

MINUTES OF THE NORTHCHAPEL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held on Thursday 28th April 2022

At Northchapel Village Hall at 7.30pm

Present from the Parish Council: Mr Alex Baker, Miss Laura Green, Mrs Sharon Holden Mr John Sochovsky and Mr Ed Warren

Also present: No members of the public
Mrs Helen Cruikshank (Clerk)
District Councillor Gareth Evans
County Councillor Janet Duncton

The Chairman welcomed all to the 2022 Annual Parish Meeting (APM).

- 1. Apologies for absence:** Parish Councillors Mr Robert Moss, Mrs Amanda Harman, Mr Melvin Greet and Mrs Daphne Trussler
Mrs Jane Dadswell – Northchapel Village Hall Management Committee
Mrs Debbie Rumbold – Northchapel & Ebernoe Parish News
Mr Clifford Bell – Northchapel PCC
Mr Willie Poste
Mrs Lynda Bell

2. Minutes of the 2019 Annual Parish Meeting: The minutes of the 2019 Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 15th April were approved and signed as a correct record.

3. Parish Council's Chairman's report: Sharon Holden

Welcome everyone, it's very good to see you all and believe it or not, this is the first Annual Parish Meeting for three years! To keep things as brief as possible, I'm just going to look back over the last twelve months. After the various lockdowns and virtual meetings, we were relieved to return to face-to-face meetings in May 2021. The village certainly pulled together during the pandemic and although it was a terrible time, it did feel like the community became closer.

Lynda Bell stepped down as my Vice-Chair, huge thanks go to Lynda for showing me the ropes in what became very difficult times for all councillors. Lynda was replaced by Laura Green and we continued to meet via zoom throughout the pandemic, something I don't really like. I much prefer to see my fellow councillors in the flesh as it were. Rarely do we get members of the public to our meetings but you are always very welcome. Alex Baker has taken on the role of Chairman of our Planning Committee which meets on a Saturday morning at the Church where required. We continue to support many local organisations giving grants or donations to St Michaels Church, Northchapel Primary School, Little Oaks Pre-School, Fruit & Flower Show, Village Hall, Haslemere Citizen Advice Bureau, Petworth Cottage Hospital, Kent, Surrey and Sussex Air Ambulance and Petworth over 60's. We continue to maintain the village and in particular the village green with fortnightly grass cutting from April to October. Many thanks to Laura who ensures this is done well. We also continue to organise and pay for the grass cutting in the Churchyard. The play area acquired a new Roundabout and many of you no doubt donated towards this, we are constantly looking at ways to improve the area for our youngsters. Another great success this year is The Youth Club for those aged 9-15, this has been pulled together by Ed Warren and his band of willing volunteers who have worked tirelessly to get this up and running. Thanks to them all and I look forward to watching this go from strength to strength. We had several issues with highways and flooding which has all been dealt with by John Sochovsky and Simon Grensted and my thanks go to them for taking this forward and getting something done.

Thanks to CDC for the free trees and for the grant for the Queens Platinum Jubilee later this year which is being put towards purchasing a Platinum Jubilee bench. Thanks to our District and County Councillors who attend as many meetings as they can and who are always at the ends of an email ready to help. Thank you to Willie who continues to oversee the allotments. Huge thanks must go to our hardworking and efficient Clerk, Helen who continues to be a great asset not only to myself as chair but to all council members.

4. Youth Club report: Ed Warren

Ed reported that Northchapel Youth Club was opened by Dot Beglin on Tuesday 8th March 2022. We have a fantastic set of volunteers led by Laura Green. Huge thanks must go to John Lewry at Sussex Clubs for Young Persons his invaluable advice and support in setting up the Club. Thank you to the Village Hall Committee for letting us use the hall as the venue and to everyone who has donated items and money. We do need more volunteers and hope to do some fundraising at the village fete. We have had a letter from Gillian Keegan congratulating us on setting up the club which was very much appreciated.

Northchapel Youth Club meets on Tuesday evenings, 7-8.30pm (during the West Sussex term time) for 9–15-year-olds and costs £1 per week. There are a variety of activities, cooking, trying the guitar, drama workshops and we are constantly looking for people within the parish who have a speciality who might like to come along and show and share their talent.

5. Churchyard report: Clifford Bell (read by Helen Cruikshank in his absence)

The church building has been kept open and functional since the end of restrictions under the national public health regulations. In particular the building has been opened up most days during daylight hours for prayer and visitors.

