

## GRAVENHURST PARISH COUNCIL

At the 128<sup>th</sup> Annual Parish Meeting held at the Village Hall, Gravenhurst on Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

|          |         |                  |
|----------|---------|------------------|
| Present: | Chair:  | Mrs. N Lockey    |
|          | Clerk:  | Miss. A Marabese |
|          | Public: | 9                |

### 1. CHAIR'S WELCOME

The Chair welcomed all those present at this our 128<sup>th</sup> Annual Parish Meeting and thanked them for taking time out of their evening to attend.

### 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs. R Hare, Mr. P and Mrs. H Mitchell, Miss A Redman.

### 3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Proposed Mrs. N Lockey / Seconded Mrs. A Redman - The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2021, having been previously circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

### 4. REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Cllr Lockey reported that again, she could not believe how quickly this year has gone and that starting back with face-to-face meetings at the earlier time of 7.30pm at the village hall, has been good.

This council year has seen the completion of the Barton Road development, now welcoming new residents to our village and the start of the development at the end of Orchard Close. Our Parish Clerk Alessandra is working closely with the Development Manager of the site to make sure that any disruption is reduced to a minimum.

Tackling vehicle speed within the village is still ongoing. We have seen the installation of the speed chicane buildout on Clophill Road, which has been long awaited. We would also like to thank the Speed Watch Team for giving up their time to run these much-needed sessions.

The Cemetery has also recently seen a big clear out of ivy and brambles by the Stondon Scout Group, who gave up an entire day to do this job. We are very grateful for all their help, so thank you. General rubbish dumped on the site has also been reduced which is a big improvement on last year.

The Recreation Ground is still a large ongoing project for us, with an extra play area and exercise equipment to be installed. But we do need to keep vigilant and are aware of ongoing deliberate damage to equipment such as the basketball hoops, tennis net and notice board. Also, the leaving of smashed glass on the tennis court and playground will not be tolerated.

The Gravenhurst Neighbourhood Plan has successfully been adopted by the village with amazing support, so thank you to the Neighbourhood Steering Group. This will help support future plans for Gravenhurst.

One of our Councillors Richard Brewer has had to stand down from his position. He will be greatly missed and we would like to thank him for all his hard work over the year. We are always on the lookout for any residents that would like to join the team on the Parish Council.

Finally, a big thank you goes to Alison Graham our Central Beds Ward Councillor for all her hard work in supporting our village. Alessandra our Clerk, who does absolutely everything that needs doing and my fellow Councillors who just get the jobs done, by giving up any spare time they have. So, thank you. See you all next year.

## **5. REPORT OF CBC WARD COUNCILLOR**

Ward Councillor Graham wished to congratulate the village on a successful Neighbourhood Plan referendum and sent thanks to the Steering Group team for their hard work. As the Greenwood's planning application has re-surfaced this will be an important reference document. CBC is likely to fight this application and if rejected by CBC the developer will likely appeal to the Planning Inspectorate. At this stage residents will need to assist and do their bit.

It was lovely to see the Gallop bonfire night back again in November and of course the Green Dragon.

Over the year previously granted planning applications have started site works. Developers of the Oakridge site have a good relationship with the Clerk and site neighbours and we hope that this continues.

The current CBC highways contractor R W Jacobs will not have it's contract renewed and a new contractor will be appointed at the end of 2022, when it is hoped that design work will be brought back in house.

Lastly, next year the ward boundaries will change and a new one-member ward will be created that includes the parishes of Gravenhurst, Shillington and Meppershall. The Chairs of the three parish councils have already been working together and have met with the Beds Police chief Constable regarding the proposed appointment of a Police Special Constable for the three villages. We have the potential to be the first village group to have a dedicated Special in the Beds Police area.

Finally, thanks to Natalie for chairing the Parish Council through a difficult year, Alessandra for her support and all the work that Councillors do for the village.

