

MINUTES OF THE HUNTON PARISH ANNUAL MEETING
held on Wednesday 14th May 2003 at 8.00pm at Hunton Parish Hall

PRESENT: Cllr Roger Sawtell Chairman
Cllr Les Leonard
Cllr Mrs Liz Oliver
Cllr Mrs Pat Parker
Cllr Mrs Lorraine Redfarn
Cllr Gary Thomas
David Swan Clerk

IN ATTENDANCE: County Cllr Eric Hotson
Borough Cllr Brian Mortimer
Borough Cllr Moira Walter
Borough Cllr John Williams
PC Brian Hillman, Maidstone Police
Mr Alan Bishop, Chairman of the Parish Hall Committee
Mrs Anne Bishop, Tree and Pond Warden
Mr Mark Day and Mr Paul Matheson, Hunton Cricket Club
Tim Pitt, Downs Mail
11 members of the public

1. Chairman's introduction and welcome

The Chairman welcomed all present, in particular the County and Borough Councillors and those who would report later including PC Brian Hillman whose report would be taken early in the meeting as he had other meetings to attend. He introduced the Parish Council Members and the Clerk and congratulated Cllr Williams on his re-election to the Borough Council.

2. Apologies for absence

These had been received from Mr Keith Eatwell and from Mr Iain Simmons.

3. Minutes of the meeting of 12th March 2002

The Minutes were summarised by the Clerk and endorsed by the meeting. Matters arising would be raised later in the meeting.

4. Police report

PC Hillman reported that there had been two crimes in the village since the last Council meeting, one theft and one burglary. In 2001 there had been a total of 29 crimes and in 2002, 40. This increase was largely due to a change in Home Office rules about what should be counted. However PC Hillman advised all present of the risks of theft from sheds, barns and motor vehicles. He said that the speed trap mentioned last year had been set in West Street and that vehicle weight limits are when possible enforced. If he was given details of HGVs which were in the wrong place (date, time, registration number and identity information) he would have a word with the owners.

5. Parish Council Finance Report 2002/2003

The Clerk reported that the Council's financial records had been internally audited and were in order. Copies of the Annual Income and Expenditure Account were issued. This had been the second year of audit under the "lighter touch" arrangements which seemed to be working well and were much less costly. Copies of the Accounts, the Register of Fixed Assets and the Annual Return to the District Auditor were available from the Clerk on request.

6. Chairman's report

6.1 Legislation and personnel

The Chairman reported that Parish Councils had had to comply with new legislation in the year including the adoption of Race Relations and Freedom of Information policies and revised audit arrangements. The Council was particularly grateful to Kim Owen, our Internal Auditor, for her professional assistance with the latter.

The Council had also signed up to the Code of Conduct in May 2002 but two Councillors, Ensoll and Wetton, had declined to do so which was a pity as their expertise was lost. However the Council had been pleased to welcome in their place Councillors Leonard and Thomas who brought their own wide knowledge and experience to the Council. More recently Councillor Iain Simmons had resigned due to pressure of other commitments which was a great loss not only to the Council but also to the King George V Field Committee of which Iain had been the first Chairman. The Chairman expressed his warm thanks to all Members and to the Clerk for their work on behalf of the Council in the year.

6.2 The King George V Playing Fields

The Chairman reported that this charity, of which the Council and Clerk were corporate Trustees, continued to occupy a lot of time and effort. The draft lease agreements were with the Sports Clubs for their final comments after which they could proceed to the Council's Solicitor. In this connection the Chairman was particularly grateful to Keith Eatwell for his hard work acting in liaising with the other clubs, not always in the easiest circumstances. In addition the Council had funded many of the costs of the Field and Hall area, not least the grass mowing and insurance. The latter alone, which includes the Hall, cost nearly £2500 last year and the Council had obtained grant aid from the Borough for improvements to the car park which were due for completion shortly.

6.3 The Police

The Chairman expressed the Council's thanks to PC Brian Hillman who attended every meeting. He also provided details of the village crime status and did his best to answer questions on Police matters.

6.4 Communications with newspapers

These had significantly improved. Thanks to Liz Oliver regular village reports appeared in the Kent Messenger and thanks to Tim Pitt Hunton usually received coverage in Downs Mail. Perhaps of greatest significance this year was the new Hunton Herald to

which the Council had made a start-up grant. This had got off to a flying start and the Chairman offered the Council's thanks to Les Leonard and the whole editorial team.

6.5 Relationships with Maidstone Borough Council

These too were much better thanks largely to our Borough Councillors who had, among other things, held a surgery for parishioners - a first which had been well received. Their enthusiasm also improves the Council's effectiveness.

