

**MINUTES OF WHATLINGTON ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY HELD ON THURSDAY
16th MARCH 2017 IN THE VILLAGE HALL AT 7.00pm**

PRESENT:- Councillor Fisher in the Chair
Councillors, Apthorp, Scott, Underhill and White
County Councillor Field
District Councillor Barnes

There were 17 local electors attending

1. Apologies – Councillor Kirby-Green

2. **CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS.**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained a different format this year. Reports will not be read out but copies of all the reports in a pack are available to everyone. The Chairman then introduced Hue Merriman <.P

3 **HUW MERRIMAN M.P.**

Mr. Merriman first spoke about Transport and the A,21 He attend meeting with Highways England and there plan is to have speed cameras along the A.21 from Lamberhurst to Hastings. Having speed cameras in Scotland has resulted in an 80% reduction in accidents, but he realizes this is not necessarily the only answer. Both he and Amber Rudd are pushing to have Dual roads all the way along the A.21 to Hastings..

Southern Rail - He was pleased to say have now come to an agreement on having 2 people on a train but allowed at times only one, and there are strict guidelines when this is to happen
South Eastern - are looking into HS1 allowing trains from Ashford to Bexhill and Hastings

Schools – This is proving very challenging with costs increasing all the time, he is trying to increase The amount local schools receive, at the moment London schools receive twenty thousand pounds per pupil whereas local school only receive four thousand five hundred pounds.

Housing – The White Paper shows the needs for more housing. In his parliamentary area 70% is in the ANOB so it is important housing is put in the right place. The Council for the Preservation of Rural England was happy with the content of the Paper.

Broadband.- They are working towards 4G in Battle and are making progress but with small changes. Mr. Merriman then took questions from parishioners

MR ANDREW WEDMORE

Mr. Wedmore was then invited to speak on the Broadband service. He outlined and explained the following five areas

1. What broadband speed am I getting at the moment?
2. What broadband speed could/should I be getting?
3. If I am actually getting less than I should/could be getting, what can I do about it?
4. Will I be able to get an improved speed in the future, and if so, when?
5. Are there any alternative ways of getting faster broadband

He also explained and showed various items you can purchase to obtain a faster service. If people were unhappy with their present provider then they could also change provider. There are improvements in line and hopefully Whatlington may have a better service by September 2018,British Telecom have said they are overhauling their customer service. Meanwhile people could lobby East Sussex County Council and their local M.P for a vision on future Broadband in our area. There is more information on his website - <http://hunters.farm/broadband/>

1. This has been a year of gentle "undulations" with issues being resolved whilst others have been raised and remain unresolved. Items of note that were concluded included: road naming on the A21, amendments agreed to the Village Hall Trust document, new local electoral boundaries (for 2019 elections) , a new Village Plan, and a static Parish precept (despite a 50% cut in our Reduction Scheme Grant administered by Rother District)).

2. The attendance record of councillors and electors remained constant and in line with previous years but with an increase in planning considerations. As regards attendance, a pattern seems to be emerging We continue to achieve parishioner attendance averaging 6 and councillor attendance of 75% across all meetings (which this year included 2 planning meetings).

3. If this was a school report it would say that parishioners could do better and that more use should be made of the opportunities presented! Indeed this was reflected in the response to the Village Plan questionnaire which achieved a limited (but statistically usable) response.

4. But to those who responded to the questionnaire and those who regularly attend meetings I offer my thanks for their contribution to the community, to their support of the council and more widely to delivering activities in the Parish. Prime amongst these being the Village Hall Committee, the PCC and Village News.

5. Of the numerous issues still being pursued I would highlight safety improvements on the A21 - which are still to be delivered, and a variable broadband service in the Parish (about which more during this meeting)

6. Of note during this year, councillors had a constructive meeting with our MP , Huw Merriman. We trust, that with his good offices, we may see an improved prospect of delivery of some of the much needed infrastructure improvements in the Parish, not least the A21 and broadband!

