

**ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY**  
**AT 1900 MONDAY 9<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2018 IN LONGSTOCK VILLAGE HALL**

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

Clerk John Musters, Mr Colin McIntyre of Leckford Estate and twelve Longstock electors, and as at Item 1 below.

**Apologies:** Borough Councillor Peter Boulton

1. **Welcome:** The Chairman welcomed our electors present, Borough Councillor Daniel Busk, PCSO Cathy Williams and (arriving during Item 7) County Councillor Andrew Gibson.

2. The **Minutes** of the Annual Assembly of 2017 were approved and signed.

3. **Matters Arising.** As last year the one matter arising from the previous APA concerned speeding traffic past Test Lodge. Hampshire Constabulary stated an intention last October to deploy a Speed Data Recorder without specifying a date, and only this week had said that this area was next in line and one would be deployed later this month.

**ACTION:** Clerk

4. In her annual report, **PCSO Williams** said that Longstock remained a low crime village with just ten reported crimes in the year. These included six thefts (three from motor vehicles), one public order offence, one instance of anti-social behaviour and two reportings of suspicious vehicles. Community priorities were road traffic offences and non-dwelling burglaries. The chairman thanked PCSO Williams for all that the police do to keep our community safe.

5. In his expected absence **County Councillor Andrew Gibson** had e-mailed his report which the clerk read out. In sum:

The Lengthman project had been expanded and would be funded for another two years at least. Cllr Gibson saw it as a productive way of funding work around the village which he supported wholeheartedly.

On Highways, it had been a very bad winter with a toxic combination of snow, ice and salt. Additional ‘pothole busting’ gangs had been deployed, but funding was an issue. HCC said that highways maintenance had been underfunded by the Government for years, leaving the local road network in a state of decline, even before the snow. Planned maintenance work had been re-programmed and if no extra funding was forthcoming it was likely to take around 12 months to get the road network back to the state it was before the winter. HCC had invested an extra £10 million each year in its planned maintenance programme which was effective in reducing the rate of decline in our roads, but without additional Government funding,

it would simply not be possible to deliver overall improvements in the roads from year to year. HCC wanted to see some of the tax raised from motorists re-invested into the roads.

Contrary to what some believed no libraries had been closed, the ones in Romsey and Andover being refurbished. Andover refurbishment would be done in stages. The library was a safe environment for members of the public and offered internet and high tech facilities. They had become Community Hubs, with facilities for baby weighing, and many activities for young children and toddlers.

Devolved Budget and other grants. Working with residents and Parish Councils, Cllr Gibson had found grants for village hall new-builds, extension projects and village shops; Community Groups such as Pre-Schools and Good Neighbours; and Small Grant awards for worthy local community projects. The grant window would open again at the end of May.

Chairman asked for warm thanks to be passed to Cllr Gibson for his interest in and support of our parish council.

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

On Council Tax, for the third consecutive year Test Valley Band D customers would have a tax increase of 3.7%, equating to another rise of £5, following a number of years of no increases. As stated in last year's report the reduced Government grant this year, after years of the similar reductions, was pushing the Borough towards increasing self sufficiency. Central Government was intending to remove financial support altogether. All TVBC Departments had made considerable efficiency savings. The other approach was to make prudent property investments and pursue business initiatives which yielded some 7% returns.

Turning to Housing and Leisure, a new contractor for leisure management provision would provide a rebuilt facility at the Andover Sports Centre and refreshed premises at Romsey Rapids and Valley Park (at no capital cost to TVBC), all of which would make significant savings on leisure provision. The Council's Housing Strategy was a continuing success story to help local people access decent homes in both Andover and Romsey. The strategy had delivered more affordable homes (266 last year) than the original target of 200 per year for the three years until 2019. It was not just about building houses but also communities with first class facilities, such as community halls, leisure park areas, sports pavilions, and numerous sport pitches. As an example Romsey's sporting infrastructure would shortly benefit from a remodelling of the Rapids with an increase in facilities. In addition on the northern boundary of Romsey at Ganger Farm there was to be a new development which would be home to a consortium of local sports clubs and provide floodlit astro pitches, grass pitches and other vital sporting accommodation.

