

**MINUTES OF COTTERED ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN COTTERED VILLAGE HALL ON TUESDAY 23RD MAY 2017 AT 7.30 PM**

Present: Cllr Bryan Pitman (Chair), Cllr Colin Bayles, Cllr David Charles, Cllr Barry Dean, County Cllr Jeff Jones, Police Sergeant Duncan Wallace (Hertfordshire Police) and 21 members of the public

Officer attending: Denise Anderson (Parish Clerk)

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees. He proposed a one minute silence prior to the business of the meeting taking place to mark the Manchester Terrorism Act. A one minute silence duly took place.

**1. APOLOGIES**

Councillor John Bull, District Cllr Paul Kenealy, John Harwood Bee, Simon Cassia, Allen Chamberlain

**2. MINUTES OF MEETING**

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2016 were signed as a correct record.

**3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

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

This report begins with some good news that the parish telephone exchange now has a super broadband capability. This results from a series of meetings the Parish Council (PC) held with Herts County Council (HCC), BT and e-mail exchanges with a BT sub-contractor and the electricity supplier. This activity has also resulted in the Village Greens Trust's bank account being increased by over £2,000 by the granting of easements and agreements for two new BT green boxes and the electricity mains cable to be accommodated by the Village Green.

We understand from BT that households within 1.6 km of the exchange will be the most to benefit.

**MEETINGS**

Following the 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016 Annual Meeting of the Parish Council when the Chairman and Vice Chairman were elected, a total of 6 formal Parish Council (PC) meetings have been held at bi-monthly intervals. A number of small meetings have also taken place to discuss various issues that have arisen, but any resulting formal actions have been decided at subsequent PC meetings. Councillors and Denise, our Clerk, have also attended training courses in order to keep up to date with the changing law effecting Parish Councils, especially in the areas of building development and the conduct of Councillors.

Once elected the 6 Parish Councillors automatically become the 6 Trustees of the Trust responsible for managing and protecting the Village Greens. In this role, the Trustees are answerable to the Charities Commission and in this role, we are reassessing the way in which these duties are performed, especially the relationship between the PC funds and the money held by the Trust. To date the majority of the costs of cutting the greens has been funded by the PC supplemented by 'top ups' from the Trust's funds.

**FUTURE ISSUES**

One issue that the PC is closely pursuing is that of a request by Buntingford to change our parish boundary with Buntingford, in the areas of Parkside and that where the 180 new house are being constructed. If this change were approved the money paid under the New Home Bonus Scheme would go to Buntingford instead of our parish.

**PARISH COUNCIL ACTIVITIES**

The principle issues dealt with by the PC during the year included the following:

**Planning**

During the year the PC considered approximately 30 planning applications.

If the Local Planning Authority, in our case East Herts District Council, refuses a planning application, the applicant can appeal to a government appointed Inspector, who will independently decide the outcome and can overrule the EHDC decision.

Thanks must go to Dr Roger Gomm and Mr Neville Chuck for being our representatives on a hard-working committee that produced the now legal, Neighbourhood Plan.

### **Village Housekeeping**

In their twin roles as Trustees of the Village Greens and custodians of the general PC village assets, such as the playing field, children's play equipment, seats, litter bins etc, the PC have continued to perform a 'policing role' in order to protect and preserve these features for the benefit of all who live in the village.

### **General Matters**

One of the essential members of the PC is the Clerk and Cottered has always been very fortunate in having a long line of very conscientious ladies in this part time role. Denise, more than lives up to this tradition and works many more hours than her formal contract requires to ensure the ever-growing bureaucratic paperwork is dealt with as well as arising issues and telephone calls from parish residents.

Nigel Bentley has continued his never-ending job of keeping the village free from litter. In the summer, he also cuts the grass on the recreation ground

One of the joys of living in Cottered is the large number of footpaths in the parish and we are fortunate in having Roger Gomm, who walks and monitors the conditions of these and liaises with Hertfordshire County Council Officers to insure the paths remain in good condition.