6. The year ahead will bring new challenges and continuing frustrations but I'm know councillors (Parish, District and County) will continue in their energetic pursuit of delivery, for which I thank them and our Clerk, who manages with vigour to keep up the pressure on those delivering services to the Parish.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR FIELD

As usual the budget has taken up much of the Council year with lower funding leading to more cuts and East Sussex's part of the Council Tax rising by 5% of which 3% is to help with Adult Social Care

New computer terminals have been installed at all of the county's 24 libraries, improving the Council's network of free to access PCs and enabling people to use the internet and email, search for jobs and look up a wide range of information. Among those benefitting from the upgrade are users of the IT For You scheme which offers advice and support on using IT to prepare a CV and apply for work

County Councillor Field continued

There were positive **educational results** reported in the summer, including improvements in GCSE and A level results. At Key Stage 1, the percentage of East Sussex pupils achieving the expected standard was higher than the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. At Key Stage 4 our Progress 8 score was +0.04, significantly higher than the national average of -0.03. 87.1% of primary schools are judged to be good or outstanding, an increase of 10.1 percentage points since August 2015. 77.8% of secondary schools and 100% of maintained special schools are good or outstanding against national averages of 77.6% and 93.2% respectively.

A new integrated service bringing **health visiting and children's centres** together was launched in June 2016. The new service aims to help families be self-sufficient in their communities by providing appropriate early intervention and support, and keep children aged 0-5 safe and healthy by providing accessible, comprehensive, high quality services, promoting social inclusion and equality and respecting diversity.

The percentage of court proceedings, to ensure timely decision making about long term **care for children**, completed within 26 weeks has increased from 22% in April 2016 to 63% in December 2016.

East Sussex County Council will receive £8.2 million for the East Sussex Strategic Growth Project to create new employment developments in areas including Bexhill and Eastbourne. £5 million has been granted towards a £44 million redevelopment of the Devonshire Park area including a new conference complex. More than 1,000 **new jobs** are expected to be created as a result which will benefit all residents in the County.

East Sussex County Council is one of seven local authorities which have agreed to form a partnership called **Transport for the South East (TfSE)**. The vision for this new body is for strategic transport planning for the whole area, unlocking economic growth and improving lives for residents. To begin with, TfSE will run in shadow form as it develops its strategy and operation, consulting with transport operators, businesses and the public. With government agreement, TfSE could move to full operation from 2019.

A new seven-year contract for the provision of **highway services** in the county began on 1st May 2016. The contract with Costain CH2M replaced the existing arrangement of three separate contractors being responsible for highways, street lighting and traffic signals. The new contract has seen the introduction of a new website and online system for people to report highways issues; www.eastsussexhighways.com. In the first 6 months of the contract East Sussex Highways completed over 220 planned road works, 10,000 minor works, laid 64 miles of tarmac, answered 26,000 calls and progressed major works in areas such as Hailsham and Uckfield.

The e-Sussex project to rollout faster **broadband** in previously isolated areas has improved access to services, jobs and education. Over 66,000 premises have been connected to improved broadband speeds in the first phase of works and the second phase to connect a further 5,000 of the hardest to reach premises in the county is underway but difficulties are still being experienced in homes and businesses which have not been able to gain access to improved broadband speeds.

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR JOHN BARNES

I was pleased to be asked to stand for Darwell Ward in the bye-election last October and even more pleased to find myself elected as your District Councillor. I feel myself very much a new boy on the District Council, although bringing a certain amount of experience to the task.

You will be aware that the United Kingdom has a national debt of over £1.7 Trillion, which is rising and has to be serviced. Effectively the country (and that means us) pays more in interest each year than the total of the school's budget. Although the deficit in the annual budget has been reduced by 2/3, the deficit is unlikely to be eliminated until well into the next decade.

As a result local government is losing every penny of the general grant it receives from central government, and while it will retain all the income from business rates in future, it has had to make major cuts to balance the books.

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR BARNES CONTINUED

Rother is no exception. It loses a further £620,000 in the coming year bringing the total loss in Government grant to £5.4 million. Obviously the Council is looking to spend every pound raised in tax as efficiently as possible and much can be achieved by close working with other Councils, principally Wealden. Waste collection, environmental health, legal services, building control and financial systems are all shared, bringing economies of scale and reductions in overheads. Digitization can also be a great help. But cuts are inevitable and the Council has to focus on its key priorities.

Maintaining the community grants budget is seen as a key priority since it enables local groups to achieve their ambitions; and with many of the larger parish councils certain functions are being devolved.

Obviously we are working with the County Council to ensure that the local economy remains one of the fastest growing in the whole country; and projects like the Bexhill Link Road and the Northern Access Road which is currently under construction will benefit the whole area by providing space for new businesses and for a large part of the housing Rother has to build.

That helps keep the pressure on our villages down and helps us to defend the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. But without some growth of housing in our rural areas, we shall continue to lose our younger population. So the right balance must be struck. Rother is committed to deliver more affordable housing and where developments are small, the developer has to pay cash towards that programme. The infrastructure levy enables parishes to profit from any new development.

