

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 22 MAY 2019
AT 7.30 PM IN BRAMBLE HALL, BRAMBLE HILL**

Present: The Parish Council Chairman, Charles Metcalfe (CM), Vice Chair, Nicky Gould, Councillors, the Parish Clerk, Rosemary Robertson plus members of the public: a total of 26 people

1. Apologies for Absence

Received from Cllr Kenward.

2. To approve the minutes Annual Parish Meeting held on 10 May 2018 (circulated)

The Minutes were signed as a true record of the last Parish Meeting.

3. Chairman's Report

The Chairman explained how the Council operated, the limits to its powers and listed the various working groups. He spoke about grants given (Victory Hall, School, Bowls Club, Age UK etc) and the provision of rubbish freighters.

Planning and housing: two sites Barnfield and Rectory Woods were originally in our Neighbourhood Plan with plans for c30 of 42 new homes; Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) has subsequently increased our allocation to 79. Rydon Homes will provide 16 new houses at Barnfield; Rectory Woods had originally proposed 17 homes (including some flats), together with the provision of a village car park but this has currently been withdrawn. The Chair spoke about the difficulty in getting District Council planners to include Balcombe Parish Council (BPC) in discussions about these applications. MSDC has not ratified the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which allocates 25% of the levy paid by developers to the local community to fund infrastructure for that community. With no ratification, we have no control over how that money will be spent. Again, it is to be hoped that District Councillors will help Balcombe to recover this money when these developments have been built. Further sites for housing are being investigated by MSDC.

Village Centre: Project Centre was engaged to look at options for safety improvements to the village centre. Four options have been suggested and BPC are talking with WSCC about these options, hoping to be able to present the options to the village soon. Two signboards were designed and installed, thanks to Carol Dutton for overseeing this.

Energy: Lower Stumble: Angus Energy, who took over as operator at Lower Stumble in January 2018, flow-tested the well in September 2018. A condition of their planning permission was the formation of a Community Liaison Group, which met twice. The flow testing was cut short because they found 'unexpected water.' Angus extracted less than a tanker of oil (218 barrels), yet announced that they had achieved a flow-rate of 3,000 barrels per day. Their planning permission at Lower Stumble has now expired. BPC has liaised with the Environment Agency and registered objections.

Street Lighting: BPC has a plan to convert our streetlights to LED as an energy and cost saving initiative, this is progressing. We are hoping to get financial support from the REPOWERBalcombe Community Fund.

New councillors: The Chair welcomed Malcolm Kenward, Henry Le Fleming, Jon Millbanks and Lloyd Thompsett as new Parish Councillors, and expressed gratitude for all the hard work by retiring Councillors, Carol Dutton, Martin Flint, Lisa Greer and Mark Whybrow.

Public transport: The rail companies currently seem to be offering a reliable service. A smart new foot-bridge was installed at the station but the lights on the bridge are very bright at night. BPC is actively pursuing disabled access at the station. Three new benches were donated by Network Rail/BAM Nuttall during the bridge project.

Sadly a daily weekday bus service was reduced to two days a week.

Traffic: Following concern about cars speeding through the village, we now have a share in a Speed Indicator Device (SID). We are hoping to relaunch Speedwatch with volunteers.

St Mary's Church: The Chair welcomed Canon Keith Richards as the new Rector. Ceramic poppies were planted on the church bank to commemorate Balcombe soldiers who served in World War 1. Thanks to Julie Rezac and Luna van Mierlo, who made the poppies plus councillors, visitors to the fête, and the Parish Clerk.

BPC funds a youth worker and provides a volunteer supporting the St. Mary's Youth Club.

Miscellaneous: With initial funding and support from the council, Age UK commenced a weekly Monday morning meeting in the Victory Hall in January.

The Parish Council gave Balcombe Bowls Club a grant of £500 this year to improve their lawn irrigation system. There have been some very successful recent litter picking days and a plea was made to use the dog-poo bins and to report any instances of fly-tipping.

The Chair thanked the Parish Clerk and fellow councillors for all their hard work.

4. Update on planned housing developments including Rydon Homes and Rectory Woods

Cllr Stevenson explained that BPC had made comments about the Rydon Homes development which had changed significantly from what had been proposed at the time of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP). Current plans offered no traffic calming or pedestrian crossing and had moved the green space further from the road. A drop-in session had been planned so residents could assess for themselves and pass comment to MSDC.

The Rectory Woods site had been rejected by MSDC despite its presence in the NP and may be sold to a developer.

BPC are still not aware which sites have been put forward for development to MSDC despite undergoing the NP process which is very disappointing.

5. An update on village centre enhancement plans

BPC have been looking at village centre enhancement and have employed a consultancy to offer solutions. After extensive surveys four options are under discussion with WSCC and we are awaiting feedback before progressing this further and consulting the village.

6. Financial Report for Year 2018/19 ending 31 March 2019

Figures had been circulated. At the Year End bank balances stood at £87,922. BPC paid a large amount to the Victory Hall last year and a grant to the School. Reserves have been accumulating to pay for projected village centre traffic calming and a possible car park, for this reason the Precept has also been increased from £66,000 to £70,000. We need to be aware that costs may go up as District and County Councils cut back services.

7. Questions from the floor

There were questions about funding for an art project and developments within the tennis club. Inspector Dommett furnished some ideas on organisations to contact and the Chair suggested that BPC be approached formally.

There was also a question about BPC involvement with the Victory Hall: a wonderful building that needs to be protected. Parish Councils are limited in their powers to give grants.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.12 pm.

Signed.....

Date.....

Following the meeting Inspector Pete Dommett gave an informative talk about policing