A major event has been the installation of new decorative glazed doors to the entrance with the original oak door renovated and re-hung at the entrance to the south porch. This has benefitted the church by introducing more light and making the porch secure. The works were entirely funded by private donation.

Some issues have arisen with water leaking through the north roof although Stemp the builder quickly resolved this with repairs to a flashing and parapet.

The heating system has been less reliable and required works to renew electrics to the boiler and a timer. Unfortunately, a fault has arisen on the electrical spur to the radiator by the main door thus the circulatory fan does not function. There is now only one of four radiators with a working fan.

The lightning conductor system was checked and certified, as were the fire extinguishers. This routine but obligatory checks for reasons of insurance cost the church around £400 annually

The works required under the quinquennial report have not progressed pending funding. This is concerning as the legacy of disrepair will continue to increase and will prove more costly.

The churchyard has been the subject of regular attention by monthly work parties and also the employment of a contractor for grass cutting. The Parish Council funds the latter and it is of immense help in keeping the grounds serviceable. During the winter two storms affected the area causing a rotted lime tree to fall across two gravestones fortunately without much damage. The Parish council funded a contractor to remove the stump.

The car park has been maintained too with grass cut edges tidied and fallen timber removed. Volunteer workers have finished repairs to the boundary wall. However, it is worth mentioning that occasionally cars of unknown persons are left for long periods without the consent of the church. This takes up precious parking space essential for accommodating church worshippers.

The notice board at the entrance has been renovated with volunteer help and private funding. To reiterate St Michael's PCC is very thankful for the support of the parish council in keeping the churchyard maintained.

In fact, it looks splendid at the moment after a generous grass cut. Additionally, the extra help with the tree damage resulting from the recent storms has been greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Sharon Holden added that there was currently no vicar however there was a search for a new one. The PCC is set up and there is a Church Warden. It is hoped more will sign up to the PCC electoral roll.

6. School report

There was no School report. Laura Green said numbers are currently low in the main school but the pre-school is booming so it is hoped these children will stay so pupil numbers will be boosted. Laura added that if there were Ukrainian families housed locally who needed school places that Northchapel should be looked at as there are people willing to help with transport.

7. Village Hall report: Jane Dadswell (read by Helen Cruikshank in her absence)

As for every other village hall, it has been another difficult year. When the government relaxed restrictions in April 2021 we opened the hall for Pilates and Assistance dogs training, ensuring that government guidelines were followed. In July restrictions were lifted and we able to host larger social events, although these have not returned to pre-pandemic levels. The Lunch Club was one of our first social events and as ever was a great success and much appreciated by the many who attended, my thanks to all those who give their time to make it all happen.

Although I don't yet have the final figures, I believe the hall will be in deficit for the financial year.

However, this excludes Government grants and a donation from the Parish Council, the latter to help finance a new cooker. The lottery has again been the vital income generator this year, and following a very successful promotion of the lottery in the now widely circulated Parish Magazine, this should continue to be the case. So financially, despite the pandemic, we are on a sound footing.

We continue to ensure that the hall is kept in good order and that any maintenance required is carried out promptly. Also, to comply with our insurance requirements, we have just had the hall electrically tested throughout with no problems found.

8. Sports Club: Laura Green (Secretary)

Laura reported that stoolball and football started last summer after Covid. Stoolball has less games this year but starts the week after next. Scarifying has been carried out to improve the state of the pitch and Jonathan Wright from Lurgashall is due to visit to give advice on what can be done on a regular basis to keep on top of it. The grass cutting is looking great. With regard the MUGA, fundraising is still ongoing with £21,000 in the pot boosted by Covid grants. There will be another breakfast fundraiser to get it back in people's minds. We have applied for further grants and are hoping to extend the planning permission window. Thank you to the Parish Council for their support.

9. Parish News: Debbie Rumbold (read by Helen Cruikshank in her absence)

I have been asked to give a brief summary on the progress the Northchapel and Ebernoe magazine during the last year. As you are all aware, when I took the magazine on I had very little experience of working on this kind of project. Unintentionally at the beginning I upset a few people by either printing the wrong details or missing them out altogether. It has certainly been a learning curve and hopefully things are on track now.

