Minutes of the 123nrd Annual Parish Meeting of Wormshill

**held in the Village Hall on Wednesday April 12th 2016**

**at 7pm**

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**Present:-** Simon Bass (chair), Jane Bass (recording secretary), Beryl Gibbard, David Hill, Susan Smith, Karen Tottle, Rosemary Smith, Valerie Hemsley-Flint, Joan Lewis, Hilary Nightingale, John Nightingale, Helen Thomas

**In attendance:-** Patrik Garten, Matthew Scott, Sergeant Balwinder Singh, PCSO Ryan Waring

**Apologies:- None recorded**

The meeting opened at 19:05. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and said that before the meeting proper, Matthew Scott, Conservative Party candidate for the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner and Patrik Garten, the prospective MBC Councillor, again for the Conservative Party had asked to be allowed to say a few words in view of the forthcoming elections.

As these election addresses do not form part of the Annual Village Meeting they have been included as an appendix at the end of this paper.

After the addresses and questions from villagers, the meeting moved on the main business for the evening.

**1. Choice of Chairman for 2016/2017**

The Chair stood down to allow the election to take place. John Nightingale proposed and Joan Lewis seconded the proposal that Simon Bass be chairman for the year and there being no other proposal, this was supported unanimously by the meeting.

**2. Choice of Vice-Chairman**

The chairman asked if anyone was interested as standing as vice-chairman. He explained that the duties were not onerous but that it may be helpful to have a deputy to assist if the need arose. In the absence of any volunteers the position was put in abeyance for the year.

**3. The Parish meeting**

The chairman then welcomed Police Sergeant Balwinder Singh and PCSO Ryan Waring from Kent Police (see item 5 below). He said how much it was appreciated that such busy people should take time to attend the meeting and proposed that the agenda was revised slightly so that after the formalities were over, the police would follow so that they were able to return to their duties.

**4. Minutes of the 122nd Meeting held on April 15th 2015**

Draft minutes had been made available to those attending the previous year’s meeting and the chairman stated that there had been no amendments requested. Copies of the minutes were made available in the hall and the meeting authorised the chairman to sign them as a correct record.

**5. Updates by Kent Police and Neighbourhood Watch matters**

The chairman invited Police Sergeant Singh to address the meeting. He stated that there had been 18 crimes for year although DH commented that there had been 18 *reported* crimes. RW added that many people have no faith that anything will be done if reported which would lead to an under-reporting of crimes.

Sergeant Singh continued and advised people to phone 101 if a Sittingbourne was not an emergency. PCSO’s can and do follow up to let you know what happened. If unreported, the police can’t do anything to remedy the Sittingbourne. *Operation Innovate* is their current scheme and they will send out cars and police where required to target a given area when things have been reported.

He asked that people did report matters so that police know what is happening and so can target resources accordingly. He appreciates the loss of confidence in Police but they can only react to known issues.

Balwinder Singh gave a brief introduction to himself. He had been 26 years in the police and was now out on area, running the Maidstone community policing team. The PCSO’s are the police’s eyes and ears in the community and have helped them build better working relationship with those communities. He commented that there may only have been 18 reported crimes but it is still one of safest places in the county – if other crimes are going on, please do report the so that they know where to target resources. He goes through the reported crimes every morning and if he sees a pattern, will send staff to investigate.

A major concern at present was ‘VOW’s’ (Victim Offender Witnesses). The police can use a variety of techniques such as CCTV, recordings made on mobile phones, crime scene (forensic) evidence. Sometimes there no further lines of investigation possible but if victims are not feeding back issues to the police this doesn’t help reporting.

There are several strands of concern in this area of the county:-

* Child abuse and exploitation
* Human trafficking and modern slavery
* Domestic abuse
* Serious violence and sexual offences
* Gangs – more in urban areas but can also occur in quieter rural areas eg drug finds
* Organised crime – the police can build a picture through assistance by communities – this was critical as policing is essentially by consent in the UK
* Terrorism and domestic extremism – for which the police need intelligence

SS commented that even if a crime is reported, eg oil thefts, the answer was something like “we haven’t got a hope of knowing where it has gone”. This is costly on peoples insurance, as well as losing the oil in the first place. The village feeling was that people knew where it had gone – but it was into a “no go “area.

PCSO Waring pointed out that everything has to be evidence based so can’t necessarily go to look for it. Officers should be updating victims with progress every 21 days. It would be helpful to contact PCSOs who have more time to look things up for you, rather than police officers.

