

DEBDEN PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held at 8.00pm on Wednesday 26th
April, 2017 at 8.00pm in the Village Hall, Debden**

<u>Chairman</u>	Cllr R. Forster	(RF)
<u>Present</u>	Cllr E. Blackie	(EB)
	Cllr S. Luck	(SL)
	Cllr Alicia Tetlow	(AliciaT)
	Cllr A. Tetlow	(AT)
	Cllr S. Watson	(SW)
	Cty Cllr S. Walsh	
	Mrs. C. Griffin	Parish Clerk
	48 members of the public	

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

SL raised a point of order about the fact that he had consulted the PC regarding attending the Annual Assembly as a private resident and not as a Parish Councillor because he had some points to raise about "the community". SL said the Clerk had refused to allow him his democratic right. The District Councillor attends PC meetings as a resident and a District Councillor.

The Clerk explained that as far as PC meetings are concerned, Parish Councillors must attend as Councillors. The District Councillor can attend as a District Councillor or a resident, however when the District Councillor attends meetings of the District Council she can only attend as a District Councillor. There are no hard and fast rules as far as the Annual Assembly is concerned, but it is generally expected that members of the Parish Council attend as Councillors.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr A. Roper, Dist Cllr T. Knight (arriving late)
Mrs. J. Pearce.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 4th May 2016

It was proposed that the Minutes should be signed as an accurate record of the meeting.

Proposed: Cllr A. Tetlow

Seconded: Mrs. N. Manser

3. Chairman's Report

The Chairman welcomed residents to meeting and thanked those organisations that were invited for attending or sending in their reports which if not read out will be attached to the minutes and posted on the website.

If you do not have access and require a hard copy of a particular report please inform our Parish Clerk or the organisation concerned

Many of the items that in the past have been included in the Parish Council Chairman's report are now dealt with in the Recreation Ground Chairman's report so you will find my report is a very short one which concerns itself exclusively with Parish Council matters.

ALLOTMENTS

A large amount of effort was spent last year in clearing overgrown allotments and finding new people to cultivate them many thanks must go to Ron Chapman who has spent many hours helping us in this task and encouraging and helping those taking them on.

Thanks also go to Elaine Baines of Saffron Walden Town Council who circulated our vacancies to their complete waiting list which has resulted in Four allotments being taken

The rotavator we acquired has been very useful and made the task much easier Further clearance including tree and hedge cutting is planned for later this year in an attempt to get all 36 plots cultivated

POND

The pond was cleaned out again this winter and treated with powdered gypsum. It is amazing how much silt accumulates in 5 years since we last dredged it.

Thanks go to Colin Harris and Patrice Sauzier who helped in this exercise

A special weed cutter and rake have been purchased to the weed each year minimising the silt build up

Marsh Marigold and Pink lilies have been planted to add interest and a new depth sign will shortly replace the old one

PAVILION

Unfortunately we have not made much progress with fund raising for its proposed refurbishment this year but hope this will be picked up next year.

RUBBISH & DOG BINS

These are gradually being replaced as the old ones fail, please let us know of any that are broken.

SIGNS

You may have noticed we have a new road sign at the top of Church Lane

BYWAYS

Cty Cllr Simon Walsh has recently visited Byways 35 and 37 at Sampson's Lane – thank you Simon.

MOD

Last but not least I wish to thank the MOD and for extending the date on their generous grant for a new village hall and UDC for their involvement in discussions with the parties. We the Parish Council are offering our full support to the mediation process.

4. Summary of the Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31st March 2017

Copies of the Accounts had been circulated in advance.

The following comments were received:

- The balance in the bank account shows that for the last two years the Council has run at a surplus. Why was the Precept increased?
It was pointed out that the Council needs to retain funding in reserve. Unfortunately, some issues have been delayed. Although orders have now been placed, payments were not made before the end of the financial year.
- Transfers totalling £4,000 have been made to the R.G. Trust.

The PC's accounts are currently subject to an Internal and External Audit but in future an external audit will not apply to small councils such as Debden.