The feedback that I have received has been mixed. I have had quite a few complaints about changes made, especially about the front cover where people wanted to keep the old map. There has also been some positive feedback but this is mainly from the 'team' behind the magazine. I did try to get feedback from the readers but only received 5 out of 500 replies!!

The magazine has really picked up over the last few months and I now receive a variety of articles from all kinds of sources to be included. Along with these articles we have also managed to increase the number of advertisers so in my opinion the balance has been maintained.

The one thing that I am often asked is can these submissions be in colour. At the present time I do not think we have the budget to be able to do this. Maybe going forward with the increase in advertisers we may be able to increase the colour pages.

One thing that I have noticed is that we seem to have a wider spread of readers and I have been contacted by people from Chiddingfold, Wisborough Green, Fittleworth, Petworth and Lurgashall, all wanting to put articles in. Where I can I will include anything, I am sent, however sometimes I have to refuse due to the content or size of the piece.

Going forward I would like to get more input from local groups, we are slowly getting more interest but it would be good to get a wider section of interests represented. It would be great if we could encourage local businesses to write an article about themselves, or local historians to give us some insight as to how our area used to be. I would also love to get budding writers to submit short stories that could be included, the article from the Chimney Sweep appears to be very popular.

10. District Councillor report: Mr Gareth Evans

Local Updates

Tribute to Cllr David Ribbons (Plaistow and Ifold Parish Councillor)

My most important update this month is to pay tribute to the extraordinary contribution of David. 27 years as a councillor for his Parish is an incredible and generous contribution to the community. My heartfelt thanks and admiration for everything he has done for this community. His knowledge and wise counsel will be missed by all. I particularly appreciated his kindness when I first took on the role of District Cllr. I hope he will now enjoy his free time and I cannot express my gratitude for his selfless service all these years.

Land West of Guildford Road Loxwood West Sussex

Thank you to the many residents that have written to me regarding the situation with the shop. I also share your concerns regarding this and have been very involved in this application since it first got approval back in the summer of 2020 as I too want to ensure that Loxwood is left without a shop. I have also been in regular contact with the planning officer and the last report I had from Jo Bell was this application could not proceed until they found a solution to the Water Neutrality issue.

Last week I wrote to Jo Bell and the CEO asking for her to a resolution to this issue as I have been receiving so many emails from residents who are rightly concerned about this matter. The CEO asked Fjola Stevens (Divisional Manager for Planning) to provide an urgent update on this and my understanding is that a solution to the water neutrality issue for this application is close to being resolved but that there remain some other issues to resolve. Fjola and Jo will be writing to every resident who has written to me with a full update. I have asked those residents to let me know if they do not receive a response.

Townfield Application, Kirdford – I have been liaising with the officer responsible for this application to ascertain which way determination will fall. The Water Neutrality issues are still holding this application up. The last update I had from the planning officer confirmed that the applicant had not resolved the water neutrality issue and the officer was due to meet Jo Bell in order to work out how to proceed. I will update as I have further information.

21/02849/FUL-Land South West of Willets way

A couple of residents have raised concerns over the proposed solution to the Water Neutrality issue by sinking five 3000-gallon tanks on site with absolutely no detail as to how they will work. There are obvious concerns as to the noise element to operate these. I have therefore written to the planning officer requesting more scrutiny into this is carried out. I have also written to request that they visit the site prior to determination

Hyde Housing – Several residents have approached over concerns with the communication process and the quality of the housing stock. I am working with the Cabinet Member and CDC to apply pressure on Hyde over these issues. I have also asked a CDC officer to visit some of residents who have raised significant concerns and these visits will take place in the coming weeks. Last month I asked SLT the following question:

“In asking this request I would like to say that I am by no means directing criticism at the portfolio holder for social housing and I have been grateful for all Cllr Sutton has done to try and help me but the issues with Hyde with regards to extremely poor communication, unresolved issues, poor treatment of their tenants and poor housing stock with serious issues of mould continue and are having an impact on our resident’s mental health and well-being. I have lost count of the number of residents who are contacting me on this issue and it is not just Loxwood Ward or Chichester District wide but on talking to residents and a cursory review of sites such as trust pilot it would appear this is a national issue. Therefore, will the CEO at Chichester District council write to the relevant Government department to demand that Hyde is held accountable for these ongoing issues and get this sorted once and for all?”

