

NUTHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting
held on Wednesday, 13th March 2019 at
St Andrews CofE School, Nuthurst
commencing at 7.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Cllr V Court (Chairman) Cllr O Hydes (OBE)
Cllr J Assassi Cllr J Mercer
Cllr J Chaytor Cllr T Nelson
Cllr G Dixon (Vice Chairman) Cllr S Turner
Cllr A Gaffney

District Councillor Toni Bradnum and seven members of the public were also in attendance.

APM001/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was **RESOLVED** that the apologies for absence from Cllr F Boulter & Cllr J McClean be **APPROVED**.

A Farewell to the Chairman, Val Court

Prior to APM commencing Cllr Gina Dixon, the Vice Chairman, made the following speech on behalf of the Parish Council:

‘I take great pride in making this speech on behalf of the parish councillors. I have known Val for a very long time – since we were girl guides in fact....

When Val joined the Parish Council over 29 years ago, when things were very different. It is quite difficult to imagine now that there were no emails, no websites – just the telephone. The clerk was male (quite usual then) and so were the bulk of the councillors; a lot were landowners too.

In the late 1990s Val found herself in the chair for a hugely contentious application for rights of way in Sedgwick and this hall was brimming with people who were keen to stand up and defend their belief.

There were shouts of abuse hurled to members of the Parish Council whose allegiance as landowners with rights of way over their land was put into question. It was quite frightening and, as a member of the public, I will always praise the way Val steadfastly ploughed through it with great courage and strength. But going to meetings was the only way you could keep up to date and voice your opinion. No social media, no emails.

I tried to speak to the clerk afterwards which was not easy in those days. However, when I managed to get through on the phone, I was told the information I requested was not available for the public and that was that.

In the year 2000 the Freedom of Information Act was introduced. Emails and websites were becoming commonplace making general communications easier.

Then in 2001 the Code of conduct order came in and that meant all Parish Councillors had to declare their interests, publicly. These changes proved a step too far as some Parish Councillors stood down, the clerk retired and the waive of change began.

Val embraced the changes that made the Parish Council more transparent and approachable, but she had to endure a deal of antagonism from some of the more 'set in their ways' councillors. However, a

new clerk launched the council's email address with a website and Nuthurst parish was finally being represented by a more balanced mixture of men and women.

The Localism Act in 2011 brought with it the neighbourhood plan and emails became the preferred way to communicate. The chair and councillors were often a target of personal and emotive flack via emails – but, I am glad to say, they waded their way through it to the eventual success of the hard and long fought plan.

A big highlight noting our chair's dedication came from Buckingham Palace inviting Val to the Queen's garden party in May 2016. Val's services to local communities such as SALC and the Parish Council were recognised and, along with local mayors and council dignitaries, Val saw the Queen, Prince Philip and many other members of the Royal Family. It was awesome, I know, because I was lucky enough to be her guest.

Val has overseen and been part of the updates and changes that have taken place in an impartial and a matriarchal manner, something that we are all very grateful for. To list the things that you have begun, overseen, taken care of etc would mean we'd be here all night. And I truly mean that...

Val, you have set an example that will always be remembered as the basis of the reformed Parish Council. We have been steered to do things in the proper manner and receive appropriate training. So, it's a very big Thank you from all of us as we wish you a quieter and more tranquil future with less emails as you move on.'

On behalf of the Parish Councillors, District Councillor Toni Bradnum presented the Chairman with a bouquet of flowers and a Dartington glass clock.

The Chairman thanked the District Councillor and Parish Councillors for the gifts and commented:

'A lot of water has gone under the bridge during the last 29 years, with the fortunate support of Councillors many issues have been dealt with, sadly some of the Councillors are no longer with us.

All efforts have been made to make the Parish Council successful and this is now recognised with the Parish Council having a good reputation.

I've always tried to be neutral, but you cannot always please everyone and I hope that over the last 29 years I've help make the Parish a great place to live.

I wish the Parish Council all the best in the future.'

APM002/19 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes from the Annual Parish Meeting held on 14th March 2018 be **APPROVED** as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman. All the matters arising from the meeting have been dealt with during the last twelve months.

