

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 26 MARCH 2015  
AT 7.30 PM IN BRAMBLE HALL, BRAMBLE HILL**

Present: The Parish Council Chairman, Alison Stevenson (AS) and Councillors, the Parish Clerk, Rosemary Robertson, together with c30 members of the public and Maggi Pratt from the Bee People.

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Received from Cllrs Huxley, Bottomley & Daniel plus parishioners Joy Hopkins and Sheila Illsley

**2 To approve the minutes Annual Parish Meeting held on 15 May 2014 (circulated)**

The Minutes were signed as a true record of the last Parish Meeting.

**3 Chairman's Report**

This was the last year that this group of Councillors would be representing Balcombe with 6 weeks to go until elections. The nomination period was 30 March until 9 April; the Clerk had been invited by MSDC to submit papers on behalf of candidates. Alison Stevenson said a number of Councillors would be standing down and thanked all those who had served. They had been an extremely good team, showing respect to each other, working well as a unit, pulling their weight with a valuable mixture of skills. She gave particular thanks to Robin Williamson who had served the Council both as Responsible Finance Officer and Chair for a total of 12 years. It was his last meeting and Alison presented him with gifts which echoed his status as "wise old owl" amongst his fellow Councillors, recognising his calm counsel.

Alison spoke about the achievements of the Council. We were about to get yellow lines on Newlands to alleviate safety issues and verge damage. Thanks to Cllr Saunders's endeavours with help from Cllr Dennison and a number of residents; congratulations were extended to them. Thanks too to Cllr Bottomley who had achieved a staggered train service which effectively meant a more frequent service for Balcombe as well as getting the car park fee reduced. Youth Club was continuing at a pace. Cllr Daniel had guided the team through the Neighbourhood Plan process with a demanding regime of weekly meetings. Alison thanked Cllrs Huxley, Daniel and Jarvest who had worked hard alongside Alison to drive it through. The plan was now ready for public consultation which had been delayed because of purdah but it was hoped that the next Council would ratify the work done, and it would go out to consultation in late May.

**4 Financial Report for Year 2014/5 ending 31 March 2015**

Cllr Williamson, the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), referred to the circulated figures which were provisional because Year End was 31 March, final figures would be available in April. The Precept had been kept at £60,000. Routine payments were mainly in line with 14/15, the main difference being the Clerk's salary which had risen with increased rate and hours. Once again there had been no Snow Plan spend so that would be carried into next year. Grants were mostly on budget with BPC continuing to support the Victory Hall (£4,500) and a donation of £2,000 to the Scouts imminent. There had been no costs incurred with Traffic Calming nor the disbanded Speedwatch. BPC continue to support the Youth Club. A figure of £5000 for Oil matters was being kept in the budget as a contingency. Neighbourhood Plan was more or less on budget with £5,000 carried into next year. Bramble Hall performed better than forecast with a deficit of only £3,515 and with BPC's own usage estimated at c£2,000 it meant that it was just below breaking even. Reserves have increased to c£49,000. This Council had thought it sensible to leave the new Council with large reserves so they can decide how to spend the budget and give them confidence going forward. The budget for next year shows a small deficit which would leave reserves at c£46,000 for 15/16.

RW thanked the Clerk for keeping the books meticulously and with great charm. The Clerk would take over as RFO which is standard practice in many Parish Councils. Robin thanked Alison for her 12 years on the Council – paying tribute to the sterling work and for Chairing the Council for the last 4 years – he was sure all Councillors appreciated the leadership she had given: there was a round of applause in support. Alison thanked the Clerk for her work saying she was a pleasure to work with!

**5 Questions from the Floor**

**Richard Greig** questioned whether the Pavilion was operating at a loss: RR indicated that there was money due to be paid in. Revenue would approximately match costs and Cllr Greenwood pointed out that remedial work had been done in the Pavilion (showers).

**Nicky Gould** asked that an “unsung hero” be acknowledged for the mowing and gardening work that he undertakes around the village. Thanks were extended to John Pierpoint and there was a round of applause in support.

**Richard Greig** asked about congestion in the village centre and asked if there had been a change in policy with cones by the Victory Hall not always in place. Alison said that there were proposals for car parking in the Neighbourhood Plan and infrastructure money available, but it would be a task for the next Council to make pedestrian safety better and ease parking problems.

**Tim Shawcross** questioned the democratic principal behind the decision to impose parking restrictions which had a negative impact on commuters; he believed that there had been no consultation. AS said that there had been consultation including a drop-in session and that the work was justified not only due to parking issues but also because of the safety issues on Newlands. Cllr Saunders corroborated saying there had been incidents of road rage and that Newlands was a “special case.”

**Graham Gosney** congratulated Council for work on the Haywards Heath Road footpath hedges and asked when the resurfacing work would be done. The Clerk said it was due 31 March 2015. He suggested that the new Council should work on the footpaths to make them safe for pedestrians and ease traffic.

**Annie Greig** hoped that the promised skate park be built soon to alleviate the problem of skating on Foxwells. AS said that it was in the Neighbourhood Plan but it was costly at c£25,000.

**Richard Greig** asked about delineated bus stops outside the Tea Rooms and a damaged blue sign on Mill Lane which he had reported in December. AS thought that once the planned re-surfacing of Bramble Hill was complete the white lining may be done. Cllr Talman would look into the blue sign.

**RR for Joy Hopkins** – in Joy’s absence the Clerk read out her comments. She wanted say thank you for the new footbridge and the new footpath, to Jamie Kirkman and Sandy Lewis of Balcombe Estate for cutting back the paths, the handrail by the Mineral Spring and all Councillors for all they had done over the last four years.

**Paddy Horne** expressed surprise that the Chairman had not mentioned fracking. He mentioned an expert at Imperial College who had referred to “good shales” in the Weald and had said that Balcombe would “frack rather nicely.” He said that oil companies were economical with the truth, claiming that they were drilling conventionally but then applying to frack.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.07 pm.

**Signed**.....

**Date**.....