

BUCKLAND ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2015

MINUTES of the Buckland Annual Parish Meeting held in the Reading Room, on the evening of Monday 23rd March 2015 at 7.30pm.

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman, Nigel Husband, welcomed everyone to the meeting and took the opportunity to introduce Councillors Horden, Pryor, Steed and Westwell and Sheena Boyce, Clerk to the meeting and relayed apologies from Cllr Day.

The Chairman welcomed PCSO Ivor Williams from Surrey Police, local residents (and contributors this evening) Ianthe Cox, Martin Boyce, Catriona Martin, Rebecca Gowrley and our Guest Speaker Simon Humphreys, a volunteer site warden with Surrey Wildlife Trust. It was noted that there were c.35 parishioners and c.5 members of the public in attendance.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr James Day, District Councillor Paul Potter County Councillor Helyn Clack, Jim Docking (Parish Rights of Way Officer), Jim Docking and Simon Elson (SCC Environment Enhancement Officer). Apologies for an anticipated late arrival had been received from District Councillor John Muggeridge.

3. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2014

These had been displayed on the Parish Council Notice Board, published on the village website, and circulated to Cllrs. The motion to adopt the Minutes as a true and correct record was Proposed by Tim Westwell, Seconded by Iain Laurenson and carried by the meeting. The Chairman signed the minutes.

4. SURREY POLICE

PCSO Williams outlined the 11 reported crimes that had been recorded in Buckland during the previous four months, all of which had previously been reported in the minutes of Parish Council meetings.

PCSO Williams reminded parishioners that a member of the Neighbourhood Police team attends Buckland Parish Council meetings to provide a contact point for Buckland residents. PCSO Williams took the opportunity to ask everyone to ensure their outbuildings and sheds are adequately secured with any expensive items fixed to structures.

The Chairman thanked PCSO Williams for attending this year's meeting as part of his last day as a serving PCSO with Surrey Police, and, on behalf of the village, thanked him for his exemplary service and wished him well in his retirement.

5. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman opened by announcing that having kept a close rein on council running costs that no increase in the Band D Council tax charge had been proposed for 2015/16. He went on to say that Council is very grateful for the generous donations and grants that have been received during the last year, without which we could not have been able to complete a number of "capital projects" nor to bring forward initiatives on the "wish list".

Chairman reported a busy year, during which we saw the completion of the restoration of the war memorial, resurfacing of the footpath across the village green, the installation of granite sets alongside Rectory lane between the War Memorial and, most recently, an upgrade to the village website.

Chairman advised that after this year's annual village green and pond clearance, led by Simon Elson, and supported by the Reigate Area Conservation Volunteers (including an encouraging army of youngsters), it had been possible to clear a good portion of the unwanted flora from the pond.

Unfortunately it had also become clear that weeds along the margin of the pond were forming a solid mass that manpower alone was finding increasingly difficult to remove. Accordingly, under guidance from Simon, Council had employed a specialist contractor to mechanically clear a margin around the pond perimeter, to be undertaken in two phases. It had been hoped that the first stage would, by now have been complete but the very wet ground conditions have prompted a delay to avoid “ploughing the village green”.

Chairman acknowledged that many of the attendees would be aware that Hanson’s sand working in Buckland is set to come to a historic conclusion very soon. He went on to say that he was pleased to be able to report that as a final gesture Hanson had contributed a sum of £450, sufficient to match fund phase one of the proposed work to the pond and that the Parish Council is grateful to them for this last act of generosity.

Chairman advised that the Buckland Liaison Group that includes representatives from the Parish Council, Buckland Estate, Hanson and Surrey County Council was reformed during 2014 to provide a useful communication channel as we move towards completion of the restoration works. He went on to suggest that everyone who had attended the Buckland Estates Open Meeting last December would probably be aware that an application had now been submitted to retain four of the existing buildings to support the use of the site for leisure activities. Whilst the current application focuses on the existing fishing club activities he advised an expectation of further applications to include an extension to allow public access to the site and concluded by stating that Council, like you, waits to hear the details of their plans going forward.

2014 will be remembered by some as year of mud; especially for those living close to the line of the new Sutton and East Surrey Water (“SESW”) Outwood to Buckland water main. Again, as a result of the weather, (and a lengthy wait for UK Power networks to move a telegraph pole) work took longer to complete than had been originally hoped. We are looking forward to the remaining restoration work being completed over the coming months and to an improvement in the condition of the local rights of way.

