

HAMBLEDON PARISH COUNCIL

Annual parish ASSEMBLY MINUTES

21st April 2022

Present: Councillor Stewart Payne (Chair of the Parish Council, in the chair); Parish Councillors Mary Grove, Robin McKeith, Sean Sinnott, Jude Milan and Philip Underwood; Parish Clerk Alison Scott-Bishop and over 50 villagers.

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

These were circulated, taken as read and signed as a correct record of the proceedings.

2. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising that were not covered by other items on the agenda.

3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Good evening, and welcome to the annual Hambledon Parish Assembly. Thank you all for coming. You will see scattered around on the seats the agenda for tonight's meeting, a record of last year's meeting, and our latest accounts summary. The last two are for your information.

I have received apologies for absence from village resident Paul Stone, Christine Baker, from our Waverley Ward Councillor Jan Floyd-Douglass, from Surrey County Councillor Kevin Deanus and our constituency MP Jeremy Hunt. Sadly, I heard today of the very recent death of Jenny Sewell, a former Parish Councillor and village resident. We send our sympathy to her family and our respect and gratitude for all that she did for this village.

This is a welcome return to the Village Hall. Last year, as some of you will recall, we had to hold this meeting on Zoom and the year before it was cancelled altogether because of the Covid lockdown. It is good to be back.

Many of you in this room will know most, if not all, of my Council colleagues. Looking around me, it is very rewarding to see quite a number of people here who were of the generation that did so much for our village, including former Councillors, Chairmen and Clerks. It is their hard work and initiatives that we endeavour to take forward today.

There have been some changes to the Council in the last year, so I will make a few brief introductions.

I am Stewart Payne, Chairman of the Council, and this is my first Assembly in this role. Mary Grove is Deputy Chair, and we have Philip Underwood, now our longest serving Councillor, Sean Sinnott, Robin McKeith, Alison Scott-Bishop and our newest member, Jude Milan.

Each of us not only serve as Councillors, but also in other capacities around the village, and this helps ensure that we keep in touch with the various activities that make Hambledon such a community-spirited village.

Let me bring you up to date with what has been happening in the past 12 months. In May, our long-standing Chairman, John Anderson, stood down for a well-deserved retirement from Council duties. He was a Councillor for 38 years, the last 19 as Chairman. He was the third longest serving Councillor since the Parish Council was formed in 1884, and he led it in an exemplary manner.

Despite the various restrictions, we were able to thank John for all that he has done for the village, and a collection was generously supported, enabling us to present him with various gifts, including a painting of his family home by local artist John Coleman and a sketch of John by Cathy Coleman. Oh, and a few bottles of fine wine for good measure. Thank you, John.

I was John's deputy, and agreed to become Chairman, for the time being at least. I have always seen myself more as a back-bencher, but I am delighted to have been asked to step up and this has been made all the easier by the excellent team of Councillors who support me. We have established a finance team headed by Robin McKeith and supported by Sean Sinnott, as this is certainly not my area of expertise.

John's departure meant that we had a vacancy to fill and, with no elections due until 2023, it was agreed we could fill this by co-option. We had several excellent candidates put their names forward, presenting us with a tough choice. However, we decided on Jude Milan as she was not only a first-class candidate, we felt that she also brought a new dimension to the Council, younger than some of us, and raising a young family.

Jude joined us in September and already she has stepped up to take over from me as the Parish Council's appointed Trustee on the Village Nursery School Management Committee.

At the beginning of this year, our Clerk, Julie Flenley, resigned to take up a new post on Chiddingfold Parish Council, where she lives. We have been advertising for a replacement and I am delighted to announce that we have selected Catherine Russell. She was the stand-out candidate. She will start with us on May 1st.

Catherine lives in Abinger Common, but is a regular visitor to the village, has local friends, and her two young daughters are schooled nearby. She tells me that she saw the job advert, not on the internet or by any social media outlet, but on one of our good old fashioned Parish notice boards when she was out running in Hambledon.

Catherine has not been a Clerk before but has many other credentials that gave us the confidence that she will be more than capable and, anyway, training will be made available to her. Catherine is here tonight, and we look forward to working with her in the future.

For the last few months, we have been working without an appointed Clerk, and I am extremely grateful to Alison Scott-Bishop for agreeing to be our interim Clerk and keeping things going for us, and to Robin McKeith for becoming our interim Responsible Financial Officer. We are all volunteers in what we do, and have busy lives, jobs and other pressing commitments. The whole Council has worked together to ensure we fulfil our responsibilities, and I am grateful to them all.

I do not intend to spend long in going through what the Council has been doing in the past 12 months. Our agendas and minutes appear on the village website, where they are available for inspection and record the decisions we make, a report appears every month in the Parish Magazine. and our monthly meetings are open to the public.