## **6. COMMUNITY GROUP REPORTS**

### **a. 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 term time and then 6 weeks of holidays throughout the year for 8:00am to 5:00pm.

During term 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 (holiday club up to 11).

Our Holiday club runs during half terms which tend to be quite quiet, and during the first 3 weeks of summer which are a lot busier.

Currently we have 37 children on roll for Pre-School and are full. We have been in this position for the last 4 years. For after School club we have 2 feeder schools; Campton Lower

School (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 have 13 Members of Staff which includes 2 apprentices, 1 After-School Club worker and 2 additional helpers too. We are a charity and are helped by a parent committee.

We thankfully continue to see little financial implications of Covid and remain in a stable financial situation.

Our current fundraising drive is to continue to improve our nature area and to fix our roof unfortunately ripped off by the storms in February.

**b. GRAVENHURST BOWLS CLUB – Report submitted by Mrs. Rosemary Hare and read by the Clerk**

Unfortunately, we have had to close the Gravenhurst Carpet Bowls Group due to members being unable to lift the carpets out of the cupboard, and a drop in the number of people able to attend.

**c. GRAVENHURST METHODIST CHAPEL – Report submitted by Mrs. Rosemary Hare and read by the Clerk**

After a disrupted time due to COVID, we went back to having fortnightly services for a while. We had to cancel the Mince Pie and Coffee morning in December. However, we are now having weekly services and plan a hot cross buns and coffee morning on Good Friday. We continue to open the Chapel during the day. We have had an appeal in the village to keep it open which has been successful

**d. GRAVENHURST PARISH OF GRAVENHURST & SHILLINGTON – Report submitted by Rev. Richard Winslade**

This year 2021 continued to be a challenging time for the Church. We were gradually and carefully able to emerge from COVID restrictions through the year.

The Sunday services are almost back to normal but with a few changes to keep the congregation safe and for people to feel comfortable in returning to live church services. We continue to live stream our 9:30am service via Facebook every Sunday and we have a growing virtual attendance each week. Facebook is also used to live stream our 7:00pm Thursday evening Celtic Christian evening prayer and to send out a daily reflection.

Our Sunday School also embraced technology and met via Zoom during 2021.

As restrictions lifted, we were able once again to welcome couples for weddings and children for baptism.

Unfortunately, our fund-raising activities were hit very hard due to restrictions but we were able to once again hold our Christmas fair and have Santa on his tour of the villages.

We hope that 2022 will see everything back to normal and we can return fully to all our events and activities.

The Deanery plans still remains a worry. The new Benefice of Barton, Gravenhurst, Hexton, Higham Gobion and Shillington will be a vast area for one clergy person to cover. Obviously, parish ministry will need to be changed in the light of this.

#### **e. GRAVENHURST GRAPEVINE - Report submitted by Mrs. Alison Redman**

At the end of February 2022, the Grapevine had 7 half page adverts, 8 ¼ page adverts, 3 full page-coloured adverts and 4 subscribers outside of the village, totaling £1268. We have seen a drop in advertising this year, and still haven't been able to fill the pages. The AGM took place on 22nd March 2022, all present officers were re-elected. We are still able to offer the magazine free of charge to the residents of Gravenhurst and have started delivering to the houses sold in Spring View.

We continue to have a strong distributing team and spare to step in if someone is on holiday or sick. We welcome one new distributor from Spring View. We have had the accounts audited for 2021-2022 and are financially stable for another year. We do need to find some more advertisers, but still villages let people advertise on their village Facebook page. We have a total of 2.5 pages free for advertising. We feel if we increase our advertising prices, we may lose some of the ones we already have.

The magazine has seen a printing increase 3 times this year and is now currently £322. Printing in April 2020 was £230, May 2021 saw it go to £260 and then a further jump in January 2022 to £334. We have also now had an email saying as from 1st April paper is going up between 10-50%.