I have since had communication from Louise Rudziak who is the Director of Housing and Communities who has agreed to investigate the growing issues not just in this Ward but across the district.

Lagoon 3 – the next progress review meeting between parish councils, CDC and EA took place on 14th April at 10.00am. The owner has failed to meet the deadline for clearing the site and had not informed CDCs legal department of how they intend to do this so legal action is being investigated.

Loxwood Claypit – This is no longer able to go to the WSCC Planning Committee meeting on the 26th April as previously advised and we have now been told to expect it to go to the 18th May planning committee. I plan to attend this and will update with further information as I know more.

Fracking – Last month at the Wisborough Green Parish Council I was asked the following question:

In view of the government’s moratorium on fracking, the Chairman was interested to know if CDC had any change in policy

I received the following reply:

“As fracking is a minerals operation, planning control falls to the County Council, and any necessary planning application would be submitted to that authority to consider. CDC would likely be a consultee if within our district, however on previous applications we have responded that we do not have the necessary specialist technical expertise in our Environmental Strategy Unit to make comment on such applications. There is no specific District Council policy in relation to fracking.

The best contact at WSCC for the Parish would be James Neave - james.neave@westsussex.gov.uk”

Chichester District Updates

£150 energy bills rebate 2022

The Chancellor announced on 3 February 2022 that council tax payers in properties in tax bands A to D will receive a one-off payment of £150 to support households with rising energy bills. It was also confirmed that this rebate will not need to be repaid. Good progress has been made on the preparations for administering the energy rebate scheme and CDC will be starting this work in early April. CDC will be prioritising those paying their council tax by direct debit followed shortly thereafter with those not paying by direct debit and opening up the Discretionary Energy Rebate scheme. Residents who pay their council tax by direct debit will receive their £150 Energy Payment quicker.

Water Neutrality

On 16 March 2022 Natural England (NE) published updated advice on Water Quality and Nutrient Neutrality for 27 protected Habitat Sites, including the Solent. The advice issued by NE amends the methodology used to calculate whether a proposed development would be nutrient neutral.

<https://www.chichester.gov.uk/nutrientneutrality>

CIL Spending Plan

Projects in the published IBP CIL Spending Plan have been approved by Full Council in principle (as at that stage the full details of a project are not normally known).

Before CIL money is handed to infrastructure providers the following procedures take place in accordance with the governance arrangements set out in paragraphs 41-46 of the S106 and CIL protocol.

https://www.chichester.gov.uk/media/36358/Section-106-and-CILProtocol/doc/S106_and_CIL_Protocol_v4.docx

The full details about a project are requested once a project on the CIL Spending Plan for the current year is reached and sufficient CIL is available to cover their costs. At that point the infrastructure provider is asked to complete and return detailed pro-forma. The information submitted is checked and either returned with a request for more information, or if satisfactory is used to draft a report to either the Director of Planning (projects less than £50,000), Cabinet (projects between £50,000 - £100,000) or Council (Projects over £100,000) for drawdown of actual CIL Spend.

Once the spend is approved the completed pro-forma is attached to the legal agreement and the information in the pro-forma is used at the quarterly S106/CIL monitoring meetings to ensure that the milestones are met.

DEFRA Consultation on new environmental targets:

DEFRA is currently consulting on long-term targets as proposed by the Environment Act 2021. The consultation, which closes 11 May 2022, is seeking views on a number of new targets (biodiversity on land, biodiversity in the sea, water quality and availability, woodland cover, resource efficiency and waste reduction and air quality). From the Environmental Protection Team's point of view the relevant proposal is to introduce an air quality target for fine particulate known as PM2.5 and to reduce the population's exposure to PM2.5 by 35% by 2040. It is not yet clear how these targets will impact on the council's duties under Local Air Quality Management. The council will be party to a joint response to the consultation from the pan-Sussex local authority air quality group called Sussex-air.