Some of our major concerns in Whatlington – speed and accidents on the A21, Broadband – are covered by other authorities, but I hope to play my part in the lobbying that is taking place to get these problems addressed.

Inevitably this year your Council tax had to rise and the Council was at one in thinking we should add £5 to the bill of a Band D household – that is roughly a 3 per cent rise in your Council tax.

5 REPORTS FROM LOCAL ORGANISATIONS**The Good Companions**

Whatlington Women's Institute was actually in existence when I moved to Battle in 1999 and had been going for some years prior to this date. The group then became Whatlington Friend's but changed its name again when people from outside the village; mainly Battle, joined the group. It then became known as The Good Companions. The Good Companions meet on a monthly basis for lunches & outings. The membership is open to all but the members are mainly retired people who enjoy companionship, fellowship and friendship. As the group are getting less mobile lunches/outings are confined to local areas, although we will venture further afield during the summer months.

On behalf of The Good Companions would like to thank Whatlington Parish Council for their generous grants over the last few years, which have enabled to group to use the Village Hall.

Hilda Aplin

THE GOOD COMPANIONS OUTINGS 2016

January	Lunch at The Queen's Head, Sedlescombe
February	Lunch at The Royal Oak, Whatlington
March	Lunch at The Bull Inn, Battle (because The Abbey Hotel cancelled booking day before our visit)
April	Lunch at The Bull Inn, Battle
May	"Bring & Share" luncheon at Whatlington Village Hall
June	Lunch at The Royal Oak, Whatlington (because The Abbey Hotel, Battle let us down yet again)
July	Cream Teas at Jempson's in Battle
August	Lunch at The Orangery, Ashburnham
September	Lunch at The Bull, Battle
October	Lunch at The Lounge, Battle
November	Christmas "Bring & Share" luncheon at Whatlington Village Hall.
December	No meeting

SUSSEX POLICE – PCSO EMMA PHILIPS

Between the period of April 2016 and February 2017 Sussex Police have received a total of 93 calls from the Whatlington area. These calls relate to a multitude of occurrences and enquiries such as road traffic crashes (RTC's), domestic related incidents, injured animals, suspicious people, concerns for friends / relatives who live in the area and others seen within the area, theft from motor vehicles, burglaries, breaks to out buildings, general enquires and duplicate calls.

Albeit 93 calls may be of concern to you the majority of these calls were non crime or incident related. I have broken down the following for you to view.

RTC's – 8

Burglaries - Dwelling (house not including garages separate to household or out buildings) - 2

Burglaries – non dwelling – 1

Theft from unattended motor vehicles – 2

We would like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to the various methods in which you are able to access information on what is occurring in your area.

Sussex Police website – www.sussex.police.co.uk by visiting our website you can gain access to your local team and how to get hold of them, latest news and crime prevention advice.

SUSSEX POLICE – PCSO EMMA PHILLIPS CONTINUED

In the Know Surrey and Sussex – by going online and entering the website

<https://www.intheknow.community/> you can select your area and they will send emails out to you with the latest crime updates, witness appeals, crime prevention advice and latest news.

Rother Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) - <http://www.rothernhw.co.uk> Chairmen Edward (Ted) Kemp is available to discuss local NHW information. By visiting the website you can access local news, how to become a co-ordinator or a member of neighbourhood watch where you will receive regular updates, you can view the local discounts to local businesses that members are given exclusive access to and find out when the next meetings are that regularly have guest speakers attend.

ST. MARY MAGDALENE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL REPORT FROM JEFFREY BRIDGES

Over the past year church services have been revised with the intention of appealing to a wider range of people. During the summer months of 2016 evening services were introduced replacing the 09.30 service on the fourth Sunday of each month, these varied in form, from traditional Evensong to Songs of Praise and Evening Prayer, each followed with refreshments and recording a significant increase in attendance. Meanwhile the regular monthly family service has continued unchanged, during last summer there was perhaps more variety in the Readers leading the service than was desirable. I am pleased to say that we have now settled into a regular pattern with three people, including Rev. Kevin Mephram taking Family services in rotation going forward into 2017.

Another new initiative for 2016 was the introduction of joint United Benefice church services with our sister church at Sedlescombe, these taking place on the fifth Sunday of the month where that occurs and alternating between Whatlington and Sedlescombe churches, bringing together the two congregations.

After six years away 2016 finally saw the return to the church of the brass chandelier, badly damaged in the fire of 2010. The Elliott family kindly met the costs of the restoration in memory of Derek Elliott. The restored chandelier was hung, together with the Sanctuary lamp using tower scaffolding by the electricians who had been involved with the restoration of the building. This represented the final chapter of the post 2010 fire restoration.

