

# WOODHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2020 at 7.30pm held remotely.

Present Cllr Andy Notman - Chairman  
Cllr Shirley Firth  
Cllr Alistair Marr  
Cllr Martin Jones  
Cllr Andrew Pendered  
Cllr Simon Brown  
CCllr Steve Criswell from 19:58

Sarah Mizuro – Clerk

Also present - 1 member of the Public

- 1. APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE** – Cllr Tony Reynolds
- 2. TO SIGN MINUTES** – The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 10th April 2019 were read, approved and duly signed by the Clerk on behalf of the Chairman as a true record.
- 3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT** – A report was given by the Chairman.
- 4. FINANCIAL REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

The clerk reported that this year the precept of £5900 has been used on various projects. The maintenance contract started last year to improve the appearance of the village has been continued with the planter displays being renewed every season, the areas of grass being cut and leaves being removed to avoid them become a slip hazard. This has cost £1178 for the year.

The quarterly newsletters have continued at a cost of £215 for printing.

The streetlight contract has been continued to ensure all the streetlights are kept in good repair at a cost of £350.

With the new GDPR legislation a data protection insurance has been taken out for the Parish Council, this will be an ongoing annual cost of £35.

The addition to the village of the Defibrillator has cost the Parish Council £536.74 this year which includes the cost of electrical work necessary to site it in the old phone box.

Payments for the Parish Council are now all made online, allowing easy of transaction for payees and giving all Councillors access to view the bank accounts at any time.

As was the case last year, the majority of the monies remaining this year have been allocated to pay for the future purchase of traffic calming measures within the village.

The clerk informed the Councillors that the bank balance is currently more than three times the precept however monies have been allocated for traffic calming measures.

## **5. VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS**

- **Village Hall** – report submitted by Louisa Jones
- **PCC St John the Baptist Church** – report presented by Shirley Firth.  
Cllr Brown asked if there was any help that could be given to the Village Hall or Church during these difficult financial times. Cllr Notman commented that as a Parish Council no financial help could be given however the Parish Council could promote and encourage parishioners to support these facilities.

## **6. OPEN FORUM** – The Chairman invited thoughts and comments from the members of public present:

CCllr Criswell informed the meeting that he had nothing to report but could take any questions. Cllr Marr asked if there was any further development with Wyton and Marshalls, CCllr Criswell said there was none at present.

Cllr Notman thanked CCllr Criswell for the daily updates regarding Coronavirus.

Cllr Notman asked if the member of the public had any questions or comments. The clerk read out an email from a parishioner thanking the Councillors for their continued interest in the village and their help to make it a good place to live.

Cllr Firth commented how wonderful it was to see the people of the village helping each other during this time.

Cllr Jones gave feed back from the Huntingdonshire Planning meeting that he and Cllr Brown attended, commenting that it was a useful session.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 20:13 and thanked those who attended.

## Chairman's Report 2019-20

This has been a successful year for the Council.

The year had barely started when the lamppost which had been installed on the day of last year's Annual Parish Meeting, was demolished within a week. I am happy to say that the lamppost has finally been replaced and is working again. So far it has not attracted any unwarranted attention from passing cars. I hope that the work to re-instate the resident's property will soon also be completed.

We welcomed a new Councillor in Simon Brown who was co-opted to fill the vacancy left by the passing of Councillor Huggins and while it has been difficult to arrange meetings around our councillors busy schedules, we have so far managed to stay quorate.

At last year's meeting I looked forward to having our own defibrillator in the village, and we finally had this installed in the telephone box last summer. It is a welcome addition to the village and more than one "outsider" has commented on the good use of the phone box in such a small village. The final stage is to purchase some stickers for the phone box to properly advertise its contents.

I'm pleased to say that one responsibility I have managed to drop is that of the village newsletter and I thank Dean and Jenny Hartwell for their work in producing and distributing the last few editions. With a change of printers, we are now able to put even more in for less money and although it's now printed in Holland it arrives back less than 24 hours after being emailed. Some two days quicker than if we print it in Somersham at half the cost!

As a council we have submitted and been successful in a bid for LHI funding. Obviously work to implement buffer zones on the village approaches would not have been scheduled until next year, but I fear that inevitably there will now be more delay as other essential works back up. This year's bid deadline has been extended and we will be pushing for further measures to be implemented as we have previously discussed but we must be careful not to suggest change for change's sake. Having presented to the panel in February they are very clear that proposals must be backed with a need and not just be "nice to have".

With the current Coronavirus situation, I have been pleased to see many of the village stepping up and helping out neighbours and strangers alike. Nobody should be surprised by this as we have known for some time the sense of community that exists here, but in recent weeks more and more people have helped others and lots of new support networks are now in place where family cannot be here to help.

