

HUNSTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 May 2014 AT HUNSTON VILLAGE HALL

Present:	Parish Council	Ms L Kenney (Chairman), Mr S Baker, Mr L New, Mr R Pagram, Mr S Solliss
	Parish Residents	27
	County Councillor	Mrs M Whitehead
	Police	PCSO McQuillan

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm

1. **Welcome by the Chair of the Parish Council.**

The Chairman introduced herself to those who might not know her. She welcomed residents to the 2014 Parish Assembly and thanked them for taking the time out to attend the meeting this evening. As you will have seen from the leaflet we circulated, we have a full and what we hope will be a very interesting agenda. However, before we start, I want to take a few minutes and talk to you about the work of the Parish Council.

We may not appear to have achieved much in the village since the last Parish Assembly, but as will quickly become apparent from the remainder of the evening, this does not mean that we have not been striving to improve our community on all levels. There was an article published in the Sunday Times on 24th April which encapsulates how we work. Entitled "Love your Parish Council. That's where real power is wielded", the Chairman read extracts from the article:

Last month I had a run-in with my parish council in Norfolk - a misunderstanding over a planning application, swiftly resolved. I confess to having felt irritated by what seemed at the time a 'busybodyish' intervention, but it occurred to me that this was a healthy sign of local democracy doing its stuff. It may sometimes be inconvenient, but it is always necessary. I should have been glad that someone was making sure I wasn't going to blight the village.

It is a timely thought. With relaxed planning laws threatening to let slip some pretty mangy architectural dogs, the voice from the parish pump is in urgent need of amplification. Small communities are soft targets, easy dumping grounds for housing quotas and other inconveniences that planners want to shift from their desks and that developers want to convert into dividends. Villagers in particular need someone to wield the pitchfork on their behalf, and it is the parish councils that man the dykes and the hedges.

Parish councils have three essential functions. They pass the views of their communities to the administrative tiers above them. They work to improve or sustain local character and quality of life. They provide services. These can include commons and open spaces, burial grounds, car parks, lavatories, village halls, war memorials, sports grounds, litter bins, footpaths, street lighting, bus shelters and much else besides. Much of it is like housework, a thankless task noticeable only when it is left undone.

Though there may be a tendency towards conservatism, councillors for the most part wear their politics lightly, loyal only to their neighbours. Reading the minutes of my own parish council, I find no clue as to how its members might vote in an election, a

refreshing change from the caucus-room factionalism of district, borough and county councils, with all their “chairs” and “cabinets”.

But there is bad stuff going on too, planning authorities are still too apt to believe that their wider responsibilities allow them, “in the public interest”, to dismiss local opposition as 'Nimbyism'. Worse: some £3.8m of government funding intended for parish and town councils is not being passed on by a small number of rogue local authorities, leaving deprived parishes with a choice of legal action or cutting services. “Scandal” is not too big a word for this. There is injustice, too, in the fact that since 1990 parish councils have received no share of business rates, reducing local companies to the unwilling role of cuckoos in the nest, taking more from local communities than they are able to give back.

Those of us living in the country are not clinging to a 'mead-round-the-maypole' vision of Merrie England. We want the best of urban culture - broadband speeds measurable in something better than bytes per fortnight, a detectable mobile phone signal and less architectural ticky-tacky.

Councillors who give up their time to work for these things, or for their urban equivalents, are the true representatives of the “grass roots” to which politicians pay so much glib and slithery lip-service. They deserve better than they get.

However, I would caution you that we can only really work effectively when we have a full complement of Councillors. As we enter the final year of our term of elected office, before the elections in May 2015, we still have two vacancies. It would be really great if we can get those vacancies filled in the next few weeks so we have enough man/woman power to get the work done. If you can spare the time and you care about our community, you truly can make a difference, so please come and join us. Your village needs you! The Parish Councillors will be happy to talk to you at the end of the formal part of the evening, when we have some refreshments laid on for you.

Finally, in keeping with tradition, I will now call upon the Parish Clerk and Councillors to introduce themselves to you, before we proceed with the rest of this evening's agenda.

2. Parish Council report

Neighbourhood Plan

The Localism Act 2011 introduces statutory Neighbourhood Planning in England. It enables communities to draw up a Neighbourhood Plan for their area and is intended to give communities more of a say in the development of their local area (within certain limits and parameters). These plans will be used to decide the future of the places where you live and work giving opportunities to: choose where you want new homes, shops and offices to be built have your say on what new buildings should look like grant planning permission for the new buildings you want to see go ahead.

