

**MINUTES OF COTTERED ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN COTTERED VILLAGE HALL ON TUESDAY 24<sup>th</sup> MAY 2016 AT 7.30 PM**

Present: Bryan Pitman (Chair), Colin Bayles, John Bull, David Charles, Barry Dean, Police Constable Leslie Bridger (Hertfordshire Police) and 19 members of the public

Officer attending: Denise Anderson (Parish Clerk)

**1. APOLOGIES**

Councillor Terry McGrath, County Councillor Rose Cheswright; Sgt Duncan Wallace, Julian Bishopp.

**2. MINUTES OF MEETING**

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2015 were signed as a correct record.

**3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

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

**New Parish Council**

The Parish Council (PC) commenced this reporting year on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2015 with the Council being short of 3 Councillors. This deficiency was quickly resolved and the total of 6 re-established. The new Councillors were, Colin Bayles, John Bull and Barry Dean.

The original 3 Councillors were very grateful that these Cottered residents came forward, had the vacancies not been filled, EHDC had the legal powers to appoint replacements of their choice.

**Meetings**

As normal a total of 6 formal meetings have been held over the year together with impromptu visits to various parish sites to discuss and progress a variety of issues.

**Activities**

The work of contributing to the production of what is now known as the Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan (BCANP) was carried out by Neville Chuck, Roger Gomm and Bryan Pitman. This document, as well as Buntingford, covers the villages of Aspenden, Buckland & Chipping, Cottered & Throcking, Hormead and Wyddial.

The document is now with EHDC as part of a strict legal process known as the "Consultation Period". After this current process is complete the document has to be examined by an independent Inspector and only after this phase is passed will a full referendum be carried out in our community area.

**CURRENT IMPORTANT ISSUES****Housing**

Currently when a new house is built within a parish area, a new house bonus is given to the Parish Council for that area. However, payments on this scheme have been reduced in recent years and it is far from certain that they will continue in the future. A large development has just started on land in the Parish of Cottered and Throcking. This site is just to the north of Buntingford, lying on the western side of the old A10 (Ermine Street) and of course 180 new houses on this site will generate a substantial bonus

The Buntingford Town Council have recently requested EHDC to carry out a Community Governance Review on the boundaries adjacent to this site and also the well established community of Parkside. The 180 houses being built would represent a 70% increase in households in our parish. Guidance information, as to the way boundary reviews are conducted is contained in: <http://www.lgbce.org.uk/home>

The District Plan, which will contain the legal planning policies in the EHDC area, has yet to be issued, only a draft exists at present. The draft issue still retains a village rating system controlling the extent to which development will be allowed. The system has a numerical scale, being from 1 to 3, in a group 1 village, development is allowed, up to 500 new dwellings, and, in a group 2, limited "in filling" is allowed, but in group 3 development is very strictly controlled. Cottered is classed as a 2 in the yet to be issued plan.

The current thinking, recently outlined at a EHDC liaison meeting was that **perhaps the entire rating system should be deleted**. This suggested change has resulted in this Parish Council submitting an objection to the EHDC together with objections from other villages Parish Councils.

#### **Broadband Internet**

In their role as Custodians of the Village Greens the Councillors have very recently agreed with BT, for the placing of communication boxes on the Greens in order to introduce a higher broadband speed throughout the village of Cottered.

#### **Thanks**

The Parish Councillors are very fortunate in having a hardworking part time Clerk, who we thank for guiding us through her first year, which has been very busy. We also thank Nigel Bentley for his continued work in keeping the village free of litter and also cutting the playing field.

The Parish Council also wish to thank all those others who help contribute to ensure this parish continues to be a very pleasant community in which to live.

#### **4. COUNTY COUNCILLOR ROSEMARY CHESWRIGHT**

County Councillor Rose Cheswright sent her apologies in retrospect and promised she would submit a report to be included in these Minutes. We await receipt of the report.

#### **5. DISTRICT COUNCILLOR PAUL KENEALY**

District Councillor Paul Kenealy did not attend the meeting or submit a report.

#### **6. HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE – POLICE CONSTABLE LESLIE BRIDGER**

Sgt Duncan Wallace was unable to attend the meeting and sent his apologies. Police Constable Leslie Bridger kindly stood in and provided a policing update.