We do not determine the outcome of planning applications; that is the job of Waverley Borough Council. But we are invited to pass comment, and that we do without favour and strictly on planning grounds.

You may be aware that Waverley planning department has been in what I can only call disarray. Covid, shortage of staff and a problematic new computer system has led to the cancelling of some services and long delays in determining outcomes. None of this is the fault of your Parish Council. Where possible, we have intervened to try and speed up specific applications. We are told that things are improving.

The only development of any size is the already-approved affordable homes, together with some market price homes, at Orchard Farm, Lane End. This too has been the subject of delays, but remediation work has been done, site drainage comes next, and then, finally, work will start on actually building the homes. This project is undertaken by the English Rural Housing Association, and we have been advised that the Autumn is the earliest we might see construction starting.

We continue to monitor roads, paths and bridle ways, liaising with highways departments and utilities, sometimes with some success. We undertake the clearance of roadside ditches, using a local contractor.

We also take an proactive role in the many consultation exercises that seem to come our way in ever-increasing numbers. Parliamentary constituency boundaries, the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Beauty boundary, even our own Parish boundary – all are up for review.

There is some concern that our current Parliamentary constituency of South West Surrey, represented by our MP Jeremy Hunt, may have its boundaries redrawn to become a new Guildford and Ash constituency, which we opposed. A decision is expected next year and, across the country, sitting MPs may find that they will have to stand for selection in altogether new constituencies to remain as candidates.

But the one I wish to bring to your attention before finishing is our Borough Council ward boundaries. As I am sure you know, Waverley is divided up into wards, currently 29 of them, to which 57 Borough Councillors are elected to serve our interests. Quite sensibly, our village is part of the Witley and Hambledon ward, and we are represented to two Waverley Councillors.

This review, conducted by the Boundary Commission, is, like the Parliamentary constituency one, largely a statistics-led exercise, aimed at, and I quote, “ensuring electoral equality by equalising the number of electors each councillor represents”.

In its proposal, Hambledon was to be moved into a ward with Alfold, Dunsfold and Chiddingfold. We could see no sense in this and argued to remain connected to Milford and Witley. Hambledon, being small and rural, turns to this neighbouring area for schools, surgeries, larger shops, garages etc. Indeed, it was largely down to the efforts of village resident and Waverley councillor Christine Baker that we were moved from a ward shared with Hascombe to one with Witley some years ago.

We were supported in our efforts to remain in this ward by Witley Parish Council and local Waverley Councillors all to no avail, and when the outcome of the review was published last month, we found that we were to become part of a Womersley and Bramley ward. And on this we were never consulted, although the same objections would have applied.

The Boundary Commission acknowledged the Hambledon case but said that to keep us with Witley and Milford would result in a 14 per cent electoral variance above the Waverley average.

So, despite the veneer of public consultation and the claim that the outcome would “reflect community identity”. It does no such thing. It is a mockery of consultation, and the numbers game was always going to be more important than community ties.

Waverley is to have seven fewer Councillors and five fewer wards. The proposals will need to be endorsed by Parliament in time for the 2023 elections. We are in contact with our MP Jeremy Hunt, who has offered his support, calling it a “stupid decision”. He said he is prepared to write a letter of objection, and we will keep the village posted.

Hambledon is not the only Council to feel poorly served by the so-called consultation exercise and Arthur Blackman has suggested the drawing up of a petition against the ward boundary review. I will raise the suggestion in the Parish Magazine.

The Council has been active in the various initiatives in the village in response to the crisis in Ukraine, most notably the Hambledon Ukraine appeal, which has raised in excess of £4,500 to date, mainly from generous donations from villagers. I want to place on record our thanks to the church, shop and villagers for their hard work on this. The Council continues to liaise with Waverley concerning the hosting of refugees and are ready to help out where we can in supporting both refugees and host families.

Well, that’s about it from me. Despite the challenges of Covid and now rising costs, your Council remains in a healthy financial state, although our budget and resources are small.

Please remember that on Saturday morning we have our annual volunteer litter-pick around the village, and if you wish to sign up for this and commit to collecting rubbish in a designated area of the village, there is a form for this at the back of the hall. There will be litter-picker grab tools, high viz jackets and bin bags available outside the village shop from 10am. Please take part, with the family, and then return with your litter to outside the shop where bags will be collected by Waverley Council.

As a thank-you for taking part there will be a free barbecue at the same location from around midday.

That is all, unless there are any questions.

I will end with a very short video made by our professional body, the National Association of Local Councils. It features Jackie Weaver, the locum Parish Clerk who became an internet sensation when a video of her exerting her authority on a disruptive Handforth Parish Council meeting in Cheshire went viral. I am pleased to say that, in my 20 years as a Parish Councillor, no such scenes have been witnessed in this Village Hall. And Jackie Weaver, who has become something of a self-publicist, has been found to have not had the authority she claimed. So, I may not have much time for the messenger, but the message to get involved in local democracy is laudable.

