

**Minutes of Hitcham Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2020  
held in the Village Hall commencing at 7.30pm**

**Present:** Allan Scott, Chairman; Pauline Squirrell; Wendy Crease; Brian Hubbard; Paul Marshall; Jim Morgan; Doreen Neun, Clerk/RFO and eighteen residents

**Apologies for Absence:**

These were received from Cllr Robert Lindsay and Rob Whiting.

**Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019:**

These were signed as being a true record of that meeting. Proposed: Jim Morgan. Seconded: Pauline Squirrell.

**Matters Arising from Annual Parish meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019:**

There were none.

**County & District Councillor's Report:**

In Councillor Lindsay's absence Mr Scott read out his report covering loss of bus routes; Fen Lane resurfacing; school transport policy; scrapping of Ipswich bypass; LED street lighting project; Babergh budget approval; County Council funding and Housing Revenue account. A copy of the report will be kept on file and available for anyone to see.

**Police Report:**

There had been nothing reported on official police site since last November but Mr Whiting had had his shed broken into recently. It was suggested that some incidents were not being reported to the police. A Neighbourhood Watch Scheme is still relevant for the future.

**Hitcham Community Play Area Report:**

The hedges and wild areas will be cut when the weather improves. There is a suggestion to add a couple of pieces of adult exercise equipment to the Play Area in the future.

**Chairman's Report:**

- a) Mr Scott was pleased to say that a second defibrillator had been obtained and fitted to the manager's office at The Ranch.
- b) The Community Speed Watch and SID (speed indicator device) were both working well. There has been a problem with the speed gun recently but this has now been resolved but more volunteers are needed to help the current volunteers. Mr Scott gave details of how the speed watch worked. Mr Marshall is our co-ordinator and police training is given to any new volunteers as they would be working for the Suffolk Constabulary.
- c) There should have been a fourth post for the SID machine put in close to The Ranch entrance when the others were erected. Highways will need to be contacted to arrange for the missing post to be put in.
- d) Several residents have commented on the state of the railings at the bottom of the village. Highways have been informed and they say they are 'under observation'.
- e) The council is trying to contact the owner of The Old School House with regard to getting the front hedge cut back as it is blocking safe use of the pavement. If we cannot get a response we may have to take action ourselves and send the owner the bill if we have a contact address.

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2/cont... (09.03.20/Chair's report)

f) The Roundabout magazine is back being published every month and Hitcham is included. Mr Scott thanked Mrs Crease and her helpers for the work they are doing stapling, folding and arranging delivery. The magazine does not cost the village anything. The Roundabout will replace Hitcham News in the future.

### **Correspondence:**

a) The Village Hall Committee have sent a request for help in funding alterations to the front car park. The car park is proving too small when large events are held, especially since current models of cars are larger than when the hall was first built. It is also eroding in places. The proposed changes involve the removal of the shrubs across the front of the hall near the doors to increase the size of the car parking area. The walkway in front of the hall will remain. To do this work is going to cost in the region of £10K. The Village Hall do not have endless funds and have asked for a small donation from the Parish Council. This had been agreed as £1,500 by the Council. The Parish Council has received unexpected income from Babergh via the Construction Industry Levy (CIL) and feel that helping this project is good use of some of this income. CIL is paid to the District Council by local housing developers and is then distributed out to parish/town councils where any development took place and can be used for the benefit of the community.

b) A request had been made for a new dog bin at the end of the footpath where it comes out near the bottom of Dale Road. This has to be agreed by Babergh and the clerk will contact Public Realm to see how to proceed

### **Planning Matters:**

a) An application to put up a new dwelling on land belonging to Brick House Farm had been received. The Parish Council have asked for an extension to commenting as they would like to have an agreed site visit as there are quite a few issues involved with this application. Apart from it being of archaeological and historic interest the entrance/exit area is of concern. If anyone has any comments on this, or any other application, please send them direct to Babergh using the planning section of their website.