To these people and many others in the parish, I and the other members of the PC express thanks for helping to keep this village a desirable place in which to live. Long may it continue?

### **4. COUNTY COUNCILLOR Jeff Jones**

County Councillor Jeff Jones introduced himself and expressed his pleasure in being elected as County Councillor for Buntingford Division at the local elections on 4<sup>th</sup> May with a 69% majority. He thanked those that had assisted him with his campaign and said it was early days at County and he was 'learning the ropes'. He stated he was in the process of selecting the various committees he would be part of and currently those included Highways, Education and Localism. He encouraged people to contact him with any local issues and that he would endeavor to attend as many Parish Council meetings as possible.

### **5. DISTRICT COUNCILLOR Paul Kenealy**

District Councillor Paul Kenealy sent his apologies for the meeting.

### **6. HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE • Police Sergeant Duncan Wallace**

Sgt Duncan Wallace stated that policing was facing challenges especially in the light of continued budget constraints. With the development of Bishop's Stortford, Hertford and Buntingford along with village development the Police Rural Neighbourhood Team were seeing the impact this was having on local policing.

Sgt Wallace stated that he had managed to maintain staffing at Buntingford and had 6 Community Support Officers and the help of two local volunteers.

He reported that, for Cottered and Throcking, in the last policing year up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 there has been 22 recorded crimes and three of which were non-recordable incidents making a total of 19. For the previous year there were 24 recordable crimes two of which were non-recordable incidents making a total of 22. This made a net gain of 3 which Sgt Wallace said was against the trend but the police were not being complacent.

Sgt Wallace continued saying that villages were vulnerable to travelling crime; high performance cars are being used to offend and leave. This is organised countryside crime targeting tools, machinery, home developments and trader's vans.

He also referred to the traffic survey carried out by the Traffic Management Department of the police which was carried out in April for 7 days. During that time, it recorded 61,250 vehicles passing through the village, 3.4% of those being in excess of 7.5 tonne.

Questions were addressed to Sgt Wallace:

1. Was there the possibility of a pedestrian crossing on the A507 Baldock Road in the centre of Cottered?

He responded saying there was fixed criteria about pedestrian crossings and the police have no influence or say in the matter.

2. Are the alarms disabled when vans are broken into?

Sgt Wallace said that vehicles are not always locked and offenders just try the doors. Modern car entry systems often have easily accessible methods to gain entry. The crime is committed quickly and the offenders have left the scene before the police are able to get there. He did state that the tradesman's tools are a separate countryside issue as police coverage is sparse, there is no CCTV and witness evidence much lower.

3. Were any of the 22 offences detected?

Sgt Wallace said since the 1<sup>st</sup> April 5 offences had been detected; two of which were connected and one was detected.

There being no more questions the Chairman thanked Police Sergeant Duncan Wallace for representing Hertfordshire Police and attending the meeting and answering questions.

## **7. FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

The unaudited financial statement for the year ending 31 March 2017 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**

Ringers from local Churches in the area come to our aid to ring for weddings. During the past year we have had visits from several churches including, Potton and the North Herts Association of ringers who enjoy ringing our five bells.

### **8.2 Carpet Bowls • Eddie and Jo Hayden (read by Cllr Terry McGrath)**

Cottered Bowls Club started in 2002 when the new Village Hall opened so we are now 15 years old. The membership has been constant over the years with approx. 24 members. We meet every Monday at 8.00pm to 10.00pm and charge £2.00, this includes refreshments. At Christmas, we had our Annual Dinner and raised £100.00 from our raffle which was donated to the Garden House Hospice Letchworth. New members will be most welcome to join us on Monday evenings.

### **8.3 Cavaliers Golf Society • John Harwood Bee (read by Denise Anderson)**

The society had a very successful 15<sup>th</sup> year managing to stage five tournaments at different courses in the region as well as adding the occasional challenge match with other societies. For 2017 we have three remaining tournaments on the calendar, in July, August and October. We also hold other interim events where players are able to take advantage of special discount deals at selected courses. We have attracted a number of new members during the year and this has helped boost the participating numbers. For more information please speak to John Harwood-Bee or David Broxup.

