

MINUTES OF THE LURGASHALL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL ON WEDNESDAY 17TH MAY 2023

From the Parish Council: Mrs Jane Landstrom, Mrs Anthea Martin-Jenkins (Chair) and Mr Andrew Loughan

Also present: Eight members of the Public

The Chair of the Parish Council opened the meeting at 7.30pm and welcomed everyone to Lurgashall's Annual Parish Meeting 2023.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

District Councillor and Parish Councillor Mrs Brett Burkhart
District Councillor Mrs Ellie Newbery
Mr Peter Worrall (Lurgashall Village Shop Committee)
Mrs Joanne Vaughan (Chair of the L.R.A)
Ms Deborah Coggin (Headteacher of Northchapel Primary School)
Parish Councillor Mr Neil Jowett
Parish Councillor Dr Andy Tate

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes from the last Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 5th April 2022 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

PARISH COUNCIL CHAIR'S REPORT – Anthea Martin-Jenkins

A very warm welcome to our Annual Parish Meeting and it's very good to see you all here this evening.

It's been an unremarkable year for us. We began our year by co-opting Andrew Loughan last May and he is a good addition to the team.

As you know that there was no election earlier this month for the Parish Council. This was due to only seven candidates being nominated, instead of the required nine or more. This resulted in all seven being declared, Adrian Stainton being a welcome new addition. Sadly, Vanessa Semmens and Ray Cooper decided not to stand for re-election but more of that later. We currently have two vacancies and are urgently looking for volunteers to fill these places.

Unfortunately, Peter Wilding was not re-elected as our District Councillor but Brett Burkhart, who also sits on the Parish Council has been. Peter did some great work on our behalf, especially with contentious planning issues so I'd like to say a big 'thank you' to him for his efforts and to welcome Brett. I'm sure she will endeavour to help us when needed.

Planning

Our Planning Committee has commented on 22 applications compared with 27 the year before. Some of these have been quite complex and have required us to make our observations known to the planners at Chichester to try to ensure that our Parish remains unspoilt by unsuitable development.

Highways

The problem with the condition of the surface of the highway in Jobsons Lane was the most serious problem we tackled. Although we had been trying to get the County Council to repair certain sections of the lane for three years, the condition deteriorated badly over the winter months. In spite of us saying that the road was

dangerous and had become a safety issue, nothing was done until April. However, much of the road has now been patched and is much safer – almost the rural equivalent of the M1!

Allotments

The Allotments are fully let once again and Jane Landstrom is to be congratulated for her efforts in achieving this and also ensuring that the area is maintained in good order.

Playground

The Playground is well-used but most of the equipment in it is reaching the end of its days so we shall have to start thinking about replacing it. This will probably have to be done on a gradual basis, due to cost, unless we can get a lottery grant or similar.

Village Green

Our thanks to the Cricket Club for continuing to maintain the Village Green, which always looks the part, especially in the summer months.

Very sadly, the big chestnut tree, which has been living on borrowed time, is going to have to be felled for safety reasons and Leconfield Estate have applied for planning permission to do this. We're hoping to persuade the Estate to re-plant with either a lime tree or an oak.

The Parish Noticeboard by the bus stop has become dilapidated and this will be renewed during the summer months, the work being carried out by the grandson of one of our Parishioners.

As you may have noticed, we replaced the long-departed flagpole on the Pavilion in the nick of time for the Coronation and had the Union and Coronation flags flying on that special day.

Last month, we held a Litter Clearance Day and a large amount of debris was collected from the lanes. We're hoping to carry out this on a six-monthly basis in future and hope to get more volunteers to help with this initiative.

Finance

The Council's finances are in good shape and there is a healthy reserve in case of emergencies. As a result, we have not increased the Precept this year. During the last twelve months, in addition to the day-to-day expenses, we have given grants to the Village Shop, the Cricket Club, the Lurgashall Recreation Association, Village Hall and to the Parochial Church Council towards the costs of maintaining the Churchyard.

We have also provided two skips to enable residents to dispose of rubbish and will be increasing this facility with an extra skip next month.

We also funded the urgent repairs to the War Memorial.

Finally

My thanks to our Janet Duncton, our County Councillor, and to my fellow Parish Councillors for giving their time for the benefit of the Parish and to Helen Cruikshank, our Clerk, who is extremely efficient and works so hard on our behalf.

