



# Ashington Parish Council

## ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

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**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at 7.45 p.m. in the School Hall at Ashington First School, Foster Lane, Ashington.**

**Present:** Councillors: N. Spiers (Chairman), J. Stillwell, G. MacPherson, M. Woolley, K. Wood, L. di Castiglione, T. Moss and T Kearney

**Also present:**

Clerk – Karen Dare

County Councillor – P Marshall

District Councillors – J Blackall, P. Circus, D Jenkins

9 Members of the Public

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**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Councillors: S. Ball, T. Watson & R. Strudwick

**Report from the Chairman of Ashington Parish Council on the Year 2018/19**

The Chairman reported:

Last year if nothing else was been interesting if not a little stressful.

We have had 3 clerks

Lost 2 councillors, some might say careless, but gained 2 new ones, both called Tony which some might say is a little confusing.

We also lost a brilliant youth worker but gained an equally good one thanks to the on-going and unique collaboration with the church

I would like to thank all parish councillors for their support over the year and thank them for all they do for the village, above and beyond but mostly un-noticed by the village.

Can I also thank our district councillors John, Philip and David and our county councillor Paul who not only turn up to all (or most) parish council meetings but also have supported us in numerous ways over the year.

I would also like to thank our regular attenders in the public gallery who throughout the year have kept me if not the whole council on our toes.

When you go back over the minutes it is surprising how much we have achieved.

In April we opened the two new play areas, Warminghurst and Post Horses a significant investment for a parish so small as Ashington, feedback is very positive for both.

May we reported on the litterpick - again a very successful day when over 40 villagers turned out to help keep Ashington a village we can all be proud of, something to be repeated early April this year, earlier so the leaves don't get in the way of our intrepid wombles.

Most of June was fighting the Velo cycle race which we were unsuccessful in stopping although many, many hours were spent trying however justice prevailed as the event was called off due to poor weather

July was the launch of the Armistice 100 in the village with Graeme taking on that mantle applying for grants

August was quiet (no meeting)

September focused on speeding and parking in Ashington which unfortunately are both ongoing issues but not left to rest, only this week we have been in talks with the police to see what we could do although no volunteers have come forward to man speed cameras in the village  
October saw the continued work with the ACCT to find common ground and working together which I am pleased to say thanks to Malcolm Woolley and hours of work has come to a good conclusion.

Also in October we completed our GDPR training (data protection)

November saw the culmination of Graeme's efforts with a village "There but not There" event that was extremely successful and well received by the village and a memorable event. But it is not over as we have funds to erect a memorial bench and garden in the village which we will discuss later in the meeting.

December as usual we had the Lunch Club Christmas meal and the Wardens Christmas party where those of us councillors that had no real excuse ended up as waiters..... we know our place.

January we finally had the launch of the new PC website that if I may say so is superb.

In the background Karen has been beavering away with the neighbourhood plan with a culmination of the public exhibition in February which had a fantastic attendance. We have now got the final written plan that will go to all councillors soon and HDC for approval. Like our Emergency plan HDC want to use our NP as a template as to how it should be done, a credit to Karen and the Steering group.

As I said an interesting year and I am sure I have forgotten a number of issues for which I apologise.

There have also been some challenges (that is corporate speak for problems)

We have had a warden off for all 12 months and many discussions with HDC over this. Bryony has really coped very well under the circumstances and been absolutely superb. We are still negotiating our way forward with the warden scheme.

We have had a lot of change and we have had some staffing issues

However, we have persuaded Karen to take on the role of RFO, NP Clerk and Clerk so we now have an experienced clerk to guide us forward along the right track

Looking forward I would like to lay down a challenge to everyone in the room, councillors and public alike.

We need to find a way to get more of the village to engage with the PC, not only when they have a problem, but to engage regularly to help to shape the village into the future. But to do this we do need everyone help.

Thank you for giving me the chance to serve as your chair.