I have been in contact with Meppershall and Shillington editors and several other villages who have given me details about their printing. I am in the process of getting quotes from other printers in the hope we can continue to produce a magazine for the village.

We have managed to get through Covid, with kind donations, winnings from the quiz, the scarecrow competition run with the preschool and a grant from the Parish Council totaling £992.16. It seems that the Grapevine has joined the other organisations in the village that need to do fundraising to stay alive. So, with that we plan to do another joint scarecrow weekend with the preschool and a stall at the Gallop. We shall also apply for a grant from the Parish Council.

A big thank you to everyone who continues to contribute to the magazine with articles, and to our proof-reader, advertisers, distribution team, and our treasurer.

#### **f. GRAVENHURST GALLOP – Report given by Mrs. Louise Brinkworth**

The aim of the Gravenhurst Gallop Committee is to organize and ensure the safe execution of outdoor social / sporting / activity-based events that bring together the people of the village of Gravenhurst, of all ages to socialize and have fun adding to the social cohesion of the village

The Gravenhurst Gallop Committee will manage any funds to ensure there is sufficient reserve to support the execution of the summer festival, and ideally the following year's events. The Gallop events are not for profit but any surplus further funds will be used to support Gravenhurst village initiatives at the agreement of the Gravenhurst Gallop Committee report March 2022

Because of Covid we were unable to organize the Gallop in the last 2 years. But we were very pleased to organize and host the Gallop Bonfire and Fireworks in November 2021, judging from the response of the village, this was a very welcome post Covid opportunity for everyone to get together and socialize.

We are planning to hold the Gallop again on Saturday 2nd July, we hope everyone has this already in their diaries, and that they will come out in number to enjoy the day

This will be the 20th Gallop, it was initiated as a village celebration in the year of the Queen's golden jubilee, by a small group of volunteers, most of whom are still active members of the Gallop Committee today, and deserve much thanks

We will also be hosting a cheese and wine evening on the 22nd of April at the Village Hall, to celebrate our 20 years, and to introduce new and old villagers to the Gallop.

We will lookback at the Gallop events over the years and hope to get people interested in contributing to make this community event successful for years to come.

As a committee we face issues around storage of equipment - for which we rely currently on the good will of members of the team, we face increasing costs for hosting events, but as with all groups in the village we really need more volunteers to help physically in the set-up, clean -up and on the day. A small number of hours of anyone's time can make a huge impact to the success of the Gallop.

#### **g. GRAVENHURST WI**

Mrs. N Lockey advised the that the Gravenhurst WI group has closed.

#### **h. CPRE – Report given by Mr. John English**

INTRODUCTION - Good evening, and thank you for giving CPRE the opportunity to address you this evening. My name is John English and I am a Trustee and a Planning Volunteer with the role of leading the Central Bedfordshire Planning Team.

CPRE Bedfordshire have a team of nine planning volunteers covering the County of which five are deployed in Central Bedfordshire.

We are supported by two part-time staff located in our Bedford Office, Lois Director of CPRE Bedfordshire and Shelley our Digital Marketing Officer.

We are an independent charity but affiliated with the nation charity, CPRE. This combination of local knowledge and national influence makes us very effective.

Our mission is to enhance, promote and protect the Bedfordshire countryside, and the ability of local communities to enjoy and value the natural world. To achieve our mission, we work with a range of organisations and communities in Bedfordshire.

OUR ROLE - CPRE Bedfordshire aims to empower and work in partnership with communities to help shape their neighbourhood's wherever we can. We work with local parishes and community groups to offer advice and guidance on a wide range of planning issues. We are not a substitute for Local Action Groups, instead we support residents with setting up and running their own campaigns and groups in their own name for or against a planning application. On occasions we embed ourselves within a LAG at the invitation of residents i.e.; Greenwood Campaign.

We also respond to consultations on big infrastructure projects such as the Ox-Cam Arc, East West Rail, London Luton Airport expansion.

