

CROXLEY GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, COMMUNITY CENTRE, COMMUNITY WAY, CROXLEY GREEN WD3
3PA

ON THURSDAY 24 APRIL 2014 at 8.00pm

Present: Chairman of the Meeting - Cllr Mitchell, David Allison – Clerk to the Council
Chairman of the Parish Council Amanda Taft – Administrative Officer

Present – 26 People

AP74/14 The Chairman welcomes members of the press and public

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed members of the public and press to the Annual Parish Meeting. He advised those present on the procedure in the event of fire and asked that mobile phones be switched off.

AP75/14 Minutes of the Parish Meeting held on 25 April 2013

The Clerk advised those present that in accordance with good practice, the Minutes of the last Parish Meeting had already been signed off on 4 July 2013 (CC1229/13), that being the first full Council meeting following the preparation of the Minutes after the 2013 Annual Parish Meeting.

AP76/14 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

AP77/14 To receive the Parish Council Chairman's Report

Cllr Mitchell, as Chairman of the Council, delivered the Chairman's Report for the year, see attached.

AP78/14 To receive the following Parish Council Committee Reports

AP78.1/14 Planning & Development Committee

Cllr Jordan, as Chairman of the Committee, delivered her report for the year, see attached.

AP78.2/14 Environment & Amenity Committee

Cllr Edmunds, as Chairman of the Committee, delivered his report for the year, see attached.

AP78.3/14 Finance & Administration Committee

Cllr Mitchell, as Chairman of the Committee, delivered his report for the year, see attached.

AP79/14 To consider any other interest in the Parish

The Chairman asked if anybody had any other matters they wished to raise.

Speaker 1 asked Cllr Jordan when the Community Plan would be finalised as this may have influenced the Inspector's decision regarding the two areas of the Green Belt in Croxley Green.

Cllr Jordan replied that the data from the survey was published a year ago and the draft Community Plan was sent out for consultation six weeks ago but she had not received any comments back. Cllr Jordan added that help was needed to write the narrative and analyse the questions that had free text responses. However, it was pointed out that this lack of narrative did not take away from the fact that the data is in the Community Plan Questionnaire results booklet. The Chairman added that the

Community Plan would feed into the Neighbourhood Plan which will carry more weight but that he believed the lack of an adopted Community Plan was unlikely to have changed the Inspector's decision as can be demonstrated where it is happening in other areas.

Speaker 2 was concerned that although residents could attend Parish Council meetings and have three minutes to speak about items on the agenda there was not the opportunity to raise other matters that may not be on the agenda. It was asked why this had changed as there used to be an 'Any other Business (AOB)' item on every agenda.

The Clerk replied that AOB is not good practice and indeed would probably be unlawful. He added that the reason the agenda is published is so that residents are informed of what will be discussed and thus have the opportunity to make representations on the Agenda item at the meeting if they wish. A District Cllr advised that Three Rivers District Council also only discuss agenda items and nothing else. Several Cllrs pointed out that residents can simply contact a Cllr or the Parish Council Office to discuss matters. It was pointed out that not every matter needs to be placed on an agenda; some can be dealt with directly. Cllr Ridley pointed out that the Cllr Surgeries were stopped and it was clarified that the reason they were discontinued was that nobody attended.

AP80/14

Closure

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.52pm.



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Chairman's Report

I believe that Croxley Green is a very special place to Live, work and play. Why do I say that? Well it is down to the many organisations and people who make things happen. The Parish council support many of these organisations through mainly one off help on projects and also organise events and provide services to improve our village and community.

I am going to run through them;

- What we do
- The events
- Grants

Also I will mention some of the main issues that affect Croxley Green.

What we do.

- PCSO's to help keep a feeling of security;
- Community Bus for the elderly, I have been told that it is often the highlight of the week for many;
- Annual seaside trip for the elderly;
- Put money into the improvement of the Baldwins lane playground, and will add more equipment next year.

Things do not always work out, we tried to set up a market, but was let down by stallholders who pulled out at late notice. The Artichoke said they wanted to do it, but that did not happen but we put a lot of work into this and still not managed it. We will not give up!!

