

Minstead Parish Council Annual Parish Assembly

Wednesday 16 March 2016 at 19.30

Green Room, Minstead Village Hall

1. Attendance Register and Apologies

Present: Cllrs W Andrews (Chair), H Bennett, S Cattell, A Ferguson, G Hough, R Taylor, HCC Cllr K Mans, NFDC Cllr Mrs D Andrews, Mrs P Osborne (Clerk), PCSO Daniel Carlin (Hants Constabulary).

Public: There were 8 members of the public present.

Apologies: Cllr D Wakelin, Mrs T Keeley, Mr R Osborne, Mr S Gibbons, Mrs G Gibbons, Mrs S Cole, Mr M Britten, Miss B Moorhouse, Mrs M Young.

2. Minutes of the last Parish Assembly (18 March 2015)

These had been circulated and were agreed and signed.

3. Matters Arising

None.

4. Chairman's Report

Cllr Andrews reported the following activities over the last year:

Fabric

- Most footpaths remain in acceptable condition despite the apparently rather wet winter.
- Footpath 4 gates and posts at top and bottom to be replaced starting tomorrow.
- Bridleways 1 and 10 have now been resurfaced and ditched, resulting in a most effective conclusion to this work.
- Bridleway 13 is exercising Cllrs and residents equally. An acceptable solution is being actively sought and the grant for re-surfacing work has been sent back pending agreement for action.
- Dragons teeth were replaced on Forestry Commission managed land; subsequently access was restored to Football Green.
- Housing for village clock on the Shop is still to be replaced.
- Our Parish Lengthsman, Stephen Short, carries out regular maintenance checks of bus shelters, seats, war memorial area, flagpole, footpath signs, PC-owned trees etc. with repairs and maintenance as required. He cleans our road signs, drains and gullies.
- He has re-furbished the bus shelter at the Village Hall, and monitors the condition of our roadways, hedges and ditches. He also works on our footpaths and their drainage.
- War Memorial is now Grade II Listed.
- Continued support from Hampshire Highways (Rob Millar, Richard Bastow, Tim Lawton) and several potholes have been repaired throughout the year. Please use the HCC website or NFDC App to report directly.
- Eroded edges are still exercising Cllrs and residents after more than 4 years involvement - further meeting next month.
- Please remember that householders are responsible for keeping their hedges cut back and ditches cleared alongside their properties.
- Drainage mapping is ongoing; all contributions of knowledge gratefully received.
- Church Close hedge continues to re-grow behind its protective fence.
- Ragwort Clearance in July is helping to keep this noxious weed in check.

Community

- Continuing to develop the much acclaimed, and well-visited, Minstead Village Community website.
- Continued efforts to bring SuperFast Broadband to the whole Parish; various 4G providers found to be effective in "not-spots". Further developments expected this year.
- Informal Councillor surgeries held two or three times each week - at Village Shop (some weekend mornings) and at Trusty Servant (Friday evenings).
- Weekly eNewsletter produced and distributed to 294 addresses (plus hard copies kindly printed and delivered to neighbours who are not connected to email).

- Minstead Mail, three issues last year, distributed (hard copy) to ALL households.
- Donations made to NF Citizens Advice Bureau, and to All Saints PCC for churchyard maintenance.
- Support of Village Fete, Carols by the Green with Father Christmas, tree lights.
- Defibrillator installed and commissioned in the village.
- Regular litter picking in/around village and car parks. There was a good turnout in support of *Clean for the Queen*, thank you all.
- Continued liaison with local police and police community support officers.
- Representation of interests of Minstead parishioners at various meetings, and support and advice in planning matters. There have been a couple of informal meetings with NPA Planners and formal training for our Cllrs.

Council

- Two new (dare I say “younger”) members who are already doing good work.
- Our Precept was not increased this year again - your increased Council Tax is due to “Others”.

My thanks to all Cllrs and Clerk for support, industry and effectivity, AND to County & District Cllrs for continued support.

5. **Financial Statement**

The Clerk reported on Parish Council finance:

- Successful audits by both the Internal and External Auditor of the Minstead Parish Council accounts for financial year ending 31 March 2015.
- Council has once again not increased the Precept. Council continues to run a tight budget and keep its costs to a minimum, so has managed to maintain a good reserve for contingencies.
- Grants were received this year from HCC and NFDC for projects within the parish:
 - HCC Lengthsman Scheme - £1,000 towards Lengthsman salary;
 - HCC Cllr Mans – £500 towards defibrillator + £750 towards replacement gates/posts at both ends Bull Lane footpath;
 - NFDC Cllr Mrs Andrews’ Community Grant - £200 towards defibrillator.
- Defibrillator: donations from parishioners (towards defibrillator and training) total £82.