### **8.4 Children's Society • Simon Cassia (read by Denise Anderson)**

The Children's Society runs two activities in the village.

#### **Change Boxes**

The Society provides a box for people who want to collect and donate their small change to the Society. This year we had 10 box holders. When the boxes were opened in October we collected the sum of £203.67. We have been advised by the Children's Society that boxes may be opened early this year, before the old £1 coin is no longer legal tender.

#### **Christingle Service**

The collection from the annual Christingle Service in December is donated to the Children's Society. This year we collected £147 at the service. The Church also kindly donated £80 from its coffee mornings. The total funds generated for the Children's Society in 2016 were therefore £430.67

### **8.5 Cottered and Throcking News • Neville Chuck**

The magazine regularly received glowing tributes from some of its readers, which is encouraging for those who work hard to produce it every other month. However, our finances are currently suffering as many who receive it are backward in paying their yearly £4 subscription. This amount doesn't sound much per household, but adds up to quite a tidy sum when only about half our readers subscribe towards the running costs.

### **8.6 Cottered Voices • Alan Weston**

Cottered Voices got together for one event to raise funds. That escalated to 12 events outside Cottered with 16 singers and a total of £2,000 raised for charity over a 3-year period.

Cottered voices would like to express they're thanks to the County Councillors for the financial support they have been given.

This year there has been 14 performances and they look forward to the Summer Garden Party on 17<sup>th</sup> June when they will be joined by friends from over the County for a big performance along with the Hertfordshire winners of Young Talent with proceeds going to Great Ormand Street Children's' Hospital. The group meet on Thursday evenings at 7.30pm/

### **8.7 Football Club • Allen Chamberlain (read by Denise Anderson)**

With promotion from Division one last year to the Premier League it going to be a hard season; the aim was to finish in the top half of the league.

So, with a good early start in training and the emphasis on fitness ready for the start of the season, the team was ready to take on the top sides in the Premier League and this year we had got enough players to get our reserve team back.

The First team rose to the occasion and had a good run of results and were top of the league for some of the season and also had good runs both in the League Cu and the Centenary Trophy Cup, only losing in both cup semi-finals.

In the league, a couple of bad results, when the team was short of players meant they lost key games to rival teams. But they continued to get results and with the last game of the season a good 5-1 win gave them the runners up position; a great achievement in their first year in the Premier League.

The Reserves did not have such a good season; new players meant the team was not gelling well but they tried their best. Also at times short of players as the first team had to borrow some players sometimes weakening the team. But they still kept their chins up but finished bottom on the league. Next season they will have a new manager who is already signing new players so both teams will be stronger for the coming season.

### **8.8 Parish Paths Partnership • Roger Gomm**

The dry winter means that the surfaces of the local paths and bridleways are mainly in good condition, unless a farmer has neglected to restore a path after cultivation. However, this is the time of year when the nettles and other vegetation threatens to swamp them: later the problem is with brambles and suckering blackthorns. They are your paths and if you walk them frequently this helps to keep them accessible, beating down the vegetation with a stick as you walk is better, and in the autumn using secateurs on the occasional errant bramble keeps them in order.

Last year the *Rambler's Association* organised the *Big Path Watch*, attempting to survey all the footpaths and bridleways in Britain: nearly all those in East Herts were surveyed and all of those in Cottered and Throcking. Broadly speaking the reports were favourable, unlike the situation in some other Counties.

Landowners or tenants are responsible for maintaining the paths that cross their land. As the Highways Authority and the Rights of Way Authority, the County is responsible for the maintenance of those footpaths which don't run across private land, and of all stiles, gates, bridges and waymarker posts. It is also responsible for enforcing maintenance on landowners/tenants who have paths crossing their land. The County has a small number of standing contracts with contractors to mow or strim sections of paths (2.8k out of the 37k total) and they will come clear badly obstructed paths if their resources allow. This year Countryside Management organised a team of volunteers to cut back hedges and restore waymarkers in the area around Bull Lane. On behalf of the Parish I'd like to thank Julian Thornton, our rights of way officer at HCC, who always responds speedily to reports of problems, and, if he can find the resources, acts to solve them.

