

MINUTES of the Annual Parish Assembly of Chalgrave held on Tuesday April 20th, 2021 at 7.30pm. The meeting was held remotely via Zoom in order to comply with current Government requirements put in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Present: Cllr. Phil Parry (Chairman); Cllr. Ken Green; Cllr. Debbie Levy; Cllr Kevin Ludgate; Cllr Frances Masters; Cllr Jan Day; Cllr Peter Warburton; Lesley Smith-Clerk

Guests: Andrew Selous MP South-West Bedfordshire; Ward Cllr Mark Versallion

Public present: 8

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS PARISH ASSEMBLY-APRIL 16th, 2021

The minutes were approved by the council and signed as correct by the Chairman.

3. CHAIR'S REPORT 2020/21: Phil Parry

The Parish Council has had to cancel, once again, the Annual Assembly because of the Covid 19 Pandemic. We hope that this is the last time we have to cancel the occasion and that next year we can have our normal gathering at the Memorial Hall, a mix of formal and social, where not only is it an opportunity to find out what the Parish Council has been doing over the past year but we also get up to date with other organisations in the Parish.

As we are not having our Assembly, we have asked organisations in the Parish to write a short report which we will collate and put into the next edition of the Chalgrave News.

As always, the Parish Council works hard behind the scenes to maintain and improve our community by monitoring planning applications, highways, fly tipping, footpaths, flooding and much more, as well as liaising with the Police, Central Beds. Council, our CBC Councillor Mark Versallion and with our MP Andrew Selous. We are also involved with anything that will have an impact on the Parish such as housing development around Houghton Regis, expansion of Luton Airport, the number of solar farms, protecting the Green Belt, and the de-trunking the A5 through Hockliffe.

As well as having specific responsibilities, Councillors will attend other meetings for example Cllr. Green attends the Town and Parish meetings and I attend the BATPC meetings.

Our Emergency Plan continues to be in operation. If you need any kind of help the contact numbers are in the Chalgrave News. Thanks to Barbara Jackson for taking a lead on this.

We get a Precept every year which is part of your Council Tax. A third of this amount goes straight back into the community in the form of grants, we keep an amount in reserve for the unexpected and the rest is for the running of the Council activities. If you want to look at our accounts, please contact the Clerk.

As we want to maintain the rural nature of our Parish, we discuss all planning applications and make comments. Importantly, if permission is given, we check that the development adheres to the permitted plans.

Cllr. Jan Day has done a lot of work on maintaining and developing the Great Pond of Tebworth along with John, Paul Whitton, Barbara and others. As soon as we are able, there will be a 'work party'. If you can volunteer, we would be grateful for your help.

The unusual amount of rain we experienced earlier in the year created flooding problems, particularly for Parkview Lane. We have liaised with CBC and a plan is being developed that we hope will solve the problems.

As with other villages parking is a problem. Cars have been parked across pavements, on corners, and near junctions. We will at some point soon have yellow lines on the corner of Toddington and Wingfield Roads. We have been asking residents to park cars with consideration for others.

Fly tipping is a continuing problem in our Parish. We discussed having CCTV but decided that it will not stop the problem as they will only tip in another part of the Parish. Fly tipping is a national problem and we decided to press CBC and Government to come up with solutions.

The Lords Hill A5 roundabout is still a problem. Accidents are still happening. Mark Versallion arranged a meeting between Highways England and Toddington and Tebworth Parish Councils last year. It was a positive meeting but still nothing has happened. We originally brought up the issue in 2017.

You will be aware that there is planning application for a solar farm next to Tebworth. The Parish Council supports the use of Green Energy but is concerned with the number of solar farms in our area and the further loss of Green Belt.

The Parish Council has two awards to give each year. The first is the Millennium Award for under 18's for an achievement of some kind – educational, sporting, charity or service to the community. The other is the Community Award for 18 years and above, again for an achievement or service to the community. If you know of anybody that deserves such an award, please contact any of the Councillors or Clerk

Finally, you are always welcome to attend any of the Parish Council meetings. They are usually on the third Tuesday of the month. Currently, we are holding virtual meetings via Zoom. If you want to join these virtual meetings, please contact the Clerk for details.

