



# HIGH EASTER PARISH COUNCIL

## HIGH EASTER PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING held at High Easter Village Hall on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023

**1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME**, Cllr Robert Lodge opened the meeting and welcomed residents.

In attendance were 10 members of the public (including 5 parish councillors), County and District Cllr Susan Barker and the Parish Clerk.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** – None

**3. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING held on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022**

These were proposed by Chris Dyer as a correct record, seconded by Neil Reeve with all in agreement; the minutes were signed by the chair. There were no matters arising.

**4. COUNTY AND DISTRICT CLLRS REPORT – County and District Cllr Susan Barker**

Cllr Barker stated it was a pleasure to represent the parish which is one of the most efficient and hands on parish councils in her ward. Cllr Barker noted the parish councils efforts to be inclusive with leaflet drops across the parish for events which she felt was particularly valued by residents who live in outlying areas.

Cllr Barker added that following last week's district elections, she is delighted to be returned as district representative for the parish. There has been some small changes in the administration with R4U continuing as the majority party, Cllr Barker confirmed she is now leader of the opposition. Looking forward, hopefully the issues with Uttlesford account sign off will be resolved, and it is good to see that additional resource is being recruited to help with planning enforcement and conversation officer vacancies.

At Essex County Council, Cllr Barker continues in her responsibilities as chair of Essex Pensions Fund. Challenges in the coming year will be pothole repairs (July-Sept repairs), and general highway issues give the accumulated damage to highway edges and no funds to complete repairs. Further challenges will arise as a result of local highway flooding due to lack of ditch maintenance by some landowners.

**5. PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT – Cllr Robert Lodge**

I would like to start by saying a big thank to Councillor Andrea Davis and Councillor Joanne Windley who have decided not to stand for re-election as parish councillors after serving two terms. I thank them for the contribution they have made over the last eight years both during meetings and outside these times, especially for taking on specific roles such as Andrea for her work with Stop Stansted Expansion and Jo for looking after footpath problems, not easy roles to take on but appreciated by all of us and many parishioners alike.

Looking back over the last year we started with an event in June to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee which has to go down as one of the biggest we have ever attempted. Along with the village hall committee and church we collectively arranged four days of activities and decorated a village that looked splendid with its flags, flowers, and decorations. Little did we know that this would sadly be followed in September by the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. There then followed reading of the Proclamation to declare Prince Charles as the new King which High Easter Parish Chairman performed on 11th September in St Mary's Church and a first, it was broadcast to the village via WhatsApp.

June also saw High Easter on national TV with one of the stages of the Women's Tour of Britain Cycle Race, finishing at Pump Green.

In the summer of 2022 and in advance of the start of the football season the parish council co-ordinated moving the football goals and repairing the previous goal mouths. No easy task with the various views involved, however essential to ensure the pitch remains playable for the teams that wish to use it. The plan is to move the posts back to their original position for the 2023 season, and we now have the flexibility to move the posts to allow the ground to rest.

Further works were arranged and paid for by the parish council to the ditch banks on school lane. These were tested this spring and reduced the amount of flooding considerably.

During the rest of the year, meetings were taken up with much of the normal business of a parish council with planning applications, highways issues etc. The green waste, verge cutting, playing field and play area cutting continue to be administered by the parish council. I was unable to attend four of these meetings and thank my fellow councillors for taking over (and probably finishing earlier than I can manage!!)

The parish council was approached last year by a resident, Mary Davis to run a seated exercise class and lunch group, our clerk successfully obtained a grant for the first term and what is now known as the Monday Muster has been a great success. Attendance has been 15 per session and 10 weekly sessions were completed, making it not only a time for exercise but for a social as well. Many thanks to Lilly, Allison, Liz, Susie and Andrea who supported the catering with hot soup and cake and to Lodges who provided a warm venue for the group to meet.

Two trees were purchased and planted over the last year, an Oak for the Queen's Jubilee and Copper Beech for the King's Coronation. Steel tree guards have been erected around both and plaques will be fitted to dedicate each so that we have a lasting memory of those landmark events.

I reported at last year's meeting that the first tenants had just moved into Mounsden Lodges. On 10th October 2022, the culmination of a 6 year project saw this new rural housing project officially opened with guests from neighbouring parishes and the organisations involved in making it happen, joining the parish council in celebrating the end of a successful project.