PC Bridger reported that in the last 12 months there had been 15 reported crimes in Cottered with seven positive outcomes. These crimes include 3 burglaries, 3 thefts and 3 instances of criminal damage. In Throcking there were 3 reported crimes; one for drugs which had a positive outcome and two for criminal damage. These figures compared to the previous year's reported crime figures of 25 for Cottered and two for Throcking.

Sgt Duncan Wallace has requested roads policing of the A507 to target speeding cars and particularly motorcycles. Unmarked police vehicles are now operating in this area.

David Lloyd had been re-elected as Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire.

PC Bridger now had the support of PCSO Karen Broad working in the local area.

There were no questions. The Chairman thanked Police Constable Leslie Bridger for representing Hertfordshire Police and attending the meeting.

#### **7. FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

The unaudited financial statement for the year ending 31 March 2016 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**

There's is not much to report on the Bell Ringers however, during August, the Church Bell Frames were repainted. During last year there were several visits by Bell Ringers. Local ringers come to our aid when there are weddings couples who want the bells rung for their ceremonies.

##### **8.2 Carpet Bowls • Eddie and Jo Hayden (read by Lesley Greensmith)**

The Bowls Club started in 2002 and we have a membership of 26. Usually about 16 people come on a Monday (but not Bank Holidays) when we meet from 8pm – 10pm. We are just a friendly group paying £2 each Monday, halfway through we have coffee or tea and biscuits.

We even have a gentleman playing in a wheelchair thanks to a member who made a launching pad for the balls.

A Christmas dinner is always enjoyed by all, so if there is anyone out there who has not had a go, please come along and give it a try!

Lastly thank you to Eddie and Jo Hayden who set this up and always there to keep us all in order.

### **8.3 Cavaliers Golf Society • John Harwood Bee**

The society had a very successful 14<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 2016 we have four remaining tournaments on the calendar, in May, July, August and September as well as a tournament in early July against Mill End, Sandon, Golf Society. 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 John Harwood-Bee or David Broxup.

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

After several years as the village's Children Society coordinator, Melanie Shaw handed over the reins to Simon Cassia in October 2015.

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 £92.69. This year we have five more box holders.

#### **Christingle Service**

The collection from the annual Christingle Service in December is donated to the Children's Society. This year we collected £105.95 at the service.

This year the Church also donated £90 from its coffee mornings. Thus we raised a grand total of £288.64 in 2015.

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

During the past year improvements have been made with the publications itself. More pictures are being used. For instance, last year's Village Day was given a centre spread in colour, which makes the publication more interesting. The back number of the Cottered & Throcking News have all been bound and I hold them. Jenny has a copy of them too and many of them are with the Herts County Record Office. We are now using a publishing software instead of Word, which make it much easier for my Sub Editor Jenny Thomson to lay out the pages. When completed, the magazine is sent to the printers through the sky. Subscriptions for this year are now due, the price has reverted to only £4 per annum, the cost of two cups of coffee if you are lucky.

### **8.6 Cottered Voices • Rita Broxup**

We had an audience of over 100 at our VE Day celebration in May 2015 in aid of the Royal British Legion for which we raised a substantial donation. We were also invited to sing a number of songs at the Harvest Supper.

We were invited to sing Carols at the Buntingford Christmas Street Party on a cold wet and windy evening, we organised the singing of carols around the Christmas tree outside The Bull and were once again invited to sing Christmas carols at Nevitts Residential Home in Buntingford. The Rev Mike Leverton invited us to perform a lovely carol at the Christmas Church Service called 'I Pray'.

We performed at the famous Barn Theatre in Welwyn Garden City and have been asked back to perform again.

On 4<sup>th</sup> June this year we have organised a Musical Show Broadway and the West End comes to Cottered and it's a sell out with 110 tickets being sold and we have a waiting list. The evening is held in aid of a spinal injury charity called ASPIRE.

We have also been asked to sing at the Queens 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebrations in Buntingford when the High Street will be closed.

### **8.7 Football Club • Allen Chamberlain (read by Bryan Pitman)**

Cottered started the season with a few friendly games winning them all. It was clear that we would only have one team this year as the response from last season's reserve players was low.

With a new kit sponsored by Brian Zeller junior, the team thrived on the new management team of Nathan Searle and Mat Smyth with their new training methods.

