

GRAVENHURST PARISH COUNCIL

At the 125th Annual Parish Meeting held at the Village Hall, Gravenhurst on Monday, 21st May 2018

Present: Councillors: N Lockey (Chair)
R Brewer, J Furniss, C Tearle, R Barnard,
Ward Councillor: A Graham
Clerk: A Marabese
Public: 12 parishioners

CHAIRPERSON'S WELCOME

The Chair welcomed all those present at this our 125th Annual Parish Meeting and thanked them for taking time out of their evening to attend.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sibley, Councillor Robertson, PC Aaron Dagley, Mrs. D Randall, Mr. S Hoyer and Mr. C Lesters.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 3rd April 2017, having been previously circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Cllr Lockey commenced her report by saying that it had been a busy year with a lot happening in the village. Firstly she thanked Mrs. Mavis Hodgson for all her hard work, as after 28 years of service to the Parish Council as Clerk she had retired in September of 2017. She also thanked the new Clerk Ms. Alessandra Marabese has in a short time done an amazing job in updating policies and procedures and ensuring the Parish Council remains transparent and adheres to data protection legislation.

Councillors have spent a great amount of time on development and planning issues including review of Central Bedfordshire Council's (CBC) draft Local Plan and the Orchard Close development which is still ongoing.

Speed control was identified by villagers as an issue to address and the Parish Council are working with CBC who are collecting data on volume, type and speed of vehicles through the village to identify the most appropriate speed control measures that could be put in place.

The Parish Council continues to try to keep on top of smaller issues such as hedges, potholes and blocked drains etc. which can be an ongoing battle, but are important and should be dealt with as quickly as possible.

Gravenhurst's first meeting on the Neighbourhood plan was an amazing success with such a good turnout. The first Steering Group meeting will be held soon.

Finally Cllr Lockey wished to thank Cllr Graham (CBC Ward Councillor) for all her support and hard work on our behalf over the year, and fellow Councillors who have all put in a lot of time and hard work over the year, each bring their own expertise to various issues. Their efforts are much appreciated by the village also.

Cllr Lockey concluded by saying that a good, solid council had been formed with an excellent Clerk to back them up and they looked forward to another successful year ahead.

REPORT OF CBC WARD COUNCILLOR

Cllr Graham commenced her report by focusing on development and planning. She said that it had been a busy year with both good and bad results. Unfortunately the apple orchard on the Barton Road development had not been saved and chalets rather than bungalows had been approved on the Orchard Road site. However, the submitted Local Plan did not swamp the village with development and a decision on the Local Plan by the Planning Inspectorate is expected in early 2019. It is important to note that whilst Luton Borough Council has not signed the Notice of Co-operation, CBC has evidence that they have co-operated and has supplied this to the Planning Inspectorate.

With regards to road maintenance, severe winter weather has meant that potholes are worse than ever. CBC has allocated an additional £2million to deal with the issue and the velocity patcher is in operation again.

Finally Cllr Graham wished to congratulate the Parish Council for its hard work and wished it and villager luck as they started on a Neighbourhood Plan.

COMMUNITY GROUP REPORTS

REPORT OF THE WI

Mrs. Wiggs said that the WI had had a busy year having organised 4 fund raising events required to help cover running costs. She expressed gratitude to all members who had helped make the events a financial success, and non-members who attended and supported.

Sadly the year has seen a reduction in member numbers and the group is keen to encourage more ladies from the village and beyond to join. A membership drive will be held at this year's Gallop.

At meeting members have heard and learnt about a multitude of things from the history of Luton Hoo to a demonstration of cake decorating. Planned for later in the year is a summer barbecue, trip to Stotfold Mill, pot throwing, wreath making and a coach trip to London that will take in the Christmas lights, visit to Greenwich and a boat trip along the Thames.

The highlight of the year will be at the next meeting on Tuesday 19th June with the guest speaker Pam Rhodes of Songs of Praise fame. This will be an open meeting, which anyone (including men) will be able to attend on payment of the visitor fee, which will include refreshments.

RECREATION GROUND COMMITTEE

Mr. Thirkettles provided a report on behalf of the Committee. He explained that following the village survey the committee now had a wishlist of improvements required to the recreation ground. Equipment is getting old and in order to improve and replace the committee is looking at funding streams. More benches are planned for installation and they are eager to work with the Parish Council.

GRAVENHURST VILLAGE HALL

Mr. Tearle, Chairperson, reported on of a very busy year and was pleased to report that, regular use of the Hall has increased and that it now accommodates a regular Mums and Tots meeting, as well as monthly Social evenings with a licensed bar. The Socials take place on the first Friday of each month and are proving very popular, giving villagers and others an opportunity to spend time together as well as enjoying the very competitively priced drinks.

Regular Quiz Nights, held on the second Friday of every month, are still proving popular as do the 3Cs coffee mornings, which take place on the last Friday of each month.

A Car Treasure Hunt was held last autumn and more recently a Bingo Night, both of which they plan to repeat.

The New Year's Eve Social was particularly successful with more people wanting tickets than could be accommodates. It is intended to hold a similar Social at the end of 2018 and hopefully it will prove just as popular and successful. A small entry charge is being considered for this year.

All of these activities create additional income over and above that generated by other regular users, who include the Bowls Club, Young Farmers, FROGS and the school, Gravenhurst WI, the School of Dance and Yoga classes.

The Parish Council is another regular user and the Hall is used as a Polling Station when elections take place either locally or nationally.

