WHEPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting**

**held in the Community Centre on**

**Friday April 20th 2018 at 7pm**

**Attendees:**

**Parish Councillors: Public:**

Cllr. Nigel Aitkens (Chair) Anne Robertson Phil Robertson

Cllr. Mike Morris (Vice Chair) Brian Mahy Penny Mahy

Cllr. Stanley Durrant Gillian Aitkens Wendy Waugh

Cllr. David Till Pat Porter Bob Porter

Cllr. Nicola Mann Shelaigh Merrett Gordon Merrett

**Guests:** Peter Double Fiona Till

St Eds Council - Cllr. Mike Chester Jill Harper Margaret Sturrock

SCC – Karen Soons Susan Quay Daphne Rosbrooke

Guest speaker – Lt Col. Robbie Silk Sue Perkins Alan Perkins

**Clerk:** James Reynolds Di Howe

Di Rix Sue Richmond John Richmond

 Harry Edrich Mark Wray

 Jim Melrose Jon Steggles

 Deirdre Dobson Kati Turner

 Florence Roby (38 attendees)

**1. Welcome**

The Chairman, Cllr. Nigel Aitkens, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

**2. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were accepted from the following: Cllr Linda Smith and Terry Smith; Graham & Linda O’Dell; Deborah Stratford & Steve Bonney; Sara & Keith Feakes; Richard Gleed; Andy Morris; Lizzie & Steve Nutt; Andrea & Patrick Walsh and Christopher Griffiths.

**3. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting April 21st 2017**

It was proposed by Cllr Till and seconded by Di Howe that the minutes were a true record.

**4. Matters arising from the Minutes of last year’s meeting.**

None

**5. Lt Col Robbie Silk MBE, Wattisham Air Base**

Having spent 39 years in the military police and a brief stint in emergency planning for Suffolk County Council, Lt Col Silk talked about his role as station staff officer at Wattisham Air Base - home to 1478 military personnel - and its’ fascinating history.

Soon after the base’s completion in 1939 it was home to Blenheim Bombers, then to the Black Arrows - predecessors of the Red Arrows - and since 2006 had become the main operating base for the Apache attack helicopter force. He mentioned Captain Wales’ (Prince Harry) brilliance as a helicopter pilot which won him Top Gun during his two years at the base.

As well as being the largest military community in Suffolk, Suffolk Fire & Rescue Training is based there as is Aviation Training Intl. Ltd and every year the base hosts both family and visitor days. There is also a heritage museum open to the public.

Cllr Aitkens thanked Lt Col Silk for his interesting talk.

**6. Borough Council Report – Mike Chester**

Cllr Chester said it was as a consequence of the very sad and untimely death of Angela Rushen in April last year that he was asked to stand, which he found an honour, as he had been familiar with Angela’s work in his other role as chairman of Chedburgh Parish Council. He said his committee work involved the Bury St Edmunds Town Masterplan Steering Group, Licencing and Regulatory, Overview and Scrutiny and more recently, The Suffolk Police and Crime Panel, all of which had given him much insight and knowledge into local government and rural policing.

He said the BSE Masterplan “showed great vision in improving a town that’s already a centre of retail excellence, much visited by tourists whilst preserving the nature of the historic core”. Cllr Soons said that Cllr Chester had been an absolute pleasure to work with. Cllr Chester urged villagers to look at the Whepstead website for his reports and contact details.

**7. County Council Report – Karen Soons**

Cllr Soons said that she stood for election as she fundamentally believes that everyone deserves efficient, diligent and effective public representation, however they voted.

She said 2110 people voted for her on a 43% turn out, and she was hugely appreciative to hold a majority of 1674 or 68% of the vote. There are 75 County councillors, 52 of them conservative. Having signed off the County Council accounts in her first role as chair of the audit committee, she moved to be responsible for children in Suffolk with educational needs and disabilities. Her current role is as deputy chair of the SCC Pension Fund Committee. She will oversee the pooling of 11 different local authority pension funds.

She said Highways was her main challenge. SCC spends £60m on the roads and after one of the worst winters on record it is borrowing £21m over the next four years to surface dress over 1,000 of our 4,000 mile network.

Cllr Aitkens understood that fixing potholes would take time, but in the meantime SCC needed to come up with a method of alerting drivers to holes in the roads. Harry Edrich agreed that the roads were very dangerous and that surely making a decision on how to point out the holes to drivers couldn’t be that difficult a decision to make. Cllr Soons assured everyone that she had made that representation.

Cllr Aitkens thanked both Cllr Chester and Cllr Soons for coming and told villagers that they both attended all of our parish meetings if they ever had a question.

**8. Parish Councillor Report - Mike Morris (Broadband)**

Cllr Morris said that while a new green cabinet has been installed at the junction of Rede and Old School Road it has not yet been switched on, but he was assured that it will happen soon. For Plumton and the Lawshall end of Tuffields Road not within the scope of the current deployment plan, other options must be sought. The government is offering vouchers to help with the installation of an interim broadband service. In addition, if enough residents are interested locally they could look at a community fibre partnership which would provide service via an aerial/dish on a church tower.

A resident living in Brands Lane said there were wires rolled at the bottom of a pole outside her house. BT engineers said they were ready to connect, but whenever she phoned BT they said they weren’t. Clerk to investigate. Cllr Soons suggested the clerk contact Matthew Hicks at SCC.

**9. Parish Councillor David Till (GDPR)**

Cllr Till outlined the new data protection law coming into force on May 25th and told everyone that for us to continue to contact villagers we would need their written consent. The clerk had already gathered some signatures. Cllr Aitkens said that email was a great way of contacting everyone.

