

ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY
AT 1900 WEDNESDAY 19th APRIL 2017 IN LONGSTOCK VILLAGE HALL

Present: Cllr Sophie Walters (chairman) (SW)
Cllr David Burnfield (DB)
Cllr Ivan Gibson (IG)
Cllr Charles Grieve (CG)
Cllr John Milne (JM)
Cllr Selina Musters (SM)

Clerk John Musters, Mr Colin McIntyre of Leckford Estate, and as in Item 1 below. No Longstock elector was present.

Apologies: County Councillor Andrew Gibson, Borough Councillor Peter Boulton and Cllr Rebecca Griffiths (RG).

1. **Welcome:** The Chairman welcomed Borough Councillor Daniel Busk and PCSO Cathy Williams of Hampshire Constabulary.

2. The **Minutes** of the Annual Assembly of 2016 were approved and signed.

3. **Matters Arising.** The one matter arising from the 2016 APA concerned speeding traffic on the narrow corner by Test Lodge. As with the 30 speed limit requested periodically on The Bunny which HCC would not apply without clear evidence of speeding traffic, so with the Test Lodge bend. However PCSO Williams said she would carry out a random speed check at that point in the near future.

ACTION: PCSO Williams

4. In her annual report, **PCSO Williams** said that burglary was one of the area's "Community Priorities". There were twelve reported in the Andover South area in the year to this April; a very low number but she continued to urge residents to review their security, especially in summer months keeping doors and windows locked when leaving the house. There had also been a handful of non-dwelling burglaries including the theft of a trailer from a barn; again garden equipment should be locked up when not in use.

The police had had a large number of "suspicious incidents" reported by residents, and several aggressive door-to-door sellers over the past 12 months. The police encouraged such reporting as sellers often did not have the right license. Whether or not a crime had been committed, the more information the police had the better picture could be painted about who's being active and where. Car registration numbers were always helpful. Relevant information could also be tied to other crimes in the area. Information about crimes could be passed on www.hampshirealert.co.uk and she suggested visiting the website to join the mailing list.

Theft from motor vehicles was still prevalent, often during the day from cars left unattended at local beauty spots. Users of such places were urged to ensure nothing was left in their vehicle.

The other Community Priority was road related matters, including speeding and anti-social driving. Speed checks were due to be carried out in the village and results forwarded to parish council.

PCSO Williams was happy to be contacted on 101 or by e-mail to Catherine.williams@hampshire.pnn.police.uk to come to community events or talk with groups about local issues.

Finally she asked to be kept informed of any community events that might benefit from police awareness. The chairman thanked PCSO Williams for all that the police do to keep our community safe.

5. In his absence, **County Councillor Andrew Gibson** e-mailed his report. With County Council elections due next month, he took the opportunity to say how much he had enjoyed working with Longstock Parish Council, which he felt was among the most efficient and dedicated in Test Valley. On local issues relevant to Longstock:

- he had been asked by the Allotment Association for a grant, the outcome of which would not be known until after the elections.
- he had had further discussions about parking in Stockbridge, and there was consensus for some form of timed parking and a belief that many people left their cars in the High Street for carpooling and some leaving cars and taking the bus to Winchester.
- ‘The Vine’ refurbishment would see five new retail outlets and all had now been leased according to the agent. The traders also wanted to ask Stockbridge Parish Council if they would register Stockbridge as a Town because they felt that Stockbridge could thus retain more of the Business Rates paid by the traders.
- he had asked BT to activate the Super Fast Broadband from the cabinet at the Longstock end of the High Street. BT had been slow but had agreed to look into it as a priority.
- the flood prevention system that he and Borough Councillors had funded to the tune of £50k plus VAT, had still to be tested. While he was happy that it had not been needed he believed it would make a significant difference if and when the circumstances of 2013/14 were repeated.
- he was pleased to have provided grant funding for the Neighbour Care scheme in Stockbridge/Longstock which he believed was a vital resource for residents.
- if re-elected he would be able to fund the Christmas lights in Stockbridge and any projects identified by the Longstock parish council since the devolved budget has been agreed for two more years.
- he had also been instrumental in ensuring a further two year extension to the Lengthman programme which was an ongoing benefit to all Parishes.

