

**Minutes of Meeting of Hitcham Parish Council held on
Monday 16th January 2017 in Hitcham Village Hall**

Present: Alan Scott, Chairman; Pauline Squirrell, Vice Chairman; Wendy Crease; Paul Beedham, Jim Morgan; Jenny Antill, County Cllr; Michael Creffield, District Cllr; Giles Hill, Play Area Co-ordinator; Paul Marshall (resident) and Doreen Neun, Parish Clerk

<p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p> <p>4.</p> <p>5.</p>	<p>Apologies for Absence: These were received from Brian Hubbard.</p> <p>Declaration of Pecuniary Interest: None were declared.</p> <p>Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 7th November 2016: These were signed as being a true record of that meeting. Proposed: Mrs Crease. Seconded: Mr Morgan.</p> <p>Matters Arising from Meeting held on 7th November 2016:</p> <p>a) Vehicle Activated Signs: With the help of Paul Marshall there is now documentation for four potential sites for the signs. Photos of these now need to be sent to Highways. Mr Scott thanked Cllr Antill for her help.</p> <p>b) Fen Lane repair: Cllr Creffield has spoken to Highways regarding the repairs to Fen Lane. He was also going to pass it on to Paul Gant to look at, although Cllr Antill suggested that Mr Gant was not the right person as he lives in Hitcham. Unfortunately, Highways are undergoing a large re-organisation, but Cllr Antill said she would try and help with arranging the resurfacing work to be done.</p> <p>c) Neighbourhood Watch Scheme: Mr Scott said he needed help with this. At least three groups would be needed within the village. He will bring the matter up at the Annual Parish Meeting in March as we need to get residents to feel there is a genuine need for such a Scheme. Unfortunately, there had been a recent burglary at an isolated property within the Parish. There is a need to educate people on security. If there is a registered NWS scheme then insurance premiums can be reduced and security equipment could be bought en bloc at a cheaper price. Mr Scott will put something about the Scheme in the next issue of the revised 'Hitcham Life'.</p> <p>d) Footpath Signs: Mr Hill was asked to add a missing footpath to the village footpath map. Mr Scott will give him the relevant information. There is a footpath sign missing next to Elm Tree Cottage. Mr Marshall, who delivers the 'Village Edition' to local residents, was requested to ask anyone he meets on his round about missing signs. Suffolk County Council's Right of Way department deals with footpaths.</p> <p>e) Noticeboards Refurbishment: It was suggested to speak to Malcolm Currie or Herndon, advert in Roundabout, regarding the refurbishment of the noticeboards outside Village Hall and at entrance to Churchyard.</p> <p>County Councillor's Report: Cllr Antill reported on the following topics. A copy of her full report will be filed with these Minutes:</p> <p>a) Devolution: This collapsed before Christmas due to lack of support in Norfolk, but with encouragement from the Government Suffolk leaders agreed to attempt to conclude a deal for Suffolk alone, so the discussions continue. Cllr Anthill abstained from voting on this way forward.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">cont....</p>
--	--

- b) Budget: This year's budget has been reduced by £170m to £934m due largely to schools becoming academies and the impact of the on-going Government grant reduction since 2011/12. There is a forecast budget gap of £40m but savings of around £30m have been identified. The Council are upholding their pledge not to increase the core Council Tax for 2017/18. However, the Government have announced that Councils can raise a 3% levy, up from 2%, to help fund social care. If this implemented it could reduce deficit to £2m. Current anticipated savings are set out on the County Council website. There may be further cuts in services announced in an 'emergency budget' issued after the elections in May this year in order to retain Council reserves. The current final budget will be published at the end of January and debated by the County Council early February.
- c) Hitcham: Apart from a certain amount of confusion with regard to ordering the VAS equipment all has been quiet from Hitcham in recent weeks.
- d) Speeding: A traffic order would be needed, but at the moment there is a freeze on Highways taking on more work. Certain criteria would have to be met including number of residencies in area; nature of road fatalities; what caused the accidents. There is going to be a new unit to look into Councillors issues, but this is not set up yet. Cllr Antill will speak to John Merry on our behalf. We should not go just for speed restriction, perhaps consider other ideas such as zig zags on road. Need to get someone to come and look.
- e) Sadly, Cllr Antill announced that she would not be standing for re-election in the May 2017 election. Grateful thanks were given to her for all her help and advice over the past years.

6. District Councillor's Report:

Cllr Creffield reported that very little had happened since Christmas although there are a lot of meetings coming up in the next few weeks.

a) Rural Broadband: The Government will now give money for this to rural areas. Brettenham knows more about this. There is a proposal to put equipment on their Church. Cllr Creffield will try and find out about funding and will speak to James Cartledge, MP. Mr Scott said there could be a satellite link, but houses would need a satellite dish. The north end of the village still has a very slow connection. It was suggested looking into the possibility using the Gas Board/National Grid tower at Cross Green.

b) Devolution: Jenny Jenkins, Council leader, believes it is 'still alive' as two areas in Norfolk are still interested.

