

GRAVENHURST PARISH COUNCIL

At the 127th Annual Parish Meeting held at the Village Hall, Gravenhurst on Monday, 19th April 2021

Present: Council Chair: N Lockey
Clerk: A Marabese
Public: 2 parishioners

CHAIRPERSON'S WELCOME

The Chair welcomed all those present at this our 127th Annual Parish Meeting and thanked them for taking time out of their evening to attend.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Rev. Richard Winslade and Cllr Paul Robertson.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 15th April 2019, having been previously circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record. (Due to the COVID pandemic no Annual Parish Meeting was held in 2020)

REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Cllr Lockey reported that council soon realised that starting the year in a pandemic was going to be scary and challenging, but it did not hold us back as a council. We quickly started to host our Parish Council meetings via Zoom and after a few glitches, our usual productive meetings once again emerged. Even slightly better as we were able to start earlier.

There seemed to be non-stop work required to look at building and planning applications within the village and the ongoing issues raised from the Barton Road development.

Otherwise, our first priority was to make sure all our residents were able to access shopping and essential medication, particularly all those vulnerable and under strict isolation rules, which were met. This showed that Gravenhurst is a very tight knit community and all seemed to be covered by amazing supportive neighbours and friends, so THANKYOU.

When lockdown rules started to ease, we were able to look at projects that desperately needed doing outside. First were the allotments; the whole council and allotment plot holders have put a great deal of work into these and with really successful results. Large areas were first cleared of trees, brambles and rubbish allowing large areas of allotment ground to come back into use again with more plot holders taking on the challenge. This has created a warm community feel that we are very proud of. Also, a new hedgerow was planted around the border.

Next was the turn of the cemetery and the clearing of a neglected corner that people wrongly thought was a suitable dumping ground for any rubbish they no longer wanted. So, with 19 bags of rubbish later and with the help of Alessandra our Clerk it looks 100% better with new plants put in as well.

Work has also been completed on the Recreation ground with old play equipment being painted and mended and the installation of a Rotary that was won in a competition, that the

children love, including my own daughter. Ongoing problems with the Rec is vandalism to the tennis court, glass bottles being smashed, litter left and dog fouling that is not cleared away or if bagged left in bushes that is not acceptable and a real problem for us to deal with.

Our Neighbourhood Plan has really moved forward with the public consultation being completed and the final draft plan now submitted to Central beds. So, a Big Thank you to Derek Blackwell and the team.

Our five-year planned upgrade of our street lights is on track and going well.

The speeding of cars in the village is also an ongoing concern for us. The speed reduction island is due to be installed in Clophill Road with dragons' teeth being painted on all road entrances. We are also due to erect speed banners, kindly designed by the children of Gravenhurst lower school.

Finally, a big THANKYOU goes to Alison Graham our Central Beds Ward Councillor for all her hard work in supporting our village. Alex our Clerk, who does absolutely everything and my fellow Councillors that just get just stuck into whatever issue we need to deal with, so Thank you.

Cllr Lockey concluded by saying that she has enjoyed the role of Chair of the Parish Council and looks forward to another year working to support this great village of Gravenhurst. .

COMMUNITY GROUP REPORTS

GRAVENHURST PARISH OF GRAVENHURST & SHILLINGTON – Report submitted by Rev. Richard Winslade and read by the Clerk

As you will all be aware 2020 was not a normal year for anyone and certainly not the Parish.

We faced the same restrictions as everyone and sadly most of our planned activities had to be cancelled.

However, the church did not stop in 2020. We continued to offer funerals but unfortunately no weddings or baptisms.

During the first lockdown services were offered via Facebook and Zoom and then as a mixture of the two. All of our Sunday services are now also live streamed through Facebook.

Other services have been offered only via Facebook and these included our Holy week celebrations and Lent and Advent reflections. These services have proved to be popular not only locally but further afield. We have people regularly join us online from St. Albans, London and Southend. These solely on-line services continue this year with Celtic evening prayer on a Thursday. As we emerge from lock down, we will continue with a mix of live and on-line services.

A daily reflection has also posted every day on the Facebook page.

We also managed to persuade Santa to once again to visit the village in a COVID safe way. This brought a bit of happiness and joy during a time of difficulty for many.

One person litter picks in the village have continued and we look forward to a time when a whole team of volunteers can once again show how much we care for our parish.

As COVID restrictions lift we look forward to once again offering social activities, Revd Richard visiting the school and hopefully a few new things.

During COVID after local discussion a new Deanery plan was put together to facilitate losing three full time clergy posts in the next five years. This means that at some point over the next few years the Benefice of Gravenhurst, Shillington and Stondon will cease to exist. Stondon will go to the Henlow Benefice and Gravenhurst and Shillington will go to the Barton Benefice. There is no detailed timings for this at the moment so watch this space.

For up-to-date information about church activities please check out All Saints Church Facebook page.