The Parish Council is allowed to transfer funds to a Charity and since the Trust was set up funding has been transferred into this account whenever necessary. The RG Trust has a separate bank account and completely separate accounts are kept. The accounts will be prepared and audited and available at the AGM of the RG Trust in June.

5. Reports from Dist Cllr Tina Knight and Cty Cllr Simon Walsh

Cllr Walsh reported that:

This year the County has pegged its proportion of council tax with no increases on the general fund. However, due to continuing Government grant reductions we have reluctantly increased the Social care element by 3%. This reflects the increasing elderly population in Essex, and their care demands. In all £524 million will be spent on Social Care this coming year.

Front line services remain our priority and we have set aside £260 million for capital projects on our highways network. £263 million has been allocated for a capital investment programme, included in this is £5 million to protect homes from flooding, and significant investments in new schools. On education, Uttlesford pupils are amongst the best performing in the County, and Country.

The Local Highways Panel continues with additional top-up funding of £100,000 split 50:50 between the County and Uttlesford District Council. A wide range of projects are on our list for discussion in April, when the funding will be allocated. Again our project list exceeds our budget so some tough decisions will need to be made.

Waste reduction remains a challenge, and a number of schemes will be promoted this year to encourage more reuse and recycling. That said Uttlesford residents are one of the best performers for recycling, so well done! So the County will be encouraging more food waste collections, more composting, clothes recycling and reminding people those small electrical items can now be disposed of in many of the County Libraries. The waste plant in Basildon is still in commissioning, but is processing waste and preventing it from going to landfill.

A key consultation on the A120 has recently closed, and it has attracted a lot of responses. These will be analysed and new routes shortlisted for the Government to consider. Getting this route improved to the east of Braintree will unlock what is an important east-west route across the county, and with its improvement economic growth will follow.

Country Parks are one of our major success stories and across the County has a range of innovative things for visitors to do. Locally, there is great Notley Country park, which has a number of exiting elements to it, including a fishing lake and the sky ropes structure. A zip wire is now being considered, and could be the longest in the east of England. Other parks offer the Gruffalo Trail, or just quiet space to walk and enjoy nature.

During the past year my role changed and I am now on the Cabinet with responsibility for Environment and Waste.

It is a wide ranging portfolio, and deals with disposal of household waste, recycling and a number of environmentally related areas of work. Included is flood prevention, country parks, rural and coastal matters. Part of my role includes chairing the Essex Rural Partnership which launched its Rural Strategy this year, and I have chaired a group which is determined to reduce industrial fly tipping in the county.

The following issues were raised:

Cllr Walsh reported that he visited the Byways at Hamperden End recently following correspondence between the Council and ECC. He agreed they are in a poor condition but there is a problem because the official route goes across the field and ECC is contesting the route. I have suggested we take the line that has been in use for many years and then record as a special route. Cllr Walsh will work on this with the ECC officers but was unable to give any time frame as to when this would be resolved.

Winter closures are being done on a one by one basis and where closures have been effected they have been successful. The byways are often not used by motorbikes when they are in good condition.

Care for the elderly is being reduced; care lines have been stopped and telephone support has been withdrawn. In view of the amount involved these should not be stopped. Cllr Walsh agreed yo look into this.

A question was raised relating to Superfast broadband. Cllr Walsh said there are no plans at ECC to increase this. A resident reported that it has been suggested that a community broadband should be set up.

Cllr Walsh will continue to chase the engineers at ECC regarding the blocked culvert on Ivy Todd Hill but they have a long list of jobs outstanding.

Cllr Walsh advised that Roger Hirst, Police & Crime Commissioner, is now bringing in more Police and taking rural crime more seriously. He will be visiting his parish fairly

soon and will let Debden PC know the outcome. The proposed merger concerns the Police and Crime Commissioner replacing the fire authority; in fact it will replace 23 with one Police and Crime Commissioner. It does seem to be sensible to join up the services.

