

St Helens Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 11th May 2015 at St Helens Sports Pavilion.

1. Apologies for absence.

Apologies received from Miss Ryan who is unwell, Mr Earnshaw and Mr Campbell who are both on holiday.

2. To receive annual report 2014/15 from the Chair Carole Parker.

Mrs Parker read the following report. *It has been a busy and eventful year for the Parish Council and there is every indication that the coming year will follow suit. There have been quite a few changes to the line-up of Councillors and we were sorry to receive the resignations of Mr Cleaver, Mrs Shaw and Mrs Russell, but very pleased to welcome Miss Ryan and Mr Robertson who we are sure will bring a fresh new approach to the workings of the Parish Council.*

As usual there have been ups and downs throughout the year.

The most memorable ups being; the purchase of a defibrillator made possible by donations from the Old Mill Holiday Camp, Bembridge Parish Council and of course ourselves, the introduction of a bi-annual newsletter keeping residents informed of current issues affecting the village, winning the awards for "Best Kept Large Village" and "Best Kept Village Overall", the completion of the repairs to Duver Road and the successes of village events such as the June Village Fayre and the Christmas Village of Angels.

The most memorable downs being; a rise of 18.1% in the precept to create a contingency fund to enable local discretionary services to continue following cutbacks from IOWC and the unfortunate last minute cancellation of the August Bank Holiday Sports & Carnival due to atrocious weather conditions.

More public consultation is in the pipeline to promote the forming of a Parish Plan which will aim to benefit all residents of St Helens and it is up to all of us, not just the Parish Council, to put forward our views and ideas on how the future of our village should look.

3. To receive report from local police and other local agencies.

The Clerk reported that the local PCSO Kevin Cooke had agreed to attend the meeting but had failed to arrive. No apologies were sent.

**4. To receive updates from Councillors on the progress of the parish plan.
Emergency plan.**

Mr Thomson that the Emergency plan was progressing well and should be completed soon. The plan is mostly run by members of the public with 2 Councillors, himself and Miss Ryan.

Economy.

Mrs Parker reported that she had added to the draft plan which now includes the beach and public toilets as it had been pointed out that these were important to the local economy.

Youth Provision

Mr Bacon reported that the main aim for this area of the plan is to get the youth club up and running again. There are sufficient funds to complete work and add a WC, disabled access and a small kitchen area. He reported that volunteers are desperately needed to enable the plan to move forward and to work out how to make the project sustainable for the future. Mr Robertson offered to join the committee.

Highways

The Clerk reported that a few issues had been highlighted again and again during open days and from questionnaires and that resolving these issues should be the focus of the traffic/footpaths plan. Please see attached draft plan.

5. The future of service provision with the village – Open debate covering –

- **Continuing public toilet provision.**

The Clerk reported that in 2011 the parish council undertook a survey as to whether they should take on the responsibility for maintaining year round public toilet provision in the village. The overwhelming majority of respondents thought that the parish council should fund continuing public toilet provision and raise the precept to cover the costs. The parish council now fund the toilet block on the Green all year round and the cleaning of the toilets on the seafront from October to Easter. The cleaner had reported to the clerk that the toilet block on the Duver was well used during the Winter months, more so than the block on the Village Green.

Points raised by Councillors

- Mr Thomson stated that he believes that the toilets should be handed back to the IW Council as the costs are too high.
- Mr Bacon confirmed that the IW Council had no plans to close any public toilets.
- Mr Thomson thought that local businesses should be asked to contribute towards the cost of public toilet provision.
- Mr Robertson stated that many businesses have toilet facilities for their customers.
- Mr Bacon thought that the parish council should explore whether other funding sources are feasible, such as donation boxes.

Points raised by members of the public:

- Local people don't use the toilets.
- They are important for tourism.
- Public toilets are of great importance to visitors and the elderly.
- Local residents use the facilities on the Duver and those on the Green.
- Funds could be raised by charging people to park during the car boot sales.

- **Landscaping and grass cutting – Village Green and Old Church Green.**

The Clerk explained that the parish council had agreed to take over the responsibility of mowing the Village Green for this financial year. They had made no commitment for future years.

Both the contract for the Village Green and the Old Church Green are up for renewal before April 2016.

Points raised by Councillors:

- Mr Bacon reported that the parish council are due to have a meeting with the IW Council as the IW Council are keen for the parish council to partake in the running of the Village Green.
- Mr Bacon also reported that the IW Council have agreed to community events, such as the Carnival and village fayre, having use of the Village Green without charge.
- Mr Thomson asked if the parish council took over the running of the Village Greens would there be further redundancies at County Hall.
- Mr Thomson also asked that the Clerk what the IW Council's response was to the parish council insisting that they would only take over the grass cutting for this financial year. Clerk to chase.

Points raised by members of the public:

- If the parish council do decide to take over the running of the Village Green they should insist they are in a good condition before they take them over.
- The parish council would need a full time clerk if they were to take over responsibility for the Greens, which would result in an increased precept.
- The parish council don't have the necessary skills or expertise to manage the Greens.
- There have been ongoing issues regarding the early start of the car boot sale and the IW Council do nothing to enforce the rules.
- If the parish council took on the Greens they would have to take on the liabilities as well – The parish council are not up to the task and can't afford it.
- The management of the Greens should remain as it is now.
- Bye-laws are being broken and nothing is done. The parish council does not have the powers to enforce the bye-laws. Therefore there is no point in changing the situation.

- **Litter bin provision.**

The clerk reported that there have been requests for extra bins on the Old Church Green and on Broomlands Path. The Clerk had explored the option of placing a large Biffa bin on the Old Church Green for July and August to ease the problems with excess rubbish over the peak of the summer season.

Points raised by Councillors

- Mr Thomson thought that the parish council should write to the IW Council and ask for additional bins.

Points raised by members of the public:

- The parish council need to consider the health and safety implications of having rubbish lying around for days.
- Councillors need to keep on top of the rubbish situation as the seafront bins are often overflowing.

6. Questions from the public.

A member of the public expressed concern that the traffic plan does not go far enough as it hasn't accounted for any possible new developments such as a possible development of Guildford Park.

A member of the public suggested having a Councillor taking care of the Grass cutting ensuring that's it's undertaken properly. The Clerk confirmed that Mr Thomson would be monitoring the grass cutting.

A member of the public stated that he thought the area at the top of Latimer Rd needed improvement as it was overgrown and was concerned the gardener wasn't fulfilling his contract.

The Clerk stated that she monitors this and that he is contracted to cut it back twice a year between the months of March and October, which he did. She has no concerns over his work as he often goes above and beyond the scope of his contract.