

**HOUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

**held on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2017, 7.30pm**

**at Houghton Village Hall**

Present: Parish Councillors P Page (Chairman), G Butler, A Young, J Scougall, P Kennesion, County Councillor Gibson, Borough Councillor Boulton

Guest Speakers        Mrs R Cardoe (Village Hall Chairperson)

                                 Mr D Livermore (All Saints Church)

Minutes:                 A Taylor – Parish Clerk

Members of the public: 5

1	<p><b>Apologies for absence</b> Apologies were received from Parish Councillor Mrs Burt, Borough Councillor Busk, PCSO Williams and Mr Woodhall.</p>
2	<p>The minutes from the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2016 were approved as a correct record of proceedings. (all agreed)</p>
3	<p><b>Chairman’s Report – Philip Page (in full as presented at the meeting)</b> Good Evening all and thank you for coming this evening. This last year started as it finished last April with tremendous demands placed upon the Parish Council with regard to development proposals put before us. The introduction of the Settlement Boundary has opened up the village for development and as we had expected a development at Kents Orchard was soon before use. A tremendous level of interest was shown by the village and constructive and well informed objections were made to TVBC in respect of the application. The PC employed a Planning Consultant to put forward concerns and argued strongly on our behalf having regard to the sensitive nature of the site within the Conservation Area and its impact upon the Listed buildings adjacent and the visual impact from Sheep bridge. After some minor revisions, the developers were given consent notwithstanding our continual objections. I’m sorry to say that scant regard was given to the PC at the Area Planning Committee meetings with support to our objections from our Borough Councillors on such a contentious development could have been more vocal than was forthcoming. Still on planning matters, the development for Bossington Farmyard was submitted, then withdrawn and following a presentation to the village and subsequent revisions following again, well considered objections and observations from parishioners, a revised application is in front of TVBC for consideration. The revised proposal is recommended for Permission at the Area Planning Committee meeting tomorrow evening (Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> April), and whilst not all aspects are considered desirable the open consultation between Bossington Estate and the village is something to be applauded in trying to achieve a sympathetic development on a site we all know is one on which development will take place.  During this year, tremendous effort was put in by Ingrid on behalf of the PC and Tom Graham, to enable the formation of a Charitable Trust into which the £500,000 Community Benefit Fund payment from the solar farm development can be administered. The difficulties and hurdles placed in front of them to achieve this</p>

	<p>should not be underestimated and all Parishioners owe them a huge thank you in achieving the formation of a Charitable Trust, which can be run by Trustees from the village for the benefit of the village for many years to come.</p> <p>Concerns were raised in the village as to how the Social Housing in Alexandra Close is now allocated by TVBC and English Rural Housing Association. A number of Parishioners and the PC had a meeting with TVBC to ensure a proper framework is in place for the advertising and notification to the PC of vacancies and deadlines when properties become available to prevent further misunderstandings.</p> <p>The PC is currently applying to TVBC for the designation as a Neighbourhood Area, which will allow for the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan. This document will form part of TVBC's planning policy and something that is considered in future planning application. As yet the Designation of a Neighbourhood Area has not been approved, but we hope this will be forthcoming in the near future and a committee can be formed to progress this very important matter further.</p> <p>The PC were happy to be able to not raise the precept again this year and we endeavour to keep costs to a minimum. This year, thanks to previous years' control of expenditure, we were glad to be able to increase the PC grant to All Saints Church to £1,000. We have also been able to agree to a new grant of £300 to Neighbour Care, which is run from Stockbridge and provides assistance to Parishioners with transport difficulties for hospitals etc.</p> <p>Last month, Claudia Bradby stood down as a Parish Councillor and I would like to thank her for her constructive ideas, diligence and overriding desire to do the best for the village and the Parishioners during her time on the PC. In closing I would like to thank all the Parish Councillors and our Clerk for all the hard work put in over the last year.</p> <p>I would also like to thank all the Parishioners who come to our meetings and take part in discussions and express their points of view on all sorts of matters. Further to this, I greatly appreciate all the Parishioners who take time to records their views on Planning Applications be it for or against, as this shows true community awareness and a desire to be involved in the village.</p> <p>We have a good village community and one which is getting stronger year on year. Thank you.</p>
4	<p><b>PCSO's Report</b>  Police Community Support Officer – Catherine Williams.  Due to PCSO Williams absence, the Clerk presented the report on her behalf. Non-dwelling breaks are commonly seen throughout the Test Valley area, however, Houghton experience a low number. There have been 4 in the last year, including a spate of 3 in Pittleworth, June 2016 and the substation on Faithfull's Drove having batteries stolen in February 2017.</p> <p>Suspicious incidents are often reported, although there may not be any offences committed it gives us a really good picture of who is about and where. Please continue to report concerns on 101.</p> <p>Locally we saw a rise in thefts from motor vehicles last summer and have experiences some already this year. Please do not leave anything in unattended vehicles, vehicles have been known to be broken into and handbags stolen from under seats, jackets and hidden in the boot. If you don't need it for your dog walk, please leave items at home. Local residents and visitors have been victims so</p>