6. Reports from Village Groups

RG Trust Report

EB read the following report:

This is the first year since its registration as a charitable trust with the Charity Commission, that the business and affairs of the Rec Ground Trust have been conducted totally separately from those of the Parish Council. This was done following recommendations of charity law solicitors and the Charity Commission. The Recreation Ground Trust was created on 28th November 2002 and the 7 Parish Councillors all became *de facto* Trustees for sake of continuity and accountability as advised by the solicitors at the time. However, Parish Councillors can resign their role as Trustees if they so wish for personal reasons and continue in their role as Parish Councillors.

We have undertaken a thorough review of the Trust Deeds and revised and clarified some of the operational and administrative aspects of the document to make it easier for trustees to understand and to avoid confusion. These changes will now be submitted to the Charity Commission for their approval.

The Recreation Ground Trust meetings are now held separately from those of the Parish Council, and, as is the case for any charitable trust, the regular bi-monthly meetings, with the exception of the AGM, are not normally open to the public, unless previous notification and reasonable reason for attending has been given in writing in advance of the meeting.

Any matters relating to the Recreation Ground, Pavilion, Car Park, Tennis Courts and Playground are discussed at the Recreation Ground Meetings. However, as the Pavilion is owned by the Parish Council, the Council is obtaining advice and clarification, initially from the Auditor, on how this should be dealt with.

Minutes and accounts for the Recreation Ground Trust are kept separately. The Trust has had a separate bank account from the Parish Council for several years.

Car Park

Work has been ongoing to fill the potholes that regularly appear and more work will be required in future until a more permanent solution can be found.

The car park continues to be heavily used and on occasions it has reached capacity and overflowed onto the grass verges of Mill Road. Larger vehicles and in particular the weekly visit of the 11 ton refuse lorry, which has to reverse to the village hall doorway, continue to damage the surface.

Tennis Courts

The Tennis Courts Committee have now replaced all the external fencing and netting, the courts have been power washed and the nets replaced.

We thank the Committee for their efforts and look forward to hearing more about plans for future developments of the facility.

Playground

Regular ongoing maintenance together with annual inspections by ROSPA are carried out to maintain safety.

Maintenance repairs were carried out on a number of equipment as advised by ROSPA and we are currently completely refurbishing the aerial runway

The ROSPA report has also identified weaknesses in the construction of the mound which will need to be addressed in the future.

A commemorative bench was installed to celebrate the Queen's 90th Birthday.

Thanks go to Sue and Martin Bird who continue to mow the grass regularly as they have done for some years.

Other matters

The location of the proposed new village hall.

Recently a proposal has been put forward by a village resident to the Village Hall Trust to rebuild the village hall on its present location. The Recreation Ground Trust is in favour of this plan which would result in a better layout of the Playground, safer access from the village hall to the meadow and no reduction of car parking spaces.

It was pointed out by SW that the report had not been agreed by all members of the Trust.

Questions were raised regarding:

- The small piece of land, 4 sq ms, which will be needed if the proposed plan drawn up by Simon Langman goes ahead. This was agreed at the last meeting of the RG Trust. This will result in the children's playground being reorganised.
- I understand the path from the hall will go onto the playground; how will you recompense this because that would not be in the best interests of the children
- In the past it has been possible to bring matters up with the PC, now the RG Trust has adopted a non-democratic stance and discussions are being carried out behind closed doors. This is a backward step.

The Chairman pointed out that meetings of charitable trusts do not have to be open to the public.

- Would the PC look into whether the PC acted *ultra vires* when they registered the land in the name of the Trustees. It is a public trust. You have not published your reasons.
- SL said a democratic process is not being followed. Members of the Trust have always maintained a land swap is not in the best interests of the Trust, I do not know what that means. The Chairman read an extract from the leaflet which was distributed to every house in the village in which the solicitor clearly sets out the reasons why it is not.

The Parish Council Chairman reported that the mediator visited the village yesterday on a fact finding mission. He had separate meeting with Richard Cawte, Chairman of the VH Trust, Mike Fairchild, Chairman of the NVHG, Elisabeth Blackie, Chairman of the RG Trust and myself. He has also talked at length to Simon Langman today. He is

now proposing a second session but at the moment we are not sure what that involves. Mediation has been put in place to determine whether or not there is a viable scheme which can go ahead.