Finally, a very special 'thank you' to Ray Cooper who has worked tirelessly as a Councillor for nearly thirty years, doing a spell as Chairman and as a District Councillor. He has, in his quiet way, fixed numerous problems over the years and been a very-much respected member of the Council and he will be much missed.

VILLAGE HALL REPORT – Ray Cooper

Ray Cooper reminded everyone of the events and regular bookings at the Village Hall; film nights, monthly lunches, afternoon teas, 3 exercise classes, music nights, table tennis (adults and children's sessions), talks

and training sessions plus parties, cycle stops, weddings and quiz and bingo nights. All organisations have used the hall for meetings and/or events. The archive room is open twice a week. He gave thanks to Stephen Meyer for running the 50:50 club which is still going well. A Loop system was installed in the hall in January.

Over the last 2 months, the Village Hall has been used 45 times; on average 5 or 6 times a week which is good. During the winter months, the hall was opened as a “warm space” but no-one turned up so it appears there is no need. However, the Village Hall is here for you to use.

CHURCH REPORT – Elizabeth Clark (Church Warden)

Elizabeth Clark thanked the Parish Council for their generous contribution to the maintenance of the churchyard. She gave thanks also to those who help with the mowing. We are still in an Interregnum and have had no applicants after the first round so are now looking to put an advert in Church Times. As of last night, we finally got Friends of St Laurence’s up and running. The idea is to push the initiative to support the surrounds rather than the church and for parishioners to donate in any way they can. People need to step up and realise how vulnerable the church in Lurgashall is right now and start to appreciate it. We persevere, it is not easy but we will keep fighting.

The Chair thanked both Elizabeth Clark and Amanda Worrel, as Church Wardens for all their hard work, time and effort. It is good to hear that the services are covered until the new year.

NORTHCHAPEL PRIMARY SCHOOL - Written by Deborah Coggin (Headteacher), read out by the Clerk

Your community primary school overview and successes:

Northchapel has been on a journey of change since the pandemic. Ofsted inspected us in 2022, we remained a ‘Good’ School, with some areas to work on. Staff and governors have worked tirelessly over the past year to implement these changes with the advice from the local authority. Through our journey, we have worked closely with a small school federation in Kent, ‘Aspire Federation’ and Executive Headteacher Emma Hinkley. The area we have focused on with them was to improve our curriculum content to cover the necessary change to 3-year cohorts in a class. Other areas have included Phonics training for all staff and focusing on our SEND offer to parents and the adaptation of our curriculum for all children to be successful and make good progress in their learning. We expect Ofsted to return soon to inspect the recommended changes and improvements.

Since September 2022, we have seen a number a changes to staffing, with 3 new teachers being brought in to drive change and improvements in the teaching and learning. They have settled well and are working hard to improve outcomes and make the school a great place to come and learn.

Nationally, there has been a decline in numbers of children attending maintained primary schools, and there is nowhere that has felt it as hard, as Northchapel Primary. We have recently seen a progressive decline in numbers attending the school, with very few, new families attracted to living in the area. This is an area of concern for all of the schools in the Rother Valley locality, but Northchapel has been hit the hardest, along with Stedham Primary. However, we are pleased to report that over the last year and next year our numbers of intake in reception are on the increase. We have had 9 new starters in 22/23, rising to an expected 13 or 14 in 23/24. We hope to maintain these intakes over the coming year to increase numbers.

Our amazing Parents & Teachers Association (PTA), who have worked diligently and alongside the villagers of Northchapel to raise a good amount. In September last year, they donated £4000 to the school, alongside the Parish Council to make urgent repairs to the outdoor classroom, install new raised beds for our keen gardeners, Forest School, Pantomime Travel and a trip to the London museums, Natural History and Science Museum for the whole school in February 2023.

We continue to develop a strong ethos of enjoyment for reading and our achievement in reading outcomes meets National standards. Our Book Week focus this year was based on the author Emily Gravett and we took part in a clean-up of the village and Little Woods as part of our focus on the book ‘Tidy’. We had a fabulous dress up day for characters from books written or illustrated by Emily Gravett on the last day of term in February.

At the end of the spring term, the children who have music lessons, participate in the choir and years 4-6 performed in the spring concert, arranged by our very own music specialist, Anneli James.

The children were also proud to participate in the celebrations of the King's Coronation last week, cakes and fruit were provided by the PTA and the children all came together with Little Oaks Pre-school, to sing songs. We even performed our own Coronation Carol to the parents at the end of the day.