### **Report from District and County Councillors County Council**

County Councillor Marshall reported that: one of the most significant issue that engaged the village was the Velo South cycling event which was to take place in September 2018. As you know this was cancelled at the last minute sighting poor weather! The organisers of this event demonstrated a lack of capability to affected residents and empathy in their concerns. Whilst West Sussex would encourage sporting events in the future they have advised the organisers they would not support any event of this nature by them for reason stated above.

West Sussex County Council (WSSC) have been working on their budget and, the council tax increase is 4.99% made up of 3% on general expenditure and 2% on Adult Social Care. This is with no revenue support grant funding from Government. WSSC is still facing financial

challenges and needs to find further savings in the coming years but essentially in a stronger financial position than some of the other local authorities. There are many services that the county provide that are over and above statutory services they need to provide. This is the last year that local authorities charge an additional 2% for adult services.

WSCC faces significant financial challenges, like every other local Authority. It budgets for £1bn expenditure and generates £0.5bn in income and has spending priorities of adult social care, health, children and young people, all of which cost >50% of revenue spend. It still needs to find £43-45m savings.

I am pleased that last year the Chanctonbury Local Committee made financial contributions to Ashington village towards the Ashington Festival and the Youth Shelter. There is still a £1200 grant for music equipment to be claimed by Ashington Youth Club.

I am aware that speeding by vehicles in the village are a concern to residents and I am happy to support any application that's presented and supported by the parish council. If you want to discuss any of these issues now or in the future please email me on [paul.a.marshall@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:paul.a.marshall@westsussex.gov.uk) and happy to discuss the process.

### **District Council**

District Councillor Circus reported that:

HDC, like every Local Authority, face financial difficulties, however, it has managed to maintain public services and balance budgets. Council Tax will increase with inflation and HDC still has the lowest Council Tax in West Sussex and is in the bottom 10% in the country. HDC are striving to maintain the quality of services while keeping costs down.

2019 is the Year of Culture and 400-500 events are taking place across the District.

HDC are having a 'blitz' on litter & fly tipping as Members of the Public have raised concerns. The A24 is particularly bad and an analysis of the rubbish shows that 50% has blown off commercial vehicles who do not have their loads securely covered. HDC will be targeting commercial operators and will hold enforcement days. Members of the public with dashcams can send in any footage of littering and the West Sussex County Times has agreed to run a campaign to raise awareness. Offenders will be dealt with either by: formal enforcement through the courts, fine up to £2500; issued Fixed Penalty Notice £75 maximum; issued a warning letter (based on Member of the Public reporting the offender).

District Councillor John Blackall reported that:

Council Tax will rise by 2.7% but HDC had anticipated the challenges that public finances would face and had put measures in early in anticipation and is able to balance its budget. Changes, such as fortnightly bin collections, have saved £1million pa which has allowed HDC to re-build Hop Oast depot which will lead to further ongoing cost savings.

HDC recognise the problems that Ashington has had with its Warden service. HDC is extending the Warden scheme to other parishes and introducing new service agreements and would be interested to hear Ashington's feedback on the proposed agreement.

Congratulations on the recent Neighbourhood Plan Exhibition and for embracing the need for new homes in the District. It is vital that HDC maintain its 5 year Housing Land Supply otherwise it will be open to speculative developments throughout the District.

No comments from David Jenkins.

### **Public Adjournment**

Questions were invited from members of the public and the following was raised:

1. Some clarification of the £1200 youth club grant was raised. It appears that the Youth Club were awarded two grants (youth shelter and music equipment) but the music equipment grant has yet to be claimed.
2. A keen cyclist asked Paul Marshall when the many potholes in the country roads would be repaired and acknowledged that the A24 potholes had been dealt with recently. The Chairman reported that white lines had been painted around many potholes recently so they may be due to be repaired.

The chairman thanked all present and closed the meeting at 8.15 pm

Signed ..... Dated .....