**21/Jan**

**ASTWOOD & HARDMEAD PARISH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES**

Meeting held via Zoom on **Thursday January 14th 2021** at 8 pm

**Attended:** Chair John Durden, Cllr Teresa Giddings, Cllr Piers Shedden, Cllr Andrea Jones,

**Ward Cllr’s:** David Hosking, Keith Mclean (part time)

The Chair welcomed everyone and apologized for the Agenda being dated 2020 and not 2021 as it should have been.

**1. Apologies for absence**

Cllr Sarah Evans-Parker, PCSO Arlene Ormston, Dave Emsley: Chair Village Hall Trustees

**2. To receive declarations of interest in items on the agenda**

Cllr Shedden declared an interested on a planning item

**3. Public Question Time**

6 members of public plus Derek Phillips: Chair NHP and Kim Durden: Chair Village Hall & Garden committee were present on Zoom

**4. To approve the minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the last Parish Council meeting held on the 22nd October 2020 were approved and signed by the Chair

**5. Chairman’s Report**

5.1 The chair reminded everyone that that the Councillors were unpaid members of the village giving their time to try and improve the village and bring the community together.

5.2 Unfortunately the Parish Clerk has resigned, and the Councillors are in the process of sorting out a job specification and pay level in order to fill the role.

5.3 The Covid 19 situation is making life difficult for all, and particularly for families with children at home, so we intend to keep the play area open, although the Village Hall remains shut . When using the play area read the notice at the entrance, socially distance and clean the equipment after use. There is a weekly report on the Milton Keynes Council web site for those who are interested.

5.4 The Chair thanked Derek Phillips for taking over the Chair of The Neighbourhood Plan Committee and who will give a report later. Villagers were asked not to lose heart when they look at over 10 new houses proposed in the latest applications, when our plan will suggest no more than 2. This will be queried with Milton Keynes Council.

5.5 The Village Play area is one of our most important assets, and it was obvious from the number of E-Mails received from individuals concerning the budget for next year, that this is where the villagers would like to see money spent.

5.6 The Village Hall Committee looks after our most important asset, the Village Hall, and is also tasked with looking after the Village Green Garden, The Parish Council only covers roughly a quarter of the costs, and the rest is raised by fundraising and some by hire fees. Kim Durden will give a report on this later.

5.7 Speeding and Traffic Calming remains of concern, and a full report will be given later.

5.8 Finally the Re-Cycling scheme seems to be working well after a few teething problems, although there is now a problem with Green Bins, due to staff shortages caused by Covid 19 deaths.

**6. Financial Report**

6.1 Cllr Jones confirmed that the AGAR and Audit reports had all been submitted and no further queries had been raised.

6.2 The Chair confirmed that almost £3,500 had been repaid from the Vat Claim. Of this £1,765 was from the purchase of play equipment and £1,593 from the fees of the Neighbourhood Plan Specialist Planning Consultancy.

6.3 The Budget for 2021 to 2022 was still being finalised, and other than the normal fixed costs such as grass cutting, village hall, emptying dog bins etc, the major items to be funded were going to be a Defibrillator for Hardmead and Astwood Play Area improvements.

6.4 When the budget is finalised then the precept can be determined. Councillor David Hoskins confirmed that the PC could set their own precept but as Chair had indicated, to be mindful of increasing taxes for villagers.

6.5 It was agreed that a cheque for £130 could be raised for Derek Phillips for Web Site Services.

6.6 Barclays Bank have proved to be impossible to deal with over the last year or more. As a result investigations have been made, and it was agreed to change the Parish Council bank account to NatWest. Cllr Jones to organise.

**7. Parish Clerk**

Due to the resignation of the last clerk, a new one needs to be recruited. Hours required and proposed salary not agreed yet, so the Precept was not yet finalised. A member of the public asked what the Precept was going to be, and the Chair reported that the increase would be between £6 and £9 per house depending on the final agreed figures.

**8. Ethics & Conduct**

8.1 The Chair confirmed that he had found in the old records passed to him, a copy of “Astwood & Hardmead Parish Council Standing Orders” 2008, prepared by Patsy Nunn, who for many years was the Parish Clerk. This had been reviewed and re-adopted on a regular basis until 2016, but apparently not recently. Cllr Jones said she had obtained a typical council procedures document from Bucks ALC which may be useful. The Chair suggested we start with the document found and undertake a review. He will forward a copy to all councillors.

**9. NHP**

Derek Phillips, Chair of NP Steering group reported progress. The Draft plan has gone to the Statutory bodies, it will be reviewed and moved on to Referendum stage. This will not be before 6th May and due to Covid-19 may be delayed. The hope is that the plan will be adopted by August/September 2021. The timing will be dictated by Government.

In the meantime, the committee will be marketing the plan to the community to convince them that it is for their future benefit.

The current steering group are working to get the plan adopted. After that it must be continually monitored to check its validity against the requirements of MKC for housing stock. Planning permissions applied for in the future must be monitored to make sure they apply to the plan. Should there be a PC representative to do this or a consultant?

Cllr Powell Sheddon interjected that it is a function of the PC to monitor Planning applications and to make sure that the adopted plan is valid and appropriate.

Ward Cllr Hoskins encouraged vigilance in keeping the plan up to date and fit for purpose and to watch what other local communities who have already adopted their plans are doing.

