



Ashington Parish Council

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 5th March 2020 at 7.45 p.m. in the School Hall at Ashington First School, Foster Lane, Ashington.

Present: Councillors: N. Spiers (Chairman), P. Kerrey, J. Stillwell, M. Woolley, J. Morris, T. Kearney, P. Linehan, S. Ball, T. Watson & T. Moss

Also present:

Clerk – Karen Dare

County Councillor – P Marshall

District Councillor – J Blackall

Neighbourhood Wardens – Bryony Sparks & Christina Arnold plus Warden Supervisor Darren Worsfold

Susses Police – Michelle Parker-Harris

28 Members of the Public

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Councillor G. MacPherson & District Councillors P. Circus & J. Saheid.

Report from the Chairman of Ashington Parish Council on the Year 2019/20

The Chairman reported:

Last year has been a very busy year for the council however looking back at the meeting minutes of the year the majority was trying to keep the wheels on.

At the elections in May 2 long serving councillors stood down. Although John Morris joined us we were one down until Philip Kerry joined us in July, just in time for the summer break. After Christmas we also lost Louise but luckily found Paul Linehan as a replacement. I would like to thank Ken Wood, Richard Strudwick and Louise Castiglione for their work as councillors over the years and welcome John, Philip and Paul.

We also lost our warden Jayne who had given the village many years of service around this time last year. After lengthy recruitment, back in August Christina started working alongside Bryony so we are now back up to full strength once more.

Nick our youth worker is now well settled in and with his energy and enthusiasm the youth club is going from strength to strength.

I would like to thank all parish councillors for their support over the year and thank them for all they do for the village, all the steering groups they sit on, committees they attend, far too many to list, and for some of the initiatives they have started this year which is dedication above and beyond but mostly un-noticed by the village.

Can I also thank our district councillors John and Philip and our county councillor Paul who not only turn up to most parish council meetings but also have supported us in numerous ways over the year, as long as they limit their infatuation with waste.

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

Some of the headlines

Most of our time this year has been taken up with planning, in particular the neighbourhood plan that we got to regulation 14 and almost on to the next phase. Recently however with the surprise of the HDC local plan it means that planning will probably take up most of our time next year as well.

Two excellent initiatives this year were the setting up of Speedwatch, something that had been talked about for years but never progressed, and the defibrillator steering group which I understand should lead to far better cover throughout the village.

Can I thank Philip and his merry band of volunteers who set up and man speedwatch, having bought the equipment, gone through the extensive training and then standing out in all weathers "Speedwatching". I suppose speeding motorists only thinking that speedwatch operates in fine weather will have to think again in Ashington.

And thanks to the two Tonys and Elizabeth our first responder for working together to bring the village a more comprehensive cover in emergencies.

A lot of our time this year has been spent keeping the wheels on, coming up with contingency plans to protect the village from the budget cuts being imposed on us from district and county by some ill thought though idea then getting a change of mind and find we had wasted hours sorting out a problem that now no longer existed or trying to come up with solutions for problems in the village ie the antisocial driving only to be thwarted by red tape that prevents us from doing anything, being bounced from pillar to post as no one is willing to stand up and take responsibility. It is always someone else's problem.

We also managed to drag the council screaming and kicking into the 21st century by going technical with new laptop, a light projector that we hope make meetings easier, and secure email addresses for all councillor, as well as online banking.

Can I also thank Karen who has done a real sterling job this past year. A council is only as good as its clerk and we a very fortunate not only having a good clerk but the best. She works tirelessly to make sure as councillors we are well briefed and have all the right information to do the best for this village. Without her I am not sure how we would cope.

To finish on a high.....

The hanging baskets looked superb this year

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

Report from District and County Councillors

County Councillor Marshall reported that: At a local level, as your local County Councillor, I have responded to complaints and issues mostly, in blocked drains, pot holes, speeding and educational concerns, in the main these have either been for local residents directly or in conjunction with Parish Council.

In addition have been successful in obtaining several project funding for the Youth of Ashington and supporting the local festival.