	<p>please pass the message onto friends and family.</p> <p>Please report the following:  Untaxed cars to be report online: <a href="http://www.gov.uk">www.gov.uk</a>  No MOT – Police 101  Abandoned vehicles – local authority: <a href="http://www.testvalley.gov.uk">www.testvalley.gov.uk</a>  New email address: <a href="mailto:Catherine.williams@hampshire.pnn.police.uk">Catherine.williams@hampshire.pnn.police.uk</a>  I am still keen to attend local events or groups, please email me or call 101 to leave me a message.</p>
5	<p><b>Hampshire County Councillor’s Report</b></p> <p>County Councillor Gibson reported that the Hampshire County Council has had to increase Council Tax by 4.99% due to Social Care, predominately care home and adult services.</p> <p>He has been able to provide grant funding for a number of new village halls during the last financial year including Nether Wallop and Longparish, each receiving £25,000.00. Funding was also provided to Broughton for ditch works.</p> <p>There will be no library closures. Andover Library will be refurbished to include mobile shelving giving the site more flexibility. The library has seen an increase in child services such as baby weigh in and Rhyme and Time sessions.</p> <p>A new contractor will take over Highways maintenance during August 2017, replacing Amey. Potholes will be repaired differently following a £9.5million investment into new machinery, which can heat tar and repair sections of road, which will be more cost effective and more efficient.</p> <p>County Cllr Gibson reported his attendance to a presentation evening on behalf of Sports Hampshire recently at Southampton FC’s ground. The charity provides funding to increase sports in schools.</p> <p>Museums in Hampshire are now run by Hants Culture Trust, which means that can access more funding.</p> <p>The broadband cabinet in Houghton should be live within the next few weeks if not so already.</p>
6	<p><b>Borough Councillor Report</b></p> <p>Borough Councillor Peter Boulton (Report in full as presented at the meeting)</p> <p>Council Tax Test Valley Band D customers will have an increase this year of £5, this is a reluctant rise after a number of years of no increase. The reduced Government grant this year, after a year of similar reductions, is pushing Borough and District Councils towards increasing self-sufficiency.</p> <p>The Borough Council’s response to these cutbacks is, every year, to ask each department to constantly scrutinise costs, and to come up with efficiency savings. This gets increasingly difficult. The other approach is to partake in prudent property investments and pursue business initiatives.</p> <p>An example, only this week the leisure management provider contract has been awarded to a new provider, who has undertaken to provide a rebuilt facility at the Andover Sports Centre and refreshed premises at Romsey Rapids and Valley Park, (at no capital cost to TVBC) all of which will make significant savings on Leisure provision, in fact will make a financial return.</p> <p>The Councils Housing Strategy is continuing to help local people to access decent homes. It is not just building houses but also building communities with first class</p>

facilities, such as community halls, leisure park areas, sports pavilions, and dozens of sport pitches.

In the south Romsey's sporting infrastructure will shortly benefit from a considerable increase in facilities and will be home to a consortium of local sports clubs and will provide floodlit astro pitches, grass pitches and other vital sporting accommodation, all at Ganger Farm.

This massive building program with the Govt funded New Homes bonus, together with the community Asset Fund, directly benefits community projects. Parishes can also benefit from the new Test Valley Community Toolkit, a valuable aid to those embarking on a Neighbourhood Plan and thereby identifying your local needs.

Test Valley BC is also very active in supporting the Future Skills and Technical centre at Cricklade College, this with its programme of supporting small business has resulted the council receiving two prestigious Wessex Area awards; Best all round Business Friendly Council and a special award for outstanding commitment to support small businesses.

As I have tried to indicate this should give a small flavour of how enterprise orientated the Council has become and is developing constantly innovative new ways of generating new income streams. It is interesting to note the return on completed projects is forecast to be 7.8%, that delivers £1.3Million more than had that capital employed remained in reserves.

As Councillors, we have done our bit to encourage local enterprise initiatives either with modest grants from our individual community grant fund, or by steering entrepreneurs towards the right advice and expertise that we have within the Council.

#### THE FUTURE

What is coming? An exciting new wetlands area at Fishlake meadows. A park, which will be open to the public for ecological pursuits and informal recreation. There are to be more enhancements to Romsey town centre. The waste collection depot at Portway is to be clad in solar panels. Also, there will be increasing use of Beech Hurst Headquarters by sharing some of the space for functions with Hampshire County Council.