In October last year the Parish Council applied to CDC for the parish of Hunston to be designated a Neighbourhood Plan Area. This was approved at the beginning of December. A Steering Group was set up in January to start the process. The Steering Group is made up of a small number of residents, business owners and Parish Councillors. The Steering Group has looked at a number of areas relating to Neighbourhood Plans and is currently designing a questionnaire to be circulated to residents.

What can you do to help? Complete and return the questionnaire. These will then be analysed and some draft proposals will be put forward. At this stage we will then hold a series of exhibitions where residents can come and look at the proposals and make comments.

Village Hall Kitchen

First of all may I apologise on behalf of the Village Hall Management Committee for the lengthy period the kitchen has been closed. Your patience and understanding have been greatly appreciated and we know for our regular users this has been extremely inconvenient.

We had planned to refurbish the kitchen and had applied for monies via the Parish Council from the S106 monies generated by the new development off Foxbridge Drive (explain 106). Had we been able to carry out the works in the way we intended then it would have been far less disruptive.

However as a result of a routine inspection by Environmental Health we were advised that we had to close the kitchen immediately. This was due to far more stringent regulations that are now in place for public buildings. Had it been a domestic kitchen we would not have had any problem so it was not because the kitchen was in a particularly poor state but just because of higher standards now required.

This meant that we did not have the funding in place and therefore this is why it has taken so long. We were not permitted to keep the kitchen open even for teas and coffees. Fortunately monies are now available and work is progressing well and we expect the kitchen to be open in the very near future.

Regeneration of the Pond

I am sure you are all aware of the lovely pond at the end of Church Lane in front of the Manor house and the Church. You might not know that there used to be two other ponds in Church Lane: one behind the church yard and one opposite Spire Cottage.

Ponds generally do a good job of storing water, even-ing out the peak flows of water in ditch and drainage systems. Unfortunately, in recent times these other two ponds and the ditches which feed in and out of them have not been regularly maintained.

As anyone who has walked down Church lane after a prolonged period of rain will know, the water tends to sit just on the road in big puddles for a long time.

As well as flood prevention benefit, of course, ponds and ditches also provide habitat for many different animals and plants. In particular, water voles already live in the rife from the pub down to the playground and there is evidence that they do feed around the pond opposite Spire cottage. Maintenance would encourage the plants that these little creatures like to feed on.

I have been talking to members of the Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group and Sidlesham Parish Council who recently did a good job of restoring their pond in their Church Lane with the benefit of Operation Watershed funding.

Together with Hunston parish council we are forming a plan to restore the pond opposite Spire Cottage and hopefully the ditch either side of it as far as possible. The pond behind the churchyard is a much bigger project for future.

Please come and chat with me afterwards if you have any questions or comments about ponds, ditches or flooding.

Traffic Calming/Cycle routes

The Parish Council has been working behind the scenes on traffic calming measures. One idea put forward was to remove the centre road markings and put in advisory cycle routes. These are currently in operation on the road from the Northgate roundabout toward Lavant. Unfortunately because of the bus route the road is significantly too narrow to allow for this option.

The Parish Council is now reviewing other options such as the installation of village gates. Other options include road marking such as 30mph or SLOW. The Parish Council will also look at the possibility of putting in an additional pedestrian crossing outside the village hall.

The Big Lunch

This year's Big Lunch will take place on Sunday 27th July from 12 noon. Bring your own picnic and enjoy a host of activities on the playing field including the old favourites, Welly wanging and tug-o-war. We will also have a book stall, cake stall and beer/Pimms tent.

Also we will be introducing Street Snooker. The Parish Council is delighted that 2012 Olympic Handball Captain, Booby White will be in attendance helping to run a Street Snooker demo. A new fun game for all members of the family, come along with your children, grandchildren and friends and have a go.

Regeneration of the hard-court

The basketball court is in need of a major overhaul. The surface is not in a good condition and there are holes where the football goals kept being removed. The Parish Council had these filled but sadly people have removed the fillings. The court is not well used by local residents and the Parish Council agreed that a major rethink was necessary. It is hoped that by putting in a family inclusive sport area it will encourage everyone in the village to come and use it. The actual area will also include a 5 a side football area, tennis court and basketball court. Details of the proposals can be seen on the poster displayed after the meeting.

