

PULBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

The Annual Village Meeting was held at Pulborough Village Hall
on Thursday, 14th May 2015 at 7pm.

Present: Cllrs Court, Hare, Henly, Kipp, Lawson, Mortimer, Reddin,
E Wallace, J Wallace

In Attendance: Ray Queded (Outgoing Council Chairman) - Chairman for the Meeting
Sarah Norman (Parish Clerk)
County Cllr Pat Arculus

30 Members of the Public

1. INTRODUCTION BY CHAIRMAN

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Before moving to the scheduled speakers, the Chairman welcomed Sergeant Chris O'Leary, from the Horsham Neighbourhood Policing Team, who provided an update regarding the recent vehicle damage in the Village.

The crimes involved damage to a large number of vehicles together with the assault of two females who were targeted with a catapult whilst walking. Although the assault did not result in serious injury, the impact on the victims was significant. The cost and inconvenience to the vehicle owners was substantial. The actual cost of the damage made is still being calculated and all those affected are in the process of being contacted individually.

The case is being handled by DC Andrew Roe and has been named Operation Argos.

Sgt O'Leary reported that 4 individuals have been arrested and bailed until 1st July by which time it is hoped that charges will have been made. Any residents with any further information should contact DC Roe on andrew.roe@sussex.pnn.police.uk or via 101.

One outcome of the incidents is the intelligence that has been gathered from the residents of West Chiltington and a meeting has been held which West Chiltington Parish Council attended.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Clarke & Tilbrook. District Cllr Brian Donnelly had also advised that he would be unable to attend.

3. REPORT ON ACTIVITIES 2014/2015

The Chairman referred all those present to the Annual Report which was circulated to all and is attached as Appendix 1.

Unfortunately the Chairmen of the Finance & Policy and Planning & Services Committees were unable to attend and therefore, with the agreement of Cllr Liz Wallace (Chairman of the Recreation & Open Spaces Committee), the Chairman proposed to give a précis of his own report and then take any questions.

The Memorial Garden was now complete and looking great. Thanks were given to Martin Dale, who was present that evening, for all his endeavours for this project.

The cricket square was now reoriented to run north to south which will be better for all cricketers.

Plans for a trim trail were still ongoing but the prospect of a local football team playing at the Cousins Way Recreation Ground had resulted in the plans being placed on hold until

the playing area is agreed after which a decision about any location of the trim trail could be agreed.

The hanging baskets are back in Lower Street and will hopefully blossom over the summer.

Due to the negative response from Horsham District Council to the request for funding for an improved and extended pavilion building, the plans are on hold until the changing room refurbishment has been completed later this year after which time it is hoped that the Sports Clubs will become much more involved in the plans for the building.

The Neighbourhood Plan continues to make progress and the Chairman thanked all those who had taken the time to complete the Household Survey. It is hoped that a results document will be distributed with the next issue of the Pulborough Bulletin. Thanks were given to Richard Keatley and all those on the Steering Group for all their work on this plan which will, if adopted, shape development in the village for the next 15 years.

Finally, the Chairman referred to the Income & Expenditure summary included within the Annual Report and noted the high level of reserves held. The Chairman acknowledged that there could be concern over this but assured residents that much of the funds have been specifically earmarked for projects such as the refurbished pavilion building. The Council and specifically the Finance & Policy Committee continue to keep a very close eye on the finances and any increases in the precept to a minimum.

The Chairman then invited questions but there were none.

4. SUSSEX POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Katy Bourne, Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) and invited her to address the meeting about her activities as Commissioner.

The post of PCC was established in 2012 with elections held and replaced the old Police Authority (PA) which was made up of 17 members.

Whilst it was acknowledged that the turnout for the PCC elections in 2012 was very low (only 15%) the resulting media coverage has increased the visibility of the PCC. A BBC poll, before the elections, showed that only 8% of the electorate knew of the PA. However, a poll one year later, after the election, stated that 62% knew of the PCC.

The next elections will be held in 2016 and Mrs Bourne hoped that the turnout would now be much higher.

Under the old regime, priorities for policing were set nationally and the 41 Chief Constables around the country enacted these priorities. The role of the PA was to review the decisions taken by the Chief Constable, assist the Chief Constable with the setting of the budget, and to hold the Chief Constable to account for the implementation of the national priorities.