APM003/19 'NUTHURST REMEMBERS' PRESENTATION BY PADDY BULLEN

Paddy Bullen explained that he was a Parish Tree Warden along with his wife, Penny Bullen and Cllr Jill Chaytor. Although supported by the Tree Council Tree Wardens do not have any statutory powers.

In late 2018 they attended a seminar at Seaford Town Council and it was noted that trees had been planted in Seaford to remember those who fell in WWI.

The proposal to plant a tree in each of the hamlets, to commemorate those who fell in both world wars, last year being the end of the first world war and this year being the 75th anniversary of D-Day, was discussed and when approached the Parish Council unanimously supported the project.

Contact has since been made with groups within each of the hamlets and the Nuthurst Society, Copsale Village Hall, MoGRA, Cricket Club and History Society have all offered overwhelming support.

Locations have now been identified in the hamlets and the names of the fallen have been taken from the church lychgate.

- Copsale - Copsale Hall
- Maplehurst - Site bounded by Copsale Road and Maplehurst Road
- Nuthurst - St Andrews Church
- Monks Gate – Verge of a private lane leading to Keystone Cottage
- Mannings Heath – Village Green

Of the 34 names who fell in WWI only 27 can be traced back to the parish at present and further details are being sought on those who fell in WWII.

An article will be published in the April edition of the Link, a brochure will be published giving details of the soldiers, sailors and airmen, and Cllr J Assassi is helping with a Facebook page for the project.

The overall budget is £1,000.00 and finances will be discussed at the next meeting, the project is self-funding and although the Parish Council fully support the project, they will not be providing the funds.

APM004/19 REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN ON PARISH COUNCIL BUSINESS 2018/2019

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Mrs Val Court, welcomed District Councillor Toni Bradnum and the members of the public to the Annual Parish Meeting. The Members present were introduced:

Cllr Val Court (Mannings Heath)
Cllr Owen Hydes (Mannings Heath)
Cllr Ann Gaffney (Monks Gate)
Cllr Jay Mercer (Monks Gate)
Cllr Tom Nelson (Monks Gate)
Cllr Jill Chaytor (Nuthurst)
Cllr Steve Turner (Copsale)
Cllr Gina Dixon - (Sedgwick)
Cllr Julka Assassi (Sedgwick)

Members not present:

Councillor Francis Boulter (Mannings Heath)
Councillor J McClean (Maplehurst)

The Chairman thanked the Councillors for their help and support over the last year and commented that thanks should also go to the Councillors families.

The Chairman also thanked District Councillor Toni Bradnum for her support, especially with planning issues, County Councillor Nigel Jupp, the Parish Tree Wardens Penny Bullen, Paddy Bullen and Cllr Jill Chaytor. The Clerk was thanked and presented with a bouquet of flowers.

The Parish Council have had another very busy and challenging year, especially with planning issues. Updates on the Neighbourhood Plan and Parish Plan are included later in the agenda.

Not all the Councillors have confirmed if they will be standing for re-election in May, however, the Chairman, Cllr G Dixon, Cllr F Boulter and Cllr A Gaffney will definitely be standing down.

Nomination packs are available from Horsham District Council and there will be an election if there are more than 11 nominations.

A brief description of a few of the matters that the Parish Council had dealt with during 2018/2019 are detailed below:

Planning

- The landowner has restocked the trees on the land north of Monks Gate and the Forestry Commissions will check the site in 2019.
- 75 new applications 2018/2019 - fallen from 97 2017/2018
- Village store granted planning permission for residential use
- A member of the public has mentioned safety issues with the public footpath since the access road in front of the store has been closed

Parish Assets

- New bus stop on the Brighton Road, Mannings Heath
- Green between Church Road & Lime Kiln Road receives an additional cut in June each year, financed by the Parish Council
- Noticeboard opposite village store will shortly be replaced
- Continue to clean bus shelters & village gateway signs
- Replaced the lighting column opposite MHVH (all the concrete lighting column in the Parish have now been replaced)
- Pole mounted light on the A281 (opposite Nuthurst Road) will be replaced 26th March
- May need to look into the pole mounted lights at a later date
- Receiving quotations to repair / refurbish the finger post at the end of Church Road
- Donated £150.00 to WSCC to replace the dead tree on the green in-between Church Road and Lime Kiln Road
- WSCC have advised that they will not issue a licence for additional trees to be planted on the green between Church Road & Lime Kiln Road

Speeding / Speed Watch

- Financed speeding surveys on the A281 in August & September 2018
- Set up Parish Community Speed Watch Group in partnership with Parish Community Group, now 8 volunteers and moving forward, have received good support from the Stephen O'Connell CSW Manager and PCSO Erica Baxter
- Trying to gain support for a pedestrian crossing on the Brighton Road in Mannings Heath, more pedestrians now crossing the road with the closure of the village store and recently opened Post Office in Elite Garage. If approved will take at least 2 years and need public support.