Chairman advised that the main community enhancement task Council is looking to carry out this year will be the replacement of the rather ugly concrete posts that form an integral part of the post and rail barrier that runs alongside the A25 near the pond. He went on to say that a year ago, at the 2014 Annual Parish Meeting *“I cautioned that timing for this project will depend upon our success at securing donations and grants”*.

He stated that Council had been suggesting to SESW that they might like to express some gratitude to the village for the way we have all tolerated the mess and disruption, and Council has, very recently, accepted from SESW, an offer made as a gesture of goodwill, of an ex-gratia contribution of £5000 towards the enhancement of the post and rail barriers alongside the A25 in the heart of the village’s conservation area. The aim is to (hopefully) undertake these works during the summer.

Chair then referred to Jim Docking’s report, that was contained within the papers everyone had been provided (see Appendix), mentioned that Jim had sent his apologies, and relayed Jim’s request for a help in covering the higher parts of the parish footpaths. Please let one of us know if you can help or contact Jim directly.

The Chairman concluded by making a reference to the forthcoming Parliamentary and District Elections on the 7th May and explained that the four yearly Parish Council elections are scheduled for the same date.

The Chairman reminded parishioners that Council has had one vacancy and been operating as a group of 6 councillors for some time now and encouraged anyone who might be interested in becoming a Parish Councillor to speak to Sheena (our Clerk) or one of the Councillors to find out a little more about what it entails.

The Chairman suggested that it would help if you have a particular interest in Buckland and invited anyone unsure as to whether it might be something they would be willing to take on to attend the next Council meeting on Wednesday 13th May to observe how Council operates. He concluded by emphasising he was sure that those individuals who had been elected to serve as Councillors by the time of the next meeting will be delighted to see you.

The Chairman then invited Sheena Boyce to present the Parish Council accounts for the Year to 31st March 2015.

6. BUCKLAND PARISH ACCOUNTS

Sheena Boyce presented a summary of the draft projected accounts with a comparison against budget for the year ending 31 March 2015, copies of which had been made available to the Meeting.

The Clerk advised that council running costs had come in slightly below budget and that ongoing activity had been funded from the precept of £8367 and grants of £2383 from MVDC. She explained how Council's ability to progress initiatives had been helped by this year's success at securing donations and grants and outlined the impact of projects that span more than one financial year on the cash book accounting.

With no questions asked Sheena indicated she would be happy to respond to any queries during the break.

7. BUCKLAND PAROCHIAL; CHARITY ACCOUNTS

Chairman referred parishioners to the 2014 Report (see appendix) and to the Accounts for the 12 months to 30th September 2014, printed copies of both documents having been made available to attendees.

Chairman introduced Ianthe Cox, who serves as Clerk to the Charity and as one of the Trustees, to the meeting. Ianthe took the opportunity to encourage parishioners to make the Trustees aware of any significant need within the village and to emphasise that all such information is handled sensitively and with discretion. Ianthe advised that the next meeting of the Trustees will be in May 2015 to discuss the Spring distributions

8. VILLAGE UPDATES

Village Website – Martin Boyce, webmaster.

Martin Boyce reported that Design Lynx, the Dorking based company that originally designed the village website (back in 2009) and who continue to host the site was currently rebuilding it using Wordpress Software.

Martin explained that Wordpress:

- (a) is a free and popular software with good functionality that can be relied upon to be updated as and when internet browsers are updated whereas the previous version of the village website used software that is no longer updated and is becoming increasingly obsolete;
- (b) will make it easier to add new pages to the website and to generally have much more control over all aspects of the content of the website whereas even the addition or removal of a page or a change to titles previously required a "change request" to be submitted to Design Lynx and attracted a fee.

Martin advised that the website is being rebuilt as a "responsive site" which means it is being designed to deliver an equally good user experience whether you use a Windows PC, a Mac, a tablet or a mobile phone and that the resolution of the website is being increased to an overall width of 1024 pixels (in line with present day industry standards) from the current 800 pixels.

With the help of a few snapshots taken of the development version of the website Martin outlined how new version of the website will differ from the current site and pointed out elements that are being retained.