The result of this regime was that there was no flexibility to take into account problems facing different areas of the country and the PA had no duty to connect with the public. As a result, many people did not know that they could approach the PA with any problems or concerns about policing.

The major changes with the introduction of the PCC were noted as:-

- i) With priorities for policing now set locally rather than nationally, Sussex can prioritise an issue such as road policing which would not been seen as important elsewhere in the country.

- ii) Also, as the PCC is elected to office, if the electorate are unhappy with the PCC's decisions, they can be voted from office.
- iii) The electorate have a direct link to the PCC and can in future influence the direction of policing in the County.

With regard to the current situation, the following were noted :-

- ❖ The current policing budget for Sussex is £250,000 million per annum. In context, of the 7 Clinical Commissioning Groups in Sussex, all but 1 have a higher budget than the entire Sussex police force.
- ❖ Sussex residents pay the fourth lowest Police precept in the country; Surrey pay the highest.
- ❖ 35% to 40% of all police work such as forensics, dogs etc is done collaboratively with Surrey Police Force. All major crime such as murder is handled by Surrey whilst major operational incidents such as flooding, is handled by Sussex Police.
- ❖ 30% of the police budget is raised through the precept with the remaining 70% received from central government
- ❖ Central Governments contribution will decrease by 25% over the next 5 years resulting in reduction in costs of £57 million over 5 years. Therefore it will be necessary to try and work more efficiently hence the introduction of the new policing modal.
- ❖ Police expenditure is split 80% pay & pension and 20% for all other costs.
- ❖ Mrs Bourne sees her role as the PCC is to scrutinise and hold the Chief Constable to account and is using her expertise and experience in business to make budgets, contracts etc as efficient as possible.
- ❖ Technology will play an ever increasing importance in the work of police officers to use their time as effectively as possible.
- ❖ Historically, all 41 forces have separate systems that do not communicate. Surrey and Sussex now have new IT systems that interface and can alert the neighbouring forces regarding incidents.
- ❖ With the reductions in the budget there are difficult decisions to be made regarding how policing is delivered across the county and dealing with modern day crime.
- ❖ Internet crime, especially child/sexual exploitation, is extremely high profile; at any one time there are 750,000 paedophiles online globally.
- ❖ The new modal will be rolled out over the coming months and residents may or may not feel an impact. Mrs Bourne requested that residents feedback on any impact via the Parish Council.
- ❖ Work was also ongoing to make efficiencies on services such as Victim Support where a framework has been written in collaboration with Surrey and Thames Valley forces. The framework is now available to all forces throughout the country and there are incentives for the initial three forces when contracts are agreed.
- ❖ The PCC has a team of 15, as did the PA; this team must include a Chief Executive and a Chief Finance Officer. There is also an Audit Committee of 4 who keep an eye and scrutinize the budget. A Police & Crime Panel scrutinize

the PCC's decisions quarterly and these sessions are open to the public and webcast. Mrs Bourne was of the opinion that scrutiny and challenge were vital to ensure progress.

Mrs Bourne then invited questions from the floor :-

A resident highlighted one area of concern which was the lack of staff. Urban areas appear to be treated as a higher priority due to the higher level of population, which was leaving the rural areas exposed. The physical location of officers results in longer waits for officers to attend.

Mrs Bourne stated that officers will always respond but acknowledged that less money results in less staff. It is hoped that the improvements in technology will remove geographical constraints and that Districts are now more fluid. Mrs Bourne agreed that rural areas need to be reassured that they are not being ignored. She is very supportive of the Community Wardens initiative and is actively looking at ways in which the PCC can help communities with this. It was noted that the Parish Council is currently the only precept raising authority that is not restricted by the 2% cap, as the Police are.

Another resident enquired about the costs of pension provision, whether the police force still operates a Final Salary scheme and if the financial burden of this can continue to be borne by the Force.

Mrs Bourne stated that pensions are set nationally, and whilst there have been some changes to the pension which have proved to be extremely controversial with staff, there is little that she can do as a PCC to influence this.

Finally, the Chairman stated that whilst as individuals residents can all take some action to prevent things such as burglary, internet crime, it is not possible to control anti-social behaviour and this is one area that is of great concern to many residents.

Mrs Bourne stated that anti-social behaviour remained a priority in the plan and that she will be raising the issue at her next accountability meeting with the Chief Constable.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Bourne, on behalf of all those present, for taking the time to attend the meeting.