They began with a winning run that took them to the top of the league and continued most of the season until Waltham Abbey went top on goal difference. This continued until the last game of the season against the Abbey where Cottered needed to win to go top of the league.

The game ended in a 2-2 draw so we finished second having gone all season and not losing a league game. But we have got promotion to the premier league next season.

They also had good runs in all cup competitions ending with them getting to Division 1 League Cup Final on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> April at the Letchworth County Ground where they played Sumners and came home with the cup with a well deserved 4-0 win.

The aim is to get a reserve team back next season for back up for the first team and hopefully have a good season.

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

The Parish Council has no statutory responsibility for footpaths and bridleways but is signed up to a so-called Parish Paths Partnership agreement – hence this report. The 'partnership' simply means that the Parish keeps the state of the paths under surveillance and reports problems to the County Council. As the Highways Authority and the Rights of Way Authority, the County is responsible for the maintenance of the surface 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. On the whole, our local landowners do look after these paths fairly well, though some may have to be reminded from time to time. For years Hertfordshire has been regarded as the gold standard among county councils for rights of way maintenance. That cachet is probably still deserved even though staffing and budgets have been severely cut over the last few years: standards are falling everywhere.

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). It's taken me five years to discover what these contracts are but now in my capacity as local footpaths secretary for the Ramblers Association I have agreed to monitor whether the contracts have been carried out properly. Otherwise the county does maintenance on a need to do basis, which is why our reporting of any problems is important. The response to such reports is much slower than it was in the past. Response is prioritised. Issues of human and animal safety get the highest priority. Impassable paths rate higher than those simply overgrown with grass and nettles. Apart from a broken bridge on Back Lane I don't think there have been any high priority issues with our paths this year, though I have made several reports, including reporting the flooding at the start of Bull Lane, the reason for which is a bit of a puzzle. My thanks to various local people, some of whom I can't identify, who mow bits of footpath or clear nettles from around gateways.

People often don't realise that once a public right of way has been established (by an enclosure act for example) it cannot be extinguished without due legal process – even if it hasn't been used for years and all trace of it on the ground has disappeared. That situation changes in 2026 when all unregistered (but legal) rights of way are wiped out. Registered rights of way are shown on the so-called 'definitive map' available on the Herts Council website. Go to 'Hertsdirect' and search for 'Rights of Way'. The county itself reckons that there are around 5000 legal but unregistered public rights of way which will be lost if an application to register them is not made before 2026. The backlog for processing applications is already standing at 20 years in this County and longer in many others. Many threatened paths are urban alleyways which keep being stolen by developers but in areas like Cottered and Throcking it is possible that continuous footpath and bridleway routes have sections within them which are unregistered, which after 2026 could be blocked off from public access. I am reviewing all 49 of our paths to see whether this is so.

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.

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

A good year for the Friends in terms of events and fund raising. We also had a new arrival and welcomed Trish Agnew as a new Friend and Rita Broxup rejoined FOCC towards the end of 2015. We sadly lost Anne Bishopp who is taking a well earned break. The numbers of Friends at the end of 2015 stands at 11.

#### **Events Held in 2015**

Three events were run throughout 2015 starting with the **Silent Auction** in April. This proved to be a very good event with many laughs and last minute bidding!

In June we were involved in the **Village Day** the Friends ran the tombola and Bric a Brac; we also 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.

In November we held the **Call My Wine Bluff** which was an excellent night with good food and wine.

The last event of 2015 was the **Friends Christmas Get Together**, this was held at Lower Farm and kindly hosted by Leon and Ingrid Snell.

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.

### **8.10 Guide Centre • Gill Park**

It is the intention to raise the profile of the Girlguiding Hertfordshire Centre in Cottered. There is maintenance work to keep on top of, including a roof repair and various fund raising events are taking place to raise monies to help achieve this.

Girlguiding Hertfordshire are working with Groundworks to clear the overgrown natural pond and re-landscape the surrounding area.

### **8.11 Horticultural Society • Julian Bishopp**

There was no report available.

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

This year has been very successful one for the Lunch Club with good numbers attending.

We still have a committee of six cooks which seems to work very well. We have succeeded in keeping the cost to £3 for a two course meal with tea or coffee. This was even reduced it to £1 when we were given sufficient pheasants to cater for everyone (kindly skinned and dismantled by Peter Thody and Liz Pitman). Meals have been very varied and, judging from the empty plates, well received. The Christmas meal with turkey and all the trimmings followed by Christmas pudding was a great success.

