

SOUTH HANNINGFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of the Electors of South Hanningfield held on Friday 28th April 2023 in Ramsden Heath Village Hall.

Present: Councillors Black, Marsello, Whitehead, Huntington, Burgess, Bonnett, Vickers, Cerson, Mitchell, Walker and Coveley. Barbara Buxton and 22 Parishioners were also in attendance and the Clerk kept the minutes.

1. Welcome from the Chairman, Councillor Kevin Black – Councillor Black welcomed everyone to this evening's meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence – Councillor Grundy and Mr & Mrs Lamb.

3. Approval of Minutes dated the 29th April 2022 – Proposed as a true record by Cllr Mitchell, Seconded Cllr Marsello.

4. Report from the Finance Chairman, Councillor Roy Whitehead – Cllr Whitehead reported that we had spent more than we earnt during the year, catching up with maintenance works after lockdown. The Parish is now looking far more improved than before. We have reserves set aside for the possibility of a new tractor and we have some funding towards the resurfacing of the tennis courts. Overall, we are in a stable position. The Chairman thanked Cllr Whitehead and the Clerk for their work on the accounts.

5. Report from the Sports Field Chairman, Councillor Kevin Black – Cllr Black reported it was another busy year for the Sports Field. We were awarded two honours by the Essex Playing Field Association. A Certificate of Merit for the Best Kept Football Pitch and a Silver Award for the Best Kept Playing Field serving a population of 2500 or less. Four Clubs use our pitches. We have had a few issues recently with litter after matches, and all teams have been warned that future issues will lead to a fine. Play in the Park was very well attended, and First Kicks use the field for the younger members of the Parish. The Tennis Courts are hired by South Hanningfield Tennis Club, and they welcome new players and are a friendly family centred Club. We are investigating the cost of resurfacing the tennis courts and we are looking into replacing the water tanks in the loft of the Pavilion with a direct flow system, due to Legionnaires Disease Regulations. Special thanks go to our Grounds Staff who maintain the Sports Field to a very high standard.

6. Report from the Parks & Open Spaces Vice-Chairman,

Councillor Susan Walker – Cllr Walker reported that the working party are responsible for overseeing and maintaining twenty-seven acres of Parish Council land in the three villages of the Parish. The Clerk and Councillors meet three times a year where we walk the Parish to see what work is required. The Clerk then liaises with the ground staff, who then carry out the work. Works include hedge cutting, grass cutting, play equipment maintenance, strimming, bus shelter maintenance and much more. In South Hanningfield posts have been replaced on the Tye and new concrete edging stones have been installed around the play surfaces in the playground. The village sign in Downham has been repaired and a plaque commemorating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee was installed at Jubilee Gardens. In Ramsden Heath nearly all the four hundred trees planted last year in Dowsett Ride survived the summer heatwave. Buried under the Queen's Green Canopy plaque, which is now installed on the site, has a time capsule containing details and photos of the 2022 planting. In the Recreation Ground, the boundary hedge was removed and replaced with palisade fencing. Our two playgrounds are inspected weekly and minor repairs and repainting have been carried out. Both playgrounds received a gold award this year from the Best Kept Playing Fields Association. Last of all she thanked the ground staff for their hard work over the year and to Julie, our Clerk, for co-ordinating the work of the working party so efficiently.

7. Report from the Transport & Parish Paths Partnership

Representative, Mr Peter Thurgood – Peter gave a detailed report of works conducted by the P3 Team. These included Bridleway 10 off Mill Lane, Footpaths 23, 26 & 28 which all lead to Crowsheath. The Prow Enforcement Officer is dealing with six footpath issues, and should anyone encounter any problems with the Prow network, please contact the Clerk, who will then pass on the information to our team. Peter reported that he has been Transport Representative since February 2020. The roadwork issues we recently suffered had a serious effect on the No 10 (Wickford to Basildon Hospital), No 256 (Ramsden Heath to Basildon via Billericay) and the No 552 (Ramsden Heath to Billericay Station). We have uncovered serious problems with the roadworks administration process, so the bus operators and ourselves have raised complaints with Essex Highways about the problems we are all encountering. Cllr Grundy, Julie Moule and I recently had an online meeting with Lee Scott, the cabinet member for Highways and we are awaiting further information from a number of meetings he was attending on this issue. The Chairman thanked Peter for his work on both matters.

8. Report from our Essex County Councillor, Ian Grundy – In

Councillor Grundy's absence, the Clerk read his report – He was sorry he was unable to be with us this evening but the advice received from the Monitoring Officer at Chelmsford City Council was not to attend, due to Council currently being in Purdah and his presence could imply a political opportunity. It has been a busy year in County Hall with officers still working from home and members meetings on zoom and teams. A new booking system was introduced at the recycling centres. This has been done to manage demand and reduce queueing at peak times. This is currently a trial, and it will be reviewed in the autumn. Anti-social behaviour problems continue along Hawkswood Road, despite the installation of cctv. Highway issues continue to be a major problem, especially potholes. The Government have given the County Council extra funding to support these works going forward. He urges residents to use the reporting system, take note of the reference number and if nothing happens, let the Clerk know, she will then contact me. Once again apologies were given, and he would happily come and attend a future meeting of the Parish Council.

