

# NUTHURST PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024, at Mannings Heath Hall, commencing at 7.00pm.

Two parishioners, Three Parish Councillors attended the meeting. Louise Shaw (Locum Parish Clerk) was also in attendance.

### **001-24/25 CHAIRMANS WELCOME**

The Chairman, Cllr D Cotton presented his report to the meeting.

The Annual meeting of the Parish Council is where the Chairman reports on Parish Council business for the year 2024/25.

### **002-24/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

It was **RESOLVED** to **NOTE** Parish Councillor Stuart Catterall, Country Councillor Nigel Jupp a gave apologies for absence.

### **003-24/25 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

There were no minutes available from the last Annual Parish Meeting.

### **004-24/25 PARISH COUNCIL BUSINESS**

The Chairman of the Parish Council provided the following report on Parish Council business; Welcome to the Annual Parish Meeting for Nuthurst.

At this meeting it is the duty of the Chair to report about the Council Business for the last year. This is very difficult due to the turbulent year that the Council has had, and I personally do not like dwelling on negatives but to look at the positives.

The year started in May with Election time. Elections saw the arrival of a new district councillor, Dennis Livingstone but disappointingly only three people for PC with 11 councillors required. With the help of Dennis, we were able to get co-op councillors to at least become quorate and able to function as a council. Gradually numbers have increased including myself who was co-opted on in November.

Difficulties have also arisen with Clerks with our previous permanent clerk Beccy going off sick and subsequently left the council, we have had to rely on the use of Locum clerks to function as a council. The council cannot function without a Clerk, but the use of locums is not ideal as they often have limited hours they can offer and tend to be expensive. Louise stepped in as Locum in January at the same time I was elected as chair. Louise has been a stabilising influence on the council and helping to put us on much better footings and we thank her for that.

The council was chaired by Cllr Bryant from May until the end of 23. This was a particularly tough time for the council and certainly made life very difficult for any Chair. Norman was on the Parish council for 6 years. Being on the Parish Council is a voluntary role for all us councillors and I take the opportunity to thank Norman for the time and devotion he showed over his years as a Councillor.

So what have we done over the last year? To me its that we have managed to keep going as a council and continue with council business to the best of our abilities and resources. If you read as to what the role of a Parish is it states:

Give views, on behalf of the community, on planning applications and other proposals that affect the parish.

Alert relevant authorities to problems that arise or work that needs to be undertaken.

Help the other tiers of local government keep in touch with their local communities.

More broadly, parish councils exercise a general consultative role on behalf of local people: for instance, they have statutory consultation rights on planning matters.

This is a very narrowed view if we look at Nuthurst we have responsibilities, maintaining the council's assets, village green, playground streetlights, bus shelters to name but a few. We also look at ways we can improve and enhance the Parish using the monetary resources we are given. To me the most important function is to engage with the Parishioners and the work with and alongside the many local groups and associations our Parish has. These are some of the groups that spring to mind and I am sure we can all name more so please accept my apologies if I have missed any.

Parish Community Group

Speedwatch

Carbon Busters

LINK

MOGRA

Millenium Group

Nuthurst Society

Allotment Society

Mannings Heath Village Hall

Copsale Village Hall

Church Of The Good Shepard

St Andrews Church

Cricket Club

Mannings Heath Action Group

Oil buying Groups

WI

There are many other clubs and societies that operate. Our Village Halls are such excellent hubs in our Parish and of course where we hold our meetings. Let's also not forget our other social establishments, The Black Horse, The White Horse, and Mannings Heath Golf Club that are in our Parish. I also like to think that we have our very own brewery in the form of Kissinggate. Try a drop of Undertakers Varnish and all your worries will disappear.

Back to Council business. Fortunately, there have been fewer planning applications we have had to look at (approx. 50) of which quite a number of which have been trees. We are very lucky to have dedicated tree wardens, Jill Chater and Penny and Paddy Bullen and we thank them for their services and continued support. There have been no major planning application to occupy our time. We are currently undergoing planning training to help us but in addition Ex Chair of the Parish Council, Owen Hydes and Dennis Livingstone are running a session on District and Neighbourhood plans next month.

We have taken over the responsibility of looking after the majority of the defibs. I thank the members of the Parish who keep an eye on these and report if there is a problem. This was

unfortunately an item that was not in the Councils Budget for this year, and they are expensive but so very vital as one day they will save somebody's life.