### **Finance Report:**

a) The RFO reported that the current balances were:

Hitcham Parish Council a/c £16,500.29 with 7 x £100 S137 donations still outstanding

Community Play Area a/c £142.26, all payments cleared

The Parish Council has tonight approved payments on the Hitcham Parish Council account of £2,291.91 which the RFO read out and will be found detailed in today's Parish Council meeting minutes when published. It had also agreed to transfer £1,000 from the Parish Council account to the Play Area account to cover forthcoming expenses. There were no question for the RFO. All financial papers and statements were available at this meeting for anyone to peruse.

### **Any Other Business:**

a) Mr Morgan reported on the need to resurface Fen Lane following erection of a new mast. The new owner of Fen Farm is also doing some construction work on the property and has offered to resurface the land from the sub-station to Gypsy Cottage. He has also cleared drains and ditches. Mr Morgan had contacted Cllr Lindsay who consequently spoke to Highways and they are re-surfacing the land this week. Apparently, the offer from Fen Farm's owner to pay for this triggered Highways into action.

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b) There had been a bin collection problem down Fen Lane recently. Mr Morgan has now given permission for the lorry to turn around in his driveway. Apparently, as they could not turn around they could not do collections.

c) Nicky Currie gave the meeting a detailed update on the progress of the All Saints Church Tower Project and information regarding the bells and Henslow exhibition. Folders with pictures of work are in the shop and village hall for residents to look at. Nicky was thanked for all the work she was doing on behalf of this project.

d) The Parish Council would like to set up a Neighbourhood Plan which means we could take control of what happens in the village. However, this will need to involve everyone in the village. Babergh wanted to know what area we have set and this was confirmed as the whole of the area within the Parish boundary. We then have to get ideas from the community as to what they want to happen in the Parish in future. There is a lack of affordable housing in the village, although an application for some had been on-going for the last three years but in the end Highway's decision had put a final stop to it. Mr Morgan feels this is a real opportunity for the people of Hitcham to decide what they want Hitcham to be. Do we want houses dotted around the area or do we want them more in the village centre for example. There will be a referendum to see who approves of a Plan or not. There is an article about this in the current Hitcham News. It is hoped people will respond to it. A sub-committee will be set up which will include interested residents and not just the Parish Council. There will be a lot to do and Parish Councillors cannot do it all. It was felt that the personal approach would achieve more success than a questionnaire. However, it was pointed out that the last one sent out got a response of 45 per 100 which was felt to be quite good.

e) A general discussion took place on how the village can respond to the Coronavirus problem. It was felt that the shop could be the centre of assistance, but volunteers would be needed to help with food collection and deliveries. Also help might be needed with prescription collections, etc. Everyone needs to keep an eye on their neighbours, especially the old and vulnerable as it is not known how long the virus will continue. It was felt that a single phone number, maybe the shop number, or email address would help with contact for those who needed assistance in any way. Mr Scott will set up an email address and any relevant information will also be put on the village website and noticeboard and in the shop. Also, any details could go in next issue of The Roundabout. Everyone will need to follow all future Government advice.

f) There was concern about the possible loss of the community bus service. This is not due to lack of numbers but a lack of funds. The Parish Council had offered to contribute to its running costs together with other villages in the area, but none had responded. It is hoped that a solution can be found but in the meantime it is suggested residents write to James Cartlidge, MP voicing their concerns.

g) There is someone looking for great crested newts in the local ponds, although it is too early for them. This probably has something to do with the proposed new development on the land North of Lower Farm Barns.

h) There is still a problem with potholes at the corner of Bury Road. Residents always report them but the road really needs resurfacing. Mr Scott said he will mention it to Cllr Lindsay who may get a better response from Highways. The question of clearing ditches and drains was raised. Highways needs to be approached as they may know who responsibility it is. Land owners can only do ditches from their land side not road side.

As no further questions, Mr Scott thanked everyone for coming and the Parish Council will be in touch with information on a Neighbourhood Plan and the Coronavirus situation.

Meeting closed at 8.40pm