

DRAFT - MINUTES OF THE SLINDON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

HELD ON MONDAY 19th MARCH 2018 AT 7PM IN THE CORONATION HALL

PRESENT: Including Parish Councillors Ann Watts, Chairman, Niki Adamson, Barbara Brimblecombe, Peter Fenton, Robert Parfey, Steve Chilver and Derek Thomas, there were a total of 48 residents present.

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the format for the evening.

Apologies were received from Craig Ramus, Manager, The Forge Shop, Gaston Farm, Mr & Mrs Clemmetsen, Dr & Dr Stone, Mr & Mrs Barrett, Mrs Faith Harris, Katie Archer, National Trust, Derek Whittington, West Sussex County Councillor, Nigel & Lorna Smith, Gareth & Paula Williams, and Mrs Catherine Slee.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20th MARCH 2017

2.1 Subject to the correction of a couple of minor typographical errors, the minutes of the meeting held on 20th March 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. PARISH ACCOUNTS 2016/17

3.1 The Clerk presented a copy of the summary of the Parish Council's Accounts for the year to 31st March 2017. The summary also included a statement of the Parish Council's reserves indicating where funds had been earmarked for specific projects. It was noted that the profit and loss statement would be published in the next edition of the Parish Magazine.

4. REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

4.1 The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting especially those for whom this was a new experience. It had been another busy year for the Parish Council and there were a lot of people who needed to be thanked for their help. Referring to the monthly parish council meetings she stated that each month was associated with a theme but always with a common thread namely, "is this value for money" and 'everything in its time'. These were valuable reminders that the Council was answerable for how it spends the precept and that the expectations of volunteer councillors are ever increasing. That said, the Parish Council has most certainly got things done!

4.2 There had been an unprecedented number of consultations ranging from strategic projects such as the A27 bypass at Arundel and the South Downs National Park Local Plan to local matters such as the Slindon Conservation Management Plan and most recently The WSCC 'Keep School Clear Markings' Proposal. The Council had done all it could to ensure residents had access to the information and were able to express their views. She thanked The Spur, The Forge and SlindonLife for the help they had provided in getting information out. She was also pleased to report that unlike many other parishes, residents often attended the Council's monthly meetings and used the 'Talk to Us' session.

4.3 The job of The Clerk was varied and in Slindon including getting wet and muddy, making tea and a steep learning curve regarding flora and fauna! The more serious side was the frequent new regulations with which Councillors and The Council must comply. Changes to audit processes, risk management, reporting and governance, as well as our code of conduct, though not visible or exciting were necessary. It was also a reminder that Parish Councillors signed up to 'Champion the Needs of Residents' and 'Listen to the interests of all parties' – something she hoped Councillors achieved. The Parish Council was a constant in the community even if the membership changed and members aimed to keep up to date on matters of

interest in the parish through briefings and member representation on outside bodies.

4.4 Moving on to more exciting matters, she proceeded to describe some of things the Council had achieved over the last year. The purchase of Traffic Cones had helped tremendously to manage the parking at events. The outdoor gym had been launched to support health and wellbeing and work continued on improvements to the Recreation Ground and Top Playing Field and maintenance at the pond and memorial garden. Judging by the motorists hooting their support most of Slindon must have driven past as the planting of the hedging along the A29 boundary took place and she thanked everyone involved. The renewal of the lease with the Sports Association had just been completed and after a period of change the Association was maintaining the grounds and pavilion.

4.5 The coming year would see more work at both the Recreation Ground and Top Playing Field to finish hedging and seed wild flowers. The Moor Family had also commissioned a flint bench to be built near John's tree which would allow everyone to enjoy the stunning views. The Parish Council recently had the war memorial cleaned and would be working with NT volunteers to maintain and refresh the flint wall around the Memorial garden. Further maintenance work is scheduled on some of the trees on the recreation ground and the Council had budgeted to replace the Clerks aging laptop. The coming General Data Protection Regulations would also see changes and it was noted that this would apply equally to any business, charity or organisation that held personal data. The improvement of the A29 crossing at the cross roads was a "live" project with WSCC. The timescales were driven by them and the Council would be involved as necessary and keep residents informed of progress. There was also a vacancy for one Parish Councillor and she added that if anyone would like to find out more Councillors would be happy to speak to them later in the evening.

