

**ST LEONARDS & ST IVES PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly**

**19<sup>th</sup> April 2017 7.00pm**

**In the Main Hall at The Village Hall, Braeside Road, St Leonards**

Present: Chairman of the meeting Vice Chairman Cllr N Hindmarch

Cllr R Bryan	Cllr B Goringe	Cllr Mrs A Warman
Cllr Mrs J Carter	Cllr Mrs S Marshall	Cllr R Warman
Cllr M Dyer (arrived at 7.55pm)		Cllr Mrs B Waugh

In attendance: Clerk Mrs A Jacobs; and 7 Members of the public.

**1. Welcome:** Cllr Hindmarch welcomed all present and explained that the Chairman, Cllr Rod Adkins, had been called away on an urgent issue. Cllr Hindmarch as Vice Chairman of the Parish Council and also the Chairman of the Planning Committee would therefore be chairing the meeting and giving both reports. Cllr Hindmarch introduced Mrs Pat Shepherd the speaker for the evening after the statutory duties had been completed.

**2. Apologies for absence** were received and accepted from Cllr R Adkins; Cllr J Crow; Cllr A Davies (attending DAPTC meeting) Cllr M Dyer (late attending another meeting); Mr P Walker and Mr K Brooks.

**3. Minutes of the Parish Assembly held on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2016** were confirmed as a true record without objection. Proposed by Cllr R Warman, seconded by Cllr B Goringe. There were no objections. The Minutes were then signed by Cllr Hindmarch.

**4. Matters Arising:** None

**5. Chairman's Annual Report:**

This last year we began with welcoming two new Councillors, Cllr Alan Davies and Cllr Mrs Sally Marshall. Both of whom were co-opted onto the Council and have already become an asset to the working of the Council. Sadly in February we also lost a valuable Member of the Council, Councillor Michael Hockley after a long illness. Councillor Hockley had served this community for a number of years. He brought a wealth of experience and knowledge gained in his professional life. He was an avid user of social media and did his utmost to keep the Community informed. A legacy that the Parish Council will be trying to continue. His particular interests were in the environment; flooding and aviation. Despite his serious illness he did his utmost to attend meetings, his last meeting attended was on the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016. Our thoughts are with his wife and family at this sad time.

I would like to take this opportunity tonight to thank the volunteers within our community for their hard work and effort. These volunteers from various areas, not just the Council Members but the wider community, help make our Parish what it is today.

Particular mention should be made of

- My fellow Councillors all of whom work steadfastly over the year to represent the Parish.
- Graham Willetts who monitors and reports back to the Council on SSSI sites and environmental issues. He also attends the East Dorset Environment Partnership meetings on our behalf.
- Peter Walker who is our Rights of Way Liaison Officer and also updates and maintains the Parish Website.
- Mr Hancock – acts as a volunteer Flood Warden, working alongside Cllr Crow at Oaktree Park.

In addition of course there are many other unsung volunteers who play their part in the Clubs and organisations using the facilities here. Without them these Clubs would fail and we would lose the diversity of the social and recreational facilities we all enjoy. Particular mention should be made of :

- Village Hall Management Committee – who run and maintain these Quality rated rooms and premises which then in turn allow other Clubs and organisations to be so successful and give a great deal of enjoyment and improve the quality of life for our residents.

- The Bowls; Tennis and Youth Clubs and of course Age Concern
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I am sure many of you will be aware of others who probably also deserve a mention so my apologies if I have missed one.

The Parish Council works closely with other Tiers of Local Government such as the District Council and County Council. We have been particularly fortunate that our three District Councillors are also Parish Councillors and it is important to recognise the additional commitment this puts on them. We do appreciate their hard work and support and particularly thank them for allocating their grants this year to the Youth Club and Village Hall.

I would also like to thank our County Councillor Peter Richardson who will be standing down from the County Council this year and hope that whomever is successful will work well with us to develop a sound and productive working relationship.

As we come together this evening the outcome of the Local Government Reform is still unknown. The challenges of even further budget cuts continue as the complete withdrawal of Government funding is still ongoing. We are now in Purdah with the Government about to dissolve in readiness for the General Election on 8<sup>th</sup> June.

The cutbacks have already resulted in the Council agreeing this last year to become the Sole Corporate Trustee of the Youth Club as the County have withdrawn their staffing support. The costs for running and staffing the Club will now be met from the precept. The Club has had a bit of a rollercoaster history but there is now an enthusiastic group of volunteers determined to meet the challenges head on. One person does deserve particular mention here, Bob Warman. Without his diligence and determination it is without doubt that the Club would have folded years ago. He has now stepped down from the Committee after over 20 years and I am sure there are many people in this Parish who have benefitted because of his efforts.