The Chairman then invited PCSO McQuillan to address the audience.

PCSO McQuillan advised that crime in Hunston was low and mostly attributable to opportunistic thieves. He reminded residents of the importance of ensuring that car windows were not left open and the doors, windows and sheds were securely shut and/or locked at night or when out of the house.

3. Residents Questions

- Q: Mr Carroll asked if the owners of the Pond had given permission for the work on it to take place as he was aware that on previous occasions permission had been refused.
- A: The Clerk confirmed that due to the nature of the request the Church Commissioners had given permission for work to be undertaken.
- Q: Lucy (Journalist) asked why the pond had not been maintained.
- A: The Clerk responded that as the Pond was the responsibility of the Church Commissioners she was unable to offer an answer to the question.
- Q: Mr Wilkins asked if any work was going to be done on the pond behind the Church as well.

- A: Cllr Solliss responded that it was not part of the project at this time as it was a far more complex issue to look at.
- Q: Mr Netley asked whose responsibility it was to maintain the ditches through the village.
- A: Ditches are almost never the responsibility of Highways unless they have been adopted. The responsibility for clearing ditches largely rests with the Land Owners. It was noted that the new tenant of the land between Church Lane and Southover Way had undertaken a lot of work on the ditches surrounding the fields.
- Q: Mrs Jarman commented that she was fed up of walking down Church Lane and getting drenched. Her husband had taken it upon himself to dig out much of the ditches in the lane to help them drain.
- A: Mrs Jarman was thanked for her comments and reminded that the Parish Council was going to undertake work to ease the situation in Church Lane.
- Q: Mrs Carroll asked if there was a timescale for the completion of the kitchen. She commented that it had not been necessary to close the kitchen prior to the Lunch Club Christmas Lunch as she was told that only work on the ceiling was necessary.
- A: The Chairman replied that work was well underway and it was hoped that the kitchen would be operational by the end of June. She also advised that the report from Environmental Health had contained a large number of issues and the Village Hall Management Committee had only shut the kitchen because they had been told this was required until all the work identified in the official report had been carried out.
- Q: A question on whether funding was in place to replace the kitchen.
- A: The Chairman responded that there was adequate funding in place to complete the renovation of the kitchen.
- Q: A question was raised as to whether users who had previously enjoyed use of the kitchen would get a rebate on hiring fees whilst the kitchen had been out of operation.
- A: The Chairman responded that the Village Hall management Committee would speak to hirers individually about this.
- Q: A resident asked whether with the new recreational facility a pedestrian crossing would be put in. He highlighted the situation that a number of small children had been left to cross the main road without supervision and he was concerned that the new facility might encourage more children to be crossing the road.
- A: The Clerk confirmed that the Parish Council would be looking at support to install a pedestrian crossing outside the village hall.
- Q: Mr Netley commented that the grass contractors whilst using the strimmer's around the playground were eating into the wooden posts of the surrounding fencing.
- A: The Parish Council will look into this matter.

- Q: A number of residents raised questions relating to speeding traffic and the possibility of extending the 30mph limit beyond the golf club entrance.
- A: The Parish Council agreed to look into this in greater detail.
- Q: Mr Wilkins asked about the implications for Hunston from the development proposals in Selsey.
- A: The Chairman explained that Parish Council often objected to such applications and that this issue was being raised at a joint meeting of the Manhood parishes and the District Council the following week.
- Q: Mrs Evan (County Councillor) reminded residents about the use of Operation Crackdown for reporting speeding motorists. Number plates could be reported online and the Police did follow up on all such reported instances.
- Q: Mr Furlong asked if the Finger Post that used to stand on the corner of Green Lane would be reinstated.
- A: The Clerk responded that this was now down to the Parish Council to organise and this would be actioned.
- Q: Mrs Redford asked if the parish Council was aware of any potential building works on the land behind the allotments. People had been seen on the land with theodolites.
- A: The Clerk responded that the Parish Council was not aware of any plans and no application had been made to the District Council.

Mr Wilkins offered a vote of thanks to the Parish Council for all of their hard work during the year. He was aware that being a Councillor was a thankless task and that many villagers did not know or understand the amount of work that went on behind the scenes for the sole benefit of Hunston Residents.

There being no further questions the Chairman declared the meeting closed and invited residents to partake of the refreshments provided.

Signed:.....
 Chairman
 Hunston Parish Council

Date:.....