Life is unlikely to be the same again for some time, even after lockdown restrictions are eased, and that may well be true for the council. I suspect we will be meeting remotely for some months to come and I hope that it doesn't affect the openness and accessibility that we are expected to display.

My thanks go to our contractors, Joe & Carol Jeakins for their work in the village over the last year. Understandably they are not working at the moment so some parts of the village might not be looking as tidy as they normally do, but hopefully things won't get too out of control.

Finally I thank the clerk and my fellow councillors for their support during the last year and also a special thank you to those villagers that take an active interest in the work that the Council does.



It's been another busy year at the Village Hall.

The Committee has taken the decision to focus on refurbishing the existing structure and exploring ways of making the most of what we have. The first step was having a good clear out and clean. Andy did an excellent job in realising funds by selling off some of the unused furniture, pool table and equipment.

In turn this was invested into new blinds, proper fridges and new chairs as well kitchen units. We have also extended the bar area to create more social space. Meanwhile the local scouts and cubs came in and repainted the interior for us.

We hope everyone will agree that it looks much better and fresher. We have had companies in to quote for the electrics and the two toilets with a view to focusing on these areas next. We have also approached the local college in the hope that some of their students could undertake some of the work. However, the current crisis has temporarily put everything on hold.

We are also delighted to say that lettings are up. We now have regular bookings for Forest School Training, individual repeat bookings, elections, celebrations, christenings and funerals. This has helped put us on an even financial keel.

Events have also done particularly well. We were blessed with good weather for last year's Feast Week, the profits of which were again split with the Church. We have held quizzes, Race Nights, Halloween Parties which have all been well attended and very enjoyable. Bar Nights have been down in attendance recently so we would love ideas on how to rejuvenate them.

Obviously, the year ahead will be far more challenging due to the current crisis. We've had to cancel Easter, the VE Day Street Party and Feast Week as well as no hire income. So there will be much work to be done to make up the shortfall.

## Report of Church of St John the Baptist Woodhurst 2019

2019 was a very busy year for the church and for the PCC. There were five PCC meetings . Martin Jones took over the role of church Treasurer and Louisa became the secretary. Shirley Firth became Churchwarden a position which had been vacant for the past few years. We said goodbye to Neil Farbon, he and Annabel had been great supporters of the church and Neil a very valuable member of the PCC as Treasurer. His help and advice will be sadly missed.

It was agreed by the PCC to spend money on repairs to the church as recommended by the Quinquennial report, and have accepted an estimate from Stricklands to carry out the work. The PCC also agreed to look into refurbishing the one remaining bell so that it could be rung again. A generous donation towards the cost of this was promised by Alex Wade and James Manning who were scheduled to married in June this year, and it was decided to launch an appeal in the village in the New Year towards the cost.

Following guidance from the Diocese each member of the PCC has been working towards completing at least the first part of the C of Es online safeguarding course. New safeguarding information has also been posted on the Church notice board.

Attendance at services has not improved during the year although for special services at Christmas the church is full. The PCC has discussed this problem and how to make services more welcoming. There were three marriages last year which showed the church at its best , and three funerals and memorial services. These emphasise that the church still has a vital role n the life of the village.

We would like to thank our pastoral team for their help and guidance during the year, Also those who host the monthly open mornings and those who take their turn to open the church during the day. Visitors remarks in the book indicate how pleased they are that it is open and also they comment on how lovely the church is. I would like to thank Brenda and Lois for their tireless efforts in cleaning and looking after items such as changing the frontals, making sure that there is a plentiful supply of candles and other items needed for the smooth running of the church.

Finally i would like to thank Rod and Anne who for a long while have kept the churchyard looking immaculate. Unfortunately they are no longer able to do this. We are very grateful for their dedication over the years and they will be very hard to replace.

### **Bringing you up to date.**

Since the corona virus outbreak things have dramatically changed for the church. We would like to have kept the church open so that people could go and have a quiet moment, but unfortunately the Church of England said all churches had to be closed. The two weddings due in June and July have been cancelled.

This will have a big impact on the church finances. We have money set aside for the essential repairs, but like other churches in the Venefice will be unable to meet our Parish share.

The bell was removed in early February and should be brought back by the end of May. Our appeal to people in the village regarding the bells refurbishment has had a wonderful response and we are very grateful to those who have contributed.

Two headstones in the graveyard have fallen over. When this occurs the descendants of the person whose grave it was is liable for the cost of reinstating the headstone. One headstone has been reinstated, the other the descendants cannot be traced.