

ST HELENS ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

CONVENED BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL,
22 MAY 2017 AT 7.00pm, AT ST HELENS COMMUNITY CENTRE



DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Cllr J Robertson (Chairman), Cllr J Coleman, Cllr V Duckett, Cllr I Thomson, Cllr M Murwill (IW Council);
Members of public: Four;
Also present: P Baxter (Clerk).

Apologies: Cllr T Woodcock, Mr M Thorpe.

Welcome and introductions

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting, introducing himself as the new Chairman of the Parish Council, together with the attending councillors, returned after recent elections. New councillors Tim Woodcock and Mike Anderson were also introduced although neither could be present.

The two outstanding vacancies were explained, arising following the uncontested election that returned only six candidates, with application forms for co-option made available.

Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting

It was **agreed** that the minutes be signed by the Chairman.

Chairman's report, 2016-17

The Chairman thanked John Earnshaw, past Chairman, for his service to the community, John having retired in January 2017. During 2016, the following achievements were noted:

- The Community Emergency Plan was completed, and radio communications tested;
- The village won the Best Kept Large Village award, and Cllr Thomson and other volunteers were thanked for their work in maintaining aspects of the public realm, including the many benches;
- A wheelie bin had been placed on the beach for the summer season, and again this year;
- A replacement dog bin had been installed on Mill Lane;
- A three-year grounds maintenance contract had been signed with a contractor for various public spaces, particularly the Greens, which would be cut at least 20 times per year;
- Nelsons Quay landscaping had been tidied up both last year, and this, with new gravel and with thanks to Nip Wade for volunteering to paint the anchor;
- Bembridge Lengthsmen available for minor works;
- Toilets remain open under a Tenancy at Will, to stabilise an uncertain future in the short term;
- A budget for 2017 had been set with no increase in the parish precept.

Looking forward to 2017, the Chairman reported the following intentions of the Parish Council:

- A new website was currently in build, to replace the current unsatisfactory service;
- The Parish Plan concept had been set aside, with most of its themes to be included in a more pragmatic internal business plan for the Parish Council. Key proposals to be properly debated and consulted where necessary;
- The Best Kept Village competition is already under way again;
- Horticultural improvements are planned for Latimer Rd garden, subject to quotes and scheme approval at the June Council meeting;
- The Council had adopted the General Power of Competence, affording increased powers and flexibility in decision making;
- A Grant-making policy is in development, for consideration at the June meeting;
- The Village Fayre is now confirmed as taking place (25 June 2017).

Financial Summary

The Clerk gave a summary report of the Parish Council's finances for 2016-17.

Public Forum

Cllr Michael Murwill introduced himself as one of the two newly elected Ward members for Isle of Wight Council. He has been appointed as an Executive Member of the Cabinet, with a portfolio covering Procurement, Waste, and Forward Planning. He wishes to promote business and visitors, both capable of increasing revenue to the island. He wishes to be open to issues and suggestions.

Further debate covered the following topics:

Housing – In response to a query as to how housing development control was managed, and whether the Parish Plan would have been able to provide local control, the Clerk explained the informal nature of a Parish Plan and that only a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) could have statutory control. NDPs are very expensive and complex, and without evidence to suggest that large scale development is pressing, it would be unreasonable to incur the expense and time (up to 3 years) to produce one. Cllr Murwill confirmed that IW Council is to review its housing planning processes. Discussion covered housing supply, affordable housing and allocations, and the preference for brownfield sites to be used before greenfield.

Toilets – A query was raised as to how it might be considered reasonable for approx. 40% of the precept to be spent on keeping the toilets open. The Clerk clarified the current temporary contractual arrangements and the period of notice available to hand the management of the toilets back to IW Council if desired. Discussion included the desire to see the Duver toilets retained to service the beach area. Cllr Murwill undertook to press IW Council for an update.

Village Greens – It was affirmed that the Greens need protecting and conserving. The Clerk clarified the existence of two sets of Bye-laws, and undertook to place them on the new website, in build. Damage caused by commercial activity (nearby building) was noted, and the need to clarify the position of control over parking in the central car park, with abuse of the facility by long-stay semi-permanent users. The Parish Council is to shortly review the current Partnership Agreement with IW Council for the management of maintenance of the Greens, which sees a contribution to the costs being incurred by the Parish from IW Council.

Historical Society – Mr Dyer noted the contribution to the community and to Science of past resident Prof Sir Edward Poulton, who had donated an area of woodland including the Gaggen Path to the community. Cllr Thomson confirmed that National Trust are to place a bench on the Path toward the end of 2017, once site clearance work was completed. A number of other notable residents were recalled, whilst the Clerk reported that a 'heritage' page on the new website had already been created, for which content was requested for uploading.

Vacancies – Cllr Coleman presented the opportunities available to members of the community to become involved in the work of the Council by seeking co-option to it. Volunteers to assist with other forms of community action and maintenance would also be made welcome.

The Chairman thanked those attending, encouraging all to follow the work of the Parish Council and to attend its meetings.