We provide clear, understandable information in our targeted briefing papers to parish and town councils on major projects and make the communities affected by these projects aware of the implications and how they can respond.

Our skilled team provide guidance on campaigning and engagement and help raise awareness of campaigns through a range of marketing channels.

Our planning team is made up of volunteers who have a broad knowledge of local issues and planning. In 2021 we dedicated over 3,000 hours to supporting local communities including Gravenhurst. In 2021 we worked on several planning applications in the parish and provided support when requested.

We know that the countryside and urban greenspaces are important for people's wellbeing, especially in the current situation, and loss of these can have a detrimental impact on communities and individuals.

Large developments can put pressure on local infrastructure and services and change the culture of rural communities. With our support, the local community can work to maintain these precious aspects of rural life that benefit all.

Your recent grant will support our team of planning volunteers to continue working with communities such as Gravenhurst to ensure that the community and parish council are aware of any planning issues and have good advice and guidance on how best to respond to these. With continued pressure on our countryside, we want to:

- Develop and support our Planning Team (all volunteers) so we can take on more work and broaden our skills base.
- Develop a panel of experts to advise on areas such as biodiversity, water, renewable energy, farming and food.
- launch a new campaign to monitor the Local Plan to ensure it is adhered to. We will also be making our voice heard at the Local Plan Review in early 2022 and providing advice to parishes and the community on how to respond to the review
- continue to campaign against developments on the Green Belt and AONB such as Greenwoods nr Gravenhurst.
- offer workshops on planning, and other topics such as developing and maintaining wild flower meadows.

We do not make a charge for our planning advice and guidance but as a charity, we are dependent on individual support and other sources of income such as grants to fund our work.

As a campaigning group we do not always fit comfortably in the criteria set by some grant making organisations so fundraising can be a challenge. Like all charities our income has also been affected by the pandemic but at the same time our workload has increased as developers have taken advantage of the situation.

In addition, communities now appreciate the value of the countryside on their doorstep and want to protect it now, more than ever before.

We have worked in your community recently and will continue to offer our support when you need it.

Thank you one again for your financial support.

## **7. GENERAL QUESTIONS**

### **Why has the WI closed?**

*N Lockey – They were struggling to retain and attract members.*

It was suggested that the village could link with other village groups and Cllr Graham also reminded attendees that there are CBC Ward Member and Parish Council grants available to groups.

### **When will the holes on Clophill Road be fixed?**

*N Lockey and the Clerk – The Parish Council is conducting a highways walk tomorrow to log all highways issues in the village and will send these through to Cllr Graham who will review with the CBC Highways Area Steward. Some issues including that of the potholes on Clophill Road have already been reported to CBC via their Fix My Street App and should be dealt with ASAP.*

### **The Clophill Road patching is already breaking up. Why is there no review process?**

*Cllr Graham - There should be but if the Parish Council can include this in their review notes, then it can be added to the list.*

### **Can the Parish Council arrange for the hedge on the allotment side of Shillington Road to be cut as it is protruding into the road?**

*Clerk – We will add this to the list of items for CBC Highways to action however we are now in nesting season and so works may be delayed until the autumn.*

### **Is the Parish Council responsible for the Churchyard at St Mary's (and the trees on site)?**

*Clerk – Having reviewed ill placed archived documents this morning it is apparent that St Mary's is a closed churchyard and is therefore the responsibility of the Parish Council. The Clerk was never advised of this and current Councillors were not aware. The Clerk has authorised works to remove a fallen tree on site. The Parish Council will now need to review actions and any budget required to maintain the Churchyard beyond grass cutting.*

### **Can the Parish Council reduce the height of the road triangle on the junction of the High Street and Barton / Clophill Roads?**

*Clerk – Yes, we will ask our contractors to do this.*

### **Can the football nets on the Recreation Ground be replaced?**

*N Lockey – We will look at these and the goal posts tomorrow.*

## **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 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022

Signed .....  
(Chairperson)

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> April 2023