

MINUTES OF COTTERED ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN COTTERED VILLAGE HALL ON TUESDAY 12th MAY 2015 AT 8.00 PM

Present: Bryan Pitman (Chair), Terry McGrath, David Charles, John Bull, Barry Dean, Police Officer Bob Hunt (Hertfordshire Police) and 30 members of the public

Officer attending: Denise Anderson (Parish Clerk)

1. APOLOGIES

County Councillor Rose Cheswright; District Councillor Paul Kenealy, Sgt Duncan Wallace, Colin Bayles, Allen Chamberlain, Sue Beswick

2. MINUTES OF MEETING

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 13th May 2014 were signed as a correct record.

3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman (Cllr Bryan Pitman) gave the following report.

Meetings

As in previous years a total of 6 formal Parish Council Meetings were held during the year (May 2014 to May 2015) and these were occasionally interspersed with progress meetings when required.

In June 2014 Marty Kilby, our hard working Parish Clerk made it known that she wished to step down from that role. The Parish Council is extremely grateful for all the conscientious work Marty has done for the Parish over the years. In September Denise Anderson took over this challenging task and is proving to be excellent at dealing with the ever increasing paperwork and responsibilities loaded on small Councils.

The main issues dealt with by the Parish Council during the past year fell into the following categories: -

Planning Applications

During the year the Parish Council considered a total of 7 Planning Applications, this number being much less than in previous years. The majority of these applications were found to be acceptable. One Application which has caused concern is for establishing a waste materials recycling plant at Buttermilk Hall Farm. A very active action group has been formed within the village to oppose this Application. The Parish Council submitted its objections to Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) in January. The Herts County Council Development Control Committee has yet to make a decision on the Application.

East Herts District Council Plan

Under the new National Planning Policy Framework Act, every Local Planning Authority (LPA) is required to produce a planning strategy, guiding development up to 2031. East Herts District Council (EHDC) produced its draft District Plan in the Spring of last year, but there is still much to be completed until it is finally adopted, the latest estimate for this being the Autumn of 2016.

Six Parish Councils, including Cottered, that surround Buntingford have combined with Buntingford Town Council in an effort to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for the area.

A questionnaire sought the views of residents in the area as to what improvements they would wish to see in the local community. This information has been used as guidance in generating a draft Neighbourhood Plan. Neville Chuck, Roger Gomm and I have been attending meetings with the Neighbourhood Forum that is generating the Plan.

In March the draft Neighbourhood Plan was displayed on the Buntingford Town Council website and comments were invited to be entered on the site. The draft plans can be found on <http://www.buntingford-tc.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan.html>.

The Plan is expected to be available for formal public consultation in July 2015

Traffic/Parking

As we are all aware the traffic on the A507 is becoming more intense and the Buttermilk Hall Application has highlighted residents' concerns about the road's overall safety. Our local MP, Sir Oliver Heald has become involved, although no clear improvement plans have yet been identified. The lack of parking spaces for Peasecroft and The Crescent continues to be a problem and the Parish Council would welcome any ideas as to how the situation could be improved. One idea was to restrict parking to one side of the road but the Parish Council have been told this could be expensive but the problem is still being investigated by HCC.

Help and Thanks

The Parish Council, is very fortunate in having a two hardworking people employed a few hours a week to help the Parish Council, these being Denise Anderson, our Clerk and Nigel Bentley, who keeps the village free of litter and ensures the grass on the Recreation Ground is well mown To these two people and others who help the Parish Council throughout the year the Parish Council convey their thanks.

4. COUNTY COUNCILLOR ROSEMARY CHESWRIGHT

County Councillor Rose Cheswright was unable to attend the meeting and sent her apologies.

5. DISTRICT COUNCILLOR JIM RANGER

District Councillor Paul Kenealy (newly elected) was unable to attend the meeting and sent his apologies.

6. HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE – POLICE OFFICER BOB HUNT

Sgt Duncan Wallace was unable to attend the meeting and sent his apologies. Police Officer Bob Hunt kindly stood in and provided a policing update.

He reported that crime incidents had dropped from 25 the previous year to 20 this year (April 2014 to 2015).

Two major police operations continue to be successful; Operation STOMP which provides prevention advice and vehicle checks and Operation AGRARIAN carried out bi-monthly. Police officers are joined by colleagues from the UK Border Agency, Trading Standards, East Herts Council and the Motor Insurance Bureau. They stop and check vehicles at locations on the A10 between Royston and Buntingford, the A507 and the B1368.