**10. Planning Applications**

The Chair reported that there were 4 current application awaiting decisions

10.1 Cranfield Road - 5 Houses

The Chair read an E-Mail sent by the Parish Council to Carrie Chan, the Senior Planning Officer at Milton Keynes Council requesting an update. The reply said she had come to no conclusion yet. Ward Cllr Hoskins has asked that this go to Committee if she is minded to approve, but has heard nothing further. He recommended that if people have further concerns or objections they should write now. L Bacon asked that the Parish Council also write pointing out further concerns with the Drainage, the Ecology, the Access and closeness to the junction with Main Road, and the Foul Sewage system problems which Anglian water do not even appear to have commented on.

10.2 Home Farm Outbuildings, Hardmead. There were no objections to this application.

10.3 St Peters Church Conversion to a Domestic Property. There were no objections to this application.

10.3 3 Main Road, Astwood. D Phillips and L Bacon pointed out that there were factual inaccuracies with this application. It was agreed that a letter would be sent by the Parish Council objecting to this application, and pointing out that it was not offered as part of The Neighbourhood Plan. Ward Cllr Hoskins said that limited weight would be given to a NP still in preparation and to submit all comments and information to planning officers ASAP

**11. Crime Report**

11.1. Figures received from CPSO Ormston indicated that there were no reported crimes in either Astwood or Harmead between 22/10/20 and 14/01/21.

11.2 Cllr Shedden pointed out that this was wrong as a burglary had taken place at Gorwelle at the junction of the roads from Astwood & Hardmead on the w/e 14/15th November. Chair to notify the CPSO

11.3 Fly tipping opposite the drive to Astwood Grange persists. Alan Williams, Doug and Sue Smith and MKC have cleared up in the past. CCTV/Signs discussed. Davis Hoskins recommended getting in touch with Pete Roberts at MKC who is responsible for surveillance. Cllr Giddings to get in touch.

**12. Traffic Calming**

12.1 The chair indicated the 4 means of monitoring speeds in the village

a) SIDS which are currently in the village on Cranfield Road and Main Road

b) The police radar van

c) The Radar Gun – Operated by police staff, but currently out of action because of lack of staff

d) Community Speed Watch – operated by trained villagers, but currently not being used due to Covid 19

12.2 Ward Cllr McLean reported that information from the SIDS was not being actioned due to lack of staff in the borough council. Roll of Road Safety Officer who collects data and passes it on has not been filled. SID could only be used for 20, 30 or 40mph roads, so A422 or Turvey Road would not be appropriate. PC can fund their own devices and Bids can be made for funding 2022-2023 but no funds would be available before Nov 2022.

12.3 A discussion was had about the current SID speed information which appears to show the threshold for requesting the Police Radar Van has been passed. The Chair to ask PCSO Ormston how the SIDS information can go straight to the police, and for an appearance by the radar van.

12.3 Cllr Shedden confirmed his continuing concern with speeds on the A422 and in particular the turn into Hardmead. He is still corresponding with the Borough and Police and asked Ward Cllrs Hosking and McLean for any assistance they could give.

**13.** **Village Hall & Village Green Garden**

13.1 Village Hall Report: Kim Durden Chair of VH Committee delivered report in the absence of Dave Emsley who is Chair of the Trustees of the Village Hall

In summary: Village Hall Annual Costs pre-Covid were £2450 and Village Garden Costs were £1867. Income from Marquee and Hall Hire was £1517 and fundraising events £2673

The PC has historically made an annual contribution to the costs of approximately 25%

Since Covid-19 the Village Hall has been shut and so no income has been generated.

The costs were briefly itemised in response to a villager’s enquiry.

**14. Play Area**

14.1 Future development. This is one of the main requests from villagers and a sub-committee will be set up to find out what parents want.

10 suggestions have been made for a “wish list” of equipment that could be added to the existing. Most are expensive and the question is how much can the PC afford?

14.2 Whatever is decided it will be put to Lewenscroft householders before actioning

14.3 Cllr Giddings expressed her concern that dogs were being taken into the play area and allowed to roam. Dog excrement has been found in the swing area: The original sign saying No Dogs has been removed. There are dog hooks beside the entrance where dogs can be tied up. All members of the Public on the Call confirmed that NO loose DOGS should be the policy. Councillor Andrea Jones to get quote for new signage. Wording to be established.

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**15. Permitted Footpaths**

15.1 Anne-Marie expressed concern re. broken gate and some fencing.

15.2 Rohit (on behalf of North Crawley Estate) said they were undertaking repairs, so it might have been their work that caused the problem. He did express his concern at the loss of Permitted Footpath and Keeping Dogs on a Lead signs which were being removed by persons unknown. CCTV suggested but Rohit felt that replacement of signs should be the first step.

15.3 It was agreed that many villagers were enjoying the use of the Permitted Paths and thanked the estate for their efforts. All to look out for those removing signs.

**16. Covid 19 Support**

Councillor Andrea Jones suggested that any villagers requiring support could do so by using the Astwood and Hardmead email

**17. Parish Council Specific E-Mail Addresses**

17.1 Cllr Jones expressed concern that use of private e-mail addresses could lead to problems, and even confiscation of laptops or phones.

17.2 This matter to be considered fully in the next council meeting.

**18. Distribution of Minutes and Use of Scan**

18.1 A discussion took place concerning whether to use Scan for publishing the minutes of council meetings as well as the Village Web Site and the Notice Boards in both Astwood and Hardmead.

18.2 It was agreed that a summary of the meeting minutes was the approach to start with, as North Crawley PC do at present. The Chair agreed to do a Summary of the PC Meeting minutes for this and the next meeting, and see how this was received.

Meeting closed at 10.05 pm

Next meeting to be held on Thursday 22nd April 2021