during the year, including another hugely successful village fete in June and the traditional bonfire night festivities in November. The Chairman further thanked the members and supporters of the SCA in their hard work staging the events that have made such a positive contribution to village life. The council will continue to invest in maintaining The Common so it can continue to be used for a variety of community events.

A small number of planning applications were considered throughout the year, although there were no major contentious issues. The village design statement is now close to adoption, and it is hoped that this will further strengthen the approach to planning to ensure development is in keeping with the village.

Whilst not within the village boundary, the application by travellers for permanent pitches adjacent to Marl Lane has been a concern to the villagers, and the Parish Council is keen to see the outcome of the planning inquiry due shortly.

From a finance perspective the Parish Council remains in a sensible position, with balanced books and a reasonable reserve. The difficult decision was taken to again raise the precept; although by a very small amount.

The council continued its policy of making a small number of grants to specific organisations that make a direct difference to the community, specifically Fordingbridge First Responders 180, Fordingbridge & District Day Centre for the Elderly & Infirm 60 and the Rae Stratan Lunch Club/Day Centre 60.

Major changes are continuing within the village and community and the Chairman thanked the councillors, both Brian Shemmings and Vicky Eden as clerks, the district and county councillors and the members of the community that have, and continue to support the council in its work. The Chairman has felt very lucky to have had this support during his tenure as Chairman and he hoped that his successor will have every success in continuing the work of the council.

The Chairman then reminded residents and councillors of the Parish Council Annual

Meeting (formerly AGM) on the 22nd of May at 7-30pm, in St.Aldhelm's.
The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.12pm.