4.6 Finally, the Chairman stated that without the help of the National Trust and their volunteers it would be very difficult to maintain the Pond and the Recreation Ground boundary. Thanking them she also made a plea. The vast majority of work was undertaken on a voluntary basis either by Councillors, residents or people who were just interested. Commenting that It would be wonderful if more people could get involved in the coming year, the Council also appreciated the help that it had received from Gaston Farm and Wyatt & Son. The Council would continue to engage with the many community groups within the village – SlindonLife, the Coronation Hall Committee, the Slindon Community Land Trust, the History Group, the Primary School and the College, the Forge and the Sports Association. The Chairman invited residents to join Members for a glass of wine or cup of tea after the formal part of the evening.

5. PRESENTATIONS FROM SLINDON COMMUNITY GROUPS

The Chairman invited representatives from local organisations and community groups to give brief presentations and the following points were noted.

5.1 SlindonLife

SlindonLife would be focussed on continuing to support the community through the round robin service, the village website; slindon.com, monitoring the village events diary, and organising activities such as flix in the sticks and the summer swimming at Slindon College. A date for the reorganised litter pick would also be circulated soon. Last year's Summer party had been a great success, and another was planned for this year. Not everything went to plan and hopes of setting up a community speed watch had not yet come to fruition and volunteers were urged to come forward to help make it happen. Other main events planned for the village included farm visits, potentially a village only "Apple Day" and several exhibitions, walks and talks to mark the centenary of the end of WW1. More recently, SlindonLife had been instrumental in gathering and sharing its research into the recent School Keep Clear Project Consultation. This was a reminder that the

organisation existed to identify things that were wanted or need but which didn't naturally fall into the remit of groups and welcomed suggestions as well as volunteers to help.

5.2 Slindon Charities Trust

The meeting received a copy of the Charity's Accounts for the year ending 23rd July 2017. Following the receipt of a generous legacy and with the continuing support of the village the Trust had been able to significantly increase its giving to those in need. The Trustees thanked the Forge for helping to provide nearly 20 Christmas hampers. The next annual coffee morning would be held on 24th May at Firgrove House and the Trustees thanked the owners for once again agreeing to host the event.

5.3 Slindon History Society

The Society continued to collect and update local records, arrange publications, and talks in the village. Last year had seen them hold talks on Slindon in The Great War and the development of St Mary's Church. History tours had recently been introduced and were proving so popular that more volunteers were sought to help run them. The proceeds from these tours were donated to St Mary's and as enjoyable as they were, volunteer support was essential if they were to continue.

5.4 Slindon Church of England Primary School

The new Head teacher of the Slindon C of E Primary School introduced herself and stated that from the very first time that she was taken on a tour of the school and the village, she fell in love with Slindon. The current school setting was unique both in terms of its surroundings and its pupils, many of whom had special education needs which the school was ideally placed to support. Currently looking after 72 pupils in three classes, pupils would be able to benefit more the use of the grounds and the copse and the School would continue to host the Forest School. She thanked many businesses and local groups who supported the work of the school and added that after a challenging year, the School was gaining ground. Speaking of the value of the extra support that pupils receive from the wonderful village community the Head teacher recalled an African proverb, "It takes a village to raise to a child". In conclusion she issued an invitation to the Annual School Fayre, which this year would be otherwise known as the "Great British Fete-Off!".

5.5 Arun District Council (ADC) and The National Park (SDNPA)

Both ADC and the SDNPA were progressing Local Plans. The District Council hoped to have positive news soon that would allow them to adopt a Plan to help control development. This was essential if the Council was to deliver the 1000 plus houses per annum required over the period of The Plan In the meantime work on building the new leisure centre in Littlehampton was progressing well and the new upgraded facilities should be opening next year.

5.6 Regarding the National Park, they too hoped to have an adopted Local Plan in place later this year. Whilst this Plan also proposed additional housing it would be aligned to those of neighbouring authorities and environmentally and ecologically focussed taking into account affordable housing initiatives such as community land trusts.

5.7 The Forge Shop

The new management thanked the community for its welcome and support over the last year. The new team had nearly twenty years' experience of running community retail businesses and their first year had exceeded expectations in several ways. Thanking customers and volunteers for their patience, market testing had been very much part of the new team establishing a presence. Changes had been made and were planned regarding the range of products on offer to reflect the tourist trade and local produce. Work had already started to give the interior a more rustic feel, seasonal menus were planned, and they hoped to start an eat in / takeaway restaurant service in due course. Wine tastings, quiz nights and super

nights were also planned all of which would be advertised in a newsletter they hoped to set up. Outside, customers would notice a change in the planting as the management planted a vegetable garden which it was hoped would provide fresh produce for use on the premises. Feedback was essential, and residents and customers were urged to keep their comments coming.

5.8 SPEC 2000

Managing the SPEC 2000 fund had become increasingly onerous and there had been no use for it for several years. It was noted that with no funds available the decision had been taken to wind it up.

