

St Helens Annual Parish Meeting.

Minutes of the annual parish meeting held at St Helens Sports Pavilion at 6.30pm on 9th May 2016.

In attendance:

Councillors: Cllr Bacon, Mr Campbell, Mr Earnshaw, Miss Ryan, Mrs Yates.

Clerk: Lisa Dyer

Five members of the public.

1. Parish Council Chairman's Report.

At this time last year Carole Parker was reading the Chair's Report. She has been a councillor for some 8 years and has served the village well throughout that period. She will be hard to replace. I hope that she enjoys her well-earned retirement.

On the plus side, it has been a pleasure to welcome Penny Yates, a relative of Carol, as a new councillor this year. Her family have a long history of involvement with the parish council. Also, Nancy Ryan took over the role of Vice Chair.

There have been many contentious issues over the past 12 months and whilst we have had modest success in resolving some of these, going forward there are still substantial challenges for the village.

There are two main sources of pressure. Firstly, from outside the village, and outside our control. Central government is in the process of trying to impose further financial restraints on public services. It is rather ironic that the Localism Act, introduced in 2011 by the current government, posited the idea of taking decision making away from central government to be funnelled down to the lowest tiers of government, amongst them parish councils. What has actually happened is that services have been devolved to lower levels, but this is often simply a cost-shunting exercise rather than a true devolution of power and fiscal autonomy - that is, the responsibility is devolved but not the money to fulfil it.

The second source of pressure is from within. I have been disappointed recently to witness a divisiveness within the parish council. The job of the council is to represent the interests of the whole community. The job of the councillors is to ensure that the council is properly managed and this can only be done by working together, rather than pursuing individual interests.

It is the community that should drive any changes and as a council we have to increase our efforts to involve those within the community. Of course, the community itself has to be prepared to be involved. To quote Edmund Burke 'The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.'

Finally, I would like to thank everyone around the council table for their efforts this year – Councillors Jonathan Bacon, Aly Campbell, Joe Robertson, Ian Thomson and Penny Yates. A special thanks to Lisa Dyer, our hardworking and unsung parish clerk.

2. To receive reports from reports from any community agencies/groups i.e. local police, community centre etc...

The Clerk explained that she had sent an invite to the Police to attend the meeting but had not had a response.

Miss Ryan reported that arrangements for the Village Fayre were well underway, the entertainment is booked, stalls bookings are being taken, the Car Boot sale will go ahead as usual this year. She raised the issue that more volunteers are needed to help.

3. To invite the public to raise any matters of interest.

A member of the public raised that The Bembridge and St Helens Food Festival will go ahead again this year and will coincide with "Isle of Wight Day". It will take place on the 24th and 25th September. The High Sheriff Robin Courage will open the event.

A member of the public raised that they believed the parish council should vote to keep the toilets open on the seafront, at the very least over the summer season.

A member of the public raised the mess at the back of the toilet block including items dumped and overgrown foliage and asked whether the parish council was responsible?

The Clerk replied that she did not believe the parish council were responsible for the dumped rubbish and that it had been reported to the IW Council and much of it had been removed. Ultimately the people that put it there are responsible, however, the IW Council are the registered owners of the Green and still manage the Greens therefore she believes they have the powers to act and some responsibility to ensure it is removed. The parish council do, however, employ a contractor to keep the flower beds tidy and she will ask the contractor when they are due to be cut back.

A member of the public raised that the footplate on the Rocking horse in the park was broken and needed replacing. The Clerk will report to the IW Council.

Signed... J Robertson, Chairman.... 22 May 2017