Thank you to a local community trust fund we have been able to reinstate our Emotional Literacy Support Assistant for a year. We will be looking for external funds to ensure that we are still able to offer this support to the children and families. As part of our therapeutic approach to behaviour and wellbeing, we have introduced 2 cocker spaniels, Olive and Ivy to the school, Miss Coggin's dogs. They have provided a beneficial support to children to help calm and soothe, bring interest and enjoyment and have also aided the wellbeing of staff around the school. A soothing pat, lick and cuddle cheers everyone up! Children have also overcome fears of dogs. We hope to introduce more animals to the school in the future as the benefits are so worth it.

Community projects:

- Carol Concerts for the senior citizens of Northchapel village Christmas dinner.
- Choir performed at the 9 Lessons & Carol service at St. Michael's Church.
- Scrub and Grub (PTA) event to highlight the importance of raising money for the children's residential to Oxford (Y5&6) and Polaris Survival Camp (Y4).
- Hosting a Mother and Baby group on Friday mornings in the school hall. This has been open since Easter.
- Working with South Coast Sports to provide holiday clubs at the school for disadvantaged pupils and for holiday childcare purposes.
- Community swimming and use of the pool has been able to continue, thanks to community volunteers who help to maintain the pool and run sessions.
- Working with the village to run events for the whole community, such as, the Village Fair.
- Regular services at St Michael's Church, promoting the Christian community and educating children to appreciate and understand the annual cycle of religious observance and festivals.
- Working with the local allotment to raise awareness of living a healthy lifestyle through gardening club.
- The list goes on...

Challenges

- Finances impacted by budgets cut by the government over the past 4 years. Increasing staff wages rising and lower numbers of children attending the school all impact and limit resources.
- Recruitment and retention are impacting our local rural schools significantly currently.
- Building condition – the school is in need of urgent repairs to the roof, drains and redecoration throughout. This will be a focus of a community project over the coming years.

Little Oaks Pre-school

The pre-school has successfully risen from previous challenges of pupil numbers and being financially viable. Good advertising and the loss of other local pre-schools has helped raise the profile and numbers. Sharon Hill, the pre-school lead, has expanded her team considerably over the past year. Our aim is to market for new pupils for next year, with a large number of the children moving on to Primary School in September. The pre-school children have all participated in some great events over the past year. 'Susie Song time' visited regularly to inspire singing and dancing. Little Street visited to give the children a fantastic role play session. Recently they were visited by local farmer Paul Gibbs who brought a lamb to the school for a hands-on session for the children.

VILLAGE SHOP REPORT

The Clerk said as parishioners are aware, Tanya, the new part-time manager has been appointed and all seems to be working out well. Any questions which anyone may have in respect of the village shop, please refer to the LVS Management team.

L.R.A REPORT – Miles Fairston

Miles Fairston said he was very pleased to give a report from the L.R.A. The Jubilee Field costs £2,500 - 3,000 per year to maintain and insure with grants helping to fund this from the Fete, Parish Council and Cricket Club. There are currently 200 members and the L.R.A is continually fundraising including an annual Quiz Night at the Village Hall. Over the past year, the storage containers have been in action, the cricket net has been repaired and is back in use and there are two new FA standard goals on wheels so they can easily be moved about. Lots of families are using the field, as well as dog walkers, runners and the L.R.A is looking into the possibility of pétanque or bowls and an outdoor table tennis table. A SDNP grant will be used to plant two small areas of wild floral meadows. The field was used 40-50 days last year for parking on cricket match days, weddings and funerals. It is the intention to open it up every weekend from Easter to September to help ease parking on the green.

CRICKET CLUB REPORT – Malcolm Caird (Treasurer)

Malcolm Caird reported that Lurgashall has had a Cricket Club since 1862. In recent times although there has been no Lurgashall team, cricket is still being played. Grayswood 2nd, 3rd and 4th XI's will play this season along with the Grayswood Juniors and the Chiddingfold Youth team. Sundays will once again feature a number of teams, such as the Hammer Bottom Butsers, who have played here for a number of years. These are good events for the village pub and shop.

We continue to keep the cricket square in excellent condition. Thanks to those who maintain the square, mow the outfield and mark the boundary. It costs a lot to run the cricket club; maintenance of the green and pavilion plus insurance. These costs are covered by match fees and sponsorship. It would be wonderful to get a village team together once again as there are some keen players and it is hoped some of the younger adults in the village will continue the club.