TVBC had benefited from the Government's New Homes Bonus that directly helped local community projects through the Community Asset Fund, giving up to £25K grants. Parishes could also benefit from the new Test Valley Community Toolkit, a valuable aid to those embarking on a Neighbourhood Plan in identifying local needs.

TVBC actively supported the Future Skills and Technical Centre at Cricklade College and the Council itself was running a very successful apprenticeship scheme. With its programme of supporting small business, this had resulted in TVBC receiving two prestigious Wessex Area awards; Best All Round Business Friendly Council and a special award for outstanding commitment to supporting small

businesses. Clearly the Council had become enterprise-oriented and was developing constantly innovative ways to generate new income streams. The 7.8% forecast return on completed projects would deliver £1.3M more than had that capital employed remained in reserves. Our Councillors too had 'done their bit' to encourage local enterprise initiatives, either with modest grants from their individual community grant fund, or by steering entrepreneurs towards the right expertise in the Council.

The proposed Ward boundary changes in central Test Valley was a significant development and not universally welcomed. What might be called the Mid Test Ward would include Stockbridge, Longstock, Broughton, Kings Somborne, Lockerley, the Wallops, Mottisfont and the Tytherleys. Councillors had argued for a three-member Ward to cover the whole area; any other decision, to make the numbers right, would have resulted in divisions between adjoined communities (eg Stockbridge and Longstock), or in splitting apart neighbouring communities who currently worked well together (eg Broughton and Mottisfont, Broughton and Houghton, the Wallops). The proposal would result in an increased workload for three elected members in 2019, each of whom would be responsible for six parishes with each Councillor having 2,400 electors. The changes would be finalised in May.

Turning to other changes, a new wetlands area at Fishlake Meadows north of Romsey, a wildlife park owned by TVBC, would be open to the public for ecological pursuits and informal recreation, and managed by the Hampshire and IOW Naturalist Trust. 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 increasing use of the Beech Hurst Headquarters by sharing some of the space for functions with Hampshire County Council. Having acquired the Andover Magistrates Court, the Borough Council was seeking suggestions for how that could best be used, with the ultimate aim of creating a Cultural Quarter for the town.

In Longstock itself, our Borough Councillors had made a substantial grant towards a deer-proof fence at the allotments.

Finally on planning, Longstock had had several challenging and not always acceptable planning applications this year. Our Borough Councillors had done what they could to mitigate proposals and advise on contentious issues where possible. Cllr Busk said that valid complaints were always welcome and parishes must not think that TVBC was vindictive!

Cllrs Busk and Boulton thanked Longstock Parish Councillors, and the Clerk for all that they do, and for keeping them informed.

Cllr Milne offered huge thanks to our Borough Councillors in turn for their work and positive support through another year, and noted especially Cllr Busk's long service (now 23 years).

**7. Parish Council Chairman Sophie Walters** was delighted by the high turnout and thanked all for coming to the Assembly, especially our county and Borough Councillors for their support and input which she greatly appreciated. She was proud to be chairman of a parish council in a village that she described as having a strong sense of identity and community. Proof was when the Community Governance Review, undertaken by TVBC, was launched and there was a possibility of 61 of our houses becoming part of Stockbridge. Every resident in the village was written to and nearly all of the 61 houses were approached by her personally to explain the situation. TVBC was bombarded with emails and letters stating that they wished to remain 'Longstockings', the parish council being cited as proactive and efficient, and the

village a friendly environment of caring neighbours. She thanked all who had taken time to write.

There had been no change in council personnel since 2012. While consistency and continuity were good, she felt the need for fresh blood and hoped that at the 2019 elections there would be some new faces willing to step up.