In summary:

Burglary, dwelling and non dwelling offences had fallen by 27%

Theft offences had fallen by 75%

Theft from motor vehicles had fallen 33%

Overall recorded crime had fallen by 20%

There were no questions. The Chairman thanked Police Offer Bob Hunt for representing Hertfordshire Police and attending the meeting.

7. FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The unaudited financial statement for the year ending 31 March 2015 was available for inspection (kept on file with the minutes).

8. LOCAL GROUP REPORTS

The following local village groups gave reports and updates.

8.1 Bell Ringing • Neville Chuck

Due to lack of ringers the bells are nowadays only rung for weddings. We only had a couple of weddings last year and none are booked in for this year. Bell ringers from Kimpton visited Cotted Church for a short ring on 7 March 2015.

8.2 Carpet Bowls • Eddie and Jo Hayden (read by Ron Deverall)

This year we have been successful in receiving a grant for £500 from East Herts Council under their small Community Grant Scheme. We would like to thank John Harwood Bee and Angela Thody for making us aware of this scheme. This award will go towards the purchase of another carpet; we are still using the original carpets from 2002 when we first started the Bowls Club and we are now 13 years old. Three new members have joined us this year so we are still growing, we now have 26 members. Our Christmas raffle raised £100 which we donated to the Isabel Hospice. Thank you to all our bowlers for their support over the past years. We bowl every Monday at 8.00pm (except Bank Holidays) anyone wishing to join us would be most welcome.

8.3 Cavaliers Golf Society • John Harwood Bee

The society had a very successful 12th year in 2014 managing to stage five tournaments at different courses in the region. We added another 8 members during the year.

For 2015 we have four remaining tournaments on the calendar in May, July, August and October. There are also other interim events where players are able to take advantage of special discount deals at selected courses. For more information please speak to myself or David Broxup.

8.4 Cottered and Throcking News • Neville Chuck

The Cottered & Throcking News continues to do well. This is largely due to Jenny Thomson who does much of the work and the growing number of contributed articles, often with accompanying photograph from readers. Subscriptions will be due next month and I am pleased to announce that the cost will be down to £3 for the year.

8.5 Football Club • Allen Chamberlain (read by Bryan Pitman)

The season started well for both teams after a good preseason training schedule and new, younger managers (Meaning I got a bit of a rest). We had good wins in all friendlies for both sides ...

At the start of the season the First Team went off with a run that saw them unbeaten and well clear at the top of the league. They also had good cup runs that ended in both losses in the semi final stage. Then there was a dip in form and loss of players due to work commitments, where they struggled to get 11 players to play. This had not been a problem in the early part of the season with sometimes 16 players at matches. The result meant that at the end of the season they finished third in the league, not a bad start for them but the promise of early season results should have meant some silverware for the season.

The Reserves were much the same, started well again, unbeaten for the first part of the season then a dip in form. The manager had to resign as work commitments meant he had less time, I then had to step in again to manage but we had to forfeit a few games as some players left the club. We got back on track in 2015 but still struggled to get 11 players to play every week. After all this the Reserves have finished fourth in the league which was a great achievement after the problems we had.

So all in all both teams have done well again considering we still manage to keep two teams going when lots of teams have folded this year and some have lost their reserve teams.

8.6 Parish Paths Partnership • Roger Gomm

The Parish is signed up to a partnership with the County Council for the maintenance of the surface of those footpaths which don't run across private land, and of stiles, gates, bridges and waymarker posts. In fact most of the stiles have been replaced with gates and there are only two stiles left in the parish: one official and one private. A great deal of work was done by the County in the parish before the reduction in budget and the halving of the County Hall staff, and we are still feeling the benefit of this. But surfaces are beginning to break down and waymarker posts beginning to rot.

Local farmers are usually pretty good at clearing and marking the paths crossing their crop fields. Fallen trees and branches usually disappear quite quickly to the benefit of someone's wood burning stove. I'm not sure who they are, but there are some people who, unasked, clear short stretches of footpath or clear the nettles from around gates. My thanks to these footpath fairies. By contrast, execration on the people who put dog mess in plastic bags and then hang it on the bushes. The by-laws notwithstanding, it is actually better for the

environment to leave the dog mess on the ground where the weather, the insects and the hedgehogs will take care of it.

There are three points (at least) on the footpath network which regularly get overgrown, and for which neither the County nor anyone else takes responsibility. It would be a good idea to raise a small local working party to clear these annually- once a year should be enough.

