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Chairman:
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MINUTES

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held 8th May 2019 at 7.30pm at the Harrold Centre

- 1. Present:** Cllrs R Tickle (Chair), D Brough (Vice Chair), A Foster (Bedford Borough Council), J Peverell, D Mercer, R Brough (Clerk), B Muller, J Calver, P Pedersen, H Mead, C Merrick
Apologies: S Reger, R Barrett (Running late).
- 2. Approval of Minutes** from the Annual Parish Council meetings held 11th April 2018 and 9th May 2018. Two meetings were held last year at parishioner-request. Meeting attendees approved the minutes unanimously and the Chairman signed them on their behalf.
- 3. Chairman's end of year statement for Harrold Parish Council for 2018/19**
Cllr Tickle read the end of year statement - see appendix 1 below.
- 4. Matters raised by parishioners (Names always withheld for Data Protection)**
Sixteen members of the public were in attendance. The majority were parishioners concerned with the Catesby Estates Planning application for 90 dwellings on Odell Road, which was due to be discussed in the Annual parish Council meeting to follow, in item 19 (19/00842/MAO). A parishioner thanked the council in advance for seeking quotes for a professional planning consultant to write the objection to this planning application. The parishioner also requested that a councillor/s attend the Borough planning meeting to determine this application. They also felt the wording on the questionnaire was of significant importance in relation to the village deciding where they wanted the housing, and the risk that the top of Odell Road may be seen as a way to channel all the required housing allocation into that one location. A parishioner added that the junction to little Odell had recently seen two vehicle collisions, and that cyclists had been knocked off their bikes in other incidents: a sharp increase in dwellings would add to this problem. Borough Councillor Alison Foster spoke and gave information that MP Alistair Burt had requested this planning application be "called-in"; essentially requesting the decision-making power to be taken out of the hands of the Local Authority and up to Government level for determination through a public enquiry. The discussion of this application was then dealt with under item 19 in the Annual Parish Council meeting following this meeting.

Three of the sixteen parishioners were interested in taking up open councillor positions and will return in the June meeting.

One member of Odell Parish Council attended with an interest in item 19 (19/00512/FUL).

One parishioner, after the Chairman's statement (inc 4 year summary) and thanked the council for their work. He wondered if the village was actually aware of the work that happened and suggested the council list all the work that has happened.

Cllr Brough confirmed that the summary had been added to the latest The Bridge magazine, which is delivered though every door in Harrold, and where we place an article every edition; that we also run a Facebook page where we post regular updates and put our article and updates in the Communication section of our website.

>> Meeting ended and moved into the Annual Parish Council meeting.

APPENDIX 1: Chairman's end of year statement for Harrold Parish Council for 2018/19

May 2019 represented the end of a four-year term of office for the councillors. There was no election for Parish Councillors on 2nd May as we had fewer applicants than positions (7 out of 13). The councillors remaining for the next four-year term of office are Robert Tickle (Chairman), David Brough (Vice Chair), David Mercer, Richard Barrett, Bob Muller, Jayne Peverell and Pat Pedersen. Sebastian Reger and John Calver are expected to be coopted back on to the council. Robbin Brough remained as clerk for her fourth year.

This past year we were sorry to say goodbye to councillors Bob Page, Lucie Hoad, Lindsay Duggan and Gary Lloyd and we thank them for their hard work.

The end of the four years represents an opportune time to look back (in summary!) and see what has been achieved by the Parish Council. Over this period we have made a tactical effort to bring down the level of cash reserves through a process of expediting projects and focusing on areas of the village that had previously been overlooked. These reserves had built up from "Section 106" payments from the developers of Roman Paddock and Harewelle Way.

Strategy 1: Distribution of funding to local voluntary groups

One of the council's strategies is to distribute more funding to local voluntary groups through Section 137 Grants. These benefit parishioners by ensuring that voluntary organisations and services are able to keep functioning and to assist those that are newly formed. Over the four years we issued grants totaling over £31k, including to the following groups: The Friends of Harrold Odell Country Park to construct the pond-dipping platform for school groups; Harrold Snooker Club (based at the Harrold Centre) for new equipment and refurbishment of the snooker room; The Bridge magazine - an essential communication tool for the council; United Reformed Church for a new cooker, to support their community group activities; Bridgman Bowls club for roof renovations; Harrold Good Neighbours for their liability insurance; the Villager Minibus service for a new minibus; Dancevybz dance group to support their attendance at the European and then the World Street Dance championships (congratulations to them!); Harrold Twinning Association to support their community social events; Harrold Toddler Group for start-up equipment; Harrold Scout Group for camping equipment; Harrold Lawn Tennis Club for their court fencing; Harrold Allotment Association for their noticeboard; Harrold Preschool for their awning/building; Harrold Online for the new village website.