Defibrillator costs (machine, cabinet, installation, training)	£1,873
Donations received (from Cllr grants + parishioners)	<u>£ 782</u>
Shortfall	£1,091

Fundraising plans: Barn dance and Village fete (share of proceeds).
- Council has made two donations this year to:
 - All Saints PCC towards maintenance of churchyard - £300;
 - New Forest Citizens Advice Bureau - £50.

6. **Report by Hampshire County Councillor K Mans**

Cllr Mans reported that:

- HCC has had difficult year with revenue support grant cut by £40m. Had to increase council tax; managing to maintain good frontline services.
- Unforeseen difficulties with roll-out of HighSpeed Broadband where customers connected to exchange are not connected to fibre optic cable. Still aiming for 95% availability across county.
- No announcement yet on Devolution.
- Minstead Parish has benefited from his Councillor Devolved budget for community projects.

Cllr Mans’ responses to questions:

- Litter on slip road at M27 Jn 2 - He has already raised this matter but will do so again.
- Results from Library Survey? Libraries likely to be run by volunteers, ideally in community centres where facilities and overheads can be shared. Mobile services may suffer.
- Update on boundary changes in this area? No decisions as yet.

7. **Report by New Forest District Councillor Mrs D Andrews**

Cllr Mrs Andrews reported on her NFDC Council activities.

- This is the first year of her second term.

- She is Chairman of the Planning Development Committee. There are major changes in planning nationally as councils are required to build more new homes. If a council does not allocate land, then a government official will do so – clearly it is preferable that our local planners with local knowledge allocate the land. Thousands of homes will be built, some on green belt sites; but within the National Park the scale of increase will be less. A consultation is planned this summer to provide more insight into where building is likely to occur, with an opportunity to comment.
- NFDC is not a signatory to proposed devolution plans for the South of Hampshire, therefore no part of the district currently falls within the Solent Devolution area. Council is keeping an open mind to what may develop and will continue discussions with Solent and other local authorities.
- She represents NFDC on boards of *Community First New Forest* and *Citizens Advice Bureau*.
- The Task and Finish group looking at different ways to tackle child poverty in the District is now at an end. She is confident that the recommendations made will make a difference.
- This is a time of change: the shake-up of officers within NFDC; the IN/OUT referendum on Europe; Devolution in South Hampshire; new housing. What does not change is the work that your Parish Council does on your behalf. Cllr Mrs Andrews thanked them for all they do and for the support that they have given her.

8. **Report on Neighbourhood Policing by PCSO Daniel Carlin**

He was transferred from Hythe to Lyndhurst only three months ago. Police figures for Hants and NF are good – among the safest areas with low crime figures. Speeding is an issue that has been raised at Beat Surgeries. Dead stag was found recently in Minstead churchyard; cash was taken from locked box in porch at All Saints church.

Responses to questions:

- Has property been recovered from robberies? Some.
- When are Beat Surgeries? Dates are posted at shop and on Village website under *News and Events*, 9.30 – 10.30 Wednesdays.

9. **Discussion: What do you want from your Parish Council? And what we CAN do**

More houses in parish: Council has no view on this - all development is determined by NPA Planning Regulations.

Village Design Statement/Neighbourhood Plan? Would it benefit the community? Is there a need? The National Park planning regulations and restraints allow very little leeway. There are two levels of plan: A *Village Design Statement* is the more basic of the two. Whilst it can be adopted as a supplementary planning document by the planning authority, the parish council feels that it would be a disproportionately troublesome process that would add no benefits or protections to the village over and above those already included in the *New Forest National Park Design Guide*. A *Neighbourhood Plan* is expensive at around £25,000 and does not seem a good use of very limited resources given the highly restrictive development regulations in the National Park.

Welcome Packs: these are regularly updated and are still delivered to new residents. A resident said it had been very helpful when settling in. Newcomers can make contact or sign up for eNewletters via Village Website. There are also village lunches during winter months and councillor surgeries.

10. **Items requested by the Public**

- Recent erosion of verges by utility services: Council is dealing with this matter and asking for restoration. Most verges belong to Manor and are SSSIs.
- Shooting on Manor Waste: Concern has been expressed about frequency of shooting and security of walkers to which, in response, Minstead Manor has provided details of shooting allowed plus assurance that all shooting is regulated and licensed. With many access points to the area, warning signs would not be practical. Council will liaise with Minstead Manor and Syndicate on this matter and will then provide information to parishioners on shooting arrangements.
- Hedge cutting: This year the section of hedge alongside the footway below Old Court House cut in previous years by a local contractor free of charge was cut (in passing and at no cost) by an outside contractor. Council agreed that a local contractor should be asked first in future.

The meeting closed at 20.40

The next Annual Parish Assembly will be on 15 March 2017