The footpaths are shown on the local Ordnance Survey map, and that information is also available on the Ordnance Survey web site, but the best source is the so-called 'definitive map' available on the Herts County Council web site: Go to 'Hertsdirect' and search for 'Rights of Way'.

The Parish has 37 kilometres (23 miles) of foot paths and bridleways, not counting the sidewalks along the roads. Put end to end they would stretch into Cambridge or well into London. I can't keep all of those under surveillance myself, so I do rely on people ringing me up to report obstructed foot paths. My number is in the Parish magazine.

8.7 Friends of Cottered Church • Andy Karn

A year of change as of the end of 2014 I became Chairman along with Rachel Karn as our new secretary taking over the roles from Alan & Jacky Smith who will be missed by all the Friends as they moved on to new pastures in Cheshire to be closer to their sons and grandchildren. We also had a new arrival and welcomed Simon Cassia as a new Friend. The numbers of Friends currently stands at 10.

Events Held in 2014

Three events were run throughout 2014 starting with the **Murder Mystery Play** in March. This proved to be a very good night with many laughs and forgotten lines with one of the murders being Carol.

In June we were involved in the **Village Day** The Friends ran the tombola and helped out with the village hall teas which was run jointly with the PCC.

It was decided that all profit was to be given to the PCC.

The last event of 2014 was the **Friends Christmas Get Together**

This was held at Warren Farmhouse and kindly hosted by Barry and Erika Price.

My many thanks to all the loyal, hardworking members of Friends and their continued efforts to raise funds as we look forward to this year.

8.8 Guide Centre • Sue Beswick County Commissioner (read by Denise Anderson)

Girlguiding Hertfordshire has over eleven thousand members and is one of the largest counties in the UK. Whilst we are fortunate in having a large, bright County Centre and office in Cottered we are also conscious of the need to provide more opportunities for our members to visit and use the facilities. We now have a part-time Site Supervisor and have had plans drawn up for refurbishing the inside of the property with the aim of attracting more residential visitors.

Girlguiding Hertfordshire celebrated its 100th birthday in 2014 and adult members enjoyed a Vintage Garden Party at Cottered in June. The setting was beautiful even though the weather wasn't particularly kind!

We will be taking part in the Cottered Village Day in June selling refreshments and craft items from girls who are going on international trips during the summer. Various groups of girls will be camping over the summer weekends and the bi-annual Guide & Scout Night Hike has been booked for October.

8.9 Horticultural Society • Julian Bishop

The first Committee meeting was held on the 8th January 2014 when I was re-elected as Chairman for 2015 supported by the substantially the same committee as 2014 except for Bill Graham, our long serving secretary, who has resigned. We are very grateful for his outstanding contribution to the Society over many years.

Membership remains at a satisfactory level and our finances are sound and, after some discussion at the AGM, subscriptions for the year remain at £3 per person or £5 per family.

Starting from this Parish Council last May, there has been a full programme of events:-

May 9th A talk in the Village Hall on beekeeping, by a member of The North Herts Bee Keeping Association, illustrated by slides, well-presented and

- interesting address but the evening was not well supported by our members.
- June 22nd Village Day had good weather and attendance was boosted by the previous year's publicity for the Japanese Garden on Gardener's World. Our thanks are due again to Mr and Mrs Snell and Mr and Mrs Leach for allowing us to 'open' their gardens and we were delighted by a donation from Ingrid's Teas at Lower Farm. We held our own plant stall that was a sellout. As a result of the financial success of the Village Day the Society has been able to purchase of a large "Cottered Horticultural Society" banner to improve our visibility at future events.
- June 27th A Garden Ramble hosted by Mr. and Mrs Thompson at The Bell, Mr and Mrs Hayden at 9 The Crescent, Mr and Mrs Graham in Throcking Lane and finishing at Dr. and Mrs Sleep, their next door neighbours. The four gardens were very different and admired for the diversity as much as anything else. A very enjoyable chatty evening and well attended.
- July 10th The summer outing to Chenies Manor in Buckinghamshire was well attended. A magnificent house with an adjacent church and spectacular gardens but with access to the public only in the afternoons left many of us needing a further visit.
- September 6th Our Annual Show. Entries this year were a little short of 2013 but the standard of the exhibits was judged to be high, particularly in the flower classes. We are very grateful to our judges for supporting our show and to The Reverend Mike Leverton for presenting the prizes. Please note that this year's show will be on **Sunday 6th September.**
- November 21st Our Annual General Meeting was well attended and rapidly disposed of the business, re-elected the Committee unopposed and finished the evening with refreshments and a friendly chat.