In July last year we sadly lost two loyal and long standing church members, both of whom had served as churchwardens, Reg Crouch and Tom Kent, were both in their nineties, they are much missed.

For Harvest Festival 2016 we reverted to an evening service, which was followed by a Harvest Buffett served in the church, this was well attended and included the giving of gifts of food, which were subsequently taken to a charity for the disadvantaged in St. Leonards. The Remembrance service was well attended, as were the various Christmas services, while the Pageant was deemed to have been a great success, with a larger than ever attendance.

Late last year circumstances decided our Vicar, Kevin Mephram to retire early from his full time employment, whilst this does not change his terms of employment as Priest-in-Charge on what is termed a 'House for Duty' i.e. Non-Stipendiary basis, it does mean that Kevin enjoys greater freedom and more flexibility. For Whatlington, this means that we will now be able to have Kevin with us for more Sundays during the year, including for some of the Family services, starting from March. We are very fortunate to have such a good Priest serving the village. The PCC are anxious to build up the congregation and thus help to secure the future of the church in Whatlington and in this regard we remain open to new ideas and suggestions for service types and patterns. We also look to expand the use of the church building, without seeking to compete

ST MARY MAGDALENE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

MR. JEFFREY BRIDGES CONTINUED

with the Village Hall and have taken one booking where the hall which unable to accommodate and are open to working together in this way.

The maintenance of the churchyard is an ongoing source of concern to the PCC, we now lack the volunteer labour from the congregation to keep the grass down. We have employed occasional professional help with the inevitable cost implications but we do hope to be able to at least keep the more recent graves clear. In this respect we were most grateful to the Council for the grant given towards the cost of grass cutting.

We are very grateful to the Thorne's, who maintain the Garden of Remembrance, but we now need to buy a replacement mower for this, with four terminally dead ones in the shed! We continue to set certain areas of the churchyard apart for wild flowers and wildlife, but seek to keep the areas around the graves clear. Visitors to the churchyard will have seen the extensive work to pollard the old Lime trees, long neglected these have now been made safe and tidy, but at a cost exceeding £5,000 from our resources. Having seen a very successful volunteer working party gathered for church cleaning, we hope to form a churchyard working party as the weather improves to tackle some general tidying up.

As we look forward to the coming year the pattern of church services will follow that established in 2016, namely as follows:

October to March, Holy Communion at 09.30 on the first, third and fourth Sundays of each month.

April to September, Holy Communion at 09.30 on the first and third Sundays, with a 6pm Evening Service on the fourth Sunday of each month.

On the Second Sunday of each month the Family service continues at 10.30, taken alternately by Reader Sue Chance, Rev. John Hawkins and Rev. Kevin Mepham.

On the Fifth Sunday where this occurs there will be a United Service at either Sedlescombe or Whatlington, see notices or website for details.

For variations and additional services please refer to the church notice boards or the website, achurchnearyou/Whatlington.

Jeffrey Bridges
Churchwarden

VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE REPORT FROM MRS ANNETTE MCBRIDE CHAIRMAN

This is the 4th annual report given on behalf of the Village Hall Committee and I am very pleased to report we are increasing our hirers and continuing to improve the facilities of the Hall for the use of the Community and which we are striving to continue with now and in the future.

This year we have

1. Replaced some of the floor boards which were exceedingly old and had split. They had been lifted some years ago and not replaced properly after a job – the reason being that the tongue part of the board was replaced the wrong way round and broke off necessitating the renewing of those boards.
2. More storage room in the toilet area – door and basins have been changed around in the toilet areas to enable us to store the tables in this area this now makes more room in the hall for hirers.

**WHATLINGTON VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE
REPORT FROM Mrs A. MCBRIDE CHAIRMAN CONTINUED**

Also a new toilet door fastener has been installed designed to be opened from either side should the need arise and also a pulley for disabled persons if in difficulties to summons help.

3. There is the possibility that a new roof may be required on the kitchen area but we are awaiting a report and quote.
4. The stage area is in need of quite some fair attention and this will be one of our next projects.

I hope this has given a little insight into the programme of the work being carried out at the hall and also the increase in people hiring the hall for many varied functions.

I would like to thank the Parish Council for their generosity in the past and hope it may continue

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There was then a short break to allow parishioners to read the reports.

The Chairman then asked if anyone had questions on any of the reports, none were asked.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.50pm