

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 30 May 2022
AT 7.30 PM in Bramble Hall**

Present: The Parish Council Vice Chairman, Lloyd Thompsett (LT), Councillors, the Parish Clerk Charlotte Jim plus members of the public: a total of 10 people

1. Apologies for Absence

Received from Cllrs Greenwood and Whybrow.

2. To approve the minutes Annual Parish Meeting held on 5 May 2021 (circulated)

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

3. Chairman's Report

The Vice Chairman gave an update on the year in review, recognising the unusual circumstances of the Covid19 pandemic and the problems in Ukraine. He thanked out-going councillors and welcomed the new councillors to the Parish Council.

Neighbourhood Planning: 61 planning applications including 20 extensions; 2 loft conversions; 1 for 17 new houses (The Rectory site), 1 conversion to a house (stables), 13 for tree work. In March 2022 the Barnfield development (next to Buttercup Barn) was completed. The 1st occupancy was October 2021. S106 money from this development has been earmarked for several infrastructure projects within the village. The S106 allotted money is £108,000; which needs to be used/allocated to prevent the funds being given back to the development.

A footpath from the development through the Barnfield allotments has now been provided.

In February 2022 Shanley Homes' application for a housing scheme on the allocated site next to the Rectory was approved at Mid Sussex District Council planning committee, pending further agreement of infrastructure contribution by 24 May. The first application was refused due to the inclusion of some 4 bedroom houses. The new development will provide a village car park with 10 spaces. We await confirmation from Mid Sussex as to when the playground updates will be programmed.

3. Traffic/ 5. Village Centre Enhancement plans:

During 2021-2022 progress stalled on our goal of enhancing pedestrian and driver safety in the centre of the village, but we have made progress in other areas, and as a result, several amendments to the plans have been made. The 1st road safety audit was not approved, and an image of the new proposed layout was displayed and came about as a result of litigation and highways standards. A Zebra Crossing is to be added and the pavement widened and the central island removed. A parking space will be lost but a village car park will be gained. The rationale includes increasing the width of the pavements, experimental traffic chicanes (but on a trial basis, enabling a reversal if required) Balcombe stores will have tactile paving to aid visually impaired. The proposed road surface is yet to be accepted despite a number of locations locally being surfaced in the buff paving.

We welcome the initiative by our PCSO to carry out speed checks on the Haywards Heath Road, and hope this continues to act as a deterrent.

Energy: On the 2nd March 2021 the WSCC planning committee voted unanimously 13 to 0 to refuse Angus Energy's application for an extended well test at Lower Stumble. Angus Energy have appealed against this decision. The time frame for sending in written representations has now closed and we are waiting to hear the outcome of this case.

Street Lighting: BPC has a plan to convert our streetlights to LED as an energy and cost saving initiative, this is progressing. A number of street lights have been repaired, and the Clerk and the energy group are working with contractors Enerveo to reinstate further lighting columns. The West Sussex County Council lampposts situated on the London and Haywards Heath Roads were deemed substandard, and local Highways have now confirmed that these will be brought up the queue but we are awaiting exact timings. There was concern that the Parish Council would need to fit the bill in order to progress the Village Centre enhancements.

Public transport: The Number 62 Compass bus service continues to run from Haywards Heath/Crawley. The Handcross District Community bus also continues to provide a service for Balcombe (see annual report for timings of buses). Trains continue to run a twice hourly service.

In the interests of time, the Chair then referred residents to the Annual Report for further updates on working groups. The below is an extract for reference;

Youth and Wellbeing: The youth club continues to run fortnightly including sessions being held by Zoom during the pandemic. The group plays an important role in the village community, catering for young people aged 11-14.

Balcombe Primary School has received funding of £4,000 to help towards the setup of the Nature Ninjas project to provide additional enrichment to the curriculum.

We still have a number of dedicated volunteers in the village who help with lifts and prescriptions etc, and whom we can't thank enough; now Covid-19 pandemic restrictions have been eased the 'Balcombe Cares' group has been suspended.

Access, Rural & Village Volunteers: We would like to give a big vote of thanks to all those who put in hours of work to keep Balcombe looking good. The telephone booth in the village centre continues to be a book exchange, and there are plans underway to turn the booth opposite the train station into a walkers' information point. Several walking routes will soon be printed on a new Balcombe Map which will be available to buy from locations in the village.

Community & Assets: The Pavilion - has again been home to Balcombe Football Club for the match season 2021- 2022. It was also used during the Fete last September to provide much appreciated refreshments, and toilet facilities. Sadly, the Pavilion was subject to damage this year from a break in, youths climbing on the roof, and repeated graffiti. On a brighter note it has recently received a much-needed face lift with a combination of a local contractor, and village volunteers. A massive thank you to Rob McIntyre, Rick and Pauline Evans, and Bridget Carter. Your work has not gone un-noticed and the Parish Council is so very grateful.

6. Financial Report for Year 2020/21 ending 31 March 2021

These accounts are prepared on a cash rather than an accruals basis. At the Year End bank balances stood at £139,838. The Accounts have been reviewed by the internal auditor and were signed off by the Council on 25 May 2022. The precept has been set at £75,000 to continue building reserves for neighbourhood planning projections, including the development of a new graveyard, and children's play area.

7. Questions from the floor

A resident brought up the Village Green with regards to the length of the grass. The Village Green already has a wild flower patch but the Parish Council advised that they would consider

this being made slightly bigger. The Clerk agreed to speak to the appointed contractor to discuss options and the residents concerns.

Another resident asked regarding the possible Center Parcs in the area, and Cllr Alison Stevenson provided some information in relation to the proposed land site 'Old House Warren' and the new POW group. No formal planning Application has been submitted to date.

Another resident stated their thanks for the hard work and dedication of the members of the Parish Council, especially with their perseverance with the necessity to constantly chase and await decisions from Mid Sussex District Council and West Sussex County Council. Covid-19 has certainly contributed to delays in work carried out, and decisions being made but this should not now be the excuse.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.14pm.

Signed.....

Date.....