Last weekend large numbers of the village came out to celebrate the Crowning of King Charles III with games, music, tea, cakes and street food followed by a firework finale. A group made up of volunteers from the parish council, church, village hall committee and others met on five occasions to plan the event which was a great success and supported financially by a grant from Uttlesford District Council and parish precept money. Commemorative coins were made available for all the children in the parish funded by High Easter Educational Trust.

On behalf of the parish council I wish to pass on thanks to our ward Councillor Susan Barker for her support and who I must congratulate on her recent re-election. I would also like to thank my fellow Councillors who willingly re-stood for another four year term, for their time and efforts over the last year and look forward to working with you in the coming years.

This year will see my 20th anniversary as a parish councillor and despite the many challenges over this time I have enjoyed my duties immensely. Although it can be frustrating at times with the amount of time it takes to resolve some issues, it is satisfying to know we are all making a difference to village life for the people who live here.

And finally a huge thank you to Allison or parish clerk who keeps us in order!

## **6. PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2022/23 – The Clerk**

The annual accounts were shared with the meeting and will become final and subject to external audit once approved by the Parish Council and reviewed by the internal auditor.

The accounts for the year saw a surplus of £7.9k this was after completing repairs to the footpaths around the village hall £2.5k and works to restore the ground around the goal mouths £0.9k. The parish council continues to allocate surplus funds to reserves to support future works to update and add to the play equipment.

Grants of £550 were given in the year, £300 towards the upkeep of the churchyard and £250 to support the work of the Essex Air Ambulance.

The closing cash balance at March 2023 was £32.6k.

## **7. REPORT FROM HIGH EASTER VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE – Simon Dixon**

Firstly apologies for absence from our chair Gordon Robinson.

Main activities – Monthly Sunday bar openings which are an opportunity for villagers to get together. We continue to host High Easter football club, football training camps for youngsters, and other village events including quiz night, harvest supper, national celebrations. Our regular users including parish council meeting, boxing club, dance club and carpet bowls. Our primary user continues to be Butterfly pre-school and we are grateful that they can provide that facility to the village.

Finances – Raised c.£27.5k with a large part of that coming from bar takings including community celebrations, as well as hire income and proceeds from fundraising events. Expenditure was similar at c.£27.2k with the major outgoing being maintenance. Reserves are c.£14.6k and this is the level we try and retain for any unforeseen problems.

Special mentions – Refurbished of the disabled toilet was completed with the help of a £1.3k grant from the ECC locality fund. Other major improvements was the work around the paths to remove the puddles, our thanks to the parish council for funding.

The parish council, village hall committee and church have worked well together in covering the recent major national events including the recent King's coronation celebrations.

## **8. REPORT FROM ANY OTHER VILLAGE GROUPS OR ORGANISATIONS**

High Easter Educational Charity – Mike Parnell

Established in 1980 as an amalgamation of charities relating to the old village school. It is funded annually from the interest from a capital endowment of c.£12k. The charities purpose is primarily to provide Christian support and education to children in the Rodings, Easters and Great Canfield parishes. In the last 12 months we have met needs for school uniform for our Ukrainian guests, provided advent calendars to children in High Easter, provide commemorate coronation medals, supported costs for geography field trip. There are 7 trustees all of whom are High Easter residents. The charity is happy to consider any requests.

St Mary the Virgin – Mike Parnell

This year is the first time we have had a 'Vicar' for over a quarter of a century following the formal recognition of our group of churches as a single benefice in November 2022. Rev Robert Stone is vicar and is supported by Rev Gary Fleming who is our curate and lives in Great Canfield, and we have the added benefit of Rev Tim Goodbody who lives in the High Easter rectory as an associate minister with a full time job as the Director of Ordinands for the Chelmsford Diocese. There are no further plans for re-organisation. It was good to see Bishop Guli our Diocesan Bishop along with the Bishop of London being the first two female bishops to take part in a coronation.

## **9. PARISHONERS QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS**

A resident commented that the old telephone box is also labelled as an information point, however it does not have information. The clerk confirmed the intention is to add a notice board to display the village map, this will be progressed,

## **10. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING – Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2024 at 7.00pm.**

The meeting closed at 7.40pm.