7. Police Report:

The Clerk apologised but she had been unable to obtain the information off the SNT website although a recent burglary has been mentioned in item 4 above.

8. Community Play Area:

a) Mr Hill presented two invoices he had received from Janice and Neil Gant who had done 14.5hrs each of maintenance work in the Play Area. The RFO will contact them to find out exactly what was done and over what period. Once this information had been gathered payment of invoices could then be agreed. It was agreed that Mrs Squirrell and Mrs Crease would inspect the Play Area before each meeting and report back any issues. It was also agreed that Janice and Neil should report to Mr Hill on what has been done and what still needs to be done. Mr Hill should also set up a schedule of work to be done. Issuing a contract for the work should also be considered.

b) Following the recent safety inspection Mr Hill has obtained a quote from Materialchange for two bulk bags of Playchip to go under and around some of the equipment. This would amount to £64.20 per bag, including VAT & delivery. This is the firm we have used before. After discussion it was agreed that Mr Hill could go ahead and order the chippings.

cont....

9. Chairman's Report:

a) Mr Scott asked Mr Marshall to report on the Community Speed Watch. There had been fifteen sessions so far and a report had been sent by post to PCSO at Sudbury. A response had been sent to Mr Marshall saying what had been done. It would be helpful to have a couple more people on the rota. To date the top speed recorded was 51mph with the average being between 30 and 40mph, with most being caught near The Ranch. Mr Scott thanked Mr Marshall for all the hard work he has put into the Scheme.

10. Correspondence:

a) A letter had been received from David Turner apologising for not being able to produce a Hitcham Life in December. He felt that if the Parish Council considered there was still a need for such a publication then a decision would have to be made on what the format and contents should be and who should produce and distribute it in the future. It was definitely felt that a village newsletter was a necessity. Mr Scott said that Gipping Press printed a lot of newsletters although this would be at a cost. Mr Scott has all the facilities necessary for preparing and drafting but editing help would be needed. It was agreed that there should definitely be a diary page included. Mr Marshall suggested an article in Village News thanking Mr Turner for all he has done and asking for someone to take over as editor.

11. Planning:

a) Erection of pool house with alterations and extension to cartlodge at The Old Guildhall, Church Lane, Hitcham, IP7u 7NN: After considering the plans and application papers it was agreed that the pool house was inappropriate both in size and setting as it would be in the grounds of one of the most historic houses in the village. However, there was no reason to query the cartlodge extension. The Clerk will convey these remarks to the Planning Department.

b) Erection of crop and machinery store at Lodge Farm, Battisford Rd, Hitcham, IP7 7LX: After looking at the plans and application documents it was agreed that there was no reason to query this application.

12. Finance:

a) The RFO presented the account reports and an up-to-date budget forecast. The current month's bank statements are still awaited. With all cheques cleared current balances stand as follows:

Hitcham Parish Council account £13,219.81

This includes £77.23 from Great Finborough for two Speedwatch signs.

Hitcham Community Area account £825.57

b) The following payments were approved and cheques drawn accordingly from the Hitcham Parish Council account:

Bildeston Parish Council £94.00

This is made up of £62.66 being 1/3rd cost of Speedwatch machine calibration plus £31.34 wrongly charged VAT on Speedwatch signs invoice.

Hitcham Village Hall £144.00

2017 hall hire fee for Parish Council meetings

c) After discussion it was agreed not to increase this year's precept which currently stands at £6,550. Proposed: Mrs Squirrell. Seconded: Mr Beedham

cont....

d) The budget for 2017/18 was discussed and agreed with the following amendments to the 2016/17 budget figures:

Increase in Section 127 donations from £900 to £1,000.

Increase donation to Hitcham Church from £1,300 to £1,500

Increase budget for Community Play Area from £1,500 to £2,000

Increase budget for Vehicle Activated Signs from £3,000 to £3,500

Reduce Community Speedwatch budget from £300 to £100 cont....

Following these amendments the budget figure for 2017/18 was agreed at £12,510.
Proposed: Mr Scott. Seconded: Mr Morgan

e) The Parish Council had been asked to consider any changes needed to the Hitcham Parish Council Risk Assessment for 2017/18. There being no amendments necessary the Risk Assessment was approved for a further year. Proposed: Mr Morgan. Seconded: Mrs Crease.

13. Questions to the Chair:

a) The village litter pick was due in March. Mrs Squirrell asked for agreement that she could go ahead and organise it as usual. All agreed.

14. Date of Next Meeting;

This will be on Monday 13th March 2017 at 7.00pm in the Village Hall. This will be followed at 7.30pm by the Annual Parish Meeting.