The Council much appreciated the visit by the new Highways Manager, Steve Goulette to look personally at road problems in the parish. This had resulted in some work being completed on the bottom of West Street and the Council would continue to press for further work to be completed in the next financial year.

The parish was represented on the developing joint Quiet Lanes initiative which gives us a closer relationship with our neighbouring Parishes in the South and West Maidstone area. Moira Walters represents Hunton at the Sub committee level.

The Chairman said that during these meetings he had noticed that several villages had published Walks e.g. East Farleigh and Yalding and had wondered whether Hunton might do the same. He suggested that this might become a project for the School with a prize from the Council.

ACTION: CLERK

6.6 Village activities

The Chairman offered his thanks to Alan Bishop and the other members of the Hall Committee for all their work for the village. He mentioned in particular the recent South African Roots Music evening which had been an outstanding success and a memorable tribute to the organisers, and the Village Fete, to be held on 21st June.

The Chairman offered the Council's thanks to Anne Bishop for the new tree and hedge plantings and for organising the walking of the village bounds and the excellent associated lunch.

On behalf of the village the Chairman offered his sincere thanks to the Parish Councillors & Clerk for their work over the last year, not least by turning out for site meetings and other extra activities. The Council's workload had again increased in the year.

7. Village Reports

The Chairman welcomed the following reports:-

7.1 Mr Alan Bishop

Mr Bishop expressed his warm thanks to the Hall Committee for their work and to Lisa and Edna Dench for their work, not only in relation to bookings but also for dealing with damage and cleaning. Some £1500 had been spent on repairs and the floor was to be refurbished during the school holidays. It was hoped that the problem of rubbish disposal would be dealt with as part of the second stage of the car park resurfacing. Mr Bishop shared the Chairman's enthusiasm for the professional events which had proved to be very successful. He also sought any offers of extra help for the 21st June Fete weekend.

7.2 Mrs Anne Bishop

Mrs Bishop reported that she was still the Tree and Pond Warden and that the Hall was the venue for annual Tree Warden courses. She would appreciate early reports of any problems with trees in the village as maintenance and clearance were part of her role.

Mrs Bishop would like to undertake a pond survey in the village. The importance of monitoring natural areas was illustrated by the serious damage by an angling society to part of the wetland area by the River Beult. Although this had been reported quickly through the Parish Council the Borough had taken no action.

Mrs Bishop expressed her thanks to the landowners for their agreement to the walking of the parish boundaries mentioned by the Chairman.

7.3 Mr Mark Day

Mr Day was reporting as the contact point for Hunton Cricket Club which was flourishing in the village. There were two Saturday teams and one on Sunday and new players were always welcome. Arrangements were in hand for a charity match for an injured player on 22nd July when it was hoped Lashings World XI would play here. He hoped, and the meeting agreed that this would receive strong village support. Mr Day introduced Mr Paul Matheson who was the new Chairman of the Club.

7.4 County Councillor Eric Hotson

Mr Hotson said that KCC were keen to maintain strong Parish Councils and thanked the Hunton Council for their work for the village. He spoke about the effects of housing growth in the county, in particular infrastructure costs, and about possible improvements in parish Policing.

7.5 Borough Councillor Brian Mortimer

Cllr Mortimer had been in recent discussion with Keith Eatwell who had asked him to let the meeting know that both teams in the Football Club had had a successful year. However Cllr Mortimer had been approached as there had been problems due to rabbit damage to the pitch. It was possible that some help might be forthcoming from the Borough and he would liaise with the Clerk.

ACTION: CLLR MORTIMER & CLERK

7.6 Borough Councillor Moira Walter

Cllr Walter advised the meeting that under the new Highway Manager less formal arrangements for minor road repairs were being introduced. A gang would spend two days in each parish. Members asked that East Street and Redwall Lane should not be overlooked.

ACTION: CLLR WALTER

7.7 Borough Councillor John Williams

Councillor Williams said that following the election he would become Cabinet Member for Customer Care.

8. Open Forum

8.1 Planning

Issues raised surrounding the conduct of an applicant and the intimidation of a neighbour were discussed during and after the meeting. Another application was under close scrutiny.

8.2 Highways

Councillor Parker was grateful for the road improvements at the bottom of East Street but advised the meeting that she understood that completion of the whole road was phased over five years.

8.3 King George V Playing Field

The Chairman asked that comments on the draft leases from individual clubs should be passed to him as soon as possible.

8.4 New School Hall

Anne Bishop advised the meeting that she was raising funds for the hall which was to be opened on 27th June.

8.5 Freighter

Some dissent about the location of the weekend freighter at the Hall was recorded but no action seemed possible or necessary.

9. Any other business

There being no other business the meeting ended at 9.45 pm