GRAVENHURST GRAPEVINE - Report submitted by Mrs. Alison Redman

The Grapevine currently has 8 half page adverts, 10 ¼ page adverts, 2 full page-coloured adverts and 6 subscribers outside of the village. We have seen a drop in advertising this year, and still have not been able to fill the pages. We currently have 2 x half pages, 2 x quarter pages and one full page colour available for advertising totaling £362 for the year. We have had the accounts audited for 2020-2021 and are financially stable for another year. We do need to find some more advertisers, but with Facebook and other magazines i.e. The Villager who offers wider circulation it is not easy. We are still able to offer the magazine free of charge to the residents of Gravenhurst. We must start taking into consideration the new building and how many more copies we will need to distribute in the village to whether we will be able to cover the costs.

The printers we were with handed over their business to Priory Press Ltd in March 2020, without any notification to us. We were unable to get April/May printed due to COVID, but the new printers helped by enabling us to circulate a copy to as many as we could by email, Facebook, and other sites. Printing costs have stayed the same until now, where we now see an increase by £30 an issue.

The AGM this year was postponed until March 2022, all present officers were willing to carry on due to the circumstances. We continue to have a distributing team many who have been with us from the start but welcomed two new families to the team this year. Thank you to all of them who continued to deliver the magazine in the village during the last year and to all who contribute to the magazine with articles, proof-reader, advertisers, distributors, our treasurer. We have had eight editors in that time, and I am now on my 4th year as temporary editor/advertising and it is a shame that no-one has come forward.

The team welcome any ideas to help keep the magazine afloat if the advertising cannot cover the cost of the printing, it would be a shame to see the magazine lost!

GRAVENHURST BOWLS CLUB – Report given by Mrs. Rosemary Hare

Gravenhurst Carpet Bowls Club has been unable to meet for the last 12 months due to Covid 19. The previous year we continued to meet for our weekly sessions on the second and third Thursday afternoons of the month and in the evenings on the other Thursdays. We also enjoyed our annual Christmas meal at a local pub in December 2019. We were unable to have our AGM in 2020. We hope to start playing bowls again when circumstances allow, and warmly welcome any new members.

GRAVENHURST METHODIST CHAPEL – Report given by Mrs. R Hare

Gravenhurst Chapel has been closed for most of the last twelve months although we were able to have a few services during the summer, a Harvest Festival, a Carol service in December 2020 and an Easter Day service April 2021. Donations from the harvest and carol services were sent to Keech Hospice.

In December 2020 gift boxes of cakes, mince pies etc were taken to various people in the village.

We had a successful Nativity Festival in December 2019 with proceeds being donated to Crisis at Christmas and Samaritans. We also had our usual visits from the Pre school and the village Academy for their Harvest Festivals in October 2019 and Nativity plays in December 2019.

We had also started leaving the building open during the day, although at present it is still closed.

We hope to be able to start having regular services soon, maybe fortnightly and also open up the building during the day again.

GRAVENHURST PRE-SCHOOL – Report submitted by Miss. Alice Redman and read by The Clerk

The premises at which the pre-school is situated is open 8:00am to 5:30pm weekdays.

During this time, it operates a Breakfast Club, Pre-School and an After-School Club. We can have 30 children in a session and take children from the age of 2 1/2 to 9 years old.

Currently we have 38 children on roll for Pre-School and are full. We have been in this position for the last 3 years. For after School club we have 3 feeder schools; Campton Lower School, Meppershall Academy (from which we collect the children in our Minibus) and of course Gravenhurst Academy. Between 40 to 50 children use the wrap around care facilities either on an adhoc or permanent basis.

We run a Holiday Club during half terms which tend to be quite quiet, and also during the first 3 weeks of summer which are a lot busier. These are for up to 11-year-olds.

We have 11 Members of Staff, 1 After-School Club worker and one additional helper too.

We are a charity and are helped by a parent committee.

This year we have thankfully seen little financial implications of Covid and remain in a strong financial situation having made use of coronavirus job retention scheme.

Our current fundraising drive is to help complete the Nature Area which we started just before Covid in 2019.

WI – Report given by Mrs. Natalie Lockey

The local WI group still has a functioning committed and members and hope to start meeting from June 2021 onwards. Membership has been subsidized this year to £22 and members are looking forward to the coming years activities.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

How many new dwellings will there be on Barton Road and Orchard Close?

The Clerk – There will be 24 on Barton Road and 53 on Orchard Close

What can be done to ensure highways safety especially during school pick up and drop off times once construction starts at the new site off Orchard Close?

The Clerk – The Parish Council has already contacted the developer (Settle) in conjunction with the Pre-School and Gravenhurst Academy to discuss potential highways safety issues. The developer has confirmed that all construction tenders are being issued with restrictions on the timings of site deliveries and collections so that they do not coincide with school pick up and drop off times. The developer has also confirmed that they will be meeting with the Parish Council and school representatives prior to work starting on site so that clear lines of communication can be set up. Work on site is expected to start in the Autumn.

MEETING CLOSE

Close of meeting

There being no further business the meeting was declared closed at 19:35pm

Certified a true copy of the Annual Parish Meeting held
on 19th April 2021

Signed
(Chairperson)

Date: 4th April 2022