**10. Anne Robertson (Defibrillator)**

Cllr Aitkens thanked Mrs Robertson – who had recently resigned as a parish councillor - for all her hard work and said she would be greatly missed, not least as we would need to replace her on the WCA committee.

Mrs Robertson explained where the defibrillator was and how it worked. She said that free resuscitation sessions for beginners and those who need to refresh their skills would be available in the autumn and urged anyone wanting more information to contact her.

**11. Neighbourhood Watch Scheme/Police Report**

In Cllr Linda Smith’s absence, Cllr Morris read her report urging anyone wanting to join the Neighbourhood Watch team to contact her or someone on the PC. She said any suspicious activity or vehicles in unusual places should be reported immediately by phoning 101.

PC Darren Marshall sent a crime report and apologised for his lack of response to communications but he had been unwell all year.

He said that twelve crimes had been reported in Whepstead last year compared to just nine the year before. These included four burglaries, the theft of a post box on Tuffields Road, two assaultive acts, two acts of criminal damage and one of threatening behaviour.

Two men – 17 and 34 year olds - have been charged with the three burglaries that took place on October 31st last year and the trial of the 34 year old is due to start on April 30th.

Cllr Aitkens said while we are very lucky to live in a relatively safe community it was important that we have a network of people warning other villagers of unsavoury/suspicious behaviour and activity.

**12. WCA Di Howe (Kitchen refit etc)**

In the absence of Richard Gleed the WCA chairman, Di Howe read out his report. In it he explained that he felt the WCA was a caretaker support group that understood that, for a village to thrive, it needed a bustling community centre at its heart. He said much had changed since he arrived in 2000, and thanks to the arrival 18 months ago of Hannah and Lee Saunders at the White Horse, there was now a thriving social community there.

He said the WCA was driven by the never ending efforts of people prepared to give up a few hours to attend monthly meetings and to help with various events. He welcomed anyone who could help with those events or take on specific roles such as treasurer, bookings secretary, committee secretary etc.

Running the community centre required a great deal of health and safety compliance and constant maintenance and improvement. Last year with assistance from B&Q the hall was repainted and new curtains put up. With a generous donation from a local businessman the fluorescent lights in the hall and kitchen have been upgraded to LED which should reduce running costs. The current project is to upgrade the kitchen and expand it into the old post office. Thanks to fundraising and donations, a RIGS grant has been match funded, but he urged villagers to contribute further as the glassware and utensils need upgrading.

He outlined the varied clubs and groups that meet at the village hall and elsewhere and urged people to get involved.

The PC handed the WCA a cheque for £2,000, its contribution to the kitchen refit. Cllr Aitkens said that in order to secure outside funding, it was important the PC was seen to be supporting the new kitchen.

**13. Steve Bonney (Community Speed Watch)**

The Clerk read out a report in Steve Bonney’s absence. He thanked Jane Alfred for being CSW coordinator since Whepstead joined the scheme, and said although she had stepped down from that role she would continue as a volunteer.

Winter had hampered attempts to do sessions recently, but speed checks were planned for the Hartest end of the village in the next few days. The latest figures from the regional coordinator for the county show that even though overall vehicle figures are down due to the weather, it still shows the trend continues and CSW is a positive scheme. In January and February the average recorded speeds in 30mph areas was over 38 with a maximum of 60mph recorded.

Whepstead only has six volunteers, which is the minimum legal requirement to run a CSW scheme, so he urged anyone willing to help, even for just an hour a week, to contact the WPC or himself. Cllr Aitkens thanked the CSW team and said along with the VAS camera they did a great job.

**14. Harry Edrich (Volunteer Working Party/Doughnut Gang)**

Mr Edrich said there were now eight regular members of the team which met every Wednesday. As well as keeping Whepstead’s footpaths clear (something the village now has a great reputation for) they did a lot of work in the play area, which meant for the last four months it had passed its inspection with flying colours. They have also put up bird boxes, pressure washed furniture and cleared the scrub around the edges of the playing field. A clear out of the churchyard had also uncovered some old gravestones. He urged anyone with suggestions for jobs that needed doing to contact them and he welcomed new members who would only be scrutinised for their ability to eat the obligatory weekly doughnut without getting sugar on their lips! Mrs Howe thanked the team for all their work in the play area. Cllr Aitkens also thanked them and said, along with the great support for the annual litter pick, it spoke volumes about the community spirit in Whepstead.

**15. Public Forum**

Mrs Howe thanked the Parish Council for its contribution towards the printing of the newsletter and the £2,000 towards the kitchen refit. Cllr Aitkens said hopefully it would improve the hall’s attractiveness for lettings and hopefully lead to the creation of more coffee mornings/lunch clubs for those on their own in the village. Cllr Soons urged Mrs Howe to apply for money through her and Cllr Chester’s Locality Budgets.

**16. Rev. Christopher Griffiths (Church news)**

In Rev Griffith’s absence, Gillian Aitkens said that the church now held a Sunday service every week bar one in the month when it alternates with Brockley. As well as coffee mornings and plant sales (to raise money for running costs and outside charities) it hosted concerts and ‘lecture’ mornings and evenings with lunch or supper. The next coffee morning and plant sale is on May 12th. She thanked the Doughnut gang for all the work they did in the churchyard.

**17. Wendy Waugh (Chapel news)**

Wendy Waugh said they were blessed to have two excellent musicians and very active social and fundraising groups. On June 22nd, five chapel members were organising an open weekend from Friday through to Sunday evening, involving the youth group, a treasure hunt, quiz, and meal of chilli and salad. They were trying to connect with old chapel goers who had moved away and encouraged everyone to join in.

**18. Any Other Business**

None

**19. Chairman’s Summary**

Cllr Aitkens thanked guest speaker Lt Col Silk MBE and everyone else for coming and invited them to join the Parish Council for a drink and some nibbles.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm