

## **Minutes of Haydon Wick Parish Council Annual Assembly held 26<sup>th</sup> April 2017**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillors L Brown (Chairman), D Bower (Vice-Chair), C Armagan, P Booth, S Callen, P Eagle, J Fuller, E Gerrard, R Hailstone, S McDermott, J Stooke, D Smith, C Taylor and M Whelan

**WARD COUNCILLORS:** None present

**CLERK:** Terry Powell

**Public:** There was one (1) resident present

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor C Armagan, P Martin and D Rodgers

Apologies were received from Councillor D Renard

### **2. WELCOME FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

Councillor L Brown welcomed all those present to the meeting and explained the purpose of the Annual Assembly which is required by legislation to be held annually between the 1<sup>st</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> June. It is best described as the annual shareholders meeting where the Directors (the Councillors) tell the shareholders (the residents) what we've done, what we want to do and to give a brief financial overview.

### **3. MINUTES**

The minutes of the Annual Assembly held 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2016 were presented for acceptance

**Proposed: Councillor J Fuller**

**Seconded: Councillor S Callen**

**Vote: Agreed**

**RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved as a correct record**

### **4. ACHIEVEMENTS 2016/17**

Councillor L Brown as Chairman spoke to this item.

Play Areas

After some two decades of requests, the Council finally holds the leases for 19 Borough play areas, bringing the total under our control to 25.

At this year's precept setting meeting, the Councillors voted to continue the rolling programme of renovations to these areas that we started last year.

There are still two play areas that are (in theory) still managed by the Borough, although we look after them on a daily basis so that all public play areas are maintained to the same standards. Once these two, Doyle and Francomes, have been formally adopted by the Borough Council from the developer, these too will be transferred to our direct control

We also now have the lease for the adult play area known as Ventnor Close Allotments, which was transferred to the parish as a result of the 2014 boundary review.

### Transfer of Services

We continue to take on services from the Borough Council. This transfer of work is an ongoing piece of negotiation between the two Councils. There appears to be a level of assumption at the Borough that, just because something is in Haydon Wick, we will look after it.

The growth of this work has put undue pressure on our office personnel to the extent that there is a need for another member of staff. We have been fortunate to fill this indoor/outdoor position with an existing member of our grounds team. This obviously means we have a man who can hit the ground running or at least jogging as he won't need to be taught the layout of the parish when he takes on this job.

Part of the role will be to get some of the stalled projects back on track, for example the long awaited footpath signage and associated leaflets, the introduction of floral displays on the entrance signs, proactive monitoring of contractors, a full review of bin locations etc

The vacancy in the grounds maintenance team has already been filled by an experienced candidate who was interviewed recently for a previous vacancy.

### Grass Cutting

The tendering process for the grass cutting and hedge maintenance contract has resulted in a three year contract with a significant financial saving.

The new company has been experiencing teething problems but then so did the old one back in 2015, when we took on the grass cutting of Taw Hill, and 2016 when we went parish wide.

I would like to thank our old contractor, Countrywide, for stepping up to the plate when we were handed the whole of the parish to cut without enough time to go to tender.

Whilst the teething problems are very frustrating for all concerned, please bear in mind that, with Easter this month, the new company has in reality only been doing this job for three weeks.

This a big parish both in terms of acreage and fiddly green bits, and inhabitants. Because of the size of this contract, the PC has to be fiscally responsible.

Consequently there is a need for us to re-tender not just this but all our contracts every three years. Unless the same company remains as financially competitive, giving rise to the need to appoint another new company, I expect we may see this problem again in 2020.

### Community Governance Review

The latest Boundary Review, formally known as the Community Governance Review, is now complete and Swindon is now fully parished. This review has had little effect on us other than an increase in residents due to small adjustments to the parish boundary. This change arose from a successful request by a Residents'

Association and an old field boundary being ironed out with the boundary now being drawn along the road instead of through back gardens.

Despite parishing being a hot topic for over 18 months now, I am still amazed at the continued lack of understanding of how a parish council works. The legislation that applies to parish councils outdates that for the Borough by centuries. We cannot spend the precept anywhere we like or on anything that takes our fancy, as much as sometimes we would like to. In particular we are not allowed to finance any area which is the statutory responsibility of a higher authority such as the Borough Council. Unfortunately this is not understood by some residents.

Unhappily at the weekend I suffered from extreme verbal abuse from a resident who thought we should be spending money on the NHS, care homes, potholes and libraries, all of which are the statutory responsibility of the Borough. But on this last issue, libraries, a loophole may have been found. The Council will be considering whether to provide funding for North Swindon Library and the process by which to do so, at the Full Council meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2017, subject to further exploration of the rules and regulations.

The political ramifications of this enforced parishing remains to be seen, but I hope that HWPC will long continue to be a guiding light in how a parish should be managed without party politics.

## **5. AIMS & OBJECTIVES 2017/18**

The Vice-Chair Councillor D Bower gave a summary of the expected aims and objectives for 2016/17.

This coming year as already been touched on by the Chair we shall be continuing our roll out on the renovation of the well-used and popular play parks this is budgeted works that we foresee as an on-going commitment. We aim to provide great public access facilities in the form of parks, open spaces and also extending the facility of more leisure gardens (allotments) with a preferred site being off Tadpole Lane in Oakhurst. This will extend these facilities to the newer areas of the Parish. We aim to provide facilities that are needed by parishioners. We are currently exploring the option of community facilities that can be hired by residents and to offset the loss of the community space that was enjoyed by lots of residents in the Haydon Centre.

As touched on by the Chair we understand the feeling about the library and even though this is a Borough controlled asset we are exploring potential options that we could put forward whilst staying within the remit of what we can do as a Parish Council, we have to comply with legislation on this matter but are hoping that we can come forward with some form of resolution on this matter. Our continuing aim is to be a leading Parish within the Borough of Swindon and a shining example of an area that people want to be part of. The Parish Haydon Wick is watched by other areas who want to follow our example and wider communities want to involve us in their growth too.

## **6. PRECEPT 2017/18**

As Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee, Councillor S McDermott, explained the detail of the 2017/18 budget and the resultant precept levied on the Borough Council.

An article containing these details had been published in the magazine which is delivered to all households in the parish sought to give a clear and understandable explanation to residents on how the budget is discussed and set

## **7. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

A request to write to Borough Council seeking explanation on the rise in Council Tax arising from the parishing of the Borough

Clarification on reasons for appointing ISS was it just financial. Decision was taken over a number of factors not just price quoted. Factors such as backup resources available, quality and programme of introduction

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.25 p.m.