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## *Notes of the Annual Parish Meeting – 11 May 2015*

This was an informal meeting, with no formal agenda or minutes taken. However the following notes may be of interest to parishioners:

The meeting was attended by Councillors, the Parish Clerk, and approximately thirty parishioners.

Following introductions, the Council Chairman, **Mrs Joan Gutteridge**, invited the trustees of the village charities to present their annual reports. A summary of each report is highlighted below and a full copy is attached as an appendix to these notes.

### **Charities:**

- **Feoffees.** **Mr Richard Saltmarsh** reported on The Feoffees achievements over the past year which include restoration of the fire hooks, compiling history of the parks both are on display in the village hall. A substantial contribution towards BacStage for the restoration work to the roof at the Old School Hall and money to Bluntisham Parish Council for the improvements to Block Hill. The Barograph equipment has also had extensive repair works carried out. Plans to improve the bus shelter in the coming year are ongoing. The charity accounts show a closing balance of £8943.32 at 31 Dec 14.
- **Bluntisham Community Fund.** **Mrs Joan Gutteridge** confirmed that the balance of the account was £1290.23 and welcomed applications for donations from the fund. The income from the Christmas Gift Fair raised £364.70 which was paid into the account in November 2014.
- **Saywell Church Causeway.** **Mrs Tracey Davidson read out the report by Mr Mike Bateman.** The trustees of the charity are Revd Sheila Anthony, Mr Mike Bateman & Mrs Julie Seamark. All requests for support from this charity are to be put in writing, see report for full details. The charity accounts show a closing balance of £3488.73 at 5.1.15.
- **Blanche Prentice – Mr Mike Bateman** confirmed the balance of this account is £165.65. The clerk is to establish who the trustees are for this charity and if it is possible to amalgamate these charities.
- **St Thomas' Charity – Mr Mike Bateman** confirmed the balance of this account is £587.22. The clerk is to establish who the trustees are for this charity and if it is possible to amalgamate these charities.
- **Bluntisham Saywells School Charity.** **Mrs Sue Everest & Mrs Jane Godfrey** provided accounts for the year to 31 Dec 14 which show a balance of £8646.67. During the year the trustees agreed grants to the following: Messy Church £250, StepZ after school club £300, BacStage £500. Somersham Band tuition at St Helens School £500 has been paid from 2015.

**Chairman's report:** Thanks to all who have contributed towards the huge amount of work carried out during the year. A copy of the full report is attached to these notes; here is a summary of the achievements within 2014-15:

- Precept not increased during 2014-15
- New foot/cycle path construction well under way
- Fantastic fund raising event for the community fund raising £364
- Barograph improvements making this a safer and more eye catching centre of the village
- Safety improvements to the park, refurbishment of village benches & new fencing to the dog recreation area
- Improvements to the football and cricket pitches
- Retaining of the doctors surgery by offering reduced rent for a 2 year period

**District Council update:** Cllr Robin Carter confirmed that HDC are continuing to work hard to reduce waste from departments. Council Tax has been fixed for another year and they are hopeful for this to continue by using zero based budgeting. Some services may be externalised in order to retain a tight control of the finances. He is happy to continue to work with the Parish Council on a local level.

**County Council update:** Cllr Steve Criswell produced a report on the past 12 month's highlights from a County level. This is attached but highlights include: Balance the budget, savings are still ongoing and that is why the 3 year budget hasn't been produced. Increased community resilience is a key factor. Funding for the new cycleway to Needingworth has been a great achievement and plans to include Earith are still in discussion.

### **Questions from the floor and actions agreed:**

Concerns with the background noise during these meetings raised questions for the days of future meetings. The new PC agreed to discuss the options in due course.

Mr David Gedye asked why the statement of the parish accounts wasn't shared. The clerk advised she followed the format from previous meetings but the bank balances are included as part of the chairman's report.

Mrs Sue Everest expressed concerns with the cost of the fencing for the new footpath being met by the PC and not CCC. She feels it is unfair that the residents should have to pay for this and why haven't we asked CCC for more money. The clerk advised that a LHI grant was applied for but was turned down by CCC.

Mr Harry Potter asked to see the costs for the new footpath. The clerk is to contact CCC to get this information.

Mr Jonathan Clarke stated the village is looking good and the existing PC have done a good job with this maintenance, however, communication isn't great. He would like to see more communication on social media and not just sticking to the traditional methods. He hopes the new PC will take this on board to try and engage more residents to get involved. He also asked what happened to all the contact details obtained at the time of producing the village plan. Mrs Margaret Lumb advised that the PC were refused the names of potential volunteers by the secretary of the Parish Plan committee as it was thought to be data protected. It took over 3 years for this to be released to the PC by which time residents had lost enthusiasm.

Mrs Claire Foster also stated that often people are not aware that help is needed and would be willing to get involved but can't always attend PC meetings. Agreed that social media is a good method, however, this can sometimes get out of hand and become personal and upsetting for some.

Mr Richard Saltmarsh advised that using social media can be dangerous and what is wrong with using email. He advised that the PC have made several attempts to obtain email addresses from residents in order to update them on meetings, minutes, etc.

Mr Ian Shepherd (New Parish Councillor) responded by saying he can have a new website up and running within weeks to help with improving communication.

Mr Rob Gore (New Parish Councillor) commented that we need to give people a reason to come to meetings, we need to establish what people want from the PC and get them to want to come along for the benefit of the village.

Mr Mark Berg (New Parish Councillor) commented communication doesn't have to be on paper or electronic but door to door speaking to people is also effective.

Mrs Sharon Button commented that facebook can become personal and the clerk has taken a lot of criticism recently with some comments being rude and offensive.

Mr Gary James advised that a social media policy needs to be adopted which will cover the correct use of this communication.

Mr Richard Saltmarsh proposed thanks to the Parish Council, which at times over the past few years, has consisted of just 6 people. Also as few as 6 residents are often in attendance.

Mrs Margaret Lumb thanked Mrs Joan Gutteridge for her chairmanship over the past 12 months.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm

Tracey Davidson  
Parish Clerk