

Minstead Parish Council
Annual Parish Assembly
20 March 2013 at 20.00
The Green Room, Minstead Village Hall

1. Attendance Register and Apologies

Present: Cllrs W Andrews (Chair), H Bennett, S Cattell, A Ferguson, P Glover, R Taylor, HCC Cllr K Mans.

Invited speakers: NFDC Cllr E Heron, Deborah Lucas NFDC.

Apologies: NFDC Cllr Mrs D Andrews, Cllr M Bridle.

There were ten members of public present.

2. Welcome by Chairman

Cllr Andrews welcomed everyone, especially the invited speakers from NFDC, Cllr Edward Heron and Deborah Lucas.

3. Minutes of the last Parish Assembly (21 March 2012)

These had been circulated and were agreed and signed.

4. Matters Arising

None

5. Report by Chairman

The Chairman reported the following actions over the year:

Fabric

- Replacement (longer, stronger) posts around Village Green
- Maintenance of bus shelters, seats, notice boards, war memorial area; painting traffic posts/rails
- Seat on top Green replacement completed.
- New Union flag purchased

Footpaths

- Regular cutting of grass/vegetation on all footpaths
- Brambles cleared alongside footpath through Manor Wood
- Replacement footpath sign at Bull Lane/Back Lane cut
- Restoration of Bridleway 10 Stage 1 – clear vegetation + drainage work. (Stage 2- resurfacing will be financed and actioned by HCC)
- Major work being considered to improve drainage on Church footpath

Traffic and Highways

- Liaison with and support from Highways Dept re problems:
 - o repairs to surface (potholes, edges)
 - o drainage / flooding
 - o Running Hill (Amendment to 1-way traffic)
 - o trees cut along Furzey Lane where encroaching over tarmac
 - o signage
- Snow plough purchase and use to clear roads (thanks to Cllr Mans for grant)
- Joined HCC Lengthsman Scheme
- Several attempts to resolve parking problems at Church Lane
- Verges continue to be destroyed by inconsiderate driving and parking, especially in Seamans Lane, near Village Hall and at Newtown

Planning

- Supporting views of community where appropriate, PC should always be the first port of call for advice when considering an application

Community

- Weekly ‘surgeries’ at both Village Shop and Trusty Servant
- Production and distribution of Weekly eNotices + Minstead Mail
- Liaison with and support from police and police community support officers
- Community Speedwatch
- Ragwort pulling (July)
- Litter picking in car parks
- Annual litter pick around village
- Bulk oil purchase scheme
- Celebrations for Queen’s Diamond Jubilee: children’s tea party, commemorative spoons, building and firing of beacon
- Support of Village Fete, Christmas Carols outside Trusty
- Purchase of new lights for Christmas tree (thanks to grant from Cllr D Andrews)
- Attendance at various meetings to represent interests of Minstead parishioners.

The Chairman welcomed new Councillor, Paul Glover; he expressed his thanks to all Councillors and the Clerk for continued support and good work, and to Cllr Keith Mans and Cllr Diane Andrews for their continued support, guidance and assistance.

6. Recycling: speakers Cllr Edward Heron (NFDC) and Deborah Lucas (NFDC Environment Promotions Officer)

An interesting and informative presentation was given by Deborah Lucas, after which, she and Cllr Heron answered questions. Answers included:

- Shredded paper is not recyclable because it damages machinery. But it is compostable.
- Recycling symbols on products are not necessarily applicable everywhere – recycling must be ecological/financially viable.
- The start-up fuel for furnaces at Marchwood Incinerator is gas.
- Bottle banks will remain alongside the new household bottle collection system shortly to be introduced.
- Black rubbish bags may vary in thickness – balance of cost against quality.

7. Financial Statement

The Clerk reported that:

- Both Internal and External Auditors were satisfied with the accounts for financial year ending 31 March 2012.
- Council runs a tight budget and keeps costs to minimum, which has enabled the reserve for contingencies to grow – this is reassuring with prospect of leaner times ahead.
- Parish Council is very grateful for grants received this year that have funded six projects:
 - Lights for Christmas tree - District Cllr Mrs D Andrews’ *Community Grant*.
 - Posts around Village Green - County Cllr Mans’ *Devolved Budget*.
 - Purchase of snow plough - County Cllr Mans’ *Devolved Budget*.
 - Hall Hire for Minstead Local History Exhibition next month - County Cllr Mans’ *Devolved Budget*.
 - Restoration of Bridleway 10 Stage 1 (clear vegetation + drainage) - 50% from HCC *Small Grants Scheme*, 25% from NPA, 25% *Big Lottery Fund*.
 - Lengthsman - £1,000 towards expenses from *HCC Lengthsman Scheme*.
- Precept kept same this year (£9,500), despite changes being made to Council Tax Benefit (Council Tax Benefit to be replaced by localised Council Tax Reduction Schemes from April 2013).
- Finally, to emphasise that your Parish Councillors work voluntarily – they are paid nothing but they work very hard on behalf of the parish.

George Dibben asked how the Precept was set - this with a view to suggesting that space in the churchyard for graves is finite so Parish Council and Parochial Church Council might, in the future, have to consider purchase of land for new graves. The Chairman said this would be put to Parish Council. Marian Young disagreed that there is insufficient graves' space and said she was against increasing because a larger graveyard would increase maintenance costs.

8. Report by Hampshire County Councillor Keith Mans

Cllr Mans reported regarding HCC:

- This has been a year of consolidation for the County Council. The changes we made in previous years to our management structure which resulted in significant savings to our back office structure are now bearing fruit. We were able to hold the county precept at its previous level for a fourth year without significant effects on our services.
- We continue to spend increasing amounts each year on care for the elderly; and we have brought forward finance from next year into this years' highways budget to start to compensate for the damage done to our roads as a result of the recent heavy rains.
- My own devolved budget has been fully spent this year and all parishes in my Division have had grants from it. My devolved budget this coming year has been increased by £10,000 to spend specifically on highways and the environment. I am proposing to prioritise this budget on flood prevention in the local area.
- In the coming year HCC has allocated funds to improve footpaths across the county. In addition the County will be prioritising high speed broadband for everyone in the coming year as well as allocating £1m for capital expenditure on community centres and village halls.

Cllr Mans was asked whether staff cutbacks had affected functionality. He replied that, on the contrary, with 25% reduction in top managers there are more opportunities for juniors to move up.

9. Report by New Forest District Councillor Mrs D Andrews

Cllr Mrs D Andrews was on holiday.

10. Items requested by the Public

- George Dibben asked whether, since a recent proposed new dwelling in Church Close had failed, there would be more attempts to build social housing. The Chairman replied that NFDC has been unable to show evidence of need for new housing in Minstead; indeed there is currently one empty dwelling.
- Cllr Cattell thanked Cllr Andrews, Chairman, for his work through the year.

The meeting closed at 21.11

The next Annual Parish Assembly will be **19 March 2014**