On more general issues, Councillor Gibson referred to his responsibility for libraries. While the mobile library service had been closed, due mainly to dwindling numbers, there was now the Home Mobile Service where books were delivered to a resident’s home. Those who had used the mobile service but had mobility problems had been offered the Home Mobile Service and many residents had taken up the offer. He emphasised they had not closed any static libraries; in fact HCC were going to refurbish many including that in Andover which had become a Community Hub with many of the Children's Centre functions being adopted by the library. The investment in Andover library would include installing moveable book shelving so that when the library was closed the space could be used for community events by rolling back the shelving. The remodelling of libraries had created increased space and the option to hire out space, ensuring that the libraries were not hit by cuts.

Finally on highways, he said there had been concern for some time about the quality and speed of repair work on the roads. There had been a major change in the drafting of the contract and HCC had a new contractor, Skanska, who would take over in August. He saw this as an exciting new phase for Highways and believed all would soon see the difference. At the same time a new Capital Investment programme for Highways had been agreed. Hampshire had bought a number of vehicles which used advanced technology for pothole filling and road repair. This meant an end to doing one pothole at a time and gave the workforce much more flexibility and should accelerate completion and improve quality. He urged parishes to continue to report potholes on the website Portal for potholes and other problems and record the reference number so quality and delivery could be monitored to completion.

6. **Borough Councillor Daniel Busk** based his report on that provided in advance by **Councillor Peter Boulton**.

As last year, Band D householders would see a further increase this year of £5. The reduced Government grant this year, after years of the similar reductions, was pushing Borough and District Councils towards increasing self-sufficiency. TVBC's response to these cutbacks was, every year, to ask each department constantly to scrutinise costs, and to come up with efficiency savings. This became increasingly difficult. Councillor Busk remarked that the closure of Duttons Road offices had proved better for efficiency, besides saving costs. The other approach was to invest prudently in property and pursue business initiatives: as an example the leisure management contract had been awarded to a new provider, who had undertaken to provide a rebuilt facility at the Andover Sports Centre (with a temporary pool being established on the Shepherd's Spring site) and refresh premises at Romsey Rapids and Valley Park at no capital cost to TVBC, all of which would make significant savings on leisure provision.

TVBC had become enterprise-oriented and was developing innovative new ways of generating new income streams. It was interesting to note the return on completed projects was forecast to be 7.8%, a rate that delivered £1.3M more than had that capital remained in reserves. Among examples of such enterprises:

- the Council's housing strategy was continuing to help local people to access decent homes in both Andover and Romsey – not only building houses but also establishing communities with first class facilities, such as community halls, leisure park areas, sports pavilions, and dozens of sport pitches.
- in the south, Romsey's sporting infrastructure would shortly benefit from a considerable increase in facilities and be home to a consortium of local sports clubs and provide floodlit astro pitches, grass pitches and other vital sporting accommodation, all at Ganger Farm.
- this massive building programme with the government-funded New Homes bonus, together with the Community Asset Fund, directly benefited community projects. Parishes could also benefit from the new Test Valley Community Toolkit, a valuable aid to those embarking on a Neighbourhood Plan and thereby identifying local needs.
- TVBC was also actively supporting the Future Skills and Technical centre at Cricklade College; this, with its programme of supporting small businesses, had resulted in the council receiving two prestigious Wessex Area awards; best all round Business Friendly Council and a special award for outstanding commitment to support small businesses.

Local enterprise initiatives had been encouraged either with modest grants from councillors' individual community grant fund (including Longstock allotments for help towards fencing), or by directing enquiries towards the right advice and expertise within TVBC.

What was in the pipeline? A new wetlands area at Fishlake meadows, north of Romsey, would be open to the public for ecological pursuits and informal recreation. There were to be more enhancements to Romsey town centre. The waste collection depot at Portway was to be clad in solar panels. Also, there would be increased use of Beech Hurst Headquarters by sharing some of the space for functions with HCC.