Martin advised he hopes the website will be switched to the new version during April. Shortly thereafter invitations to submit refreshed content will be issued to existing community groups and contributions be encouraged from any community groups not currently represented. An initiative to encourage local businesses to have a presence on the website is planned and any other ideas will be considered (in time).

Martin explained that until very recently the Parish Council had thought it would be late 2015 (at the earliest) before consideration could be given to progressing the website upgrade. He took the opportunity, on behalf of everyone in Buckland, to express thanks to Cllr Helyn Clack for supporting the Parish Council's recent application to the SCC Mole Valley Local Committee for a grant of £1000 and to the Parish Council for agreeing to fund the remainder of the £1185 upgrade.

Martin concluded by sharing some recent visitor statistics; the village website had 8,567 unique visitors during 2014 (2013: 6,700) and 13,940 visitors (2013: 10,700), equating to an average of 38 visits per day viewing an average of 2-3 pages each (2013: 29 visits per day). It was noted that this analysis excludes automated robots/worms and automated messages.

The Chairman thanked Martin for volunteering for the role of webmaster and for overseeing this upgrade.

Public Access Defibrillator – Sheena Boyce

Sheena Boyce explained that when the British Heart Foundation volunteers visited Buckland to run the Heartstart courses that the lead trainer had brought along a public access defibrillator ("PAD") and demonstrated to the course participants how easy they are to use.

Sheena advised everyone (who had yet to sign up for a Heartstart course), that a PAD is a specialist device made available to anyone to use on someone who is having a cardiac arrest. The attendees had learnt PAD machines are simple and safe, that the machines gives clear spoken instructions and that once in position, the defibrillator detects the heart's rhythm and won't deliver a shock unless a shock is needed.

What caught many people by surprise was the fact that after a cardiac arrest, every minute without CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and defibrillation reduces someone's chance of survival by 10 per cent.

So, Sheena advised she was taking the opportunity offered by the Annual Parish Meeting to announce the launch of a new village initiative for 2015 - to raise sufficient funds to install a PAD to the exterior of the Reading Room.

Sheena advised that the village will need to purchase the PAD itself and to buy a suitable secure storage cabinet. Cautioning that the project is in its early daysshe advised that thus far:

- (i) The South East Ambulance Service had confirmed its support for the proposed installation, adding that this is important as the 999 emergency operators will (given that support) direct callers to the location of the PAD and provide them with a security code to access the storage unit;
- (ii) The Reading Room Committee is supportive of an installation of the equipment on an external wall of the building;
- (iii) The Parish Council has agreed to act as lead sponsor for the project and to allocate budget in future years to ensure batteries and pads can be replaced as and when needed
- (iv) Murray Clarke, the lead trainer who came to Buckland has agreed to endorse an application to the British Heart Foundation for a grant to help purchase the PAD.

Sheena indicated that based on the advice received so far we should budget the project at c. £2000, with the purchase of a PAD accounting for c. £1300, the secure cabinet c. £500 and the balance relating to installation costs.

If a grant application (shortly to be submitted) to the British Heart Foundation is successful the cost of the PAD could be reduced by £900 bringing down the funding requirement to £1100.

Sheena shared the good news that our fund raising had been given a great start by the staff of the Jolly Farmers who had very kindly donated £202 raised through a raffle they held recently at their post-Christmas party.

Sheena concluded by asking anyone (either individually or through village groups you are involved in) willing to make a contribution to this very worthwhile project to contact her as all donations will be most gratefully received and invited anyone interested in attending a future Heartstart Course to let her know.

Family Activities for Buckland and Betchworth (“FABB”) – Catriona Martin and Rebecca Gowrley

Catriona Martin reported that having recently taken on the role of Chairman for FABB that she is keen to raise the profile of FABB and to encourage villagers to engage with the group. Catriona introduced Rebecca Gowrley as a mum with young children who had recently moved to Buckland and expressed her hope that having attracted quite a few new recruits to the FABB committee that the group can continue to build upon its 40 year history of arranging family activities for residents of Buckland and Betchworth.

Catriona outlined a number of challenges the group has faced over recent years that have included the need for public liability insurance, the obligation to complete risk assessments for each proposed activity and increased competition from commercial operations. She advised that the group has, for some time, addressed these needs by operating as a sub-committee of Betchworth Parish Council and also benefits from subsidised hire charges during school holidays at Betchworth Memorial Village Hall.

