**The Meeting of the Parish Council Meeting was held**

**on**

**Tuesday 14th May 2024 at 7.15pm in Ashen Village Hall**

**Minutes**

Present: Cllr R. Purchas (Chairman) (RP)

Cllr S Simpson (SS)

Cllr L Cockburn (LC)

Cllr O Palmer (OP)

Cllr V Ovenden (VO)

Public: 2 members of the public were present

In attendance: Karen Melville-Ross, Clerk to the Council (KMR)

RP opened the meeting to the public but there were no matters raised.

**24.00 Apologies for Absence**

All were present.

**24.01 Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman**

SS proposed RP as Chairman, which LC seconded. SS was proposed as Vice Chair by RP which was seconded by LC. Both accepted and the paperwork signed.

**24.02 Declarations of Interest**

The declarations are as registered and any additional interests will be recorded as necessary.

**24.03Approval of the minutes for the Council Meeting held on 26th March 2024.**

The minutes of the above meetings were approved and signed.

**24.04 Financial Matters**

RP expressed thanks to Tony Couling on behalf of the Council for all his work on the internal audit.

a) The year end accounts and been approved by the internal auditor and were approved by the Council.

b) The accounting statements consisting of the explanation of variances, the asset and investment register and the risk assessment and review of effectiveness had been approved by the internal auditor who had also completed and signed page 4 of the AGAR and were agreed. It was agreed to apply to be exempt from an external audit as the PC meets the criteria. Section 1 of the AGAR was therefore completed and signed. Section 2 of the AGAR was then completed and approved. KMR is to submit the form, with a copy to RP. The notice of public rights to examine and object to the accounts will be from 3 June to 12 July. RP is to put up a notice to this effect. KMR will publish the accounts, the certificate of exemption and other accounting documents on the website.

c) Payment was made to the village hall for hall hire for the meeting.

**24.05 Playing Field**

a) The orchids have been protected during grass cutting. Julie Matthews had mentioned that the entrance hedge is becoming very overgrown, this is to be included in the autumn hedge cutting.

b) RP thanked everyone for their help with the working party. It was agreed that once the weather improves that RP will spray the hard services with weed killer and that SS should source some appropriate moss killer. Thanks were expressed to John Cockburn who kindly mended the sign and the seesaw. In consultation with John RP had arranged for Keith Cook to repair the swing support with hardening adhesive and the wooden swing timbers with sealant and resin glue. This is to be completed once the weather has dried up. He was unable to repair the gate which closes too quickly as the spring appears to be embedded in the frame. He has Wicksteed and NGL’s telephone numbers to discuss the matter with them. A decision will then be made on how to proceed. Meanwhile SS will put up a sign warning about the gate.

**24.06 Village Hall**

a) Julie reported that the AGM was on 30th April and had 11 attendees. The committee is currently running on a minimum number of trustees and more trustees are needed. Gigaclear will hopefully be connecting the Wi-Fi on 17th May and the new heating system can then be installed.

b) The lease and sublease have been engrossed and signed and are ready to be exchanged, but BDC Estates still need to grant approval, which they are yet to do in spite of much chasing.

c) Keef is awaiting better weather to carry out revarnishing of the notice board and the bus shelter. The top box will need to be taken off the notice board for 2 days. If this is during the period of the exercise of public rights for the accounts it was agreed to laminate the notice so it could be attached to the notice board posts..

**24.07 Highways**

a) SS has reported the 5 worst pot holes as requested by Cllr Schwier and is continuing to monitor matters she has logged on the portal. However some are deemed to be at the edge of the road and not eligible.

b) Winton Dene have put up a mirror and a gate to make the footpath exit onto their drive safer. It was agreed to monitor the situation. VO is sending a list of sign repairs to Jason at Essex Highways and now has a link on which to report matters.

c) It has been confirmed by Cllr Schwier that ECC are not entering into any further verge cutting agreements with Parish Councils but there is a link to report dangerous areas where verge cutting is required. OP is to co ordinate safety cuts. SS suggested the dangerous drop over the verge on the ditch side of Lower Stoke Road should be included.

d) The grant for Street Cleaning has been received and the report for last year submitted.

**24.08 Neighbourhood Watch and Police**

Julie is currently putting up the Neighbourhood Watch reports on the notice board and on Facebook, but ideally someone else would take on the role. Thanks were expressed.

**24.09 Village Amenity**

There was nothing to report.

**24.10 Administration to include:**

a) Clerk & Councils was put on the notice board along with the Colne Stour Magazine.

b) Ashen was not included on Openreach fibre consultation but should be connected by the end of 2026.

c) The bank signatories have been updated.

**24.11Planning**

a) There is still no outcome on application 24/02713/OUT for land at the rear of Hope Cottage. b)Tree work at the Old Post Office has been carried out.

c) No representation was put forward on the request for sites.

d) OP left the room for the discussion on Ashen Hall 24/00850/HH & 24/00851/LBC after explaining they were replacing windows from the 1970s and reinstating windows that had been previously blocked up. There were no objections. KMR to respond.

**24.12 Parish Plan**

a) SS reported there are now 266 Facebook members.

b) The action points table has been updated.

**24.13 Matters raised by the Community Agent.**

There was nothing from the Community Agent.

**24.14 Other Urgent Business**

Nothing was raised.

**24.15 Next Meeting**

The next meetings will be on 17th September 2024 at 7.15 pm in the village hall.