The New Year has started with a meeting of members at the Village Hall, not in large numbers, to discuss matters of interest to the Society. Several good ideas for events were proposed and will be followed up by the Committee.

We have a full programme of events for the rest of the year and will be present at Village Day with open gardens, teas and a plant stall.

8.10 Luncheon Club • Cilla Grist (read by Liz Pitman)

This year has been very successful for the Lunch Club with numbers increasing to near our maximum of 40. We have also been very lucky in recruiting two new members to help with the cooking, Trish Agnew and Kathryn Archibald.

We have succeeded in keeping the cost to £3 for a two course meal with tea or coffee. This was even reduced it to £2 when we were given sufficient pheasants to cater for everyone (kindly skinned and dismantled by Peter Thody – a task none of us would have wished to do!). Meals have been very varied – Steve's Auckland now famous beef casserole; gammon; salmon and of course the Christmas meal with turkey and all the trimmings followed by Christmas pudding.

8.11 Petanque • Kevin Daisley

No report available

8.12 Cottered Ramblers • Roger Gomm

Cottered Ramblers convene at 2pm in the Village Hall car park on the first Sunday of the month, September to June inclusive for leisurely walks of between 3 and 4 miles. Walks are usually within the parish, but sometimes further afield.

8.13 Royal British Legion • Bill Bennett (Report by John Harwood-Bee)

The branch still exists although membership has dropped to just 11 people. Our Chairman Bill Bennett and I continue to attend RBL Group meetings and contribute to the debate on the way forward for the Legion. Terry McGrath continues to do a magnificent job as branch Standard Bearer and Poppy Appeal organiser. Maintaining the branch enables us to have a proper presence at the annual Remembrance Day service in November. This year we collected

over £1400 in contributions from residents in Cottered. That is a magnificent sum for such a small community and we should like to thank everybody for their generosity. We hope to keep the branch going for the foreseeable future. We should like to thank the members of Cottered Voices, organisers of the VE Day event, who have made the Royal British Legion their chosen charity. If anybody would like information on becoming a member of the Legion please speak to me or Bill Bennett.

8.14 Cottered Village Festival • John Harwood-Bee

Village Day 2014 was again a great success in attracting visitors to the village. We were fortunate with the weather and with the support from the stall holders and organisations that attended. The Festival Committee aims to ensure that each year we earn sufficient funds to enable us to cover the cost of running the following years Village Day. Over the past two years, with the success of the day and with generous donations from Mr & Mrs Snell and Mr & Mrs Rowlands, we found ourselves with a small surplus. This enabled us to make token donations to the Cromer Windmill fund, the Isabel Hospice and to Carers In Hertfordshire.

Village Day is on Sunday 28th June this year and we hope we shall have another good turnout. We have more stalls, more cars, a bigger dog show and a range of other entertainment. The 2015 programme should be delivered door to door in the week before the event.

For information about features or stalls or to offer assistance on the day please speak to me or to Roger Hayes.

8.15 Cottered Village Appreciation Society • John Harwood-Bee

CVAS continues its role as a volunteer organisation ready to help with projects in and around the village and to offer support with manpower when requested. In the past year Volunteers have helped with, amongst other things, the upkeep of the churchyard, the cleaning of road signs and assisting with Village Day. Since 2010 the society has organised the village entry into the Hertfordshire Best Village Campaign with some success having achieved an award of some description every year since then. The campaign has changed and is now the Rural Living Awards. Whilst anybody is entitled to enter a project, the Appreciation Society continues to submit entries in a variety of categories. This year the entries have to be submitted by 30th May and so if anybody wishes to have more information on the awards or would like help with submitting a project, please speak to David Broxup or myself.

This year so far the society has supported the forthcoming VE Day Party event and the Waste NOT Want NOT campaign. Work on the churchyard will commence again soon as there is now a specific maintenance policy in place. If anybody would like to be included on the volunteers list please let me know.

8.16 Cottered Village Hall Trust • Colin Bayles

I am Colin Bayles, chairman of the managing trustees. We held our AGM on 16th April 2015

Our form in 2014/2015

It seems to me that we have finished the year in pretty good shape, after a rather difficult start and some stumbles along the way. Success and failure are inevitably judged in considerable measure on financial performance, community facility and charity though we may be. In this context I give my particular thanks to our treasurer, Bill Graham, who has gone beyond the call of duty in keeping us on the financial straight and narrow without forbidding expenditure completely.

