

PARISH OF WOTTON

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting for Residents held in Wotton Village Hall at 7pm on 5 March 2024

Present:

Wotton Parish Councillors: Peter Evelyn (Chairman), Laurence Matthews, Andy Cole, Janet Hunt.
Also present: Gary Burgess, Parish Clerk, and several residents.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Cllr Mir, Cllr Hackett, Cllr Bennett, and SCC Cllr Watson.
2. **Minutes of 7 March 2023 meeting:** There were no comments about the minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting which had been held on 7 March 2023. The minutes had been agreed and signed at the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 9 May 2023.
3. **Parish Council Chairman's Report:** The Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr Peter Evelyn, thanked everyone for attending the meeting and reported on the Council's activities since the previous residents meeting in March 2023. Most of the potholes in the lanes had now been repaired; the new grit bins had finally been installed; it was agreed that reduced speed limits in the lanes would improve road safety; the loss of all except one bank branches in Dorking had been noted with regret and it was expected that a banking hub would be provided in the coming months. The Stephan Langton Inn had closed permanently and planning permission for residential use granted. Cllr Evelyn said it had been a relatively quiet year in Wotton and therefore it had been possible to keep the Wotton precept at the same level as the previous year. A new initiative, which had been agreed by the Council in January, was to encourage volunteer litter picking. Long-handled picking equipment would be provided for residents wishing to take part in clearing footpaths and Cllr Evelyn invited residents to volunteer.
4. **Invited Speakers:**
 - 4.1 **Inspector James Green, Borough Commander for Mole Valley:** Inspector Green gave an interesting talk and answered several questions from residents about rural crime including theft of farm machinery and fly tipping. Inspector Green said he was keen to improve communications with the public and while residents should always call 999 in an emergency, or 101 in a non-emergency, they can also email any officers in the local Safer Neighbourhood Team, who would be happy to offer assistance if possible. The names and email addresses of the officers in the local team have now been posted on the Parish Council's website and on the Council's noticeboards.
 - 4.2 **Miss Ruth Hills, Surrey County Council Countryside Access Team:** Miss Hills from Countryside Access, maintenance and enforcement team, at Surrey County Council said her department is responsible for maintenance of all rights of way in Surrey. It is a reactive service and relies on the public to report problems, which can be easily done online. SCC carries out three cuts of verges a year, sometimes two, and is responsible for maintaining the surfaces of footpaths, vegetation on the sides, signage, styles and gates. Ms Hills said there are twelve

issues currently in progress on Wotton's footpaths. She said it would be helpful to have a rights of way contact who might be able to establish a volunteer group for rights of way work in Wotton. Ms Hills answered several questions and said she was happy to be contacted by email: ruth.hills@surreycc.gov.uk.

4.3 Cllr Chris Budleigh, Mole Valley District Council: Cllr Budleigh spoke about the progress with the local plan and said 67% of green belt is now included. He is head of the Budget Scrutiny Committee and explained that the District Council is only allowed to keep 3% of the money raised from business rates. There were questions about the cost of parking in Dorking which discourages shoppers. Cllr Budleigh said they were considering introducing a half-hour parking charge so that residents do not have to pay for one hour when they do not need it. He said a lot of the cost of installing recharging bays for electric vehicles in the car parks had come from central government. Following the closure of all high street banks in Dorking, leaving one building society which is only open a few hours each week, the council had applied for a banking hub. This had initially been refused, but the council are still actively looking into ways that a banking hub can be provided. Questions were asked about the very poor postal service now and Cllr Budleigh said the council has contacted them about this problem which is particularly bad in the more rural areas.

5. Participation by Residents:

Q. A resident said she was unhappy that a neighbour dispute had been discussed at a previous meeting and she had complained to Mole Valley. A. Cllr Evelyn said it was not a matter for the Parish Council but due to the level of concern expressed a letter had been sent to relevant external organisations.

Q. A resident asked if dogs were supposed to be kept on leads. A. Cllr Evelyn said that dogs should be kept under control and the Countryside Access Officer could give further information.

6. Any other business: None.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.40 pm.