Catriona invited residents to consider whether they might be able to offer skills and/or time to support the group’s activities and asked everyone to encourage any families in the village to make contact with FABB with a view to joining in the organised activities.

The Chairman thanked Catriona and Rebecca for taking the time to update the village and wished them every success with the planning and execution of the summer activities.

After a break for refreshments, the Chairman introduced our guest speaker, Simon Humphreys, the volunteer site warden at Surrey Wildlife Trust’s Dawcombe Reserve.

9. GUEST SPEAKER: SIMON HUMPHREYS

Simon Humphreys delivered a short talk entitled “Dawcombe: An Internationally Important Nature Reserve on Buckland’s Doorstep?” Those present soon discovered why the short answer to the question is “Yes” as Simon, aided by maps and photographs helped us to become more familiar with this wonderful asset so close to our homes.

Simon concluded his talk by extending an offer to lead a guided walk around the public areas of the reserve – Simon’s offer was warmly welcomed as was the offer of help from the Clerk to publicise the event to parishioners and to manage bookings.

10. CHAIRMAN’S CLOSING REMARKS

The Chairman thanked everyone for their contribution to this year’s Annual Parish Meeting with particular thanks extended to Simon Humphries and thanked everyone who had made the effort to come along to join in.

The Chairman declared the meeting officially closed at 9.50pm.

APPENDIX

Buckland Parochial Charity: Ianthe Cox, Clerk and Trustee

The Henry Smith Charity is for 'the relief of need'. This can be provided either generally or individually to people resident in the Parish of Buckland, as stated in the constitution of 1889. It can be provided as financial help or in the form of a gift to someone who is undergoing a difficult time. The only stipulation is that the recipient must live in Buckland.

The Trustees apply for the Henry Smith Grant each year which amounts to £2500.

During 2014 the Trustees held meetings in May and November to discuss any parochial need that had come to light and agree the distributions. This resulted in two financial distributions during the year to 11 residents for assistance for the provision of food and fuel bills. The last distribution was just before Christmas 2014.

The Charity is always willing to help anyone in need and fortunately we have quite a good network of people to keep us aware of any potential needs. My name and telephone number is on the back of the Parish magazine should any one wish to contact me.

Minutes of the meetings of this Charity between 1893 and 1924 were recently discovered and these historic documents have now been archived at the Surrey Record Office in Woking for safeguarding and preservation. It is interesting to note that the needs were very similar to those of today.

All the work provided by the Trustees is entirely voluntary and the members are: Mrs Ann Adams – Chairman, Rev. Pattie Vigers, Mr Philip Haynes – Treasurer, Mr James Day, Mrs Ianthe Cox – Clerk, Miss Susan Fellows.

Village Rights of Way Team Update: Jim Docking

Alan Pryor, Richard Wheen, Chris Worsley, Martin Cantor, Barbara and Tim Westwell and I have patrolled all the paths in the parish, and I have kept the local Countryside Access Officer and Buckland Estate informed of any matters of concern.

Once most of the water mains pipe work to the north of the A25 had been completed the paths affected by temporary closures were reopened. Several areas remained very muddy indeed and we understand that further closures will shortly take effect to enable Clancy Docwra to undertake work to reinstate the paths to a more acceptable condition.

A temporary path from the middle of Old Road to the cricket pitch, is in a good state because the farmer has left a large area of grassland on the left area of the field and this is where walkers have been crossing the field. This means that the present path is somewhat to the left of the official route, which at the moment is bare soil and muddy. It is to be hoped that the route will remain on its current path until the condition of the official route has improved.

Otherwise, the lower paths in Buckland seem in quite a good state. Some stiles have been repaired and someone has kindly cleared the leaves from the steps of "Jacob's Ladder", which descends to Old Road just before Sandy Lane, making the path much less slippery. Thanks to Sheena's intervention the Water Company has cleared the path that runs alongside the Shell Garage, a job that was very much needed yet was not really caused by the water works.

Some areas of the North Downs Way and other high paths, however, do constitute hazards or difficult walking. There are some fallen trees, broken fences and areas where walkers have used a steep slope to avoid some deep mud – but this is only contributing to erosion. The County does not regard dealing with mud as a priority, but nonetheless I have asked the Countryside officer to attend to areas on the high paths that constitute hazards to walkers.

If anyone feels able to take on responsibility for patrolling some of the rights of way along the slopes of the North Downs an offer of help would be very welcome.

END.