

**CROPTHORNE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2011 in  
Cropthorne and Charlton Village School at 7.30pm**

**Present:** A Hughes (Chair) WDC Cllr T McDonald  
M West (Cllr) PC Stuart Toms  
J King (Cllr)

**In Attendance:** R J Coles (Clerk) 3 Parishioners

Copies of the Agenda, last years minutes and the provisional Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011 were available to all present.

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. Apologies were received from V/chair Annis, Cllrs Meredith, Segar & Meikle, John Ayliffe and WCC Cllr Eyre.
3. The minutes from the meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2010, having been previously circulated and corrected for minor spelling mistakes and surnames, were proposed for signing as a true record by Hilary Hall, seconded by Cllr King and agreed for Chair's signature.
4. As there were no matters arising from the minutes the meeting continued.
5. Chair Hughes presented and explained the annual accounts for 2010/11. The precept now represents a mix of about half in administration and half to the Village Hall and Sheppey. A big change in 2010/11 was the accounting for the Sheppey Play Project which saw funds of £60k enter the accounts, with £45k having been spent to date and the remaining £15k carried over to 2011/12. The £3.5k grant for the refurbishment of the village hall had also been paid over. It was proposed by Angela Henderson, and seconded by Hilary Hall, that the Receipts and Payments Provisional Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011, having been previously circulated, be approved for onward auditing and finalisation at the Parish Council Annual Meeting on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2011.
6. Chair Hughes reported that the big event in the year was the Sheppey Play Project; however it was also the end of the present four year term of the Parish Council. He wished to record his thanks to all those councillors past and present for their contributions, time and efforts respectively and also wished his best to the five councillors (V/chair Bob Annis, Cllrs Jacqui King, Margaret West, Jane Segar & Tom Meikle) who would be standing again but unfortunately due to other commitments he and Cllr Julian Meredith would be standing down.

He continued with explaining that due to the Parish Council's decision to return most of the free balances to the council tax payers two years ago the Precept had been reduced by 90% to £475 only to rise nearly 700% to £3720 and a further rise of 18% next year to £4390. This was slightly embarrassing as nearly everybody else held rises to zero but was unavoidable due to the timing of the earlier large exercise to return money to parishioners. This figure is again subsidised by about £600 of free balances and the extended play facilities are expected to require additional on-going support through the village hall in the future. Overall the Parish Council finances were in a solvent lean state.

The Parish Council had been the representative body for the village in supporting the Sheppey Play Project which gave the whole project the necessary governance required when dealing with other organisations. Cllr Segar in particular and her associates on the relevant committee are to be congratulated on securing such high levels of finance so quickly that half the total project has been completed in a single year together with the additional work placed on the clerk who forwent any additional remuneration. The area of activity is regularly visited by a large number of parishioners old and young with the recent open day attracting 170 people including over 70 youngsters and raised a further £700. Additional funding to the £15k already mentioned has been applied for but the current economic times are making such grants more difficult to obtain. The current grants covered European Union/County Council as well as County, District and Health and thanks are due to WCC Cllr Eyre and WDC Cllr McDonald for their support and assistance.

A number of planning applications had been dealt with, however the most contentious was still outstanding and although situated in the Parish of Cropthorne was of great importance to Fladbury Parish who had been supported in voicing their objections to the development of landing stages and ancillary boating activities opposite the conservation area and in particular the Millennium Wood area of solitude on the flood plain. The adopted Parish Plan is expected to be further developed under the new coalition government Localism Bill into a Neighbourhood Plan. It should be noted that the Sheppey Play Project was an action within the Parish Plan.

Fladbury & Charlton are garnering support for a cycleway/footpath to bypass the dangerous Millbank road from the Jubilee Bridge to Charlton Cemetery with up to three routes possible. Highways funding is expected to be too constrained to help so a landowners/Parish Councils example of localism will have to be pursued by the incoming council and the District Council.

Following his report, Cllr West proposed and the meeting supported an expression of thanks to Chair Hughes for his work on the council now that he was leaving.

Chair Hughes also expressed his thanks and admiration to Cllr King who chairs the Village Hall for her work in handling the refurbishment start stop following the original builder's demise. It had taken a lot of hard work to secure the necessary refinance and new builder.

7. Footpaths – Hilary Hall (860212) reported, “All footpaths have been walked and checked. They are all walkable at the moment. I continue to waymark as necessary. It is sometimes a struggle to keep them all in place. Our local Access Officer, Fiona Argyll, visited recently and I was able to show her a bramble problem on FP 508 from Brook Lane to Cropthorne Heath. So she has the matter in hand. FP 513 from the main road into the village has been cleared by the council and they have said they will return during the year to assess the need for any further work. The bridge on FP502 at the bottom of the race track field is unsatisfactory but this too is in hand, but there seem to be financial restrictions. There is a poor stile on the same path. I will pursue this when I can. Otherwise all seems well and once again please contact me if I can be of help” She also acknowledge the problems to orphan path FP 525 with the ‘Fladbury’ moorings application requesting it be moved from the river’s edge into the meadow hence losing a lot of its impact on walkers and also the cycle/foot path at Millbank.