Thanks

I applaud the hard work put in by all my fellow committee members during the last year in promoting and running the hall. I shall avoid naming names and particular performances because I know we all know who they are and what they do. They all contribute time and effort and expertise to ensure that practical things get done as and when needed.

This is the last occasion on which I shall be able to thank Councillor Jim Ranger for his role in ensuring that East Herts Council grants us 100% rate relief. That is not because the relief is about to be reduced or withdrawn – perish the thought – but because Jim has not stood for re-election.

Farewell and welcome

Ashleigh de Cordova, who came to our rescue as letting secretary in 2013/2014, had to leave us last summer. I thank her and wish her well. Tina Reed gallantly took up the reins again.

Slow payers and untidy party hosts quaked in their boots, email traffic increased and so did income.

Maintenance and repair

In essence, we have done some and have some still to do. The details have been and will be discussed at routine committee meetings.

Grants and fund raising

As always, John Harwood- Bee has worked astutely to track down grant sources for us. For my part I must report failure to persuade the developer and/or East Herts Council that Section 106 funding should come to the hall from the project north of the Park Farm Industrial Estate. We, the hall's managers, should press our own Parish Council to allocate part of the New Homes Bonus to the hall, I was told.

We have received very generous and much appreciated donations from local friends during the past year. I take this opportunity to thank them publicly.

Bars

In discussion with Cottered Village Hall Club we have introduced a new system of charging for use of the bar facility and for consumption of alcohol in the hall. I believe this system is now becoming understood and is contributing positively to our finances.

Changing rooms

The thorough and costly refurbishment is now old news. Anyway, the changing rooms are in working order again now and we have underlined the responsibility of all users to treat them carefully and keep them clean and tidy.

Regular/frequent hirers

This group of hirers is particularly important to us. They tend to be local clubs and associations or organisers of activities for local residents. We have one particular new hirer in this group (Oasis – helping adults with learning difficulties), providing a very worthwhile service and using the hall more than once a week to do so.

Elections and appointments

Subject to the single change mentioned earlier and to minor changes in representative duties, elected members and officers of the management committee and members appointed to represent various local organisations during 2015/2016 are as before.

8.17 Cottered Village Club • Colin Bayles

I am Colin Bayles. I am Chairman of the club committee.

The club continues. It was established in 2002. To remind you, its object is "to use Cottered Village Hall and to lend support to the trustees of the hall ... in the development and promotion of the use of its facilities." All profits made by the club are paid to the trustees of the hall. Membership is open to all and still costs only £1 per year.

The club holds a Club Premises Certificate which authorises and regulates the operation of the bar and the supply of alcohol in the hall. In consultation with the managing trustees of the hall a new system has been introduced for charging for use of the bar facility and for consumption of alcohol in the hall. We believe it is contributing positively to the hall's finances.

8.18 Cottered Voices • David Broxup

Cottered Voices have organised the VE Day celebrations in Cottered Village Hall on 16th May 2015 in aid of the Royal British Legion.

It is Cottered Voices who sing around the Christmas Tree outside The Bull Public House as part of the Cottered Christmas festivities.

Cottered Voices welcomes new members, please contact David Broxup details in Cottered and Throcking News.

9. OPEN DISCUSSION

Jenny Thomson gave an update on behalf of the Waste? Not!... Want? Not! campaign against the Application for the development of a Waste Transfer Site and Materials Recycling Facility at Buttermilk Hall Farm:

- 300 objections have been submitted
- There has been a further postponement of the Council's meeting to consider the Application until Tuesday 23rd June 2015 10.00am or Wednesday 22nd July 2015

10.00am at County Hall. The delay has been caused as the Highways Authority have stated the Applicant must produce a traffic assessment as there is insufficient information in the original Application.

- Campaign signs along A507 will be re-erected to refresh public awareness leading up to the Committee meeting.
- A peaceful demonstration will be held outside County Hall on the day of the meeting.

Peter Thody asked the assembled meeting for a show of hands demonstrating their support for the Waste? Not!... Want? Not! campaign. There was a unanimous 'vote' of support for the campaign and its continued activities.

A parishioner raised concerns about the green area at the bottom of Peascroft being driven over and used as vehicular access to Peascroft when it clearly wasn't supposed to be. A number of other parishioners said they had witnessed this happening and were concerned about the abuse of the green and the safety of pedestrians. Parish Councillors said they would investigate the problem.

There being no other questions, the Chairman thanked the Police, the Parish Councillors, and everyone for attending and giving their reports.

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm.

Chairman

Date