- Installation of gateways in the hamlets put on hold, many of the proposed sites were unsuitable and parishioners felt too 'urban'
- School Safety Zone programmed 2019/20 – flashing lights, tarmac on the corner of Harriots Close, no 20mph speed limit

Mannings Heath Village Green

- Chairman continues to prepare monthly reports on the play equipment
- Swings & Climbing frame sanded and welded, quotation received to repaint
- S106 Grant for a replacement rocker
- RoSPA Inspection annually in June
- Under a 'Duty to Care' PC took responsibility for a small area of trees on the corner of Golding Lane & Greens Lane. Trees included in Parish Councils Tree Report and a Level 3 Report identified that two trees (Oak/Pine) required felling, waiting for permission from HDC
- Routine remedial work to six trees, waiting permission from HDC
- Chestnut trees treated for Leaf Minor and Bleeding Canker in spring annually
- Chafer bug's identified on village green and badgers have caused considerable damage seeking food, quoted £4,000.00 to treat/repair. A Councillor is looking into alternative treatment of the bugs and will report back at the next Full Parish Council meeting.
- Construction of pavilion under way, neighbours and PC being informed of deliveries by Cricket Club

Highways / Footpaths

- Part of Lime Kiln Road resurfaced, Masons Field is still in poor state of repair
- Trying to get WSCC to repair the footpath along the A281 from Sedgwick Lane to Monks Gate, submitted a report on the condition of the footpath to WSCC in 2018
- 39 potholes reported to Highways from 1st March 2018 – 6th March 2019.
- Details of potholes reported to WSCC Highways by the Parish Council, with regular updates, included on PC website
- Details of highway works & temporary road closures included on PC website.

Other Issues

- Velo South 2018 cancelled due to bad weather, no event in 2019, rescheduled 2020
- Clerk continues to write to landowners and householders asking for them to maintain their hedges hedgerows and ditches. The letters have again received a positive response
- Councillor G Dixon represents the Parish at CAGNES PC Forums (standing down)
- The Chairman has again been elected Chairman of HALC & Director of SALC (standing down)

APM005/19 REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Finance Committee, Councillor Tom Nelson thanked the Clerk for preparing the accounts and provided the following report on financial matters;

Over the last few years the Parish Council has steadily overspent and the budget has been increased. The overspend has primarily been due to the following:

- Clerks Salary – hours increased from 20 to 25 hours per week (GDPR/Policies etc)
- GDPR Compliance – clerk's laptop, printer, councillor email addresses, encryption etc
- Grants – Copsale Hall £2,500.00 2018/19 & £2,500.00 2019/20 (ring fenced)
- Trees MHVG – Tree Report, Level 3 Report, fell 2 x trees, surgery 6 x trees, treatment for Bleeding Canker & Leaf Minor
- Budget Contingency – risen from £1,000.00 to £3,000.00

The reserves have now eroded and are below the recommended level, the Budget Contingency for 2019/20 will help to boost the reserves. Due to increased demand the Parish Councils finances are in a slightly precarious position.

2017/2018 (audited accounts)

Budget £36,901.00 / Precept from HDC £36,500.00 / Overspend £7,572.00 (detailed below)

£8,235.95	Replacement street lights (£4,000.00 ring fenced)
£1,791.00	Replacement Bus Shelter A281 (50%) (reserves)
£4,312.50	Purchase & Installation of the gateways (£3,000.00 ring fenced)

The Internal auditor, Peter J Consultants following suggestions have been actioned:

- i) Insurance Key Man (Woman) – This might be added to the insurance schedule.
- ii) Standing Orders – Update the Standing Orders

The external auditor, Moore Stephens approved the accounts and did not make any recommendations.