General Data Protection Regulations were coming into force in late May 2018 and as our clerk had so aptly put it, the train was rapidly approaching and we had to get on board. Steps were being taken to adapt and comply.

We had had real concerns over the state of roads and repair of potholes. As stated by our County Councillor, budget cuts and backlog of work after severe winter weather would mean that it would be at least a year before the status quo was achieved, let alone any improvements. Meanwhile The Bunny continued to deteriorate through overuse, not only by cars trying to pass at speed, but by heavy/large industrial vehicles; HCC suggested self-help (!) to restrict HGVs and we were looking into an 'unsuitable for HGVs' sign. Traffic speed through the village continued to be a running concern, especially in the narrow parts of road by Test Lodge and Suicide Corner. Installation of a speed data recorder agreed by the police last October and hastened in January was expected shortly. We were also responsible for some 14 street lights that would need replacing gradually as manufacture of the current lamps ceased in the next two years. Cllr Musters had been investigating designs and costs, and the various permutations; chairman thanked her for her efforts.

The Lengthsman project continued successfully. Effort this year had concentrated on replacing broken or missing finger posts and signs on our footpaths under the watchful eye of Cllr Grieve. Chairman thanked him and was pleased that this worthwhile scheme was set to continue for a further year.

This year we had considered no fewer than 16 separate planning applications (some for resubmissions on the same property) and 9 tree applications. Langtry House had finally got the go-ahead at the fourth iteration; Barn Cottage continued after several amendments. There was some bafflement over criteria applied by the Conservation Officer (the contentious issues referred to at Item 6). We had been advised by our Borough Councillor to gather complaints and to send them directly to the CEO of TVBC. No resident wanted our lovely village ruined by modernist ideas.

On the subject of housing we still had made no progress in securing affordable housing in this past year. Yet another Rural Housing Enabler had been appointed who would soon be in touch. We were in dire need of affordable housing but landowners were understandably reticent to give land whilst there was the 'Right to Buy' after a few years. There was no easy solution to the problem and Chairman thanked Cllr Burnfield who kept plugging away on this thankless task. We were also approached about starting a Neighbourhood Plan. It would have been a Statutory Planning Document but, faced with not a single volunteer from the residents coming forward to serve on a committee to get it off the ground, it had not been taken forward.

The environment was for ever changing and with many meetings, memos and endless e-mails Cllr Milne kept us informed and abreast of all requirements, for which chairman thanked him. She spoke for all in saying that the Bunny main bridge looked much better now, with improved sight lines and all much tidier. Chairman was grateful to the owner of 'The Willows' for having that work done and for cutting back undergrowth when asked.

We continued to enjoy close relations with the Leckford Estate. The cooperation over expansion of the rec ground car park had been hugely appreciated. The Estate had agreed to do the work once TVBC conditions were satisfied and the

fence between the playground and Charity Farmhouse had had the stile and dog hatch removed and the fence reinstated. They had also agreed that part of the Waitrose Community Giving scheme at the Nursery farm shop in March could be allocated towards cleaning of the war memorial in time for the Armistice centenary. She thanked Colin McIntyre for all his help.

The war memorial was a focal point in the village and the memorial green looked a picture, for which we had Dave and Joy Watts to thank.

Our playground continued to be well maintained and chairman was grateful to her group of volunteers who carried out regular inspections. The annual RoSPA inspection found a few minor issues that parish councillors had dealt with, and TVBC did the ramp repairs. The Estate would cut back the overhanging trees by the zip wire. The playground is a true asset to our village and the picturesque venue for the fete.

Chairman passed thanks to Cllr Gibson for his continued work on cemetery maintenance and to Peter Moore for keeping the cemetery garden in good shape and looking lovely. The Cemetery now boasted a smart new notice board for the burial plot map and cemetery regulations, part-funded by a generous grant from the Tatton-Brown family. The allotments continued to run smoothly, enthusiastically supported by our green-fingered residents. She hoped that deer incursions had been tackled successfully by the installation of the deer-proof fence.

