

# COLDWALTHAM PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD

ON TUESDAY 22nd APRIL 2025 @ 7.30PM

AT THE SANDHAM MEMORIAL VILLAGE HALL

### **Those Present:**

**Cllr G Nelson  
Cllr J Evans**

**Chairman  
Vice – Chairman**

**Cllr O Dudman  
Cllr A Davies  
Cllr I Dregar**

**Cllr C Dennis  
Cllr K Coughtrey  
Cllr J Stevens**

**Mrs LD Sherlock-Fuidge**

**Parish Clerk**

### **Parishioners:**

**Simon Berry  
Richard Hewitt**

**Chrissie McGinn**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting

### **1.00 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies.

### **2.00 TO APPROVE AS CORRECT THE RECORD OF THE MEETING OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 23rd APRIL 2024.**

Minutes of the last meeting held on the 23rd April 2024, were signed as a true and correct record.

### **3.00 MATTERS ARISING**

None arising.

### **4.00 CHAIRMAN'S REPORTS**

Parish Council Report:

Cllr Nelson thanked all members of the Parish Council (PC) for their continued support in keeping our parish well represented, giving of your time and support without cost or grumble, and it is deeply appreciated. Adding his thanks to the

clerk, Dona, who is not just a beacon of excellence and a reality check on our activities but also ensuring that the PC stays legal and secure in all respects.

Thank you to Celia for her lead on Planning. This important area needs constant feedback, and we wait to see if recent changes over the SDNP and planning will have any impact on our area. There has been no news on potential development on the land south of the A29, which is a designated site in the SDNPA development plan. The site at the corner of Lodge Hill is now being developed with 4 new houses.

Thank you also to John for his continued contributions to The Link, which now goes to every household and is being run by Bury PC. The 'new look' of The Link is a welcome improvement.

As you are aware, the PC has been actively involved in supporting the re-start of our local Post Office. This has involved a lot of additional meetings and local consultation and for the last year we have undertaken responsibility for fundraising for 75% of the costs, which we now, as a community have to find. So far, we have been successful in raising money for the first 20 months. Thank you to the many members of our community who have donated money to-date. We will have to decide how long this commitment is manageable for the PC going forward.

I believe that our support for the Post Office has contributed to the expanding use of the Sandham Hall; something which is of great credit to the SMVH committee and of considerable benefit to the parish.

Our responsibilities for the Alban Head remain firm and the field is in a good position and is reported on separately at this meeting. Thank you to the PC for their support for the purchase of the new tractor.

We continue to support the local church but note sadly, we seem no closer to gaining a new vicar, which may have long term consequences for the community.

In July 2024, after six months of preparatory work, our Coldwaltham A29 Road Improvement Committee, submitted a comprehensive 'Community Highways Scheme Application' to West Sussex County Council. The Committee put forward various proposals to make the A29 safer for everyone, in particular, to reduce vehicle speeds. We had great community engagement from a survey that many parishioners responded to, plus support from our MP, Sussex Police and many other organisations. In March this year we heard that our application had successfully passed the first hurdle - West Sussex Highways has just begun a feasibility study into our ideas. We hope to see some positive changes in the next year or so.

This is a very important piece of work for the parish, on what is for many of us the key environmental issue of today. Thank you to Iain for his leadership on this and to the rest of the Road Improvement Committee.

Inevitably, we lose valued members of our community each year, and we note the loss of Vic Rose in 2025 a former member of the PC and chair of the Alban Head – he will be greatly missed.

We have not undertaken any work on updating the village plan.

We live in interesting times... it may be that devolution in our area will lead, in the near future, to the abolition of both the District and County Councils. They will then be replaced by a Unitary Authority. How this will impact on us directly is difficult to guess at this stage. We presume planning will remain with the SDNPA.

All the work we undertake as a PC is summarised in the minutes of our meetings which can be found on our village website. Thank you to the wider community in our three-hamlet parish, we appreciate your support and engagement with us.