The proposed Ward boundary changes were described, to include the mid-Test villages round Stockbridge, out to the Tytherleys. Originally planned to be two 1-councillor Wards and one 2-councillor Ward, councillors argued for one 3-member Ward to cover the whole area. This was seen as the 'least worst' option as it would avoid divisions between adjoining communities, although the proposal would result in an increased workload for the three elected members in 2019. Currently five members cover this large area with 1900 electors each; the change would result in each Councillor having 2400 electors! Parish Councils would be consulted on the changes; suffice to say the current five members accepted this proposal.

The report concluded by noting the retirement after 20 years of TVBC's Leader and by thanking the parish council for all they did and for keeping their Borough Councillors informed.

Answering questions, Councillor Busk said that we should ask HALC about the anomaly of MPs for example being able to announce their intention to retire ahead of time, yet when councillors did so their resignation took immediate effect.

On planning applications, he was well aware of Longstock's concerns and our wish to have consistency in the way planners came to their decision. He felt that the Head of Planning could usefully come and talk at a future parish council meeting. On the subject of 'support' for an application versus 'no objection', an area in which the parish council again sensed inconsistency in interpretation, he urged honesty: if we support an application, say so and do not hedge bets.

Asked for his view on the application to formalise a gypsy site at the present 'knackers yard' on the northern approach to Stockbridge, Councillor Busk said there were enough designated pitches in Test Valley and therefore the appeal by the illegal occupiers of the site should be overturned. He reminded the meeting of duty of care for councillors and employees and their recourse to 101 if they felt threatened.

JM thanked our Borough Councillors in turn for their work and positive support through another year.

ACTION: Clerk

7. Parish Council Chairman Sophie Walters was grateful for the continuance of close relations with the Leckford Estate, welcomed Colin McIntyre's regular attendance at council meetings as their representative and thanked him for organising a farm tour for councillors last November. She thanked Waitrose for their generous grant of £400 towards HM's 90th birthday celebrations, held jointly with Stockbridge PC, and for the £250 grant from the Waitrose Community Giving scheme towards repairs to playground equipment.

Our footpaths continued to provide varied and beautiful walks through this parish, and CG had done great work drawing up a comprehensive work plan for repair/replacement of finger posts and markers. Our lengthsman scheme was working well, financed by HCC, and more of his work would be allocated to footpath upkeep.

On the subject of HCC, she thanked County Councillor Andrew Gibson for his support and attendance at our meetings and keeping on top of our potholes! We had had full surface treatment through the village but with the heavy traffic flow continuing unabated on our back roads, the state of them soon deteriorated.

Planning applications considered in-year included seven on buildings and three for tree works. We continued to be perplexed by some of TVBC decisions: while for example Hunters Lodge was given permission against widespread objection and now loomed at the south end of Longstock, what appeared to be unobjectionable works at Sindle Cottage initially fell foul of Conservation Officer advice and Langtry House had had to go through the hoops three times and was having its latest iteration viewed by the Planning Committee. As the people who had to live with their decisions, all we always sought was some consistency in interpretation by Planning Authority. She thanked our Borough Councillors Daniel Busk and Peter Boulton for their help with queries and problems that the Borough covers.

An open meeting had been held in the village hall on 6th February to discuss a Neighbourhood Plan. Liz Bourne and her daughter Becky came and gave an insight into what was needed. An account had been printed in the Longstock News and we were waiting to hear if there was any enthusiasm among the villagers.

The quest continued for land for affordable housing. The Rural Housing Enabler and a rep from English Rural had walked round the village with the chairman and DB, and she had also viewed the potential sites with Leckford Estate reps. Word was awaited now from the RHE after discussions with TVBC planners, and from Waitrose property committee. With fingers crossed that something would finally come to fruition after some 25 years of trying, she thanked DB for his hard work in trying to push this all forwards.

The chairman thanked the staff of the Peat Spade that continued to support the parish council and, especially on Remembrance Sunday, the whole village when they provided coffee and cake after the service at the war memorial. The pub was a main focal point of the village and it was important to keep patronising it to ensure its survival in these hard days in the hospitality trade.