Parish Council minutes were added to the village web site each month by Jan Greep the web mistress of [www.longstockvillage.com](http://www.longstockvillage.com), who also edited our much-loved Longstock News, for which she deserved big thanks for all the hard work involved. Thanks were also due to the distributors who did the house deliveries.

Superfast Broadband seemed to be getting up a head of steam at last, with the required numbers of signatures gained as 'expressions of interest' and recent appearance of markings on the pavement at Windover crossroads.

The Peat Spade was thanked for their generous support of the Remembrance Sunday commemoration and for welcoming the Parish Council after every meeting.

The Henry Smith Charity had again given us a generous grant of £2K, so enabling us since last April to pass on £250 to help the sick and needy; £690 to help school children join field trips; £200 for a seniors' day trip to Heale House and garden; and £750 on annual seniors' lunch, always well attended and great fun.

The Village Hall was being well maintained as ever and run as a focal point of the village and a popular venue for wider groups as well. The fact that it did not look nearly 30 years old was a tribute to the hard-working management committee.

'Our' school, Test Valley, continued to thrive and we once more sponsored a prize for academic achievement. Chairman thanked Cllr Griffiths for liaising with the school and for keeping us up to speed on all things afoot.

The Parish Council Audit again achieved a clean bill of health from the Audit Commission for the 2016/17 accounts, who approved them without comment. Patrick Coates, local chartered accountant, was thanked for doing the Internal Audit.

Our Finances continued in good shape, well controlled by our Clerk/Finance Officer. The 2018/19 Precept had increased to £7,000 to allow for changes to data protection and start of gradual replacement of street lights, but Longstock was still one of the cheapest villages in the Test Valley to live. Chairman thanked the clerk for all his hard work on the Parish Council and on behalf of all the residents of Longstock.

Cllr Musters thanked the chairman on behalf of councillors for her tremendous hard work and for directing our affairs for another year.

8. **Finance.** The RFO was again happy to report a satisfactory year that started with a balance of £5,188 and ended on an estimated £4,770, a fall of some 8%, but not significant. The end-of-year figure was an estimate since the street lights electricity supply bill for the final quarter up to the end of March had yet to arrive.

Looking at his year's figures in more detail; the Precept had risen from £6,000 to £6,500; having increased the advertising charges, we made a surplus on the newsletter despite a rise in production costs; income from cemetery burials at £380 was well down on last year; cemetery maintenance expenditure at £2,000 reflected the expanded contract to include grass cutting on the recreation ground; the electricity contract with Scottish and Southern continued, but maintenance this year was higher due to some unplanned work on the especially unpredictable light at Windover crossroads; and Section 137 expenditure was up by a third at £1,295 and included installation of the new notice board in the cemetery. We had also had to find £155 for TVBC for application to expand the car park.

Longstock electors would have the opportunity to view the accounts between 4<sup>th</sup> June and 13<sup>th</sup> July.

A side issue was the Henry Smith Charity, administered by the parish council. We had at the moment about £1,400 to disburse before the end of September and are always receptive to any suggestions for grants to eligible recipients.

Looking at the coming year and future plans; we needed to plan to replace all our 14 street lights in the next few years, since the existing lights would no longer be manufactured after 2019. This would be expensive. To that end we had increased the Precept again this year to £7,000, and were also investigating other sources eg the S106 developer contributions of some £11,000 that we could claim for 'sustainable transport measures' if TVBC agreed that street lights could come under that umbrella.

We would be having the war memorial cleaned and refurbished in this centenary year of the Armistice, at a likely cost of £610.

Also, with the new obligatory General Data Protection Regulations coming in next month, we would need to allocate money for a dedicated laptop and system for the parish council, since that work could no longer be conducted on the clerk's home computer.

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

10. **AOB.** Nil.

The Chairman closed the Assembly at 1950.