#### Alban Head Playing Field Report:

Cllr Nelson thanked all Trustees and the members of the Alban Head Committee for their continued support. We are fortunate to have this much-loved local resource, and I am confident it continues to be a well-managed and appreciated local asset for our community. We continue to also be fortunate in the high-quality service provided by our Parish Clerk who ensures our finances are carefully managed and clear to all.

As reported last year after the theft of our tractor we spent considerable time fund raising and arranging the purchase of a new tractor and cutter which arrived in November. This represented an important success for our Field Manager, who used his contacts with the Football Foundation, to gain a much-needed grant. This is the biggest single investment we have ever had in this parish. It has helped to improve the field, and its operation is a great technical contrast to our previous equipment. We continue to update our field investment plan with 'jobs done' and future needs; these include new lighting in the Club House, improved car park fencing and improved security for our garage.

Following on from my last report the impact of climate change seems to be ever increasing, with the field either too wet or too dry. This challenge our manager is grappling with, making sure we do not 'overuse' the pitches or plan for events which we cannot sustain. We continue to keep in touch with other organisations who can cover us, help and advice in this area.

Our field has an important corner: a children's play area which we invested in a few years ago. Sadly, perhaps a sign of our straightened times, we now have to pay for the annual Health and Safety Inspection, something which was provided by Fields In Trust, free up until now.

Last year we recruited new members to our committee, and they are playing an important role in helping the field management. We are also making efforts to publicise the field more to the local community and it is noticeable how many new users came to the field this Easter.

We are planning to evaluate expanding Colts use in football and cricket this year with every care not to 'trespass' on existing users and the wear and tear impact on the field and our neighbours. This would also be a useful budgetary contribution, as this continues to be an area of concern. Thank you to all our employees and volunteers who give their time and energy so constructively. I can assure you we will continue to be happy to invest our time and efforts in making the Alban Head the special place it deserves to be.

## **5.00 FINANCE REPORT FROM THE PARISH CLERK**

The Clerk to the Parish Council presented the audited accounts for both the Parish Council and the Alban Head Playing Field for the Year 2024-25.

The Parish Council has ended the year with reserves of £9,697, which is an increase to the previous year's figure, as a large VAT refund was claimed within the financial year. In December 2023, the Parish Council agreed a budget of £18,250, an increase on the previous year, also setting the Precept of £18,026. The Parish Council ended the year under budget.

The Alban Head Committee account balance reduced to £7,872. The major cost for the Alban Head was the purchase of the tractor, and although the majority of the costs were covered by a grant from the Football Association, there were still additional costs for the Alban Head.

The Alban Head continues to be a major asset supported by the Parish Council.

## **6.00 COLDWALTHAM POST OFFICE – AN UPDATE FOR THE COMMUNITY**

Cllr Nelson acknowledged the time taken by those who have worked behind the scenes to re-open the Post Office (PO) last June. Fundraising has been good, receiving donation from various individuals and groups in the community. However, the Parish Council will need to review the level of commitment ongoing.

Today, Cllr Dregar and Simon Berry, the Sandham Memorial Village Hall Chair, met with Andrew Griffiths MP and Neil Brocklehurst Post Office acting CEO, at the meeting, the PO to confirm that the opening is working, and confirmed that the PO would committed to fund one day with immediate effect, which will reduce the commitment from the community to 50% of the costs. The PO are looking to view Coldwaltham's Post Office as a case study, and are looking to visit the post office later this year. This change in funding has yet to be confirmed.

Simon Berry highlighted his personal confusion regarding the precept increase, being put towards the Post Office costs, that should the post office not need this funding next year, then, does the money goes back to the community. Simon hoped that there should be more publishing of the costs and the for the community.

The clerk explained the current Post Office cost, before the change agreed with the Post Office at the meeting. All income and expenditure is tracked by the clerk.

The chairman responded to Simon Berry addressing all his concerns. In the past large increases in the Precept have been paid back to the community through lower than inflation rises in the next few years. Some costs and fund raising information has already been published and more will be put into The Link in the near future.

#### **7.00 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Nothing else was raised.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm

**Chairman:.....**

**Date:.....**