

**MINUTES OF THE CHARING PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY
5th MAY 2015 AT 7.30PM IN THE PARISH HALL**

Present: Cllrs: T Reed (Chairman); C Bain-Smith (Vice Chairman); R Carrison ; A Gudge ;D Gudge; G Bradshaw; S Hawkins; J Leyland; M Weekes; B Vigar; S Gosbee; J Wilkinson & the Clerk; J Munro (RFO)
Community Award nominees and approximately 35 parishioners.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting especially all Community Award Nominees.

1. Apologies:

These were received from Borough Cllr G Clarkson. Member of the public P Pym.

2. Minutes of Open Meeting 6th May 2014: These were proposed by Mr T Bain-Smith and seconded by Mr R Selves they were agreed and signed.

3. MATTERS ARISING: There were no matters arising.

4 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: Cllr Reed reported on the following.

Your council has had a most interesting year with plenty of highlights and some low points. The low points always seem to be planning related.

The work of the council appears to grow as the years go by. Gone are the days when there was little more than looking after the hall, the cemetery and the open spaces.

Parish hall. We have almost completed the small works in the porch and repaired the roof. Our next task is to rectify the lower brick work in the porch either side of the outer doors.

I do hope you take a moment on your way out to see the addition to the War Memorial. David Wilkinson died whilst serving in Afghanistan. At long last his death is marked on the Memorial in the Parish Memorial Porch. Talking of the War Memorial, we were recently approached by a group wanting to erect another memorial in the centre of Charing. We are of the opinion that it would be disrespectful to the memory of those who died and those who erected the memorial and will not support the venture unless the Parish Hall is sold, it would only then appropriate to consider replacing the memorial elsewhere. [Post meeting note. A straw pole at the meeting showed unanimous backing for our decision.]

The hall floor has been sanded and re-sealed. The tasks for the coming months include the cleaning of the gutters etc and the ceiling above you, the cobwebs are now highlighted by the dust from the sanding of the floor! We have replaced our crockery, cutlery, cooker and fridge so our kitchen is better suited for more functions. Thank you Anita and your committee for a job well done.

You cannot fail to have noticed the additions on our walls. Last summer we were delighted to part fund and host one of the World War 1 commemoration exhibitions that members of the Charing and District Local History Society organised. It was well attended and I'm sure we all thank those involved for their dedication and skills in putting on the exhibition. The legacy will remain here and elsewhere in the Parish.

For some time it has been my wish that a copy of the Tithe Map of 1840 be on show in our Parish Hall. My apologies for the time it has taken but I'm pleased to say that, thanks to some recent most kind substantial donations, by the end of this evening we will have the map on show for all to see. The largest donation we have received is of £500.00 in memory of the late Pat Winzar. Gill, Pat's daughter and her partner Caroline are delighted to support this venture. They feel it is most appropriate and believe Pat would have approved. In the Cemetery we undertook the job of cleaning war graves and memorials a little over a year ago. We then planted poppies on each of

the graves and memorials in time for the WW1 commemorations. The History Society 'planted' large poppies on the graves and memorials with details of those commemorated. We have been offered funding from a relative of 'one who served' if an interpretation board is placed in the cemetery. With the help and support of the History Society we will do this probably nearer to 2018. – the 100th anniversary of the ending of the Great War. Cllr Dennis Gudge has overseen the work in the cemetery, thank you Dennis and your committee.

Regular work includes grass cutting, hedge trimming and tree work with the occasional painting of the vestry and railings.

Open Spaces has also been busy. Cllr Jill Leyland is Chair of this committee, she and her team have been very active this year. The land and play equipment that we own or have responsibility for is inspected regularly, the play equipment meets the required standard or is repaired or removed. This year we haven't installed any play equipment but we are planning to install more and replace some elements that are tired. The funding will be coming from the developer of Poppyfields as part of their '106 Agreement' with the Borough Council. A questionnaire went out to the young people asking them what they would like us to add to the play equipment. We offered an incentive and are pleased to say that we had over 80 replies, a most gratifying response. The winners have already been notified. Meanwhile we are looking at how much is possible given the funding we will be receiving. Poppyfields will be funding replacement bus stops and shelters in School Road.

Footpaths have caused us problems this year. For some time we have been trying to get KCC to officially designate a footpath along Canterbury Road and give it an 'AW' number, this will safeguard the path and make walking along the Canterbury Road much safer. KCC are not convinced by our argument and statements. Another problem is a footpath AW158 that KCC feel is not now needed, we and others feel it should not be removed from the list. We hear that KCC is now considering submitting the Order to the Secretary of State for a decision. Our thanks go to Corry's husband Tim for working on this and other issues around the parish. Our new Cllr Mark Weekes has written our objections to KCC.

Parish Council's Member Grant Fund. This year we trialled our first ever Member's Grant Fund with every member able to donate up to £250.00 towards any organisation that would normally fulfil our strict criteria but had not been catered for earlier in the year. I'm pleased to say that the money has been well spent with some of the recipients being the Scouts for a new flag, Charing Youth Football Scheme for new goals and the Primary School, here they had purchased new Tablets but couldn't afford the covers for them, and we came to the rescue. I am pleased to say that our Member Grant Scheme is to be continued this year but slightly reduced in size.

Parish Council

During the last four years, the life of this council, it seems that we have not had a moment that we were not fighting for or against something. My fellow councillors have, at times, been dropped in at the deep end and have worked tirelessly to support the parish.