The Parish Council has no statutory responsibility for footpaths and bridleways but is signed up to a so-called Parish Paths Partnership agreement. The 'partnership' simply means that the Parish keeps the state of the paths under surveillance and reports problems to the County Council. The Parish has 37 kilometres (23 miles) of foot paths and bridleways, not counting the sidewalks along the roads. 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. Alternatively, the *Ramblers Association* provides a web site with an interactive map on which you can report footpath problems direct to the relevant authority where ever the problems occur in Britain.

### **8.9 Friends of Cottered Church • Andy Karn)**

A good year for the Friends in terms of events and fund raising. We also had new arrivals and welcomed David Broxup & John Harewood-Bee as a new Friends. The numbers of Friends at the end of 2016 stands at 10.

#### **Events Held in 2016**

In June, we were involved in the Village Day the Friends ran the tombola and also helped out with the Village Hall teas which was run jointly with the PCC.

In September, we held a Quiz Night with just under 100 people attending with quite a few new faces which is always nice to see for Friends events.

In November, we held a Film Night which was an excellent night held in Ingrid & Leon Snell's barn with two comedy films showing and good wine.

The last event of 2016 was the Friends Christmas Get Together in December.

This was held at Warren Farmhouse and kindly hosted by Barry & Erika Price. A buffet was laid on with the Friends bar & raffle in attendance as well and was a very nice way to end 2016.

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

**(Report received after the meeting but content published in the Minutes)**

### **8.10 Guide Centre • Gill Park**

The Guide Centre has had a successful year.

As well as the local Buntingford Guides and The Senior Section units being based and meeting on a weekly basis at the Centre we are welcoming more of our members from across the county for holidays and camps as well as the Centre being used for more trainings for leaders and development weekends for groups taking International trips.

Buntingford Brownies have taken over an area of garden to design, plant and maintain as part of their Design Badge.

Our facilities are also increasingly being used by schools and Duke of Edinburgh groups for activities and in preparation for expeditions helping the young people to gain valuable skills and personal development.

We are continuously working to improve our facilities and attract more bookings

One of our major projects over the last 12 months has been to have plans drawn up for the redevelopment of our pond area into a nature area and educational facility. We were successful in obtaining funding from the "Tesco Bags of Help" scheme. We would like to thank all those who voted for us in local Tesco stores and enabled us to win the largest grant available of £12,000. Work is scheduled to start within the next month, and if it is completed by Village Day we hope to be able to show visitors around.

Since launching in 2015, Bags of Help has awarded more than £24m across 2,421 local projects. And from 1 December, 2016 customers will be able to vote for local groups all year round, every time they shop and grants will be awarded monthly – meaning that thousands more projects will benefit from the scheme. Funding will now be awarded to groups who are seeking to use and develop outdoor spaces in ways that will benefit their local community, and money will be available in smaller amounts, making it more accessible. Three groups in each of Tesco's regions will be awarded funding.

Anyone can nominate a local project and local organisations can apply. To find out more visit [www.tesco.com/bagsofhelp](http://www.tesco.com/bagsofhelp)

There is now a defibrillator at the Hertfordshire Guide Centre in Cottered which is set up and ready for use should it be needed. These machines are designed to be used by anyone (suggest 16+). A course to use it is not necessary, but attendance can be helpful. Verity MacLachlan our County First Aid Adviser has run some courses at the centre for local residents and would be happy to offer further courses if required. To use the defibrillator, one would be expected to follow usual procedure for a non-breathing person: call ambulance, start CPR, then someone should get the defibrillator and open the lid for automatic instructions to greatly improve chances of survival.

### **8.11 Horticultural Society • Caron Lawton**

Julian Bishopp was re-elected as the Chairman for 2016 on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

Membership was 113 and the finances are £117 in profit, the membership also remains at £3 per person or £5 for a family.

