

**CROPTHORNE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2013 in Crophthorne and Charlton Village Hall at 7.30pm**

**Present:** R Annis (Chair) WDC Cllr T McDonald  
J Segar (Cllr) WCC Cllr E Eyre  
M West (Cllr)  
J King (Cllr)  
E Stoodley (Cllr)  
T Hardy (Cllr)

**In Attendance:** R J Coles (Clerk) 1 Parishioner

Copies of the Agenda, last year's minutes and the provisional Receipts & Payments Account for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 were available to all present.

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. Apologies received from T Meikle (V/Chair), John Ayliffe and the Police Team.
3. The minutes from the meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2012, were proposed for signing as a true record by Cllr Segar, seconded by Cllr Stoodley and agreed for Chair's signature.
4. As there were no matters arising from the minutes the meeting continued.
5. The clerk took the meeting through the 2012/13 Parish Council Accounts which are heavily affected by the near £100,000 projects being managed for the Sheppey. They reflect a decision taken a few years ago to return free balances to parishioners. This action has now unwound and a rise in the precept of 11% was reflected in recent Council Tax demands. Cllr Segar proposed, seconded by Cllr King, and the meeting agreed that these accounts were in line with expectations and would be put forward for internal/external audit and full adoption by the Parish Council in June.
6. **Chair's Report** - The year started with the approval for the Festival Housing site in Field Barn Lane (FBL). This has also led to a minor amendment proposed in the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) requiring an additional few houses on FBL to tidy off the village boundary and the introduction of a new site on the North Croft off Blacksmiths Lane.  
There has been plenty of activity on the Sheppey with an additional grant from the Lottery following the previous LEADER project both of which were supported by the Parish Council as the Accounting Authority.  
The planting of a Boulder at the Watergate by LANT was disrupted by summer river levels which continued into the winter culminating in four floods in four months.  
The riverside picnic area has been subject to an on/off/on again proposals by WCC to get someone else to take over the running and future development. As the site is quite extensive, complicated and well away from most people's perceptions of Crophthorne village it is an area where any good ideas would be welcomed. The financial implications are quite enormous for a small, mainly administrative Parish Council with a total precept of £5000/year! The clerk was asked to circulate a flyer on the subject.  
Major road repairs have taken place in Blacksmiths Lane, FBL and Middle Lane. New footpaths have been reconstructed outside Holland House and the School. Both these items are WCC responsibilities for which we thank WCC Cllr Eyre for her support in this and many other areas of activity.  
A new flood relief ditch has been implemented in the orchard at Patty's Farm corner and additional alleviations are being investigated. There are major concerns that this corner closes at

the same time as the Jubilee Bridge amounting to two of the major ways into the village being closed. A worst case scenario of Charlton flooding as well as in 2007 would leave the whole of Cropthorne dependant on a less than normally satisfactory FBL! Work in this area is WDC responsibility for which we thank WDC Cllr McDonald for his support in this and many other areas of activity.

We thank our new WCC Footpaths Warden Tom Williams for taking on the task from Hilary Hall who has been thanked on behalf of the whole village.

Those with eagle eyes will have noticed that the Parish precept went up 11% whilst all other constituents of Council Tax remained the same. This has been due to a policy implemented a few years to reduce the free balances of the Parish Council to as close to zero as possible (a negative figure being illegal!). This program resulted in a one year drop of 90% in the precept followed by rises as it returns to the simple level of 'what we spend' is 'what we raise'. This issue has been helped by recent Government programmes to incentivise local areas to increase their housing stock via a New Homes Bonus scheme (NHB). WDC have been very generous in allocating a big portion of this to Parish Councils and Cropthorne has netted £36,000 for future project uses.

An issue with continued use of the Lower Croft by traffic to get to the school after temporary measures in 2007 Cropthorne Canyon days appear to have been adopted full time at the annoyance of local residents. Measures are being taken to eradicate this misuse of a residential area. The issue of a walking bus from the Sheppey to the back of the school is being progressed once again.

Finally I thank my V/chair Tom Meikle, Cllrs King, Stoodley, Sager, West and Hardy together with the clerk for keeping everything ticking over. There may be exciting times ahead. Thank you to those present, and those who have shown interest in Parish Council matters over the past year. It was noted that the clerk would be resigning on 30<sup>th</sup> September after 9 years in the post and additional thanks were tendered.

7. There was no report on the footpaths.

Cllr Segar reported that the final lottery grants for the Sheppey Play Project were being tidied up with sustainability activities. An Easter event had attracted 40 children and 180 adults. Additional activities such as storytelling, wild life, environment and first aid are due. A new ride on mower for £2600 is being obtained.

Peter Harris reported as Church Steward that lack of funding and rearrangement of priorities had put further work on the wall back a while. A five yearly report on churches is now due and other priorities are expected. Regarding the Walkabout it had been decided to give a free ticket to each household with the next Five Alive to regenerate village interest. There will be more to do for children and it will become important in the future to involve younger people of all ages if this event is to survive.