SS had one good tip from a policeman, write down a suspicious car number in dust on a car then copy it down on paper later!

PCSO Waring mentioned that they were holding a security event in Hollingbourne with Kent Horsewatch, this was a good proactive type of event.

The Chair asked if PCSO Waring could let him know details of any such events and he can circulate them to residents.

JN commented that to reinforce the difficulty in reporting, a van smashed his fence and he had number from villagers but was told to go down to Sittingbourne to report it at the police station. He couldn’t get there so it was left unreported. Sergeant Singh asked how long ago the incident was and the reply was over a year. Sergeant Singh advised that the incident management unit had since changed its practice and that the police can now take information over the phone. It can then be followed up, eg by traffic cameras picking up any vehicles involved.

DH brought up incidents at Saywell Farm and Torry Hill. PCSO Waring said that a 4x4 had been found and that forensics were being followed up. They were looking at CCTV from Saywell as part of this.

In response to a question as to what proportion of crimes were resolved, Sergeant Singh said he would have been able to answer that if had known question earlier. The Chair commented that he could feed back the proportion to Patrick or himself once he had it.

PCSO Waring said that in town, many streets have CCTV equipment and number plate recognition cameras. It would help if everyone had it in rural areas too.

Sergeant Singh pointed out that the police had had major cuts to resources over the last few years and were trying to work smarter. They were using technology to help much more and officers were carrying body-worn cameras. They are still delivering a service, but the reality is that the force has been cut by one third and there is more to come. The police have to work smarter. The expectations of services provided in the past can’t be upheld in the future as the funds are not there to support this

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The Chairs added that the outgoing PCC’s report stated that Kent was “one of most effective services in country” but we still all have to play our part of protecting our property.

PCSO Waring added that people should mark your property! SelectaDNA forensic marking fluids work well in deterring criminals and being able to help trace goods. The company can provide signs too for labelling. He can come to give advice to individual householders.

KT asked if the police provided a service on giving advice on any vulnerabilities of individual properties, even if residents had had no problem so far? PCSO Waring said yes, just get in touch.

The Chair thanked them for their attendance and helpful discussions with residents.

**6. Village Correspondence**

During the year the Chair gets a vast amount of correspondence from the county, borough and police as well as from other bodies such as the local NHS or local charities. Most is not very relevant to a small village like Wormshill but where it is he may comment or update the notice board.

Apart from the Local Plan discussed later in the meeting, the report from our outgoing Police and Crime Commissioner, Ann Barnes, was of interest as was the report on the Lower Thames Crossing. Reports on flooding were probably of less relevance to most of the village given its relatively alpine location (for Kent). These reports were available for reading at the back of the hall.

**7. Parish accounts**

The chairman reminded the meeting that it was an ‘Annual Parish Meeting’ rather than a formal parish council since as soon as a precept was levied, it would also be necessary to have the accounts audited. This would incur otherwise avoidable expenditure. As in previous years he saw no obvious reason to change that at present.

The chairman stated that he would be returning the short form, as required, for the year ended March 31st 2016 to the Audit Commission; the short form declaring that there had been no income and no expenditure during the year. The balance in the bank (Santander) was unchanged at £504.93. The meeting supported the position of remaining a Parish Meeting rather than becoming a Council and approved the action of the chairman as regards the accounts.

**8. Village charities**

The Chairman reminded the meeting of the two village charities and their purposes.

The Mary and Harriett Shornden charity is 'for the benefit of the poor of the Parish of Wormshill'. It meets its objectives currently through making a Christmas gift to elderly residents of the Parish.

The Poor’s Land Charity is for the benefit of 'the children of persons resident in the Parish of Wormshill’. It meets its objectives through the provision of educational materials or support to children and young people who are residents of the village.

The trustees aim to maintain a list of those they believe eligible for both charities but are always happy to receive new applications which they will consider at their next meeting. They meet in March and November.

Five of the six trustee positions were currently filled, himself by virtue of being the Chairman of the annual Parish Meeting, and which was subject to the endorsement of this meeting. The others were Nicola Billing, Kevin Shilling, Ian Philips and Claire Bartlett.

The accounts were circulated to the meeting and the Chairman took people through the main points. In doing so he noted that there was an error in the accounts for which he apologised and said that they would be updated. The year end balances were however correct and he thanked Nigel Field for having inspected them. The error was entirely the Chairs.