4. ANDREW SELOUS MP

Andrew Selous MP for South West Bedfordshire kindly joined the Chalgrave Parish Assembly on April 20th, 2021 via Zoom. He updated the Parish Council and residents on the following:

- a) Traffic through Hockliffe. The traffic problems through Hockliffe have been going on for some time. Andrew is attending a meeting with Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) and Highways England to find a solution.
- b) Fly Tipping. Fly tipping has got worse. Apparently a lower weight of tipping has been collected but the number of incidents have gone up. An appointment is needed to go to a Tidy Tip but they are very good. CBC has bought LitterCam cameras to catch and fine drives who litter. Maidstone Borough Council is the first to pilot this technology.
- c) Police and Crime Commissioner Elections. These take place on May 6th, 2021. Andrew suggested engaging with the candidates to find out what they are proposing.
- d) Police Matters. This is an area of concern. The government has increased Bedfordshire Police's budget by 25% but this allocation is still not good enough. Leighton Buzzard had 34 Polcie Officers in 1998. Now it is a hub of only 8 and not open 24 hours. This is work in progress.
- e) Travellers' Sites. Planning for Travellers' sites has adverse outcomes for the settled community. The current policy does not work well.
- f) New Phlebotomy Clinic. A new Health Hub is proposed for Dunstable, which will include a Phlebotomy Clinic. This is good news locally.
- g) Planning. CBC's Local Plan will be in place by the summer, which will be good news as it means that CBC can turn down proposed development where it's not wanted.
- h) Solar Panels. Andrew is concerned about the impact of solar farms on the landscape. He said that the country will need three times as much electricity in the future as we are providing now.
- i) Agroecology. Bedfordshire NFU is looking at how to apply agroecological principles in this area.

- j) Economics. Unemployment is much higher than it was before the pandemic with the under 35 age group being hardest hit.

Andrew then took questions from councillors and residents.

WARD COUNCILLOR MARK VERSALLION

Ward Councillor Mark Versallion kindly joined the Chalgrave Parish Assembly on April 20th, 2021 via Zoom. He updated the Parish Council and residents on the events of the last twelve months:

- a) Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) Performance. CBC's response to the Covid-19 pandemic has been extremely good. The national government has performed well with funding therefore there have been no savage cuts to services. However the government is putting pressure on CBC funding, especially for social services, which has resulted in a 5% increase in Council Tax. The new leader of CBC, Richard Wenham, may take a different approach to funding for the council.
- b) Solar Farms. Mark now has four applications for solar farms within his ward; Chalgrave Manor Farm, Tebworth, Tilsworth and the other side of the A5 opposite Hockliffe Road. Very few applications have been submitted within the rest of Central Bedfordshire. Mark is in favour of renewable energy but all these applications are in the Green Belt. There is a lack of policy for solar farms from Central Government.
- c) Facebook. Mark has a Facebook page where he gives updates on current issues and takes questions and comments from the public. Mark can be found at:

CllrMarkVersallion, or on a web page at:

<https://m.facebook.com/CllrMarkVersallion/>

Mark then took questions from councillors and residents. There were short discussions on the Green Belt, new housing and government policy on barn conversions.

CHALGRAVE MEMORIAL HALL REPORT: Roger Masters

Unfortunately with the pandemic over the last year, there is little to report on the Memorial Hall this year. However may I take this opportunity to thank the Parish Council for its continued support of the Memorial Hall and indeed its financial assistance toward the running costs of the Hall. We have in addition received £11,500 from the Central Bedfordshire Council to assist with our costs, and this has enabled us to maintain the Hall and provide for such necessities as electricity, oil and general maintenance. For the second year running, there will be no increase in the Hall charges

I think it's worth restating three of the Trustees main objectives.

Firstly to ensure the Hall is as far as possible self-supporting, **secondly** to preserve and maintain it as a major Parish asset and **thirdly** to ensure it is available, accessible and affordable to the residents of the Parish.

In addition to the normal running expenses, we do need to continue to improve the Hall and facilities and I am sure you will have noticed that some time has been spent on the garden. We are further considering an upgrade to the kitchen but this will inevitably be the subject of an external grant bid.

We are very concerned that some individuals have damaged the guttering to the roof and we would ask parishioners to report any vandalism they see to any committee member.

Finally, the first booking on the Hall this year will be on May the 6th when elections are to be held for the Police Commissioner. Hopefully there will be more bookings as things improve.

BOOK CLUB REPORT 2021: Noeleen Thomson

Unfortunately there is nothing to report due to the pandemic. Hopefully when weather warms up, and stays warm, we will be able to meet up in the garden.

THE CHALGRAVE NEWS REPORT: Lyndie Lothian

The Chalgrave News is battling on through the pandemic and we have managed to deliver free quarterly magazines to the community throughout 2020. We have been very lucky to have plenty of willing contributors resulting in some very interesting articles. During the pandemic the magazine has offered support and contact to families in lockdown.

Raising funds is difficult just now so we are mulling over ideas to see how we can make some money for future editions.

We endeavour to report in a positive light the great things happening in the parish and publish reminders for future events and we invite ideas and articles from anyone in the parish and hope to continue to deliver in a fresh way each quarter.

These reports were collated and published in the Spring 2021 edition of the Chalgrave News.

DATE and TIME of NEXT MEETING.

To be arranged for April 2022

Meeting closed at 8.12pm

Signed by Chairman..... Dated.....