

DYMCHURCH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Friday 28th April, 2017, at 7pm

Peter Sloper Room at Dymchurch Village Hall

Present: Cllr. Roger Wilkins, Chairman
Cllr. Russell Tillson, Vice-Chairman
Cllr. Richard Blackwell
Cllr. Arran Harvey
Cllr. Karen Lewis
Cllr. Denise Meyers
Cllr. Ian Meyers
Cllr. Terry Mullard
Cllr. Merlin Redding
Parish Clerk and 68 members of the public

Approve Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 6th May, 2016.

Proposed by Cllr. Richard Blackwell, seconded by Cllr. Arran Harvey, that the minutes be approved. All agreed.

Chairman's Report:

The Chairman welcomed everyone and highlighted the protocol at an annual parish meeting and informed that agenda, statement of accounts and sketches of the recreation ground and car park were placed around the hall for residents' information.

The Chairman addressed the recently hand delivered parish council annual newsletter that highlighted work the parish council has undertaken during the last twelve months.

Following the success of beach entertainment during August last year, the parish council will be funding additional days of activities for this coming August. The entertainers are also planning a community event during 21st and 22nd October, called *Turn the Tide* and he encouraged residents to support it.

The Chairman highlighted that councillors attend monthly parish council meetings and also attend working group meetings; Assets and Amenities, Strategy and Planning and Beach Advisory. The role of the parish council was explained and how it communicates with other local authorities to make improvements in the village.

The Chairman thanked KCC Cllr. Carole Waters (retiring shortly) who has been most supportive of projects in Dymchurch, he also thanked Community Warden Jon Lodge and local PCSO Zinko who help to keep the village safe and Dave Burgess for his dedication at keeping the pavements and streets clear of litter.

The Chairman informed that Government is looking at making further cuts to local government which will impact on local communities, with grant funding being even harder to achieve. Parish and town councils are being asked to look at how they can raise money to fund their own local improvements. For this reason, the parish council is considering ways how it might raise funds to make improvements and one option being explored is the possibility of selling small pieces of land to fund improvements for recreation and leisure. Before introducing Cllr. Russell Tillson,

Vice-Chairman, to explain the options being explored, the Chairman thanked Dave Henley, the parish council's grounds man, the clerk and councillors who volunteer their time, in planning the way forward for the village.

Vice-Chairman's Report:

Cllr. Tillson explained he would talk about the legal and financial background and Cllr. Ian Meyers would provide options regarding the recreation ground.

Cllr. Tillson emphasised that the parish council listens to what residents have to say, and advocates transparency and open government. Nothing is set in stone and all options could be considered. The council has a statutory duty to plan ahead with a view to bequeathing a successful council and thriving village to its eventual successors.

The Localism Act of 2011 broadened the potential scope of local amenity that can be provided by a parish council and the local activities in which it can become involved. At the same time, constant central government cutbacks and mounting financial pressures on the local government sector are being felt everywhere and at all levels. The parish council will need to find new, additional income streams if it is to fulfil its statutory obligations and initiate any programme of amenity and leisure provision improvements.

With regard to the recreation ground, the pavilion is a decaying asset and becoming prohibitively expensive to maintain and repair; it also fails to meet the requirements of the Equality Act. The parish council cannot keep throwing good money after bad. The parish council's bids for external funding for a new pavilion, using professional bid writers, have been unsuccessful for a variety of reasons. For this reason, the council is bound to look at other possibilities.

Cllr. Tillson gave the history of how the parish council came to purchase the land now known as the recreation ground and the agreement with Dymchurch Cricket Club that the project would not entail any burden on local ratepayers. The deeds for the recreation ground and pavilion explicitly require the parish council *'to use its utmost endeavour that the property shall be so administered as to be self-supporting'*. In this case the property is defined as the recreation ground and the pavilion. The recreation ground and the pavilion cannot be defined as self-supporting. They have been financed and bailed out by the parish council for years. This is no longer tenable, especially as Dymchurch Cricket Club has now moved and merged with Brookland Cricket Club.

Cllr. Tillson informed the parish council is entitled to look at a housing option, although this is very much in the initial stages of the process. Perhaps nothing will ever come of it. On health and safety grounds it is possible the council could be told to demolish the pavilion. Without outside funding the council certainly couldn't afford to rebuild it. At the current time Kent Highways, Shepway District Council and Sport England are being consulted to ascertain their views about access, flood risk, amenity provision, social housing and enabling development before council can consider any next stage.

Cllr. Tillson concluded that the parish council has an opportunity and obligation to explore a variety of options to increase its revenue and provide more services and amenities for residents and visitors alike.

Cllr. Ian Meyers:

Cllr. Meyers outlined a number of options using a lap-top presentation. The presentation provided a range of wooden pavilion structures that ranged from £100K - £350K. The cost did not include the laying of utilities, foundations and bases. The existing decaying building was projected, which was once a state of the art building in 1931. Cllr. Meyers highlighted the options for internal layout that could offer a wide variety of uses; meeting room, socialising area, gym, in-door games and activities. He emphasised the possibility of creating outdoor well-being facilities at the recreation ground for all ages.

Questions:

The Chairman agreed to take questions and many parishioners wanted to express their views. Questions/comments lasted one hour and can be categorised as follows:

- What guarantee is there that money raised by selling land will be spent on improved facilities at the recreation ground?
- Do not want any development at the recreation ground.
- Village hall could be better used for recreation.
- If land is sold, it should be for affordable housing only.
- A new pavilion should have tea room facilities, capturing trade from the railway before it reaches the high street.
- Sell the council office to raise funds for improvements in the village.
- Develop facilities for youths and make improvements to the entrance of the recreation ground.
- Sale of land should be sold at full market rate.
- Likely additional cost to precept payers by 2020 if no additional income streams found? (Estimated at between £40 and £60 per household per year)
- Any plans to sell part of the recreation ground for housing should stop.

Proposed by Ms. Sally Cook, seconded by Clive Dudley that no development take place at the recreation ground. Clerk counted 42 raised hands in favour. Two further hands were raised but these people are known to live outside the parish and their vote cannot lawfully be included.

Not one question was raised about the parish council car park sketch.

Meeting closed at 8.30pm