9. Guest Speaker Barbara Buxton, Business Support Manager from

CHESS Homeless – Barbara reported that she had worked at CHESS Homeless for the past 20 years and she thanked us for inviting her this evening. She reported there are many reasons for homelessness, these include relationship breakdown, family breakdown, prison, job loss, domestic abuse, eviction, drug & alcohol use, financial issues, poor health, rent arrears and threats to life. Through donations this charity helps secure accommodation for homeless and people at risk of becoming homeless, they offer support and food. They have twelve properties within Essex that house 60 people and they have a soup kitchen with volunteers offering their services day and night. Last year there were 1225 referrals for help alone. The charity applies for government funding, grants, sponsorship and practical donations, such as bedding and clothing. The Chairman thanked Barbara for attending this evening, we have a far better understanding of the work achieved.

10. Report from the Chairman, Councillor Kevin Black – In his report last year, the Chairman Councillor Michael Thomason, started by saying "What a year it has been", but this has been a much sadder year, with Michael passing away after a short illness. Tributes have been paid to him and his funeral service was so well attended that Downham Church was standing room only, so this evening I will carry out his usual wish to keep a low profile but to get things done – his way of course! I am glad

that his wife Anne is here tonight. I am honoured to have been asked by my fellow Councillors to follow in his footsteps as Chairman and I will do my best to ensure that we continue to serve you, our residents, to the best of our abilities. He welcomed the Reverend Jacqui Pearson to the Parish and also thanked all of those who have kept our churches in such good order during the long period when there was no incumbent for the Parish. She is now responsible for what is, I understand, called the Reservoir Group of Churches, which includes our two churches, St Margarets Downham and St Peters South Hanningfield, plus Stock, Ramsden Bellhouse and West Hanningfield. We have three Village Halls in our parish, far more than most parish Councils around us who usually have only one. Our thanks go to all of those on their Hall Committees. The Parish Council looked at 54 planning applications, which was a few less than in the previous year. We held a "Thank You" event for the volunteers who helped others during the Covid emergency. We were able to get the City Council to install CCTV in Hawkswood Road to monitor the "boy racers" who were causing so many problems, but getting the Police to take action there, is still on-going. Norton Meadows has once again been used by Downham School for Sports Day and cross-country events and Ramsden Pre School for Easter Egg hunts, fetes and sports days and the Sports Field is in full use again after the Covid restrictions were removed. Thanks go to Cllr Bonnett who organised the popular Scarecrow competition and Barbara and her team who continue to provide excellent meals at the Luncheon Club. The Parish Council made a substantial donation to the Luncheon Club for their Christmas lunch which was, as ever, delicious. We decided to continue with the distribution of Christmas Cheer, and, at this time of inflation, it was well received and thirty-three households decided to donate their voucher to the Billericay Food Bank and we thank them for that. Our butcher, Peter, decided to retire and the loss to the village was huge. The Parish Council employs four part time members of ground staff who make sure that our Parish is kept neat and tidy and that our open spaces are maintained to a very high standard. Thanks go to Peter Thurgood, our Transport Representative who kept us updated with the extensive road work matters in the centre of Ramsden Heath. Fifty-year-old gas pipes had to be replaced. Peter kept us informed on a weekly basis. My thanks go to Councillor Grundy for all his work trying to get the County Council to get works done. We have Roy Whitehead as both a Parish and City Councillor and he too oils the wheels and his work with finance has been mentioned earlier. We have a host of responsibilities, and this includes the Parish Allotments, which is a separate charity, but for which the Clerk does the bookings and directs the ground staff. My special thanks go to Julie, our Clerk, for all the hard

work she has put in during the past year. As ever she works far beyond the call of duty, but this has been a particularly difficult year, with the loss of Michael and the need to bring me up to speed on the work of the Chairman. We are losing some members of the Parish Council and I want to say thanks to two of them for their work over the years and Richard who has only been with us for a year but has made a great contribution in that short time. Gillian has been a Parish Councillor since 2002 and been involved in many things and as part of our committees. Neil has been a tower of strength, literally when the Christmas tree is being put up, and his work on the Parks & Open Spaces Working Party and P3 will be much missed. We wish them all well. Before the meeting ends, Gillian would like to give a short presentation of the work achieved over the past 20 years.

11. Matters for Information – None.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.28pm.

Approved as a true record.

Signed.....Dated.....