Recent priorities are, although I am County and this is a District matter, supporting the Parish Council on the major concerns of the local housing numbers proposed by Horsham District Council's framework review up to 2036. I have set up meetings with Horsham District Council to raise the concerns and objections on behalf of the Parish and its residents.

At County wide the budget for 20-21 was approved on the 14th of February. There will be an increase 3.99% in Council Tax (approximately a £1 a week band D).

The extensive Capital Programme continues ensuring that WSCC is investing across the County.

As well as some major road schemes the budget continued with established schemes in the programme

£57.4m for 'Growth Programmes' – working with partners to improve infrastructure, create new jobs, and provide new homes - in areas including Horsham, Worthing, Burgess Hill, Crawley, and Chichester. £49.1m to extend existing or build new schools, ensuring each child in West Sussex has a school place. £32.6m to maintain the condition of existing schools, providing for the most urgent items such as replacement heating systems and new roofs. £10.4m to create new Specialist Support Centres, to increase provision in mainstream schools for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. £1.7m for extra care housing to support people to remain independent in later life.

The recent interim Fire & Rescue Service Inspection saw 'tangible improvements' with our Prevention and Protection activities. In their letter to WSCC it states the inspectors saw a real commitment to making further improvements and they could see an accelerated pace with the improvement work over the past few months, mitigating the risk to public safety.

Children's Services continues on its improvement 'Children First' programme. A good appointment for a Director of Children's Services was made last month.

We await the Chancellor's Budget statement, a long term sustainable plan for Adult Social Care continues to be a priority for all authorities, Counties and Unitaries, with Adult Social Care responsibilities.

District Councillor Blackall reported that:

He congratulated Paul Marshall on becoming a County Councillor and Leader of WSCC. HDC are finalising their budget in the coming week and are hoping that there will be investments in roads maintenance.

MP Andrew Griffith had visited Ashington during his election campaign and MP Jeremy Quin (Horsham) had been appointed as Minister for MOD Procurement. John Blackall is hoping for strong support from both MP's to challenge the Govt. on housing numbers for the District and for the A27 upgrade scheme as the District needs investment in infrastructure.

HDC had recently appointed consultants to audit the work of the Planning Compliance department at HDC and had agreed that additional resources are needed, alongside more emphasis on following up on planning permission conditions and subsequent enforcement action.

With regard to the Local Plan Review and the possible additional 600 homes for Ashington – nothing has been agreed at HDC. There are lots of discussions to be had as to where homes are best located. It is not a done deal.

Report from Sussex Police

Neighbourhood Policing is going from strength to strength. The Sussex Police element of Council Tax is increasing and this will increase the number of Police to 296 PCSOs, 250 PCs and 50 specialist staff. PCSOs will concentrate on neighbourhood policing and there will be an allocated PCSO to each area. PCSO Marimba is the officer for Ashington and will be making contact with the Parish Council shortly. He is looking to become a PC in due course and is keen to engage with residents. If there is anything that the PCSO can't deal with then it will be transferred to the appropriate resource.

Sussex Police will be making more use of Criminal Behaviour Orders which cover issues such as anti-social behaviour (ASB). Offenders will be dealt with by a warning, official CBO notice, arrest and then court. Punishments vary but can include bans from certain locations.

There is a dedicated Sergeant and 2 x PC's focussing on youth crime & ASB.
Sussex Police will be holding a Community drop-in event in the near future.

Public Adjournment

Questions were invited from Councillors & members of the public:

1. The Clerk reported to the Sussex Police representative that the village has suffered for many years with 'drifting' at the 2 northern roundabouts. It had been reported to the HDC/Sussex Police Joint Action Group but the Parish Council were keen for the Police to take enforcement action – this would be followed up by Sussex Police.
2. A resident asked Paul Marshall whether care services for the elderly would be improving. He stated that WSCC are undertaking a large amount of work to improve services, particularly around helping people remain in their own homes for longer ie accessing care but maintaining their independence.

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

Signed Dated