The following report was filed by John Ayliffe on behalf of The Randolph Meakins Patty's Farm and the Widow Lyes Charity Annual Report 2012-2013:-

As I reported last year, the Charity lost its last remaining founder trustee when Maime Blizard passed away. Maime was always going to be hard to replace for her tireless and unselfish work. However, we are very pleased to say that Angela Henderson was invited and accepted the position of trustee and we welcome her to the charity.

As most people are aware the country's financial state has not changed for the better, which we were all hoping for, and with a small charity like ours the constraints are considerable.

Still, we have managed to continue along a stable path and are pleased to be able to support parishioners of Cropthorne.

Following a request the charity granted £196 towards the event to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in the church grounds in June. In July senior citizens were invited to the village hall for an

array of sandwiches, cakes and tea provided by the trustee and friends, which was well received by those who attended.

We helped 9 students who are in full time education with grants for books etc. which totalled £360. This was down on last year's numbers of 13 students.

Our main outlay has again been the Tesco Christmas vouchers which we provide for the senior citizens each year and this totalled £1960 a similar figure to the previous year. Welfare donations this year totalled £600 which included small gifts to parishioners who throughout the year were unfortunate to have a spell in hospital, and convalescing at home. Unfortunately, in recent years the trustees have found it increasingly difficult to find out if any parishioners have been hospitalised for 3 days or more, and would urge anyone who knows or has heard of anyone in that position to please contact one of the trustees below so we can give them an appropriate gift. The trustees are, Sheila Smith, Sheila Castle, Megan Bruce, Garth Wood, Roger Hutchings, Angela Henderson and John Ayliffe (Chair).

Cllr King, chair of Village Hall/Sheppey reported that there were 9 trustees reducing to 7 and a secretary was needed as Liz Taylor was resigning. The AGM has changed to 21<sup>st</sup> May from 23<sup>rd</sup> April. Snagging of the new refurbished building has unfortunately dragged on for a year and more. Donna is running a library/coffee morning on Tuesdays 9:30-12:30 with variable attendances but with interest growing alternative times are being investigated. Thanks were due to the self-managing mowing team ably assisted by Chair Annis.

One adult and several youth football clubs were in residence. Recent increased usage of the Sheppey has resulted in the necessity to place notices asking dogs to be kept on a lead, suitably ignored to date. Changes to and a new safer garage door had taken place in the tractor shed. The Tim Hall memorial bench had been sited at the bus stop. The barn dance was cancelled due to poor interest but a successful Quiz night was held in December. The 200 club was in continuance although with smaller numbers. The Ground Source Heating was saving plenty of oil and keeping the building warm. The 30 PV panels were rated at 7.2kw and after a problem with the inverter has contributed 3300kwh since September. The heating had generated 45000kwh saving 3500 litres of oil costing £2500 and the grey water had saved 100m<sup>3</sup>. The CO<sub>2</sub> savings were of the order of 10 tonnes.

The Cycle Path from Jubilee Bridge to Charlton as part of a new Pershore to Evesham route has appeared on a wish list at WCC.

WCC Cllr Eyre reported that Council Tax had been frozen together with pressure put on the Fire portion as well. The retention of small schools in the South of the county was a priority. The footways outside Holland House and the school had raised some design issues that would be addressed in due course. Road resurfacing had taken place with further dressing to come. She thanked everyone for their continued support over the past year.

WDC Cllr McDonald thanked the parish for its support. He raised the issue of trying to retain cobblestones/kerbing where possible. The walking bus would be a welcome addition and he was very impressed with the Village Hall green credentials and will be sending an officer to help promote. WDC are trying to complete a community project a year in a selected village. Additional flood funds of £50k per year for 3 years totalling £150k aimed at households has been found. The withdrawal of Bosch at the new M5/J6 site is being addressed with programmes to attract new businesses given the apparent globally competitive nature of UK manufacturing particularly in the West Midlands. Homelessness is an increasing problem and more affordable housing is being supported. A recent study by WDC indicated that of 566 recent lettings 96% had met a local connection criterion.

8. The first round of new homes bonus totals £614 x 6 years £3684 have been added to by a further £5443 x 6 years £32658 totalling £36342 in all, however any projects over £1000 must be

accompanied by village consultation proof. Additionally WDC Cllr McDonald has indicated that there may be S106 planning monies available for certain projects i.e. cycling. A request from the school regarding help funding additional facilities will be raised with WDC for applying various rules to use of the funding with regards to education.

The SWDP would appear to have acceded to the Parish Councils request to tidy up the village boundary in Field Barn Lane North with further 4-5 dwellings and remove any Croft infill from the North. These 4-5 dwellings will hopefully be coupled with plans to tidy up a large area of the croft for public and school uses, more to follow in due course.

9. Peter Harris raised the issue of the state of a bench on the footway at the southern entrance to the churchyard.

As there was no further business raised Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.55pm

**Signed:** .....

**Date:** .....

**Chair**