Users from outside the village are welcomed and there is occasional use by the County Federation of WIs, who find the Hall a very good venue for some of their smaller meetings.

In general, the Committee has been very pleased with all the work carried out to improve the Hall and it is their intention to look into costs and plans for upgrading both the kitchen and toilet facilities. However there are ongoing problem with the floor and it is proving difficult to put right. For this reason, other redevelopment plans are on hold, so that unexpected additional expenditure on the flooring can be made.

All in all, a very successful year and the Village Hall Committee are to be commended for their hard work on all the activities undertaken in the past twelve months. Anyone wishing to join the Village Hall Committee should contact the Committee Secretary whose details are in the Grapevine.

GRAVENHURST ACADEMY

The following report was read by the Parish Clerk on behalf of Mrs. D Randall - Principal:

I would like to introduce myself. My name is Debbie Randall and I am the new Principal of Gravenhurst Academy and Langford Village Academy. I am usually at Gravenhurst on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday every week and divide my time equally between the two schools.

My Governors are very supportive and I have fantastic, hardworking staff that work as a great team at each individual Academy and also work closely with each other across the two sites. We are part of the BEST Multi-academy Trust.

We currently have 62 pupils on roll. Intake numbers continue to be 15 per year group and we have a maximum roll of 75, due to available teaching space. With numbers rising we often have more applications for places than we can take, but some of these pupils are from outside our school catchment area. This year we still have spaces available in our Reception Class.

I am looking forward to meeting you in the near future and would like to thank the parish council and the local community for their continued support of their village school.

CARERS OF GRAVENHURST (COGs)

The following report was read by the Parish Clerk on behalf of Mr. S Hoye:

CoGs continue much as usual. In the last quarter, until the end of March, we did fourteen jobs. Mostly they were medical related, visits to doctors or hospitals etc., although a few were social trips. Being the winter period we are never quite as busy.

It seems that virtually all of our requests from Gravenhurst are transport related. Some villages in the scheme are expanding into other fields like group activities such as chair aerobics, but it is very unlikely to happen here in Gravenhurst, there are not enough of us, we don't have the skills, and we don't believe there is a demand!

Unfortunately, personally I have been a little unwell, but we still have eleven volunteers doing what we do, and if I may I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their sterling service, proving I think that they don't need me!

While I am making my thanks I would like to thank the PC for again this year helping us with our third party insurance cost. It allows us to operate on a donations only basis. To me this is very important as it simplifies everything and no one has to 'look in the purse' before asking for help.

WANDERBUS

The following report was read by the Parish Clerk on behalf of Mr. C Lesters:

Firstly may we express our thanks to Gravenhurst Parish Council for their continued support of Wanderbus – a donation of £300 this year.

We would like to emphasise to all residents here tonight that Wanderbus is a Community Bus service open to all passengers – not just for the older members of Gravenhurst and we accept cash fares as well as concessionary travel passes, which for the latter we are compensated by CBC. We appreciate that sometimes our cash fares are dearer than the contracted operators and this is something we hope to address later in the year.

We are run entirely by volunteers and are self-funded so annual donations from the Parish & Town Councils, whose residents we serve, are vital to allow us to continue to operate.

2017-18 was significant for us in that it was the first year we had operated 2 buses. Obtaining a 2nd bus has enabled us to increase the frequency of our services as well as adding destinations into our timetable. We were concerned whether two buses would be viable financially but both passenger numbers and charitable donations have increased to ensure we can continue with our two buses.

In September 17 our committee decided it would be prudent to replace our older bus (8 years old and 100K+ miles) if we could raise enough funding to supplement our own reserves that we had managed to build over the past 8 years for this purpose. Through generous donations from various Bedfordshire charitable trusts, local Town & Parish Councils, such as Stondon, and a National Lottery Award, we are delighted that we have been able to order our new bus for delivery in June. This will help us to maintain vehicle reliability in our services and to avoid costly repairs often associated with older vehicles.

We do always need more passengers to support our services and would ask the Council and any residents to please let people know about our services and to consider using us more frequently. For Gravenhurst residents we go to; Bedford every Wednesday – market day; Biggleswade every Monday – including the London Rd Retail Park / Asda / Sainbury's; Welwyn Garden City – 1st Thursday of each month; St Neots – 2nd Thursday of each month – lovely down by the river; Milton Keynes – 3rd Thursday of each month. We give you between 2-3 hours in each destination before bringing you back – and will drop you as close to your homes as possible – if safe to do so.

In addition both our 16-seater buses are available for private hire for local schools, clubs and recognised societies and if any here are interested please visit our website. www.wanderbus.org.uk – where you will also find full timetables.

GENERAL QUESTIONS TO THE PARISH COUNCIL

Can average speed cameras be installed in the village?

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council had applied for CBC's Rural Match Funding and that as part of this CBC Highways would be monitoring speed, type and number of vehicles entering and exiting the village at all points. The results of that data would assist in assessing the best course of action that CBC Highways can implement. Unfortunately the Parish Council cannot insist or install average speed cameras and the cost may be prohibitive for Gravenhurst. However, villagers could assist by volunteering to help with the village Speedwatch group who could then request Police assistance with monitoring.

Can anything be done regarding the poor parking and speed of vehicles around the school?

Cllr Graham advised that she had asked that the school travel plans team visit the site.

MEETING CLOSE

Close of meeting

There being no further business the meeting was declared closed at 20:45pm

Certified a true copy of the Annual Parish Meeting held
on 21st May 2018

Signed
(Chairperson)