***Poor’s Land Charity***

This had received dividends on its investments of £291.53 in the year to 31 December 2015 but only spent £40.00 on support so had a surplus of £251.53 for the year, which was held in the current account. The total book value of the charity was £6,107.45 of which £5,000 was held in the Charity Official Investment Fund managed by CCLA. The market value of these funds was £7,632.96.

***Mary and Harriett Shornden charity***

This had received dividends on its investments of £282.24 in the year to 31 December 2015 but had spent £250.00 on Christmas Gifts so had a small surplus of £32.24 for the year. The total book value of the charity was £4,098.50 of which £3,846.66 was held in the Charity Official Investment Fund. The market value of these funds was £7,389.37.

The Chair noted that the Poor’s Land Charity still struggled to identify suitable expenditure to meet its objectives but the Trustees were still anxious to help out young people as best they could.

With respect to the Mary and Harriet Shornden Charity, the Trustees were continuing Christmas gifts for existing recipients but had changed the distribution policy so that older people in need could apply for particular support at any time. This might be for help to replace white goods or for a contribution towards larger items such as a mobility scooter..

**9. Village Hall**

Joan Lewis gave an update on village hall activities. Events in the past year had included a Spring Supper, afternoon tea and games, a Quiz and Curry, and a Valentines supper, which was very well supported and had raised over £500 – with support from friends from Bredgar.

Dates for the diary were:-

* Sun 8th May – Spring Lunch rather than supper
* Quiz and Curry in November

The AGM was last Wednesday. No other people apart from officers attended however. The officers were Joan Lewis Chair, Jane Bass secretary and Sandra Beatty treasurer and bookings co-ordinator. Sue Clarke is also on the committee. The Judo/karate has unfortunately been lost but dog showing/grooming is starting. Short mat bowls, Scouts/Cubs, woodcarvers continue. Bookings are healthy, it is used a lot as a Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. All this is important as the village hall relies on bookings for income. The priority for the year is to do some rewiring and updating the kitchen.

Simon Bass asked if there would be fundraising for the kitchen? Joan replied that the hall committee may apply for grants. SB said he occasionally got details of grant opportunities and he would send on any info he received.

VHF asked why don’t we sell tickets in advance for some events? Otherwise you don’t know how many will be coming. She has money from some friends already in respect of bookings. Joan replied that Mrs Beatty will be phoning round to take bookings in due course..

**10. Planning**

There had not been many applications over the year and nothing problematic had come up. If any application was controversial the chair said he would publicise it on the noticeboard and website – and of course Maidstone put up orange notices anyway.

**11. High speed broadband**

KCC were funding rollout of this across rural areas. The Chair was in correspondence with the KCC project manager and the new communications box should have been fitted in last few weeks but they appeared to be running late. It isn’t expected to go live until about September.

**12. Local Plan**

The Maidstone Local Plan had been received and a copy was at the back of the hall for review. It was a very extensive and lengthy document. Its importance was that it was open for developers to get planning permission automatically if there was no local plan. Therefore it was extremely important to have one. As we are in an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' there was a presumption that no large planning developments would be permitted in Wormshill. The plan does indicate the likely areas where development will take place in next few years. There is a lot development land identified particularly in Harrietsham and Lenham, with some in Hollingbourne. Sympathetic development of old farm buildings in the local area may however be allowed.

If anything controversial such as eg fracking was suggested then the Chair would call a village meeting.

**13. Highways / road sweeping**

Our KCC councillor, Jenny Whittle, had asked for a report on roads in the area but the Maidstone area person was on leave so she could not provide any feedback.

The Chair asked if anyone had used the council reporting system?

DH commented that there was lots of leaf mould and debris on the roads. Antiskid devices mean that vehicles with wheels in the gutter don’t stop in the way they used to. Heavy duty sweeping fills up the tanker too quickly so it is not being done by the Borough either.

The Chair commented that nobody reverses any more so the lanes are just becoming wider as the verges are churned up and disappear. In village itself it appears to be under control, however.

MBC had swept the pavement thoroughly outside church after our meeting last year and cleaned it again in the autumn. The Chair had thanked them for this.

**14. Village clean up date**

Possible dates would be put up on the village 'notice board'. We already have cleaning equipment from Maidstone Borough Council. Verges in other areas now seem full of litter – the cuts are being felt - but Wormshill still seems fairly tidy.

**15. Trees and woodlands**

DH commented that farmers were reluctant to have trees planted because of mechanical hedge cutting. The position of woodlands was that we seemed to be relatively disease free in local area.