FETE REPORT – Neil Harding

The 2022 Fete was a huge success with record takings, sun, smiles and crowds bigger than ever. Neil gave thanks to Mike Pavia and said his absence is felt at every meeting. The fete's gross takings in 2022 were £20,000 with a £13,000 surplus. There were lots of costs post fete which needed paying for; refurbishment of equipment and the storage containers. Six village institutions were given £500 each from the proceeds.

We are in a good position this year with card readers now available however costs are up and prices are continually rising. It is about everyone having fun and a community village atmosphere. The 2023 fete is on Saturday 3rd June; parking is being expanded and there will be no parking signs on the green itself to stop inconsiderate parking and to enable emergency access at all times. There is no train nor chairoplane this year but there is a new attraction – a Climbing wall. With regard any fete surplus this year, it is under discussion that potentially the Village Shop should have an increase in the share of proceeds.

VILLAGE LUNCH REPORT – Erica Meyer

The Village monthly lunch is an important part of village life and has been for the past 20 years. There are 22/23 people who attend regularly with a super team of volunteers who cook and help out. The event is very much appreciated by parishioners and very good value at £4 per person. Everyone is welcome and we would love to see more people.

LURGSHALL HORTICULTURAL CLUB REPORT – Jane Landstrom

The Club has 40 members. We recently had Gardener's Question Time by experts with 35 attendees. The Village Show is being held in August with programmes currently being printed. The Horticultural Club has a stall at the fete and a pre-Christmas wreath making event.

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT – sent in by District Councillor Ellie Newbery read out by the Clerk

Brett Burkhart and I are hugely honoured to be elected as District Councillors in the recent local elections and we look forward to supporting the Parish Council and having a close working relationship with you all. I work part time as a family solicitor and I am married with two young children (7 and 3 years old). I live in the heart of Fernhurst but owing to the above I spend quite a bit of time in the parks of Milland, Camelsdale and Lynchmere (Hammer). Brett lives in Lurgashall and is away this week but is keen to meet everyone soon.

District Council Elections

The District Council Elections were held on Thursday 4 May and is now Liberal Democrat led after 24 years of being Conservative led. The results were that 25 Liberal Democrat Councillors were elected, 5 Conservative Councillors, 4 Selsey Local Alliance Councillors and 2 Green Councillors. The Local Alliance and Greens are joining together to form the Opposition.

We are due to meet for our first Full Council Meeting on Wednesday 17 May when the Cabinet will be announced, along with Committees and Panel Committees.

Police

Clerks are being encouraged by the police to sign up for “Sussex Alerts” which is an email system to keep parishes informed on crimes that are being committed/on the rise in the area, including frauds and scams.

There is also funding available up to £5,000 from the Sussex Community Fund for youth diversion schemes, surveillance and community speedwatch campaigns. This funding closes this Friday (19 May) but reopens again in September.

Midhurst

SDNPA have published a press release with a working timeline of another 7 weeks until the road can safely reopen in Midhurst. The DC, SDPNA and WSCC are all paying 1/3 of costs in order to get on with sorting out the building as the insurance company refused to pay funds urgently. Idea is that they will be repaid from insurance monies in due course.

Meeting your District Councillors

Ellie will be in the following places if you would like to speak to her:

Saturday 20th May 10-12 Milland play park and café

Friday 9 June 10-12 Fernhurst Hub

Saturday 10th June 10-12 Camelsdale play park and tea room

If those times are inconvenient, I am happy to speak on the telephone or have a Zoom call or arrange another time to meet.

Our contact details:

Cllr Ellie Newbery, email enewbery@chichester.gov.uk or telephone 01428 656 941

Cllr Brett Burkhart, email bburkhart@chichester.gov.uk or telephone 07876594168

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT

There was no report.

PARISHIONERS FORUM

A member of the public asked whether any decent wood from the felling of the Horse Chestnut tree on the green could be used by her husband to make a bench. As the tree is on Leconfield Estates land, the parishioner was advised to contact the Head Forrester, Neil Humphries.

A member of the public enquired when the notice board would be refurbished as it states that it would be carried out in the spring. It is a mess and is letting down the green as the flagship of the village. Anthea Martin- Jenkins noted the comments and said there had been a delay but the refurbishment would now take place over the summer with a smart new notice board made by a local craftsman.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.45pm. She welcomed all to stay for refreshments.