5.9 The Community Bus

The "new" Community bus was now over two years old and had recently benefitted from some extensive maintenance. The bus was staffed by two groups of volunteer drivers from Slindon and Amberley and more drivers would always be welcome. It was noted that some variations to the timetable had recently been introduced and that details had been published in the Parish Magazine.

5.10 Slindon College

The Head Master at Slindon College would be leaving to take up a post setting up a similar school overseas. The Governors hoped to be able to announce details of his replacement after completion of interviews which would be held shortly.

5.11 National Trust

The Trust was grateful as ever for the continued support of residents. There were a number of projects being undertaken to refurbish properties on the Slindon Estate some of which were part of a Head Office pilot project. Referencing staff changes over the last twelve months, a number of new faces were welcomed. Katie Archer had taken on the role of Head Ranger and the meeting went on to hear from two rangers who had recently joined the team. Improvements to the car parks, information boards and walks were noted and a recent innovation, "The Slindon Safari", was proving to be a popular way of showing visitors the Estate. The Northwood project continued with more trees being planted and coppicing being undertaken. The Team prided itself on using materials drawn from the Estate's natural resources and this was evident in the new gates at the car parks. Progress with hedgerows and initiatives to support birds and wildlife were also noted. Recognising the significance of this year's centenary of the end of World War 1 (WW1), the Trust would be working with the Airfields of Britain Conservation Trust to introduce a memorial in Northwood where a very early airfield had been positioned. The Trust was also working on the development of an educational facility at the Estate office which would be available as a community space and teaching facility.

5.12 St Mary's Church

The last twelve months had been very busy for the Church and the congregation had been pleased to have the church bell returned, refurbished and sounding better than ever. The main priority for the coming year would be internal redecoration with the aim of creating a brighter and more welcoming environment. The congregations of St Mary's and St Richards, were now regularly coming together for a monthly event to help raise funds for children's charities. The continued generosity of residents ensured a regular flow of donations and details of this year's Fate were noted. Referencing the nationwide act of commemoration regarding the centenary of the end of WWI, the Slindon Knitwits would be knitting poppies to remember each resident who gave their life during the conflict. These would be displayed in the Church together with a biography of each individual named on the village memorial.

5.13 Courthill Farm

The Crawley family had been resident at the farm for four years and only now was it starting to feel like the business was firmly established. Combining sheep and cattle with a crop of organic barley it was hoped that customers would be able to buy produce direct from the farm by the end of the year. The Farm's environmental ethos drove all its work and the hard work of previous years was starting to show benefits for local wildlife and birds. Progress in this respect would be monitored and recorded. The impact of Brexit was as yet unknown particularly in terms of the Common Agricultural Policy, but the family remained focussed on developing the business with clear environmental objectives.

The family were warmly congratulated on winning the silver award in the "New Entrant: Against the Odds of the Year" category at last year's British Farming Awards.

5.14 The Slindon Community Land Trust (SCLT)

Mr Peter Fenton addressed the meeting in a personal capacity as Chairman of the SCLT Steering Group and gave an update on progress with the CLT and the preferred site to host the proposed housing scheme. Reporting that 14 sites had originally been considered, the field earmarked for the development was considered well positioned. A public meeting last October had seen the formation of the Steering Group which was now affiliated to the national CLT network. The Group would be taking the project forward and funding had been secured to employ legal and architectural expertise. It was noted that any future development would be sympathetic to the rural environment of the village and energy efficiency. It was noted that the development would consist of twelve dwellings. Updates would continue to be published in the Parish Magazine and Mr Fenton thanked the Steering Group for its work.

Concerns were raised about how the development would be accessed and that the ability of existing residents to access neighbouring properties was not compromised. Assurances were given that the Group would work closely with planners to devise a plan to address these issues. There was also some scepticism that the preferred development site was appropriate, and several residents called for more clarity in terms of the sites that had been considered and why they had eventually been discarded. It was also suggested that the Steering Group should undertake a review of this decision. Initial support for the concept had been positive and as time had moved on it was considered beneficial to remind residents of how the project had evolved. It was also suggested that residents should have been engaged in a more consultative way regarding the preferred site and consequently a better understanding of why other sites in the village had been discarded was sought. Residents were invited to send questions to the SCLT and Mr Fenton assured the meeting that regular updates on the work of the Steering Group would continue to be published in the Parish Magazine. He also agreed to take these comments back to the Steering Group.

- 6.** The Chairman brought the meeting to a close and thanked everyone for taking part.

**The meeting ended at 8.20pm
Councillor Mrs Ann Watts,
Chairman of the Parish Council**