Thank you. After the video we will hear the reports from around the village.

4. PARISH ORGANISATIONS REPORTS

On behalf of **Hambledon Cricket Club**, Sion Griffiths reported that, in 2021, the club fielded both a friendly and a league XI and was competitive in both. However, in common with many clubs, it has not proved possible to sustain a league team for the 2022 season, although the intention is to re-establish one in 2 to 3 years' time. The club has a number of projects in train, including the installation of new nets and the renovation of the outfield and the inside of the pavilion. This will put the club among the best locally and provide first class facilities. There will be a club open day on 7 May and Wednesday night nets and coaching thereafter.

For **Hambledon Football Club**, Matt Kiley reported that the club was in its 26th year and was running 5 teams, all of which were enjoying some success. The 1st team won the Hospital Cup and finished 4th in the Surrey Intermediate League, reaching the quarter finals of the Surrey Intermediate Cup. Martyn Grove and Matt had been invited to Wembley, but only one attendee was allowed so Matt was the lucky one to go. A new pitch irrigation system has been installed and a new tractor is arriving at the end of April. As a result of running so many teams, the club is having to rent pitches in Godalming, which is sometimes a struggle.

Ruth Canham reported it had been another unusual year for the **Village Hall** due to Covid, but things are gradually returning to normal. Hall events have restarted, beginning with a quiz in November, and film nights will restart soon. Donations, grants and money from the Community Fund have enabled the replacement of the hall's windows and Martyn Grove has replaced the noticeboard and redecorated both sets of toilets and the lobby leading to the fire exit. The hall also now has broadband and wifi.

The Chair of the **Hambledon Village Trust**, Mary Burrows, provided an overview of the Trust and its activities, including acting as landlord to the tenants of Pendle Cottage and the village shop and facilitating the creation of the village website. The Trust also created the **Hambledon Community Fund** which provides a permanent source of capital for community projects. Having taken back managing the community fund in 2021 while looking for a new chair, the Trust is delighted that Debbie Calverley has now taken on the role. The fund continues to be healthy, with money available for grants.

On behalf of the **Parish Magazine**, Jane Woolley thanked all its readers and noted that, out of 330 entries in the A4 magazine category at the 2021 National Parish Magazine Awards, it had achieved 9th place. Also, having sent Jeremy Hunt MP a copy of the issue which contained a report of the Village Shop being awarded a South West Surrey Heroes Award and the launch of the Hambledon Ukraine Appeal, he immediately took out a subscription. Jane also put out a plea for more contributions, especially from any cooks who would like to share their recipes and anyone with something interesting to say, whether about the village, an event or a villager.

Jane Woolley also reported that **Oakhurst Cottage** is due to reopen on 5 May, after being closed for the last 2 years. Ahead of this, there will be a 'waking up the cottage' day on 27 April. New volunteers and guides attended the volunteer briefing on 20 April and will shadow several tours before going solo. In order to address some subsidence, bracing has been installed on the left side of the cottage and building work has been completed on the exterior wall. The cracks inside the cottage do not seem to be worsening and a further inspection will be undertaken in May/June, after which it should be possible to remove the bracing.

Cllr Stewart Payne read out a report from Tim Cross on behalf of the **Heritage Society**. The society put on a successful and well attended AGM on 16 March, with the highlight being Stephen Dean's illustrated talk on 'Winton Dean's Memories of Hambledon'. Beyond that, much work has been undertaken to preserve the village albums and scrapbooks.

On behalf of the **Merry Book Club**, Debra Mitchell stressed that it was more of a supper club that talks about books. Meetings are monthly at 7.00pm in the Merry Harriers, with between 6 and 8 of the 125 members generally attending. Members are all local and share a love of reading and books. The reading list is fairly eclectic, and a list of what the club has read since it started in 2009 can be found on the village website.

In providing an update on the **Almshouses**, Andrew Falk reported that they were fine, having been refurbished and extended 5/6 years ago. Both are occupied and their finances are sound.

Andrew Falk also reported that, having held a **Flower, Fruit & Vegetable Show** on the day of the Village Barbeque in 2021, the intention was to do the same in 2022 on Saturday 27 August. Entries will need to be submitted in the Village Hall by 10:30. Entrants can then attend the barbeque, before returning to the Village Hall to see whether they have won any prizes.