#### WARD BOUNDARIES

There are proposed Ward boundary changes, which are significant, and not universally welcomed, in this central Test Valley area – possibly to be renamed Mid Test. This will include Stockbridge, Longstock, Broughton, Kings Somborne, Lockerley, the Wallops, Mottisfont and the Tytherleys. This was originally to be 2 wards with a one Councillor Ward and a 2 Councillor Ward. Locally we have argued for a 3 member Ward to cover the whole area - any other decision, to make the numbers right, would have resulted in divisions between adjoining communities i.e. Stockbridge and Longstock, or splitting apart neighbouring communities who currently work well together i.e. Broughton and Mottisfont, Broughton and Houghton, the Wallops. This proposal will result in an increased workload for 3 elected members in 2019; each of these 3 will be expected to be responsible for 6 parishes each. Currently 5 members cover this large area with 1900 electors each and the change will result in each Councillor having 2400 electors! There will only

	<p>be 3 Councillors working together in this large rural Ward. You as a Parish Council will be consulted on these changes, but your current 5 members are willing to accept this proposal.</p> <p>LOCALLY</p> <p>Houghton has had several challenging and not always acceptable planning applications this year. We have done our best to help and mitigate where possible. Daniel and I joined your Council members in getting the entrance to the Bossington Estate proposal more acceptable.</p> <p>We hope your adoption of working towards a Neighbourhood Plan will enable your Council to look to the future, but it will be a lot of work.</p> <p>Finally, the big change for us as Councillors is the fact that our current leader Cllr Ian Carr, responsible over the last 20 years for successfully guiding the Council through many difficult changes, and promoting many of the new initiatives, has decided to step down from the role, and his leadership will be much missed.</p> <p>I get to as many Parish Council meetings as I can but there is often a clash of dates</p> <p>I would like to thank the Houghton Parish Councillors, and the Clerk for all that they do and for keeping us informed</p>
7	<p><b>Chairman of the Village Hall Management Committee's Report</b>  Mrs Rosie Cardoe (in full as presented at the meeting)</p> <p>In November, we sent out a survey to all the village, by hand and via email, to see what everyone felt about the current state of the village hall and what improvements might be required. We are relieved to hear that 70% of those who responded strongly agreed that the village hall is a community asset. However, the replies also indicated that the hall lacked some ambience and there was a strong wish to have a refurbished and fit-for-purpose hall. There were a large number of requests for Wi-Fi, a projection screen and an external terrace. The current use of the backstage, 'caged' external area, lack of storage and ill-equipped kitchen were also of concern.</p> <p>Therefore, the survey gave us an excellent idea of how to steer the next stage.</p> <p>The committee have also visited four village halls that were recommended to us to see how well they have been modernised or recently built. All of them were a little bit bigger than ours but it was interesting to see how they used their space - in fact none of them had a stage but instead a stackable-away stage in an enviably large storage space, they all had large windows that let in good light, a terraced area and a neat kitchen with a hatch.</p> <p>The intention at present is not to alter the village hall out of recognition but to bring it up-to-date and to iron out storage problems and eyesores, keeping costs as low as possible.</p> <p>We have been in touch with three architects and are now waiting to hear back from two of them about how much it would be to create plans and elevations sufficient to submit a pre-application to TVBC. This would help provide an indicative cost of the refurbishment project which, in turn, will help determine likely funding sources to approach.</p>

	<p>We do hope we can approach the Community Benefit Trust Fund shortly to help us with this project. However, I have been in touch with Kevin Sawers, the community buildings adviser, at Action Hampshire, who we will be meeting in due course to get some idea of the kind of grants we may be able to get to help this project especially from TVBC or Hampshire County Council.</p> <p>The committee shall continue to consult and listen to more views and look forward to suggestions over the coming months. The committee will also make presentations to parishioners prior to any decision on whether to go ahead.</p> <p>Other news... we have a new microwave, kindly donated and even better the new dishwasher! Coffee mornings continue to be a success and donations have been made to a variety of charities - we welcome any parishioner to help us on any month if they wish to support a charity of their own.</p> <p>We didn't have our usual Valentine drinks this year due to a few committee members being away but intend to have a village party of some sort later in the year.</p> <p>Lucy Gosse will be standing down from the committee this May. She has been an unbelievable good super secretary so I don't know what we will do without her! Mark Lister, who has been an invaluable and cheerful member will also be leaving. However, we are delighted to welcome Kate Lewis on the committee and would also welcome any others who would like to help us at this important time for the village hall.</p>
8	<p><b>All Saints Church Report</b></p> <p>Due to Mr Woodhall being absent, Mr Livermore reported on his behalf. Restoration works have been carried out to the Church to include two windows and roof repairs. Funds were received from the Busk Family to install a set of bells, which have become a valuable asset to the Parish and have assisted in bringing an increase in wedding to the Church. The monument inside the Church has also been restored.</p> <p>There is now an active bell ringing group within the Parish.</p> <p>Three years ago, several complaints were made about the condition of the Churchyard. With thanks to Michael Woodhall and his groups of volunteers, they have achieved a wonderful job of tidying up the Churchyard.</p> <p>A future project will be to install a loop within the Church. When doing this it would make sense to install an audio-visual system and the Parochial Church Committee would also like to consider a new lighting system.</p>
9	<p><b>Parishioners and Councillors Comments and Questions</b></p> <p>Parish Councillor Young will commence seeking interest from residents to be involved in the formation of a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.</p> <p>Mrs Gosse noted a large number of trucks are passing through the village, therefore requested the Parish Council give some thought to requesting remedial works to repair verges once the construction works at Kent's Orchard are completed.</p> <p>The Parish Council will request a copy of the S106 Agreement from TVBC for Kent's Orchard.</p>

**Meeting closed at 8.53pm**