2018/2019 (forecast)

Budget £40,725.00 / Precept from HDC £40,500.00 / Overspend £8,612.00 (detailed below)

£1,849.00	Legal Fees Hawthorns & Micklepage (£400.00 ring fenced)
£1,000.00	Replacement Lighting column opposite MHVH (reserves)
£4,500.00	Tree Reports, fell 2 x trees & surgery 6 x trees (reserves)
£1,791.00	Replacement Bus Shelter A281 (50%) (reserves)

2019/2020 (budget/precept)

Budget 46,298.00 / Precept from HDC £46,000.00

£2,000.00	Legal Fees (increased from £400.00)
£2,500.00	Copsale Hall Grant
£3,000.00	Tree works
£3,000.00	Budget Contingency

The increase in the precept ranges between 10% and 15%, which is in the middle of the statistics recently produced on Parish Councils in the Horsham District. The demands on the Parish Councils finances will not decrease, but only continue to increase.

The Chairman of the Finance Committee asked the members of the public if they supported the following annual grant payments for 2019/2020:

£ 800.00	Cricket Club
£ 400.00	St Andrews P.C.C
£ 300.00	St Andrews School Governors
£ 250.00	The Link
£ 250.00	CpAD (Heart Beat)
£ 300.00	AGE UK Horsham

Copsale Hall have applied for a grant of £5,000.00 to assist with refurbishment costs. The proposal is too split this between the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 budget. The funds will not be released until the building work has commenced.

£2,500.00 Copsale Hall (2019/2020)

£4,800.00 Total grant payments 2019/2020

Six members of the public supported the grants for 2019/2019

APM006/19 NUTHURST PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Councillor O Hydes provided the following updates on the Neighbourhood Plan:

Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan is now three and a half years old. The plan, has so far, saved the parish from the huge developments that are currently going up in villages that don't have Neighbourhood Plans. Billingshurst, Southwater, Broadbridge Heath and Henfield are all being developed with hundreds and hundreds of new homes. Cowfold may be the next because it too has no Neighbourhood Plan.

Nuthurst's Neighbourhood Plan is not anti-development. It aims to provide about fifty new houses, all in small developments spread across the Parish, which is the number that it was felt could be absorbed into the community, without spoiling the largely rural Parish.

So far, the Neighbourhood Plan has saved the parish from the large unwanted developments. It saw off 60 houses at Saddlers Farm in Mannings Heath and 14 on the A281 at Monks Gate. It has also helped resist the small, but inappropriate, developments at Keatings and Hollyhocks in Nuthurst, Church Road at Mannings Heath and The Mead also at Nuthurst.

Although there have been big benefits to having a Neighbourhood Plan, the last two years have also seen developers mount challenges to it. The best known is Micklepage at Nuthurst where the developer built 3 big houses which breached both planning permission and the Neighbourhood Plan. They remain in breach, despite being advertised for sale in the Link. There has also been a challenge to the Neighbourhood Plan at Coolhurst Close at Monks Gate, where the owner was successful in pushing the number of houses up from 12 to 15. Little Homefield at Mannings Heath used the access road to the Neighbourhood Plan site to gain entry to a backland and otherwise isolated site that the developer bought from a neighbouring resident. Here though, the developer made and exploited an opportunity, rather than directly challenging the Neighbourhood Plan.

Given that the Neighbourhood Plan was the result of a huge community effort, residents need to value and support it by being very proactive. This means residents from right across the Parish commenting on any planning applications that seek to challenge the Neighbourhood Plan and not leaving it solely to nearby residents.

How do we know what planning applications challenge the Neighbourhood Plan? The answer is to keep an eye on the Parish Council's website and look under Planning Updates. If you are unsure about anything, please contact the Clerk.

It may be felt that Planning Officers at HDC are very inclined to approve any planning applications put before them? Unfortunately, this is probably true. Firstly, HDC get a new homes bonus from the government for every new house that is built and secondly, HDC cannot afford to defend legal challenges made by developers.

In the face of HDC's attitude, what can the Parish Council do in order to support its own Neighbourhood Plan? In the first place, Councillors spend many long hours researching applications

and relevant planning policies, writing long, detailed comments on applications, meeting with officers to put forward the Parish Councils views and write very many letters to HDC.

