



THE ANNUAL SANDRIDGE PARISH MEETING

Held at Marshalswick Community Centre on
Wednesday 10th April 2019 at 7.00 pm

- PRESENT:** Councillor Janet Churchard (in the Chair), Councillors Julie Booth, Geoff Churchard, Claudio Duran, John Foster, John Hale, Graham Leonard, John Newton-Davies, June Reid, Jenny Roberts, Bernard Roberts, Neil Harris
- APOLOGIES:** Councillor Stefania Estacchini
- OFFICERS:** Simon Thwaites, Parish Clerk
Emma Hostler, Deputy Clerk
Rebecca Pannese, Project and Amenities Officer
- IN ATTENDANCE:** 3 members of the public

DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were none

MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 11th April 2018, having been previously circulated, were taken as a correct record and it was unanimously:

Resolved

That the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 11th April 2018 be approved and signed by the Chair.

Chair's Report to the Annual Parish Meeting

This report comes at the end of this Council's four-year cycle. I have Chaired the Council during those four years. There have been ups and downs, good times and more challenging times but throughout the Parish Council has continued to function well. This is largely due to our Officers whose commitment to improving their service to our community is beyond

doubt. The Parish Council elections held in 2015 did not fill all the fourteen places so shortly after there were co-options. Since then the Council membership has remained very stable although we have sadly had member illnesses and a resignation due to personal circumstances. Whatever the outcome of the elections in May I know our Officers will continue to support and advise the new Council to ensure a seamless handover so that the responsibilities of Sandridge Parish Council will be carried out properly.

The following is a report about some of the many activities carried out by the Parish Council over the past year. As always it is impossible to include everything but I hope this will give an insight into how the Officers, Councillors and volunteers continue to work together to maintain and improve facilities within the Parish.

Community Centres

The Parish Council manages the Marshalswick and Jersey Farm Community Centres. There are activities every night of the week and during most days in the week. At weekends they are used by a variety of groups and for private parties and events.

Charges are intended to cover the day to day running costs of the centres so that they provide useful and attractive facilities at affordable rates. Major improvements to the centres are funded from the Council Tax.

As well as regular maintenance at both community centres further work has been completed inside and out. At Marshalswick Community Centre new energy efficient LED lighting and a new PA system have been installed. The community centre has also been redecorated.

As Jersey Farm Community Centre had similar work done previously this year has seen some external improvements. New bollards and a handrail have been installed to make it safer for those using St Brelade's Place.

Both community centres continue to be popular venues for a variety of activities.

Sports and Recreation

The Parish Council continues with its maintenance and development programme of play areas in all parts of the parish. There are also regular inspections and an independent safety assessment of all equipment. Among improvements this year have been:

New basketball nets, an outdoor table tennis table and a new multi-play area at St Leonards Play area and green space. In addition, there has been a new path created to make it easier for residents to access the play area.

At Harness Way new football posts have been installed and the area around the basket swing has been improved by the addition of wetpour.

Sherwood Avenue Recreation Ground has benefited from new tennis posts and nets. A new CCTV system has improved the security of the area.

The William Bell Play Area has had new trees and hedging to improve the perimeter and to provide a better natural habitat and green pathway for small creatures. It also improves the privacy and security of residents whose homes back onto the area.

Jersey Farm Woodland Park

The Woodland Park has a new five-year management plan, the previous one having finished last year. This was put together by our Tree Warden and committee members taking into account the evolving needs of the Park. Rather than planting trees the focus is now on managing the woodland and open spaces for the enjoyment of residents and visitors.

New leaflet dispensers have been installed although one person, on first seeing them, thought they were bird boxes. They are wooden and more durable, we hope, than the previous Perspex dispensers. At least 50 posts either side of the track to Woodland House have been replaced as they were becoming rather loose and rotting. The new ones are of the same wood and will weather in to match quite quickly.

Major tree thinning in the Eastern Plantation has been carried out by specialist contractors. Our Tree Warden and a couple of members of the Woodland Park committee spent a morning marking up the trees beforehand with the intention of creating more open space at ground level to encourage flora. The objective was also to encourage the better trees to grow straight and strong and form a good canopy.

The Woodland Park is about to be judged for this year's Green Flag Award. This allows us to fly a flag at the Chiltern Road entrance to the park indicating that it is one of 'the best green spaces in the country'. Keeping the park up to the required standard takes a lot of work by committee members and Officers and couldn't happen without the support of volunteers. Hedge-laying continues to be a popular volunteer activity and many of our laid hedges are looking really good. Some exploratory 'small ponds' have been dug to find out the best place to create the first natural pond on the site.