Col. MacDonald added:

The MOD are pleased that the mediation process has now started and there remains a positive opportunity to save the grant.

By 30th June, the MOD will require:

- An agreed plan inclusive of all parties
- A time line programme
- A schedule showing funding streams other than the MOD grant.

VH Trust Report

Richard Cawte reported that:

The existing Village Memorial Hall has continued to be busy in the last year 7 days a week with bookings holding steady. Thanks to the hard work of the Trustees, the local community and our loyal hall users most enquiries have been able to be accommodated.

Special thanks must go to Jim Watson who has been on call constantly to make sure that any minor problems have been dealt with quickly.

2017 is going to be challenging as work needs to be done to keep the Hall in a safe and usable condition. We have undertaken a complete Electrical Inspection and portable appliance inspection to make sure we comply with the latest regulations, this has highlighted areas that we need to address including the fitting of new coin meters for heating etc. all this will be need to be paid for.

We will be asking for help from our users and the wider community to take part in a spring clean of the existing facilities to make sure we can all use the Hall safely for the many activities we now have booked in.

Fund raising for the New Village Memorial Hall has continued, but due to the problems of the land exchange, a lot of funds have not been able to be accessed, some funds have been lost due to time constraints and the community have held back with their commitment to fund raising because of the uncertainty.

In November-2016 a new proposal was put forward headed by Simon Langman to build a new hall on the existing site. Although progress has been made in a short space of time on this idea, there are still many outstanding issues that need to be addressed before the Trustees could give approval to move forward.

The Trustees overall strategy for a new hall from day one has been that the new hall must be self-financed, it must safeguard the shop, the post office and the hall users so as to maintain continuity of services during construction.

Thanks to the generosity of the MoD in extending the timescale to the end of June 2017, the Community Covenant Grant of £236,400 awarded to the Village Hall Trust is still in place. This is so that all parties can go to mediation to try and reach a solution to come up with an agreed, robust plan to use this grant in a timely acceptable fashion. The Community Covenant Grant is down to the hard work and dedication of the volunteers of the New Village Hall Group as these grants are not given easily.

Throughout this process one over-riding principle has shone through, all the advice we have been given both legal, financial and from the wider community is that;

“Where there is a will, there is a way”

I am sure that any perceived obstacles can be overcome for the greater good of the whole community both now and into the future.

Col MacDonald then reported on other matters:

- We recently has some displays for an RBL event and we hope to expand this in future.
- The Army 2020 restructuring process will bring changes at Carver Barracks. The number of soldiers will increase because of the work we are doing around the world.
- The Defence Strategy highlighted the sites which would be closed; Carver Barracks being one of them. It is understood that the Army will be selling most of the larger sites in the next few years and Carver Barracks has been selected for closure in 2031.
- Thanks were expressed to Dist Cllr Tina Knight for all the support she gives to the Barracks, Cllr Steward Luck for his assistance with utilising the runway and help with the Air Cadets and Brian Lindsell for all his efforts in raising money for the Injured Soldiers Fund.
- The army is in discussion with ECC and Essex Police concerning the purchasing of an ANPR camera to protect both the Barracks and the local community
- Armed Forces Day will be on Saturday 24th June.

Mike Fairchild thanked Col. MacDonald for the amazing contribution he has made to the village particularly the Army Covenant grant. He wished him all the best for his retirement.

Reports from the Tennis Courts, St. Mary's Church, Pentecostal Church and Village Shop were then read.

In view of the time, all other reports received will be added to the website.

Brian Lindsell, organiser of the Debden Cycle, thanked the people who had helped with this event in the past and asked other people to give up a few hours to help with the marshalling. This year's event will be on Sunday 3rd September. The event

last year was most successful and raised £2,200. Further details are available on the website, www.Debdencycle.co.uk

7. Open Forum

It was reported that a car is regularly parking on the footpath next to No. 8 Deynes Road making it very difficult for people to get through. The Parish Clerk will contact the owner and point out that cars should not obstruct public rights of way..

The meeting closed at 10.08pm.