

MINUTES OF THE SHERE PARISH ANNUAL MEETING

HELD ON THURSDAY 3RD MAY 2012 AT 8 P.M.

Present: The Chairman of the Parish Council, eight other Parish Councillors, Hon. Alderman K. Childs, Borough Councillor D. Wright, Rev. J. Potter and sixteen members of the public.

Apologies for Absence were submitted on behalf of those Parish Councillors not present at the meeting.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15TH April 2011 were approved and signed as a correct record.

Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council

The Chairman welcomed those present. He began his report by emphasising that the meeting was not a Parish Council meeting but a statutory meeting of the electors of the Parish, when the Chairman of the Parish Council reports on the work of the Council during the past year and residents can raise any issues relating to the public life of the Parish.

Mr Newman stated that Shere Parish is easily the largest in area in Guildford Borough. Most other parishes serve one village only whilst Shere Parish Council serves the villages of Gomshall, Holmbury St. Mary, Peaslake, Shere and a large part of Abinger Hammer excluding the village centre. The total electorate is approximately 2,840 although the true population is probably in the region of 3,500. In addition a large number of tourists visit the Parish each year including hundreds of bikers and walkers together with many school groups. The Parish is represented by thirteen Councillors serving three Wards - North Ward 6 Councillors (Shere & Gomshall), South East Ward 3 Councillors (Holmbury St. Mary & part of Abinger Hammer), South West Ward 4 Councillors (Peaslake).

The Chairman went on to say that 9 full Council meetings had been held during the year, 25 other Committee meetings e.g. Planning, Playgrounds, Parish Maintenance, Health and Safety, Finance, Tanyard Hall and nearly 200 planning applications had been examined. Average attendance by Councillors at full Council meetings during the year was 10 with an average of 7.33 members of the public. In addition representatives of the Council have attended meetings of the Peaslake Memorial Hall, Shere Village Hall, Holmbury St. Mary Village Hall, Shere Fun, Shere Recreation Ground, Surrey Association of Parish and Town Councils and the Wasp (Wotton, Abinger and Shere) Bus Committees.

Elections were held in May 2011 and the Council was sorry to say goodbye to Mrs Jane Williams who had decided to retire. However, Mr Brian Cohen has taken her place. All Councillors were duly elected without a poll as no other members of the public offered to stand for election.

Routine Services

Routine services provided by the Parish Council during the year included the maintenance and safety management of much land owned or leased by Shere Parish Council (including 4 village centres, 5 play areas, 5 recreation grounds), the upkeep of bus shelters, seats, notice boards and village signs throughout the parish, operation of the well-frequented public toilets in Shere, tourism information point and Residents' helpline. The Parish Council had arranged for grass cutting to be carried out in 34 separate areas in the Parish.

Achievements this Year

The Chairman stated that the closure of the mobile library facility by Surrey County Council had meant that many residents and children lost access to a library. In conjunction with the Shere Village Hall Committee the Parish Council has had alterations done to combine three rooms behind the stage into one and these are being turned into a community meeting area/library. The library books will be supplied by SCC and the library will be staffed by volunteers. The school library will be housed in the facility. The Library will be known as Shere Diamond Jubilee Library and will be open in the not too distant future. Keith Taylor was thanked for his work in persuading SCC to assist with the finance, library equipment and expertise. The Chairman also expressed special thanks to Roy Davey who had put a lot of work into this project and to Borough Councillor David Wright who persuaded Guildford Borough Council to also give a grant.

A number of meetings had been held during the year with the rail authorities to try and get improvements made to train services at Gomshall station. The Council is also trying to get modifications made to the pedestrian crossing at the station to make it safer.

An Emergency Plan has been completed and is now in operation in conjunction with the Borough and County Council plan.

School Admissions are still a problem and the Council is supporting local parents in their appeals.

The Council has been investigating the provision of a Skate and Ride facility for youngsters and have had a working party meeting regularly. The Chairman thanked the members of the public who had volunteered to join the working group and especially for giving up their time. He also thanked the youngsters who were involved.

The Swimming Pool field has had a drainage problem which the Council hopes has now been rectified. However it is too early to ascertain whether the work has been a success as, due to the Environment Agency's insistence on the installation of non return flaps on pipes entering the stream, water will not drain out when the river is high.

Cycling in the Parish is very popular and the Parish Council is working with other organisations to try and make sure that it causes residents the least disruption possible.

The Council is considering arranging Cycling Proficiency training for youngsters and would like parents to contact the Council should their children be interested.

London Lane (B.O.A.T) in Shere has been closed to 4 x 4's and this has been a great success with hardly any silt flooding into Shere Village during the winter months. The Parish Council is seeking full closure and this is supported by our Borough and County Councillors.

The Parish Council has carried out some planning work in conjunction with the County and Borough representatives for the visit of the Olympic torch and the Olympic Cycle Races to the Parish this summer and these events should be very exciting. The Tour of Britain will also be visiting the area in September and will affect the A25 and some of the roads to the south.

Finance

The Chairman stated that the Precept for 2011/12 was £116,500 (the full income for the year was £182,000). Additional projects carried out have included assisting with the reroofing of the Holmbury St. Mary Football Pavilion, expenditure on a new Lychgate and Arch for the Felday Chapel in Holmbury St. Mary, improvements to the field next to the swimming pool in Shere. In addition £5,000 was allocated for traffic calming in Upper Street and £2,500 for possible improvements to the area around the telephone box in the centre of Peaslake.

Donations given by the Parish Council included:

Citizens Advice Bureau £300, Crimestoppers £35, Hurtwood Control £800, SWS Mobile Physiotherapy Service £600, Surrey Ambulance £250, WASP Bus - £1,000, Shere Cricket & Bowling Clubs (donation towards the cost of new fencing) £1,995, Holmbury Cricket Club £1,000. The Council's accounts for the financial year 2011/12 will shortly be available for public inspection.

The Chairman notified those present that the Precept for 2012/13 had been set at £116,085. Projects for the new financial year include the skate and ride facility, library facilities, possible installation of bollards at Tanyard Hall (to prevent unauthorised parking resulting in loss of bookings and lack of parking spaces for the public and councillors when attending meetings).

Mr Newman gave thanks to: Parish Councillors, Guildford Borough Councillors Richard Billington and David Wright, Surrey County Councillor Keith Taylor, David Colebrook for filling in rabbit damage in Peaslake, Judy Colebrook for maintaining the flower tubs in Peaslake, Christine Gorsuch (and her team) and Graham Eusden for caring for the white ducks in Shere, Malcolm Foster the Council's internal auditor, Brian Hilsdon and Graham Rapley the Council's contractors, Geoff Pullen for always turning out at short notice to sort out plumbing problems in the Old Fire Station, Lesley Childs, the Parish Clerk.

Questions from the public – no matters were raised.

Following refreshments, Mr. Rob Hewer, National Trust Head Ranger for the North Downs, West Surrey Hills gave a very interesting and illustrated talk on the management and wildlife of the North Downs especially in the region of the Netley Estate. He included information on the types of deer found locally, the fantastic butterflies, local pill boxes, countryside maintenance in general, and the work being carried out at Netley Park in particular, by a band of volunteers. He stated that the National Trust were more than happy to work with local communities with regard to environmental improvements.

Finally, Mr Hewer answered questions relating to the invasion of Rhododendron Ponticum, the legality of paths across the Netley Estate and volunteer requirements.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hewer for giving up his evening to attend the meeting and for an interesting talk. He also thanked residents and Councillors for attending.