We were very saddened by the death of Joe Edis last month who had been a very regular supporter of the Lunch Club and he will be very much missed.

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

The Petanque Club has already started this season. We have three different teams playing again this year. We have four regional competitions during the season as well as very busy time for us.

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

Cottered Ramblers is an informal and rather small group of people who take a stroll on the first Sunday of the month (excluding July and August). Most walks are around the Parish and about 3 miles at a leisurely pace and start at 2.00pm from the Village Hall car park. Sometimes we go further afield; for example, in the last 12 months we have walked from Buntingford to Alswick and back and along the Lea Navigation canal from Ware to Stanstead Abbots.

### **8.15 Royal British Legion • Bill Bennett (Report by John Harwood-Bee)**

In 2015 we almost lost the branch when the number of members dropped below a viable level. However, several new members were recruited and so the branch has survived for at least one more year. Our Chairman Bill Bennett and I continue to attend RBL Group meetings and contribute to the debate on the way forward for the Legion. Maintaining the branch enables us to have a proper presence at the annual Remembrance Day service in November. This year we collected over £1,200 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. If anybody would like information on becoming a member of the Legion, please speak to me or Bill Bennett.

### **8.16 Cottered Village Festival • John Harwood-Bee**

Village Day 2015 was again a success in attracting visitors to the village although perhaps a little down on other years. 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. Village Day is on Sunday 26th 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 2016 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.

### **8.17 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. Since 2010 the society has organised the village entry into the Hertfordshire Rural Living Campaign. The Rural Living Awards is open to anybody to enter a project; the Appreciation Society continues to submit entries in a variety of categories. The Society was delighted to receive a donation from the Rowlands family as a parting gift when they left the village last year and this has enabled us to maintain the comprehensive insurance policy that covers the volunteers and subsidises the public liability insurance for Village Day. It also helps towards the servicing costs for our equipment. The society has purchased a new electric start power mower to help with some of the mowing jobs especially in the churchyard. 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.

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

#### **Introduction**

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 2015-2016**

I have characterised other years as “difficult at the start but improving later”, “a curate’s egg – good in parts”, “one of difficulties overcome” and so on. The year 2015-2016 has been clearly and definitely a good year and a year free from any serious troubles. Our treasurer and letting secretaries agree.

#### **Thanks**

At the last committee meeting before the AGM I spent some time giving a very sincerely meant pep talk and vote of thanks to colleagues, whether part of the public face of the hall or workers in the background or, more likely, both. These deserve to be repeated briefly now. So I 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**

Tina Reed, with long experience of this post and only recently retired from it, came back temporarily as letting secretary until we were able to make a suitable permanent appointment. This was far beyond the call of duty. She has now been able to hand over the reins (again) but will continue as a member of the management committee. My thanks to Tina, the importance of her input cannot be exaggerated. Gary King and Coral Middleton have joined us as joint letting secretaries. They are already handling this part of our operation competently and remarkably cheerfully. Well done and welcome. For many years Sian Reed has made invaluable contributions to many aspects of managing the hall. One of her recent triumphs was to oversee refurbishment of the changing rooms and to negotiate discounts. She has just retired for family reasons. My thanks to Sian, we shall miss her.

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

We have adopted a new policy, made possible by now being in a more comfortable financial position. In essence, we push on as soon as a need is identified. Much useful work is 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.

### **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. 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 were a number of questions raised about the financial implications of the requested Community Governance Review of the Buntingford Parish Boundary by Buntingford Town Council and the effect that would have on the New Homes Bonus as the Redrow development currently sits within the Cottered and Throcking Parish Boundary.

The Chairman stated that Cottered and Throcking Parish Council felt that such a review should seek the views of the entire community and that the majority of people it would affect were as yet not in residence. The Clerk had written to the Head of Legal and Democratic at East Herts Council to express those views.

The Clerk also explained that in the Chancellors Autumn Statement in November 2015 a number of changes to the way in which Councils are awarded the New Homes Bonus were proposed; one of which was limiting the length of time the awards are made. From 2017/18 there will be a loss of 2 years of award for Cottered and Throcking Parish Council. It is suggested that New Homes Bonus will continue but how it is calculated remains unknown.

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 9.20 pm.

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Chairman

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Date