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/natural-environment-policy/consultation-on-environmental-targets/>

Surgery Dates

My next round of District Councillor Surgery dates are as follows:

Sat 30th April (12-2pm) The Half Moon, Northchapel

Sat 9th May (11-1pm) Plaistow Stores, Plaistow

Sat 21st May (12-2pm) The Stag Inn, Balls Cross

Sat 11th June (11-1pm) Old Mill Cafe, Wisborough Green

Sat 18th June (12-2pm) The Onslow Arms, Loxwood

Should these dates not be suitable I am always happy to visit residents in person or arrange a call/zoom conversation. I can be contacted by phone 07958918056 or by email gbevans@chichester.gov.uk

11. County Councillors report: Mrs Janet Duncton

Some 3 to 4 years ago we had a wakeup call from OFSTED that we were not performing as we should be for our Children's Services. This caused quite a shake-up at the time and that has worked in our favour together with working closely with the Commissioner that was tasked to guide us John Macoughlin Chief Executive of Hampshire County Council. On top of the Mcloughlin new Leader put in a new Cabinet member Jacquie Russell and my goodness what a choice this was.

She has worked with the Commissioner and anyone else that we need input from, this also included new social workers who willingly trained in what we needed to achieve, a new Director of Children's Services and I can't praise her work enough.

Together as a team they have achieved what I believe is the only County/Unitary Council in the Country has struggled to achieve when they also have had Children's Services in special needs.

The achievement is that DEFRA has decided on advice from our commissioner that West Sussex Children's Services has improved to the extent that they will not be taken to Trust status which is excellent news. If you go to Trust status you lose control but you still pay for the Service. Something everyone can be proud of but believe me we still have work to do and we will not stop improving. By the next report to you I should possibly know what the outcome is of our next OFSTED inspection and all are feeling hopeful but of course knowing it isn't the end of the road.

As County Councillor I have been pushing hard for my Parish's to get the road improvements many want, mainly in surfacing and of course the never-ending Potholes. It is rather like treading in treacle but slowly, slowly I do get some achievements and I won't stop pushing.

I think I can now boast that all the 6 Primary Schools in my division have achieved Good from their OFSTED report. Now some may say only good, believe me the rules changed somewhat and to get Good is a very high standard nowadays.

The Fire & Rescue Service is about to build its new Fire Station at Broadbridge Heath for Horsham. This new facility will not only become a fantastic Station for West Sussex but it will include training facilities that can be hired by any other Fire and Rescue service from anyone who wants or needs it.

Trading Standards have had a busy time not only trying to make people aware of Scams etc but finding the stores who have illicit tobacco products for sale, usually well-hidden but sniffer dogs find the bounty and we have had several prosecutions.

I need to also mention with regards to Fire & Rescue some 3 years ago when her Majesty's Inspectorate judged that we need improvements, it wasn't for the way Fire or Road accidents were dealt with it was because we were way behind with our community work mainly in visiting vulnerable people and advising on what could be done to help them in their own homes. I am glad to say this is now caught up with virtually no outstanding community work. Another fine achievement.

My report may appear glowing and yes, I am telling you the good things. On the other hand, we have a continuous stream of work in one Service or the other, if we didn't, I wouldn't be able to tell you how much it has improved, but we are aware that some things, like the famous Potholes take longer than others and please be assured that our Scrutiny Committees look at these things in depth and make recommendations to the Cabinet and sometimes those decisions have to go to full Council. You can never stand still.

We passed the West Sussex Transport Plan 2022 to 2026. There are some good intentions in this plan but I want to see them become fact. I did make a plea for Services in the Rural villages but we shall have to see on that one.

Lastly but not least. I must make mention of the Ukraine situation.

You cannot believe the community work that is taking place right now to try and alleviate some of the plight of the Ukraine refugees. This is before any Government directive which will come but so that you know so many are working all hours so hard to raise items wanted for Ukraine refugees and many are already offering accommodation when we know the numbers we are asked to take. Some are already here because of relatives and I know the gentleman who has worked tirelessly with us all doing our bit for the Petworth Refugee support on Facebook. Of course, financial contributions are welcome but at the Petworth collection point in some Barns between Lodsworth and Lurgashall you have to see to believe the generosity of people from as far away as Dorking and Eastbourne with more local residents giving up their time to sort, pack and label the boxes which we eventually load into lorries 5 so far and counting. It won't stop for some time yet I fear.

Should anyone want to offer accommodation the e-mail at County is Ukrainesupport@westsussex.gov.uk. I thank all now who have put in so much time and effort and that includes some big stores who have sent brand new clothing so that when the refugees arrive, they can go to the Barns and choose what they need.

12. Public Questions

The Village Shop is on the up! Good news! Laura Green thanked Sharon Holden for all her hard work as Chair of Northchapel Parish Council.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm. The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and welcomed all to stay for refreshments.

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