The village hall was another focal point in the village, was very well maintained by a dedicated team of volunteers. and had just had its two-year floor re-seal. The chairman thanked SM as the driving force behind the hall. SM was also thanked for all she had done for the Newsletter having stepped down after 10 years as editor. Jan Greep had taken up the baton, changed the format slightly, and launched it onto the world-wide web at www.longstockvillage.com that she owned. Jan put all our minutes and agenda on her site too, and her efforts were much appreciated.

The Henry Smith Charity gave us a generous grant of £2,000 this year enabling us to pass on £1,150 to help the sick and needy: £665 to help school children join field trips; and £695 on the annual seniors' lunch. The lunch was always well attended and great fun, all went away fed, watered and clutching a pot plant for the garden. Selina Musters and Maddie Sumsion had also set up a 'soup and sandwich lunch' on the last Thursday of every month; a big success that helped combat rural isolation issues being championed by our county councillor.

Our school was going from strength to strength and this year achieved 'Good' in their Ofsted inspection. We continued to support the school and sponsor an annual prize. RG as our Councillor liaison with the school kept us well informed of developments, progress and exam results.

Our beautiful playground was being well used by all ages. In the last RoSPA inspection a few things had been picked up and had now been addressed. A team of

residents who carried out weekly inspections were really the mainstay who kept this facility safe and viable. Chairman thanked them all.

JM as our Environment Councillor was a member of CPRE, regularly attended various meetings and kept us informed about new strategies and environmental issues. His input was invaluable to us in this very rural piece of England.

Wildlife in Longstock seemed to be thriving and, while nice to see, was not always welcome. There was a deer problem at the allotments, where there was a plan to install fencing. The allotmenters continued to produce wonderful fruit, flowers and vegetables of all shapes and sizes. This was a really good use of the Glebe field and the annual allotment BBQ was always a highlight of the year. There had been a badger incursion in the cemetery which was being dealt with by IG who was commended for the wonderful state of the cemetery. Chairman also thanked Peter Moore for maintaining the central garden in the cemetery and Dave Watts who looked after the war memorial garden beautifully. On another note, sadly, the grim reaper had also been busy this year with six burials.

Parish Councillors had agreed to have monthly meetings in future on Mondays – more convenient in many ways. We had had the same 7 councillors on the Council for several years now and the chairman appealed to any Longstockings who may be thinking of coming on board to contact the council to express their interest. New faces would help keep the council fresh.

Finally, chairman thanked all Longstock councillors for all their efforts through another year, and thanked especially the clerk who steered us through all manner of political issues and financial mine fields.

Colin McIntyre thanked the chairman on behalf of councillors for her hard work and dedication.

8. **Finance.** The clerk was again in the happy position of reporting a very satisfactory year, which had started with a balance of £4,563 and ended with £5,188. Despite the increased balance, councillors had already agreed to raise the Precept for 2017/18 to £6,500 due to the expanded grass cutting contract in the coming year (up from £1,300 to £2,000) and to the expiry of ring-fenced (ex-First Friday) monies to pay for playground maintenance and repairs. Such costs would in future be charged under Section 137 in the main account.

Patrick Coates had again completed the Internal Audit of the 2015/16 accounts, which then achieved a clean bill of health from the Audit Commission.

Comparing significant differences in elements of income and expenditure between the two years: advertising charges in the newsletter had increased in-year, but so had printing costs, such that the newsletter showed a loss overall of some £240; cemetery income had gone up from £415 to £980, following a spate of burials; S137 expenditure had risen as result of the Queen's 90th birthday commemorations and also the need to part-pay for expensive repairs to playground equipment; and the clerk's wages had grown from £1,550 to £2,000 gross.

The STOPPIT fund stood at £852, following transfer in of remaining monies from the Parish Plan fund.

9. **Questions/Comments from the Public.** Nil.

10. **AOB.** Nil.

The Chairman closed the Assembly at 2020.