This year we have trialled running without the Finance and Amenities subcommittees. This has enabled a saving in costs. The trial expires in May and the Council will discuss the merits or otherwise at their Annual meeting

## **6. Finance**

You will see that the Councils accounts show a healthy balance which should stand us in good stead to meet the challenges of the future.

The Council continues to support groups by way of an annual grants this year these were:

- Village Hall
- CAB
- Greyfriars
- Age Concern
- Youth Club
- East Dorset Environment Project

### **Future plans:**

The Allotments has to date still not progressed, it has been held up at planning. For security reasons the Landowner wants to erect a small cabin and at this current moment in time we are at stalemate with the Planning Authority.

Burial Ground - We have identified a site for the burial ground and have already conducted the groundwater risk assessments with encouraging results. The next step is to prepare a biodiversity mitigation plan with the assistance of the County ecologist, to ensure protection of the locations flora and fauna.

Whilst we are confident of eventually gaining planning permission for a woodland burial site, and have the full support of the landowner, the land is already leased to another party. We have recently

initiated contact with the current leaseholder, the Forestry Commission, who stated they would seek financial compensation from the Parish Council if we wanted use of the land, in spite of the local need.

As we have no plans to fund the purchase or leasehold of land for this purpose we will rely on the land owner to exercise their right to take back leased lands or find an alternative solution that satisfies the Forestry Commission.

Our plan is to apply for Planning Permission early next year and to begin accepting burials and providing a place to scatter ashes by mid 2018 or early 2019.

The play area was last refurbished 10 years ago so the Council will be looking at putting aside reserves for repairs and new equipment as and when needed.

Our reserves are healthy but with the future pressures so uncertain we need to be prepared to take on more costs and services that is good prudent financial planning.

The Chairman asked if there were any questions on the financial report, no questions were raised.

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## **7. Report on Behalf of the Parish Planning Committee**

The Parish Planning Committee meet every three weeks to view the planning applications submitted for the Parish. The flow of applications is constant and in one evening we can view anywhere between six and 15 applications of varying size. There can be no doubt that with the growing population we need more housing and our sylvan area close to the sea and beautiful heathlands is extremely attractive to developers. There is now a presumption in favour of development and on top of this the budget cuts have meant that Planning Authorities must consider carefully, the financial impact if an application goes to appeal. An appeal can cost a considerable sum particularly if it is then lost and costs awarded against the LPA. Costs which then get recovered in Council tax. On the plus side more housing means more employment and more people boosts the local economy which in turn means more money for business, facilities and services. What we need though is the right type of development. The Parish Council is concerned about the volume and type of development being sanctioned as is the rest of this community and is striving to maintain the special individual character of the area we love.

We do our best to consider each application on its own merits or otherwise and to give a considered view on your behalf but an application can only be refused if it is not compliant with planning considerations. If the LPA do not agree with the Parish Council we have to also then argue our point of view at the District Planning meeting. Members of the Parish Committee have attended to speak on behalf of the Parish at East Dorset on numerous occasions during the last year, a further commitment on their time. You can help the Committee by letting us know your opinion of an application by sending us a copy of your letter or email to the LPA. Come along to the meeting and speak in the public forum. If the Parish is also to speak at on your behalf then please support us by booking to speak as well at East Dorset.

I would like to thank the rest of the Members of the Committee all of whom put in a great deal of time and effort to ensure that they are fully informed and ready to debate the application prior to each meeting.

This Council has and will continue to strive to protect this community, its character and essence to the best of its ability as its Members have a vested interest living here as well.

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## **8. General Open Forum:**

The Chairman reported that the Council have a vacancy which we must be filled as expediently as possible, those present were asked to speak to the Clerk or one of the Councillors present this evening if you want to know more.

The Chairman thanked the Clerk for her advice and guidance not just to the Committee but to him personally.

The Chairman asked if there were any questions? No questions were received.

The Chairman then closed the Statutory part of the meeting at 7.22pm and introduced the speaker. An interesting and informative speech was well received on Munich Olympics of 1972, the speaker, Mrs Shepherd had been part of the Rhodesian Team which was forced to withdraw.

8.05pm The Chairman thanked all for coming and closed the meeting.