We also have many streetlights in the Parish that we maintain. Some are now getting old and need to be replaced. As a trial we have replaced one with LED lighting, more energy efficient and less bulb changes. This is something that we are going to be looking at under our Parish Plan.

This brings me on to our Parish Plan. The Council are very lucky to have a robust Neighbourhood Plan and Design statement that helps guide us on planning and how we would like our Neighbourhood to look. This is a key referral document for all planning issues as is respected by HDC and beyond. The Parish Plan is a document produced by the Council that gives some direction on longer term aims within our Parish.

We have recently sat down and reviewed the plan, and I would like to highlight some of the things on this.

Improving the road safety on the A281. This has been a project that has taken on many forms and ideas as to how the road safety can be improved. Many of which have been discussed at length with WSCC not excluding a crossing for the past 40 years. This all must take one step at a time and the council had decided that the priority and first step is to get a speed limit reduction. The Speedwatch team along with the Council are putting together a plan that will be put to full council in June. I take this opportunity to particularly thank Roger Cato for all his efforts in getting this off the ground.

We are continuing to look at efforts at the school to make it safer for the children.

We are looking at and pedestrian paths/routes into Horsham.

As mentioned earlier we will conduct a feasibility study on the streetlights to reduce ongoing costs for the Parish. This is to look at energy efficiency not any reduction in the number.

These are just a few items but input from the Parishioners as to what improvements they would like to see are always very welcome. The council does have funds available that can be used on appropriate improvements that fit in the criterion dictated by HDC. Please let us know.

We are just about to advertise for a Permanent Clerk but hopefully Louise will be able to continue with locum support until we find the right person.

I would also like to reach out to the Parishioners. We need more councillors particularly from the Hamlets. I have many people come up to me and say why do you want to be on the Parish council. I have one simple answer, I love the Parish I live in and want to give something back. There must be more of you that think the same way and have much to offer so come and join us.

I will conclude by saying a big thankyou to the councillors who have stuck with it through what has been a very difficult year. I hope that they agree that we are now starting to move forward with some positive things to get involved with.

Thank you for listening.

## **005-24/25 PARISH COUNCIL FINANCES**

Cllr Catterall unfortunately send his apologies, so you've got me again. Sorry but unfortunately is not the right word to use. Stuart is currently cycling from Land end to John O Groats in aid of Cancer Research. This is a solitary bike ride not as part of a group. I spoke with him yesterday in Kendal and he is doing OK. The weather has been the biggest factor as its impossible to keep dry on a bike.

We move on to 23/24 financial year. The accounts are still to be finalised and audited due to time constraints on our clerk. This has also been frustrated by our bank, a now ten-month saga that would knock strips off War and Peace. We have nearly resolved all the issues but when you cannot get a bank statement it makes it very difficult. I will not mention the banks name but three cubes representing innovation compassion and growth to us has a different meaning.

We estimate at this stage an overspend of approx. 4-5k this year. Overspend has occurred: Having to use locum clerks whilst still paying for a permanent clerk.  
Legal costs with regards the clerk's settlement  
Non-budgeted defibrillator maintenance.

This was all somewhat negated by no tree costs, playground and general maintenance and amazingly lower energy costs for the lighting.

The reserves of the Council are still strong with over £50k in general reserve and some 97k in CIL monies to spend on HDC approved expenditure.

Full accounts will be available as soon as they are finalised and audited.

Budget 24/25

As I am sure you have all seen the Parish Council tax has increased by around 7%.

The biggest cost for the parish council is the Clerk. They are a salaried person, and we must align ourselves with the scales of pay commensurate with the guidelines.

This is where most of the increase has come from along with a budget now for defibrillators.

Thank you for listening.

## **006-24/25 QUESTIONS ON PARISH MATTERS FROM ELECTORS**

One MOP attempted to ask questions but was reminded that they had been issued the Vexatious Policy which allowed council to not answer. The Policy can be found [here](#). The MOP challenged the comment and stated that they were not aware of the policy or it's meaning. The MOP is banned from making contact with the council for six months but are free to attend meetings. The MOP has been made aware that should they insisted on making a public disturbance during any meetings, they will be removed and or the meeting will be drawn to a close.

**The meeting closed at 7.19pm**