The Parish Council are very fortunate to have a District Councillor who sits on the Planning Committee North, who liaises with the Councillors and is prepared to argue against the planning officer's recommendation. Sometimes, this leads to refusal of Planning Permission, but not always. The Parish Council always attends these District Council meetings and puts up a councillor to speak before the Committee.

Developers usually appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against refusals of Planning Permission since it costs them nothing to do so. The Parish Council always submits very long, detailed reasons for dismissal of these appeals because they are usually challenging the Neighbourhood Plan. In the past, the Parish Council has been successful in getting the appeals dismissed at land on the A281 at Monks Gate and at Church Road, Mannings Heath. Currently, there are as many as five appeals in the Parish awaiting decisions.

Although not in the Neighbourhood Plan, an application for five gypsy pitches, in the field behind Millers Mead, was refused by HDC and the owner's appeal was dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate. Following the owner's legal challenge in court to that dismissal, a second appeal must now be conducted by the Planning Inspectorate. The Parish Council hopes that the appeal will again be dismissed because the same reasons for dismissal still hold true and will work hard to try and ensure that this happens.

The Parish Council does a considerable amount of work behind the scenes. It works hard to try and ensure that residents' wishes for the Parish to remain a largely rural and pleasant place are respected, by everyone.

Parish Plan

In 2017 the Parish Council drew up a 3-year Parish Plan. It consisted of 10 projects many of which were suggested by residents during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. Some of the projects are ongoing, but some were time limited and these have been successfully completed.

Two of the projects, monitoring planning applications for compliance with the Neighbourhood Plan and the Parish Design Statement have already been reported on. Three of the projects were concerned with the Parish Council's website. The website contains the regularly updated news in the Parish and links to community facilities and clubs. An important facility is to enable residents to report issues in the Parish, such as potholes, flooding and other problems so that the Parish Council can initiate action with the relevant authorities. This facility hasn't been well used and residents were encouraged to make more use of it, so that the Parish Council have data on extent of each problem and whether it is improving or worsening.

The Parish Council continues to support road safety initiatives. West Sussex County Council will be installing flashing lights on Nuthurst Street at St Andrews School and improving the pavement in Harriotts Close. The Community Speed Watch Group will be monitoring speeds on the A281 in Mannings Heath.

There are 10 circular walks in the Parish published on the Website. The Parish Council has organised walks in the Parish every two months on the first Sunday of the month with the option of bacon butties at Copsale Hall afterwards. These have proved popular. Further walks are planned with the next being on Sunday 5 May which will be a themed walk looking at spring flowers.

The initial project to improve the look of the Parish has been completed. 1000 mixed daffodil and narcissus bulbs were planted in autumn 2017 mainly on the green between Limekiln and Church Road. A further 1000 bulbs were planted in autumn 2018 on various verges in the other hamlets. These are starting to flower now and there are some lovely displays for example at the junction of Polecat Lane and Broadwater Lane, the junction of Broadwater Lane and Copsale Road in Copsale, at the top of Harriotts Hill, Nuthurst and opposite Saxtons Farm in Monks Gate.

All street lighting columns have been successfully replaced with greener, more efficient columns.

Cllr O Hydes thanked the fellow Councillors and residents who had helped with the Plan and asked 'If you have any ideas for future projects please let us know'.

APM007/19 PUBLIC FORUM

The Chairman of Copsale Village Hall thanked the Parish Council for supporting the hall, the approval of the grant funding application and support at the monthly Bacon Butties, on the first Sunday of each month, was very much appreciated.

In reply to the question 'even though the parish has a Neighbourhood Plan, will there be an increase in the number of houses?' the Chairman replied, the Government have not yet issued a directive, it may mean that the Neighbourhood Plan will need to be reviewed.

The Parish Council have asked HDC if there is a requirement for additional numbers, if these can come from the additional dwellings (approximately 20) which are not included in the Neighbourhood Plan. HDC have not yet replied and it is likely to be several months before there is any further information.

The Parish Council have also requested a copy of the Consent Order for the Millers Mead appeal and are waiting to hear from their Legal department.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the APM, presented Cllr G Dixon and Cllr A Gaffney with flowers and wished the Councillors standing for re-election good luck.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.55PM