5. BRUCE MIDDLETON - SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

The Chairman welcomed Bruce Middleton, Central West Area Manager for the South Downs National Park Authority, and invited him to address the meeting about the Heathland project and the work at Nutbourne Common Recreation Ground.

Bruce gave a very interesting talk and slide presentation regarding the flora and fauna of the local heathland. He gave a brief history of the landscape and explained that the heathland had been disappearing over the last 200 years due to lack of management, exploitation of natural resources, development and forestry. Heather by its nature likes a constant state of flux in its environment and struggles when nature is allowed to take over.

In 1831 there were 6,600 hectares of heathland in Sussex. By 1991 this has fallen to just 371 hectares making it rarer than Rainforest. The Heathland Forum was therefore set up in 1991 to try and combat the decline in heathland.

Since that time, with the help of Heritage Lottery money, the then South Downs Joint Committee and now the South Downs National Park Authority, has continued with the work of the forum and as a result there are almost 1,000 hectares in Sussex today.

There are four types of heathland:-

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| Wooded Heath | This is where human intervention has helped it along |
| Dry Heath | Most common type of Heath |
| Wet Heath | Rarer than Dry Heath and home to many rare species |
| Acid Grassland | Often not recognised by the lay person as heathland but home to many important species such as harvest mice and barn owls |

There have also been invasive species which have affected the heather including :-

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|-----------------|--|
| Bracken | Historically bracken was a highly used commodity especially in the manufacture of glass. However, this use has declined over the years and it is now prone to take over. It is not to be eradicated but does need to be managed. |
| Rhododendron | Is a beautiful flowering shrub but grows to huge size and blocks out all light to ground level which affects heather growth. |
| Heath Star Moss | This is reputed to come across on the boots of Australian soldiers in 1942 when they were stationed at Sullington. It is now spread across the entire British Isles. |

Bruce then went on to discuss many other species that may be found at the various types of heathland including Bilberry Heath, the Silver Studded Blue butterfly, the Emperor Moth, the Bog Bush Cricket, the Golden Ringed Dragonfly, and the Solitary Wasp.

Bruce reported that it is hoped to get the Silver Studded Blue butterfly into a Stewardship Agreement. It likes bell heaths and is symbiotic with an ant. The ant carries the egg underground over the winter and then returns the grubs safely to the surface in spring. The butterfly likes to fly only a couple of feet from the ground which means that "corridors" need to be cut into the heather. A plant called "Ling" then takes hold and lives off the heather and sometimes gorse.

Bruce commented that heaths should not just be heather but should be a mixture of ages, heights, bare soil and gorse amongst other things. In fact, 60% of lowland heath insects need bare soil as it heats up quickly to help their life cycle including the Green Tiger Beetle, Heath Tiger Beetle & Field Cricket.

Bruce then went on to talk about some of the other creatures that make their home in the heathland including Dartford Warbler, Hobby, Nightjar, Woodlark, Adder, Smooth Snake, & Natterjack Toad.

Bruce then spoke about some of the mosses and lichens that can be found at the wet heaths including Red Bog Moss, Cranberry, Lousewort, Bog Violet, Bog Bean, Bog Beacon and Fly Agaric.

Conservation of the heathlands is always ongoing and uses tools such as stump removal and the cutting of rides to act as fire breaks but much of their work relies on volunteers.

Finally, Bruce highlighted three upcoming events :-

- Dog Fun Day – August 2nd at Woolbeding Park
- "Secrets of the Heath" weekend – 5th/6th September at Petersfield Heath
- "Fernhurst Furnace" weekend – 12th/13th September

Bruce also referred to Nutbourne Common Recreation Ground, where thanks were noted to the work of the Parish Council who with local volunteers have managed to turn the central clearing at the Common from the overgrown wood back into the heathland that it once would have been.

The Chairman thanked Bruce for the presentation, which was enjoyed by all.

6. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

The Chairman closed the meeting and invited all those present to join the Parish Councillors for tea and coffee, all of which are Fairtrade as the Parish Council supports the Fairtrade Group. The Chairman also invited residents to look at the interesting display, provided by Mr Ian Ellis, about the village during the second world war and thanked Mr Ellis for erecting the display.

The meeting closed at 9pm.

..... **Chairman**

..... **Date**