We had 6 events last year which were:

**May 13<sup>th</sup>**, we had a Plant Sales evening at Ingrid & Leon Snell's barn which was very successful: Vegetable plants, Herbaceous and Spring bulbs.

**June 17<sup>th</sup>**, we had a Garden Ramble where we visited Jenny & Andrew Thompson's garden at The Bell, Margaret & Terry's garden opposite the Church and ending at our garden with refreshments and a social chat which resulted in a very enjoyable evening.

**June 28<sup>th</sup>** was Village Day where we had our plant stall on Ingrid Snell's driveway, this did not result in a particularly successful day because the stall was not in a fortuitous position and the weather was not good but we did raise some money for our funds.

**July 14<sup>th</sup>** was our day out to Hemingford Grey in Cambridge. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves and the weather was lovely. We had lunch in a local pub and a tour around the house for those who wanted it.

**September 2<sup>nd</sup>** was the Annual Show. The entries were down by 30% on 2015 which left the hall looking rather sparse but the judges felt the overall standard of the show was very good. Rosemary Sleep the Society's President presented the Cups which the society was very grateful for.

**November 18<sup>th</sup>** AGM where Julian Bishopp announced his resignation as the society's chairman.

Cottered Horticultural Society is a very friendly society which needs more members and friends to attend the events. People have said they don't get to know about what is happening but there is always a notification in the Cottered & Throcking magazine. Maybe putting the forthcoming events on Facebook would work or even on the Cottered Web Page. We don't know but we need to try! If there are any other ways of getting the message out there that would help everyone, besides the magazine, please let me know.

### **8.12 Luncheon Club • Cilla Grist (read by Denise Anderson)**

We have had a pretty successful year with meals such as tarragon chicken, pheasant casserole down to sausages with potatoes dauphines. Our numbers have been fairly stable with some new members joining during the year. We have managed to keep the cost to £3 except for the Christmas Lunch which is £6. We have had a surplus for a couple of years now thanks to donations of pheasants, apples, gooseberries, etc. plus a very generous donation of the wine for one of the Christmas Lunches. To use this up we decided to do a "Free Tea" which was very well received and Peter Thody managed to get us funding from the Council to carry this on. We also had a generous donation from the Cottered Appreciation Society following their successful Burns Night. We are now having a lunch one month and a tea the next (this is open to everyone) and the tea will be free for the foreseeable future.

May we take this opportunity to thank members of the Bowls Club for all the help they give us in the setting up and laying of the tables ready for the Lunch Club the next day. We would find it difficult to operate without their considerable help.

### **8.13 Petanque • Kevin Daisley (read by Denise Anderson)**

The season has already started with three teams playing Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings. We have already hosted a large event with another next weekend planned. As I'm sure most people have noticed the club has started painting the outside of clubhouse not quite finished but well on way.

### **8.14 Cottered Ramblers • Roger Gomm**

Cottered Ramblers is a very select but always welcoming group who walk on the first Sunday of the month (excluding July and August) from 2.00pm. Mostly we walk from the Village Hall in Cottered around the Parish but this year we also went to Ware and walked the Lea and the next walk (4<sup>th</sup> June) will start from Ardeley (by the church) and finish with the W.I. tea in the Village Hall. Walks are usually 3 miles or so and very leisurely.

### **8.15 Royal British Legion • John Harwood-Bee (read by Denise Anderson)**

The last year has seen some ups and some downs in the fortunes of the branch. The ups being the amount of money collected during Poppy Appeal and the very generous contribution made by the Fancy Family hosting a pre-Christmas evening at their home. For a small community Cottered residents are very supportive of the legion.

We are not sure for how long we shall be able to continue having an independent branch in Cottered because of the dwindling numbers of members able or willing to take on committee

responsibility. There are new guidelines coming from head office that make running a branch a considerable administrative responsibility. The Chairman Bill Bennett and I shall continue to monitor the situation and hope that for this year at least we shall be able to have the standard at the Remembrance Day service. We are considering options for a fund raiser later in the summer and notice of this will be in the Parish magazine.