The Woodland Park continues to be part of Sustainable St Albans each year.

Parish Paths and Environment

The Parish Environmental Assets and Paths Committee (PEAP) is responsible for helping to secure improvements to the footpaths and to help enhance areas of environmental

importance such as Skys Wood. PEAP continues to use its Management Plan to guide its activities. Last year they produced a Parish Map which included outlines for four local walks of varying lengths. These are all delightful walks and we would encourage anyone who hasn't tried one yet to do so.

Planning Matters

While the Parish Council has no power to approve or refuse plans, it does review and comment on them to the District Council. A Planning Committee, to meet every four weeks, was established in February last year. This cycle proved to be problematic so the meetings were changed to a three weekly cycle which is working better.

Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan continues to progress with a final draft now nearing completion.

Council Precept (Tax)

The Parish Council has to submit a request to the District Council for the following years Precept. The Finance committee looks at expenditure requirements for the following year and then makes a submission to the Parish Council Full committee. This year Sandridge Parish Council are requesting an annual increase of less than £2 in the amount of precept paid to the Parish Council for a Band D property. Sandridge continues to charge one of the lowest precepts in the district. The aim is to strike a balance between keeping the precept low and providing services to the community.

Grants

As well as those activities directly funded by the Parish Council, we have also provided grants to local organisations. During the past year these have ranged from £300 to £8,000. Most grants are nearer the lower figure but there are sometimes exceptions for major projects.

This year we have supported the Baptist Church and Sustainable St Albans among others. The Parish Council is always pleased to receive applications for grants from local organisations so please contact the Parish Office if you would like more information.

Neighbourhood News and Parish Website

Our Parish Magazine continues to be well received by residents. The number and variety of articles continues to increase largely due to the pro-active approach by the independent Editors. Please contact them or the Parish Office if you have an article you think will be of interest to others.

The Parish Council Website and Facebook Page continue to facilitate communication between the Council and our residents. In recent months it has proved very effective in recruiting volunteers for activities such as the Litter Pick, tree planting and hedge-laying. It is also becoming a 'go to' place to find out what events are coming up in the local area.

Asset Transfers

During the year the Parish Council has again been processing areas within the parish from the District Council. Since recently taking over control of the carpark next to Marshalswick Community Centre it has been relined and disabled bays added.

The Green Man in Sandridge Village has been awarded Asset of Community Value (AVC).

The Parish Council decided not to proceed with the proposal to take on Jersey Farm Open Space due to ongoing issues with the Lagoon.

Areas of concern to the parish Council and residents

The Parish Council, through its councillors, Officers and residents, keeps an eye on what is happening around the parish. The possible development at Symondshyde and the actual development at Oaklands concern both the Council and many of our residents. We continue to monitor and are pleased to hear from residents who may be aware of events before us.

Car parks

There are a number of car parks within the parish; some under our control and some not. New signage has been installed at our car parks and relining has hopefully made use of space more efficient. At Spencer Meadow extra bays have been provided and a very useful, for the footballers and hikers in particular, heavy duty boot scraper.

Cllr Newton Davies joined the meeting at 7.20pm

The Parish Office

This is the heart of our organisation. The office is at the Library end of Marshalswick Community Centre. There is an access ramp for those who need a little, or even a lot, of help. There is, usually, a bright tub of plants at the entrance and a warm welcome from the Officers working inside. Last year our Deputy Clerk decided she needed a new challenge. Everyone was sorry to see her go but understood her need to 'spread her wings'. During the autumn we advertised for a new Deputy Clerk and were delighted to find someone who complements the exiting Officers.

On behalf of all Councillors I would like to thank our Clerk, our Deputy Clerk, The Community Centres Manager (who also manages the Website) and The Projects and Amenities Officer

for keeping everything going during another busy year. Their positive, cheerful and helpful attitude is much appreciated by councillors and residents alike.

Janet Churchard

Chair, Sandridge Parish Council

OPEN FORUM

A question was asked regarding one of the grants awarded last year and another regarding the nomination to give The Green Man Public House Asset of Community Value status.

AUDITED ACCOUNTS

Copies of the audited accounts for the 2017-2018 financial year were available at the meeting.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.25pm.

Chair

Date