

WOODHAM MORTIMER with HAZELEIGH

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

MINUTES - TUESDAY 12 APRIL 2016

Convened at WOODHAM MORTIMER VILLAGE HALL
Post Office Road, Woodham Mortimer at 7:30pm

In attendance

Parish Councillors: - Simon Brady (SB) Chairman of the Parish Council, Pauline McDonald (PM), Andrew Macmorland (AM), Stephen Pemberton (SP)

County Councillor Penny Channer (PC)

Andrew Ritchings (AR) Clerk to the Council recording proceedings)

One member of the public.

1.16 APM APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Parish Councillors Kim Broadhurst and Kim McDonald were unable to attend due to work commitments. District Councillors Henry Bass and Mark Durham were unable to attend due to other meeting requirements.

2.16 APM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2015 were proposed by SP and seconded by AM to be accepted as a true record of events, agreed by those Cllrs present at that meeting and duly signed by the Chairman.

3.16 APM CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

It seems that various Parish issues have been discussed many times over the previous few years of which this Council continues to pressurise the particular authorities capable of resolving such matters – excess speeding in Fambridge Road and along the A414, long standing diversion signs due to Rectory Lane closure, inadequate infrastructure system, specific litter infringement sites, carriageway flooding and verge damage of certain lanes and missing street signs.

Parish administration activities has seen significant changes over the past few years and I am confident and pleased to report we have progressed by continually changing and adapting. We now have our own website and Councillors are contactable via their own Parish Council email addresses. A variety of policy documents are now annually reviewed and adopted and the Council resolves where possible to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy.

Meetings have moved to the earlier time of 7:30pm to allow for an improved work/life balance and extraordinary planning meetings have been convened where necessary to meet the Planning Authorities strict consultation response timescales. The Community litter picking events appear to be having a positive impact and I would like to thank the dedicated parishioners who take their own time on a continual frequent basis to keep the villages as free from litter deposits as possible.

Matters associated with the Royal Oak Quarry have been subdued during the year and the Council continue to liaise with interested parties. I would like to thank other Councillors and the Clerk for attending associated meetings with other Dengie parishes and Local Development Planning matters.

During the year the Council reviewed aspects of a potential Neighbourhood Plan concluded as unnecessary at present but continue to monitor neighbouring parishes

attempts at their own implementation and whether a cumulative effect may change the Council's opinion for the future.

In conclusion I would like to thank the Vice Chair for her valuable assistance at times when I've been unable to be as active as I would like along with all the other Councillors and the Clerk for their endeavours, advice and participation towards Council activities and am pleased to say that following my recent meeting with the Leader of Maldon District Council and other Parish Councils I believe our Council is progressing in a proactive up to date manner.

4.16 APM VILLAGE HALL REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT *(presented by PM)*

The Village Hall Committee were pleased to once again organise the return of the ever popular Burns Night which as usual was a great success raising much needed funds for village hall maintenance and running costs.

The Committee endure to strive toward a solution for a replacement cesspit, however protracted correspondence with various organisations continue to frustrate the process.

5.16 APM FALKLANDS TRUST REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT *(presented by SB)*

There had not been a meeting of the Trust during the year therefore there were no matters to report.

6.16 APM CHURCH REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

Following last year's Annual Parish Meeting a Church Representative has still not been appointed and Cllr Andrew Macmorland agreed to act as a Parish Council Liaison Representative.

7.16 APM PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

There was no report available from the PROW representative.

8.16 APM OPEN PUBLIC FORUM

The member of public in attendance requested explanation of the recently introduced Adult Social Care charge to the Council Tax demand and whether the Parish Council is likely to continue to raise its own annual precept demand.

County Councillor Penny Channer advised that a Comprehensive Spending Review hit local government hard resulting in a significant reduction of Essex County Council's grant funding together with service and inflationary pressures placing considerable stress on all services.

Council Tax had been frozen for the past five years, however, due to significant pressures it was not possible to continue with the freeze. At the ECC budget meeting in February the Council agreed an increase of 1.99% and introduced the newly allowable government precept item to be raised for any authorities having social care responsibility services.

The Parish Council advised that over the past few years increasing legislative adherence has been continually placed upon the Council including the requirements of open and transparent documentation of all activities associated with Council business as introduced by the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities, this in turn has led to increased administration time drafting policy documents, IT (website & email) activities and Audit Commission requirements. Adding to the increased administration various Planning Applications have had to be resolved outside the schedules of ordinary monthly meetings due to the time scale limits included in the Town & Country Planning Act legislation and requirements of the Planning Authority.

2017 will see changes to the way Parish Council accounts are audited as introduced by The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and it is unknown at this time what the new full requirements will be with respect to The Smaller Authority Regulations.

The Council meet in December each year to set its precept demand for the forthcoming financial year and in summary considers matters such as the Clerks remunerations, potential election costs, IT system requirements (software updates etc.), updated and new legislation, extra administration time with respect to extraordinary Planning meeting decisions, potential Clerk overtime allowance, conceivable increase in services such as street lighting maintenance and insurance policies and any unforeseen circumstances. Without knowing future changes to the items aforementioned it is difficult to say for certain potential forthcoming precept amounts but the Council always seeks to keep funds at a minimum having due regard to any future uncertainties.

Each year usually during the month of June notice is published that the public are able to view the Council accounts for the previous financial year which are prepared in accordance with Audit Commission requirements, and from this year these will also be available to view on the Parish Council's website.

AR advised that a full report from County Councillor Penny Channer, a further report from District Councillor Mark Durham and full minutes of all Parish Council meetings are available on the Parish Council website - www.wmortimerhazeleigh-pc.gov.uk

9.16 APM MEETING CLOSURE

Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and valuable comments and closed the meeting with appreciations.

..... *Simon Brady*..... (Simon Brady Chairman to the Council) 11 April 2017