



Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish
25th May 2021 7:00 p.m.
Downley Community Centre

Present: Councillor M Lazenby (Chairman presiding), Cllr P Brooks, Cllr K Chandarana, Cllr A Lenard, Cllr W Monroe-West, Cllr W Steneskog.
Apologies were received & accepted from MP S Baker
In attendance: Buckinghamshire Councillors M Hussain and P Turner.
Officers: G Tandy (Clerk)
9 members of the public present

1) Introduction & Welcome

2) Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** that the **Minutes of the meeting held on 14th May 2019 be received, approved, adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.**

3) Apologies for absence were received and accepted from MP S Baker

4) Downley War Memorial Hall provided a report detailing their income & expenditure for the year ended 30th September 2020 a copy of which is appended to these minutes.

5) The Communications Forum & Downley Covid Action Group Bill Thompson reported on the activities of these Groups, explaining that the Communications Forum is responsible for the Downley Village News, the Downley Community Website & the Downley Facebook page.

The Downley Village News continued to be published & distributed throughout the year although in May a limited run of 1000 copies were produced & distributed partially by street reps while some were placed in local shops & other pick-up points.

The website (www.downley.org) and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/Downley.Community) has functioned as normal and were particularly useful to support the village with information about Covid restrictions and local initiatives coordinated by the Downley Covid Action Group (DCAG)

Downley Covid Action Group is a group of residents who came together for an initial meeting on 17th March as part of the Downley Parish Council's Emergency Plan for Downley initiative.

Following a mail drop to residents that provided advice in the event of serious disruption, a system of Street Reps was created for every street in Downley. The Reps provided a point of contact for residents assisting with communications & practical help for those who needed shopping. Additional support was provided in the form of Pharmacy Reps delivering medicines from Downley Pharmacy to residents who were unable to collect.

A Listening Ear telephone service was created to provide support to lonely residents but the Street Reps provided such a good job that this service was largely inactive.

DCAG has been recognised by Buckinghamshire Council as the primary Covid support agency in Downley and in October 2020 DCAG & the Street Rep network received a “HighlyCommended” in the Proud of Bucks Collaboration award

- 6) Report from One Can Food Trust** Jo Belshaw reported on the activities of the One Can Food Bank & Trust, a Charity established in 2011 to provide emergency support to people in the South of Buckinghamshire who do not have enough money to buy food. Jo explained that financial support from Downey Parish Council had helped the Trust buy fruit & vegetables for 300 families. Jo also emphasized the significance of the Street Heroes of Downley who provide a network of food drops allowing food to be collected for onward distribution. The Street Hero campaign provided 90% of food during the first lockdown.

Covid has impacted on the way the Trust operates with drivers now delivering food rather than relying solely on distribution through churches. Debt has been the top reason for referral to the food Bank & Jo noted that demand for the services had tripled through the period while the supply from supermarkets had declined with people increasingly shopping online through the pandemic.

- 7) The Downley Common Preservation Society DCPS** A report was provided by Andy Bass Chairman of the DCPS, a registered charity that works in partnership with the Downley Parish Council to manage the common, maintaining it as an amenity for residents while conserving its natural features. The DCPS committee meets monthly to consider any issues & to organize work parties.

Volunteers meet on the first Sunday of the month to undertake a variety of projects. Such as keeping woodland paths clear, planting & felling trees as required, collecting litter & working on Mannings pond to remove weeds & encourage wildlife. The most visible aspect of the DCPS work is the building of the annual Downley bonfire which provides a traditional 5th November bonfire for the village.

While much of the work undertaken is carried out by hand, the DCPS is reliant upon its Massey Ferguson tractor, which now 36 years old requires maintenance to keep it operational & Andy thanked the Council who have on occasion, helped provide funds for specific tools & projects of critical maintenance.

- 8) Downley Dynamos** Andy Stafford Chairman of the Downley Dynamos Junior Football Club offered his report. Andy recognised that this season has been one of the toughest for many reasons for children. Following the first lockdown some training, within social bubbles was started in the late Summer of 2020. When schools returned in September most of the clubs’ children also returned to training & quickly resumed fitness.

Following the sad death of Ollie Darlington last year, a memorial bench has been sited at the pitch side in West Wycombe. Andy thanked the Parish Council for their support & donation towards this.

Downley Dynamos has over 300 children registered through all school years and is now a Football Association Charter Standard Club which provides wider FA support including contributions to develop the pitches, wider support for the welfare of children and the opportunity to place more coaches through badged courses.

9) Reports from other organisations

St James' Church Reverend Heather Graham reported on behalf of the Church explaining that their newly redecorated hall would provide a pleasant backdrop for the Coffee stop.

Heather explained the involvement of the church with Growing Hope charity which provides therapeutic support for children with additional needs. The charity is new with St James' providing its third outlet with two others in London. The partnership offers: Occupational therapy, Speech therapy and Music & Art therapy.

Downley Old School Community Association (DOSCA) David Worsdall Chairman of DOSCA reported on their extraordinary year highlighting how the organisation went into hibernation in March with staff furloughed, the building secured & any internal meetings conducted via Zoom.

Downtime was used to refurbish the library, install sound absorbing panels in the Beech room & carry out repairs to the building.

By May a subgroup was formed to consider how to safely reopen. This took place in July under strict adherence to Covid protocols however as regulations changed DOSCA were once again forced to close in January 2021. Closure has inevitably impacted upon income reducing this by 28% to £25,185. Nevertheless DOSCA has contributed to local charities working hard in the prevailing circumstances. Notable donations last year were made to One Can Trust, Wycombe Homeless Connection and a provision of toys to the children's ward of Wycombe Hospital.

The emergency has tested the strength of the team and the intention now is to ensure that everything, buildings & procedures are made robust.

David closed by thanking his team & recognising that DOSCA is entrusted with one of the most valuable physical assets in the local community & will continue to maintain and develop the facility to meet the needs of local residents.

Buckinghamshire Councillor update Cllr Paul Turner explained that Buckinghamshire Council officially became a single unitary authority, replacing five District & County councils on 1st April 2020. This new measure was overshadowed by the start of the pandemic and lockdown. The new Council put measures into place to support residents & businesses and to protect the most vulnerable.

Teams were put in to place to design and implement several business grant schemes and to date, £140 million has been paid out to businesses.

Working with partners, rough sleeping has been virtually eliminated. 16 new Community Boards have been founded and improvements made to Children's Services which seeing an increase in the number and seriousness of referrals. This work was recognised with a good Ofsted rating in February.

The May 2020 elections were delayed until May 2021 & saw Buckinghamshire Remain a Conservative Council. Of 147 seats there are 113 Conservative, 15 Liberal Democrats, 14 Independents, 4 Labour and 1 Green Party Councillor.

Paul closed by recognising Downley as a great place to live, with its community focus and the tireless enthusiasm and hard work of hundreds of unsung volunteers to whom he extended his thanks & looked forward to continuing to work with.

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 09:05 p.m.