VHF commented that a new holly has been planted on the Ringlestone Rd but that large lorries were breaking down branches of trees.

**16. Any other business**

Concerns were raised about lorries using satnav and the Chair commented that signs have been put up, eg, at the Bedmonton Lane junction by the church. HT commented that satnav takes vehicles from the M2 through Bedmonton and the Chair added that some lorries were not using commercial satnavs

RW asked if weight restriction signs could be erected and BS asked if they could be in different languages? The Chair promised to take this up with KCC.

The Chair commented that many lorries are for delivery companies as Royal Mail are no longer delivering so much.

HT suggested a book exchange could be set up in old telephone box but DH commented that it is still a working box and BT wanted us to adopt it.

JN further commented that it is a listed building – if they gave us an endowment we might take it on!

VHF said it stopped working about 3 months ago and she had phoned them to let them know. It doesn’t cost them anything as there are no coins to be collected. There is a light but no working phone!

The Chair will investigate what plans BT have for it. It is Wormshill 241.

JN said that Daphne Parvin, the retiring MBC councillor couldn’t be here but that we should write to her to express our thanks. The Chair said he had emailed her but JN proposed a more formal thank you which the Chair agreed was a good idea.

JN thanked the Chair and secretary for running the meeting and for their work over year.

The meeting closed – 20:30

**Date of next meeting – 4th April 2017 7pm**

**Approved at meeting on 4th April 2017**

**Simon Bass - Chairman**

**Appendix**

**Election addresses from candidates for forthcoming Borough and Police and Crime Commissioner elections**

**Matthew Scott – Prospective Conservative Party candidate for the Police and Crime Commissioner**

Matthew, who lives in Swanley, has experience helping the victims of crime, his father was a Chief Inspector until retirement and his brother is still serving.

Matthew stated his campaign was county wide, there was an election on, there was a choice of candidates and it was your security and safety that came first. Rural areas often feel neglected – to him, no matter where crime takes place, it is important. He will work with other emergency services as part of his role and one of his ‘big pledges’ would be on mental health. Much police time was taken up helping the vulnerable yet the police were not necessarily trained for this type of responsibility. Safe places were needed and he would work with the NHS to try and improve the problem.

The PCC role was often controversial and not universally accepted. It was a role established on your behalf to enable the Chief Constable to be accountable to the electorate. The PCC set the budget and was accountable for the precept. As far as possible he would make sure that Kent Police had resources they needed to do their work.

He asked if there were any questions?

VHF asked if there were any visual aids so that we know what policeman looks like?! They were very rarely seen in the area.

She also added that if reporting a crime, valuable time was lost on questions such as on ethnic origin and questions about the questioner whilst the criminal was getting away. It was possible that that information could be collected later when time was less critical.

Matthew Scott commented that she had done well to get through on the phone! He agreed that it was the information that was important, the satisfaction survey could be collected later.

After further questioning Matthew reminded people to vote and the meeting moved on to the next issue.

**Patrik Garten – Prospective Conservative candidate for the area for Maidstone Borough Council**

Patrik said he had met most people in the village at their doorstep or left a card and hopes to be able to represent the rural areas from 6th May, post-election. He will be in close contact with future colleagues from Maidstone and KCC. He will do his best to follow in Daphne’s footsteps.

He asked if anyone had any questions.

JN asked about flytipping and Maidstone discontinuing the refuse lorry collections. He was concerned that flytipping would get worse.

PG commented that the Conservatives are not the ruling party on Maidstone and so he can’t speak for the council. One of the issues was that recycling was not possible with freighter waste and the council, like others, was under pressure to recycle as much as possible.

It was also commented that it was probably not local residents who were flytipping but that it was coming in from elsewhere.

The chair said that apparently it would save about £40,000 across the borough which did not seem a particularly large sum and probably less than clearing up after flytipping incidents.

PG said that the rural community was not getting good services. Maidstone (the town) needed to understand that the rural community needs services too, eg parking wardens in some villages were needed as well as in Maidstone itself.

JN pointed out that with the postbus having been stopped, the taxi service still allowed the elderly to get to Sittingbourne. His understanding was that Daphne Parvin had used some of her discretionary budget to fund this, and he requested this to continue.

PG said the message was received. He knew that Stockbury ran a very successful minibus service as charity. Perhaps Wormshill could liaise on this matter? If elected, he would consider contributing some of his budget if has one.

If you would like anything else added do please contact me! Simon Bass, 01622 884233 / simon.bass1@btopenworld.com