Strategy 2: Improving the look of the village

Another of the council's continued strategies has been to improve and smarten the look of the village. In the last four years we have: built the stone wall down by the bridge and removed the unattractive metal railings; restored the war memorial, added the WW1 "Tommy" figure and sited the memorial bench next to it; designed and purchased 3 new village entrance signs (still being manufactured); repaired/restored the Lych gate at St Peter's church; installed two wooden bins on the Lower Green in an effort to reduce the amount of littering that happens in that area; employed a Street Ranger to litterpick, clear leaves and empty the village bins, which would regularly overflow; repainted over 100 lampposts along the High Street and other main roads; restored all the ornamental fire hydrants throughout the village; replaced all the wooden bollards on The Green and removed the rusty chains; replaced the pedestrian crossing poles that had turned green; replaced all the plastic High Street bins with the attractive cast iron bins; installed the "2016" new cast iron benches and restored the existing metal benches to their former glory; started a program of tree maintenance including trees on The Green and Lower Green; a plethora of other smaller maintenance items, including playground fixes.

Strategy 3: Facilities and services

We completely replaced the playground at Harewelle Way, encouraging the transfer of ownership from the developer, took over a lease for the land and took ownership of £149k to maintain the land; replaced the climbing frame/fort and soft surface at Saxon House End playground, which had reached end-of-life; extensively refurbished the Harrold Centre playground with the large playfort and other pieces of new equipment; later we replaced the playfort in the toddler section of the Harrold Centre playground; we are continuing to work with the playing field association (HPFA) to deliver a renovated sports pavilion; the refurbishments to the HPFA-owned Scout Hut are nearing completion and include internal cladding of the walls, kitchen

improvements and improvements to the heating. The council had set aside £100k from reserves to fund the two HPFA projects; we transferred approximately £143k for the Harrold Centre redevelopment project; installed an Outdoor Gym in the Harrold/Odell country park, upon a request from residents; added new ramps to the skate park in the country park and resurfaced the current ramp; initiated gritting of the High Street and Medical Practice pavements; bought a defibrillator for the High Street and arranged training on its use; instigated re-mortaring of the Lockup on The Green (expected shortly); we also created a good-looking new council website and regularly update the Parish Council Facebook page to keep you informed of what we're up to.

Developing the Neighbourhood Plan

The Parish Council has made very good progress in developing a Neighbourhood Plan for Harrold. This plan will, in line with the requirements imposed by Bedford Borough Council and the government, result in some new developments in Harrold. However, the expected scope of development is proposed to be within the prescribed range of 25 to 50 dwellings. This reflects the preferences of the village as a whole and is consistent with the strategic policies of the Development Plan for the area. The Neighbourhood Plan is about to enter into its next phase with a further village consultation planned for May/June. This consultation will give villagers an opportunity to express their views on the viable development sites and, in particular, the allocation of dwellings to the viable sites. The Parish Council will proceed with the Neighbourhood Plan as planned and intends to have a draft plan ready for submission by the end of 2019.

SpeedWatch group

The SpeedWatch group was created and continues to attempt to curb speeding in the village. We also purchased two portable speed signs for the village (VAS) and report the data to the police.

Finances for 2018/2019

Cash Balance: As at 31st March 2019 the cash balance sits at £146k, down from £171k this time last year. We estimate that the overall cash balance will drop to approximately £34k once all the projects in this coming year's budget have been completed. This remaining balance will then form an accrual to keep Harrold's current facilities up to standard and replacing them when they reach the end of their life.

Spending: Ignoring larger projects in progress, in the 2018/19 financial year, the council overspent the budget (and used up reserves) by £14k due to items of expenditure that couldn't be forecast. This consisted of £2.5k unexpected costs for the new Street Ranger salary, £8k to replace the Harrold Centre playfort, £2k to fix the Lych gate and £1k on the WW1 Tommy statue.

Precept: The parish council has agreed to increase the precept only by the rate of inflation this year: from £72,645 to £74,708. The parish council believes it is vitally important to set the precept at a level to enable services to be provided, local groups to be supported and to ensure village equipment can be replaced when it deteriorates beyond repair: in short, to keep Harrold alive and to make sure it stays a great place to live.

Robert Tickle Chair - Harrold Parish Council

Date of next Annual Parish meeting

Wednesday 13th May 2020