Unfortunately we have for various reasons, said goodbye to nine members. We thanked them for their commitment and time they were with us and, as we will now have to, we found people to join us. You may not be aware but we have four members who, for various reasons, decided to leave us this year, this will be their last meeting. The remaining eight members have decided to continue on the council. As no other people came forward for either Charing Ward or Charing Heath Ward there will be no parish council elections here in the parish.

This year I have many people we wish to thank.

Richard King was KCC Member for many years He was most supportive of our parish. Charlie Simkins took Richard's place and has supported us well. Cllrs Gerry Clarkson has financially supported us and several organisations in the parish. Cllr Dr Robert Taylor has supported my council and the Heath with funding and time, he has attended many of our meetings and has been most supportive, I'm grateful for the advice he has given me. Robert is not standing for re-election this time, we will miss him.

Our councillors who are leaving us this time are Richard Carrison, Dennis Gudge, Bruce Vigar and Judy Wilkinson. Each in their own way has contributed much towards the life of the council. We will miss them and thank them for all they have done. We would welcome any of them back should

they change their minds!

This year we said goodbye to our RFO (Responsible Financial Officer) Maggi Hill. Maggi's resignation was unexpected but she did give us time to find a replacement. Thank you Maggi for the support you have given to your community and in particular our council. She was first a councillor then our clerk and latterly our RFO. Following interviews we recently welcomed Jo'anne Munro as our new RFO. Thank you Jo for coming on board.

Christine Stupple has again been most helpful; she is our hall and public convenience cleaner and key holder. Thank you Christine and husband Chris for supporting her.

Robert Falkner our road sweeper took over from Jody Sealwood, we thank them both for the work keeping the centre of the village clean and tidy.

Hilary Evers is our Burial clerk, Hilary is so supportive and helpful. Thank you Hilary.

Thanks go to our Cllr Bruce Vigar we are this evening using our new logo for the first time. We have for some time been thinking that our letter heading was out of date, not any more, thank you Bruce.

As Chairman of our Finance Committee, Cllr. Richard Carrison has been responsible for our healthy financial situation. Richard has enabled us to be solvent without over taxing you the residents. Not an easy job but one well managed. Thank you Richard. No chairman can have had more support from their Vice Chair than I have had. Corry has stepped in when I've been unable to attend a meeting; she has guided and supported me throughout my term as Chairman. Thank you Corry.

Our Clerk Dawne has again worked above and beyond the call of duty. Unlike me it appears Dawne can work well into the night, it is not uncommon to receive a text or e-mail that she sent well past 11pm and sometimes later. As you can see, she takes her duties and responsibilities very seriously. It is no secret that we couldn't do what we do as a council if it weren't for Dawne's professionalism and commitment. Thank you Dawne.

May I thank councillor's wives, husbands and partners for the support they give us. I couldn't do what I do without Stephanie's full support.

Lastly, thank you all for your support and suggestions. Our job is to support you and protect the Parish from outside influences. We always bear that in mind!

What of the future? We will continue to maintain what we have and improve where we can.

Unfortunately I expect our work load to be maintained at the level it now is. I have suggested to council that is time to consider asking the Borough if it is possible to increase the number of councillors so that we can maintain our present workload more easily.

5. FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT: Cllr Carrison reported on how we finance the parish, the committees meet to set the budgets for the next financial year. The Finance Committee meet and work out a figure on what has been put in by all committees. That is then put to the full council to agree. Cllr Carrison said that finances were looking good in the current climate and were on target. We have uncertainties on parish grants that could be cut but at present grants were slightly better than anticipated. We have occurred costs with legal letters to defend the parish against illegal developing. We have received more money from the precept, grants from A.B.C were 11% they are down to 7% this year. £43,000 of reserves is an acceptable level. Donations we have increased grants by £3000 as members grants for other good causes within the parish, this amount will reduce to £150 per member for the next financial year. Groups who have benefitted from the additional grant are Scouts, Youth Football, Tennis Club, Charing School, History Society and The Christmas lights.

6. PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT: We have had 43 applications this year 4 were withdrawn by applicant and 37 granted 8 against our recommendations. The applications received have been a mixed bunch. Councillors continue to visit the site of all applications, on larger applications the whole council where possible attends the site visit. The Extra care application decision should be announced shortly. The Brett's application is just in we have four arch leaver files to go through. We are grateful to residents who have supported the parish council with planning applications where the heritage of the village must come first.

7. WEALDEN WHEELS: Alan Davies attended to represent Wealden Wheels. They have been running for eleven years and are currently busy and growing. They have achieved 11,500 journeys

in the first ten years. They have a new bus coming shortly from a government initiative it should be in place by the autumn. With the retirement of Kevin Parry they have had to put a new team together these are Liz Reed from Kent & Sussex Railway, Chris Housman from Pluckley. They are always looking for additional volunteer drivers.

8. REPORT OF CHARITABLE TRUSTS: Janet Mc Intyre read the charitable trusts report.

9. DE FIB PRESENTATION: Councillor Carrision showed a presentation on how to use the new De Fibs which are placed outside the public toilets and one outside the Red Lion in Charing Heath.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS: A talk was to be held the Archbishops Palace on the arch and entrance by the Spitalfields Trust on the 5th June.

11.2014 COMMUNITY/ YOUTH AWARD: The nominees were Darryl Spicer, Alison Clifton, Sarah Pearson, Lucy Simmons, John & Francis Wire & Phillada Pym. The Winner was Lucy Simmons.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.17pm

Signed.....

Chairman

Clerk