### **8.16 Cottered Village Festival • John Harwood-Bee (read by Denise Anderson)**

Village Day 2016 was again a success in attracting visitors to the village. The Festival Committee aims to ensure that each year we earn sufficient funds to enable us to cover the cost of running the following year's Village Day and we are fortunate to have done that again. Unfortunately, a major attraction, the Japanese Gardens, were not open but it is hoped that the new owners will reopen in 2018.

Village Day is on Sunday 25th 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, including a Tug of War competition, are on the agenda for this year. The 2017 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 John Harwood-Bee or to Roger Hayes.

### **8.17 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. The Society continues to maintain the comprehensive insurance policy that covers the volunteers and subsidises the public liability insurance for Village Day. Work on the churchyard has commenced again as there is now a specific maintenance policy in place. Several donations have been made to organisations in the village and we were pleased to receive a grant from CDA earlier this year. If anybody would like to be included on the volunteers list please contact John Harwood-Bee on 01763 281581.

### **8.18 Cottered Village Hall Trust • Colin Bayles**

#### **Introduction**

The 2017 Village Hall AGM took place on 20/04/17. Our AGMs are open to members of the local public. We are a registered charity and we report to and are overseen by the Charity Commission.

#### **Summary of the year 2016-2017**

2016-2017 has been another satisfactory and successful year for the village hall. We have achieved the objective set for us in our 1963 Declaration of Trust and our 1977 Scheme. Although these documents use other words, my interpretation of the objective is to provide a useful community facility for the benefit of residents in Cottered and the surrounding area. Our treasurer and letting secretaries spelled out at the AGM what this means in financial and user-related terms.

#### **Thanks**

I take this opportunity to express my thanks to fellow trustees and colleagues, to hirers and other supporters of the hall and to some very generous donors.

#### **Comings and goings**

Last year the longest part of my report was under the heading of comings and goings. This year is different. There have been no changes since our last AGM in committee membership or functions. I think we have seen the practical benefits of this continuity during 2016/2017.

#### **Repairs, maintenance, decoration and equipment**

We have continued the approach adopted during the last year or two, made possible by now being in a more comfortable financial position. In essence, we push on with appropriate measures as soon as a need is identified. All manner of useful work is still done by committee members and others on a voluntary basis but we do not shy away from employing professionals.

#### **Elections and appointments**

Five members of the management committee are elected each year. Other members are appointed to represent various village organisations. We will always consider requests for

representation. Officers of the management committee are elected at its first meeting after the AGM. At present our team for 2017/2018 is pretty much as before

### **8.17 Cottered Village Club • Colin Bayles**

The club exists primarily to promote the hall's functions and facilities and to help the managing trustees achieve their charitable objectives.

I believe it has continued to hit these targets during 2016/2017.

The club holds a Club Premises Certificate which allows and regulates the provision and consumption of alcohol at the hall.

Membership costs £1 per year. The club holds a small number of committee meetings each year and its AGM will take place shortly.

## **9. OPEN DISCUSSION**

There was a plea for Tug of War teams for the Village Day.

Alan Weston provided an update on the A Safer A507 campaign. He reiterated that this was launched in August 2016 and the petition had gathered 1,800 signatures. The matter of reclassifying the A507 to a B road and imposing a weight limit is to be considered at the next Highways Cabinet Panel on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2017 at County Hall.

The issue of dogs being walked on the Recreation Ground was raised especially as there is signage specifying this is not allowed. The problem with dog fouling was also raised. It was felt new signage was required. Cllr Jones suggested that the Parish Clerk could contact the EHDC Environment Department and enquire as to any possible signage they might provide.

The problem with fireworks and their effects was raised. It was suggested this could be included in the Cottered and Throcking News

There being no other questions, the Chairman thanked the Police, the Parish Councillors, and everyone for attending and giving their reports and announced tea and cakes were served courtesy of a number of parishioners for all attending the Annual Parish Meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm.

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Chairman

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Date