Charities – John Ayliffe (860011) reported via the clerk, “Randolph Meakins, Patty’s Farm & Widow Lye’s Charity Annual Report 2010-11. Again this year the trust has seen, like many small charities, its income severely diminished with the continued economic situation it finds itself in. However, the trustees have managed to maintain the same level of support for the Parishioners of Cropthorne that it has provided in recent years. To this end, over the past year the Trust has distributed £3,507 to individuals and groups of residents in Cropthorne.

- As in previous years, the Trustees decided because the Tesco vouchers had been received very well by the senior residents that they would continue to distribute these at Christmas. The Tesco vouchers totalled £1,975 and these were distributed to senior residents over the age of 70 years who have resided in the village for a minimum of 5 years. As with other years the trustees decide on a date to deliver the vouchers. Unfortunately, last December it was decided to deliver on the weekend of the 18<sup>th</sup> December obviously not knowing what was to fall out of the sky that weekend so far in advance. Although on Saturday it was blizzard like conditions for most of the day the trustees managed to deliver almost all of the vouchers to the recipients and it was a sterling effort from those involved. Just walking up Main Street was hard enough let alone Middle, Blacksmiths and Field Barn Lanes where there had been virtually no traffic which made walking difficult. As chairman I am very grateful to the trustees for their perseverance in making the deliveries.
- The trust also distributed a total £830 to the youth of the village. This included £330 to 11 students who approached the charity, and are in full time further education. Each received a cheque for £30 towards the cost of books. Also a donation to Sheppey Sports Club of £500 to support trips for about 70 children.
- We did not provide an outing for senior citizens last year as it was decided previously to make it a bi-annual event. We will look at various options this year and if financial constraints allow and a suitable destination decided upon.
- Several residents who were unfortunately hospitalised were given a small suitable gift. The welfare and another grant totalled £702.

As I mentioned earlier, the charity has distributed over £3,507 to several individuals and groups of residents, and despite the economic climate this has been an increase of £267.00 on the previous year and although the charity is not immune to the financial problems of the world, we will endeavour to provide support to the residents of Cropthorne wherever we feel we can help.”

Church Wardens, via Hilary Hall, noted that Parish Council had a £1k reserve for next part of the wall which was delayed for amongst other things the liquidation of the previous contractor.

Walkabout, via Hilary Hall, noted only 3 weeks away, a lot to be done but coming into place but the key ingredient is always the weather!

Village Hall and Sheppey – Cllr King reported that the AGM had been held last week for what had been a busy and eventful year. Treasurer Lindsay Beckman had officially resigned but would cover the refurbishment project through closure and help with handover. Also Linda Heath the bookings clerk/cleaning had announced her resignation. Additional to the refurbishment project elsewhere in

these minutes the due date is 18<sup>th</sup> July and meetings are held every 2 week to ensure on time delivery. Residents had received an updating newsletter in September of which 32 questionnaires were returned. Work on rental charges, booking forms and hire agreements are underway. It is planned to have a Village Hall website and also a skills audit of the trustees is being carried out.

Junior football has increased and now uses the seniors pitch for £50 a month together with one senior team, Anchor Harriers. Parking is still a problem and the police/parish council are helping to find solutions. The shower boiler has had to be shut down and alternatives under investigation. The new mower has arrived and thanks are due to V/Chair Annis and Chair Hughes for sorting and collecting as well as volunteering with Cllr Meredith on cutting duties which are now safer and producing a better result. The H&S coordinator had stood down and was being replaced by Jonah King-Jones and as well as the weekly inspection of the play equipment the whole field will be reassessed every three months. Fund raising had been limited by there being no hall but there had been a book stall at the walkabout, activity on the Sheppey, a Shindig performance at Fladbury Village Hall and weekly keep fit at the school, however charges reduced contribution.

Sheppey Play Project – Cllr King, in the absence of Cllr Segar, confirmed much of what has already been reported above.

Police – PC Stuart Toms reported that there had been 19 crimes in Crophorne of which 12 were thefts mainly of Saddle stones and scrap metal. He noted that he was due to retire in July and a replacement should be in place. He thanked the Parish Council and in particular the clerk for their local help and cooperation during his time here. Chair Hughes wished him a happy retirement and thanked him for his wisdom in helping the council.

WDC Cllr McDonald was in ‘purdah’ due to local elections but noted that fuel poverty was hitting even areas such as Crophorne. A possible solution for some may be joining together locally to bulk buy heating oil/gas as Crophorne is ‘off ‘ the mains and a contact in WDC is Vic Allison deputy MD and Finance on 565000.

8. The issue of the Speed activated light in Fladbury was raised by Cllr West and Chair Hughes noted that he would pass on to the new council the possibility of sharing with Fladbury.

As there was no further business raised Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.25pm

**Signed:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Chair**