Kate Walford reported that, since the 2021 Assembly, **Hambledon Nursery School** had seen much change in terms of the listing of Covid restrictions and was now poised to complete the first full academic year with largely normal operating procedures in place. Two nursery pets, guinea pigs Rex and Blaze, have been welcomed and are proving to be very popular. The vegetable garden has been transformed into a productive allotment and pupils were rewarded with a bountiful harvest at the start of the autumn term. Other highlights were the visit of Dr Julie Llewelyn in her full regalia as High Sheriff of Surrey; the annual nursery nativity; and the refurbishment of the kitchen over the Christmas holidays. The school is looking forward to welcoming its first child from Ukraine and also a special afternoon on 27 May to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

On behalf of the **Hambledon Ramblers**, Helena Hockridge reported that 2021 had been a challenging year and attempts had been made to split walkers into smaller groups which set off at staggered start times. However, there was no pub lunch to be enjoyed at the end. 2022 has been much better and pubs have been very accommodating. Hambledon Ramblers is not affiliated with the National Ramblers Association and therefore no fees are paid. Anyone interested in joining one of the longer (6/7 miles) or shorter (4 miles) walks should contact Helena for further details.

Jon Petersen noted that it had been a quiet couple of years for the **Hambledon Festival Committee**, although it had been able to run a mini-Village Fete and Village Shop Barbeque in late August 2021. These raised £4,300, which was distributed between various village organisations. The 2022 Festival will be the first in 4 years, with tickets for the main event being rolled over from 2020. The Festival will comprise Jazz on the Green on the evening of Friday 17 June; the Village Fete on the afternoon of Saturday 18 June, followed in the evening by the Village Ball; and the Classic Car Rally and Church on the Green on Sunday 19 June. The Village Shop Barbeque will take place on the same day as the Flower, Fruit & Vegetable Show: Saturday 27 August. There are also plans for Village Christmas Party on Saturday 10 December and Christmas carols outside the Village Shop on 24 December.

George Pitt asked whether villagers wanted to live up to 10 years longer? If they did, they should join the **Hambledon Peddlars**. The group is now in its 30th year, having ridden touring, hybrid, mountain and e-bikes on roads and bridleways since 1992. Rides normally depart from the Village Hall on Thursday evenings between April and September at 6.00pm and vary in length from 6 to 15 miles, with a pub stop en route or at the end. The season concludes with an all-day ride.

Judith Crowhurst reported that the **Hambledon Bridge Club** had played both online and in the pub over the course of the last year but was now back in the Merry Harriers on Wednesday evenings when there was no quiz. The small, informal, friendly group plays rubber bridge in groups of 4. There is a cut in if there are more than 8 players and for partners. Those who want an extra game still play online on Monday evenings.

On behalf of the **Webteam**, Paul Osborne reported that website traffic was up by 40% on the previous year. The most popular page was the news one, with interest also being shown in the history pages, such as those on the bomber crash and the hospital, the graveyard index and the Hambledon Ukraine Appeal. The website will be 15 years old in 2022.

Reporting on behalf of the **Merry Harriers**, Mikey Coleman noted that the last year had been tough, but the pub was now open, fully staffed and back in a good place financially. Events have restarted and there is a desire to ensure the pub remains as a community facility. He thanked villagers for turning up to the first quiz of the year in aid of the Hambledon Ukraine Appeal, for which £600 was raised on the night. Mikey will be stepping down as landlord from 1 May. He will be replaced by Mike Scott, while Martine Mason will take on the role of general manager of the whole property.

Cllr Stewart Payne read out a report from Charlene Edwards on behalf of **Hamblelots**. Hamblelots is held every Wednesday from 9:30 to 11:00 during term time for parents and carers with children aged 0 to 4 years. Various toys and activities are on offer, and there is a different craft each week. Refreshments are available and included in the cost of the entry fee. Sessions end with music, songs and nursery rhymes.

Reporting on the activities of **Hambledon Village Shop**, Alison Scott-Bishop noted that, on behalf of the shop, she had received its South West Surrey Community Heroes Award from Jeremy Hunt MP at a reception in Farnham in March. The shop's work during Covid had also been recognised through a small number of donations from customers who wished to recognise the support which was provided to them. November 2022 marks the 30th anniversary of the shop reopening as a community shop. This will be marked at the Village Shop Barbeque on 27 August. The shop has once again made a modest profit in the year to 31 January 2022 and is always on the lookout for volunteers and professional staff to help both in the shop and also in areas such as marketing and communications, events management, IT support and maintenance.

Mary Grove reported that the main event of the village's celebration for the **Queen's Platinum Jubilee** will be a Big Lunch in Malthouse Lane on Sunday 5 June. Villagers will be invited to book a table and bring their own food and drink. Other events over the Platinum Jubilee weekend will include a treasure hunt or hunts, open gardens and a church flower event.

6. QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR – none received.

Cllr Payne thanked attendees for coming and closed the meeting.