Maintenance

Last year we struggled to keep up the maintenance as one of the rangers had left. So we supplemented the work by using a contractor. However, we recruited a new Senior Ranger, Philip Hinton, who started at the beginning of February. I do hope you can see the difference. We maintain the Green, stones orchard, footpaths and have an agreement with Canals and Rivers Trust to help improve the towpath, plus other areas.

We also work with Flowers of Croxley, and this brings a lot of colour into the village, and many thanks to them.

Events

- Dog show, the fun was had by so many and I was doing a little judging last year. Pity I do not know anything about dogs (!), so I had to choose which one I would like best to take home. I took home 5!!
- Fireworks
- Wassail
- The Revels
- Croxfest
- Quiz at the Sportsman
- New Christmas tree at the Library.

These are all things that are free to join in with, and are open for all. These are the things that contribute towards Croxley Green being a community rather than just a dormitory village.

Grants

Last year we gave grants to local organisations - Croxley Green Mummers (up to £500), Croxley Green Guild of Sport (£3,750 for kitchen upgrade), Croxley Green Residents Association (£500 for CGRA history project). I will discuss the budget in the F&A report.

Issues that affect us

Croxley Rail Link

- Largest project to affect us for many years;
- Work to start this year, and complete in 2017;
- We have liaised with the team to try to ensure we get a reasonable looking viaduct;
- We will keep in contact with them to help ensure disruption is kept as low as possible, but there will be some.

York Road School

Paul O’Rielly has restored the old building, and well done to him and also to the Croxley Green Residents Association who saved the building from being demolished.

Community, Neighbourhood and Village Centre Plan.

- Cllr Jordan will talk about the progress, but one big step was the consultation and approval by Three Rivers District Council that we can go ahead with a neighbourhood plan for the whole of Croxley Green;
- The Village Centre Project will form part of that. This is still in the thinking stage. The Community Association has been doing very well, and they are considering what they want for the future. This will build into the plans, and we will see whether or not a medical centre will be part of this. No decision yet;
- We will probably follow the format of the Chalfont St Peter Neighbourhood Plan;
- I have researched to see if there may be some funding to help us to the next stage;
- It is so important that we get this done, as it gives us more control over what happens in Croxley Green and also ensures that a %, I believe 35, comes to Croxley Green from development premium;
- Any help on this will be useful, so if you want to please contact us.

Church bells

- The bells are ringing again, although not at night. It is great that the fundraising for them went so well, so well done to All Saints’.

Sport

- After the issue last year, we are glad to see the Croxley Green FC youth have a home here, i.e. in Croxley and they use the Community canteen for events. Hopefully a line can be drawn in the sand and things can move on, with rugby also in the village.

Planning issues

- Big concern over the Inspector’s report concerning the TRDC allocations plan, and we lodged a letter of objection to the findings, after advice from CPRE, (Council for the Protection of Rural England).

Monies raised for charities so far totals about £1,800 for the Stroke Club, Croxley Green and Linda Jackson Macmillan Centre, Mount Vernon.

Boundary changes - The Local Government Boundary Commission has carried out a review. They have recommended that Croxley Green has two wards, one called Dickinson in the South and West and the other Durrants for the North East of the village

I do believe all of these things are so important to keep Croxley a vibrant and fun place to live.

Thanks to our Clerk, Admin Officer, the Rangers, the PCSO's. Also great thanks to the Councillors for their time in attending meetings and making the decisions etc. Please remember they are volunteers, and we do not get any allowances for our time. Also, a great thanks to all the volunteers to who directly help us deliver our services, and to all of you who do something to help Croxley Green.

Cllrs Jordan and Edmunds will present their reports for the P&D and E&A committees.

You can see that the Parish Council supports many organisations and acts as a catalyst for the benefit of the people of Croxley Green. We also:

- Provide extra services;
- Support events;
- Maintain the village to a high standard.

By doing this and working together with others, we help keep Croxley Green a wonderful place to live, work and play.

Thank you.

Cllr Chris Mitchell
Chairman of the Parish Council



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Planning & Development Committee Report

During the 2013-14 municipal year the P&D committee met 23 times and looked at approximately 150 applications. It considered a wide variety of applications for planning improvements on houses and businesses as well as commenting on key policy developments for the district and county. The latter involved issues such as development on the green belt and the allocation of school sites. In addition, the team from the Croxley Rail Link came to brief members of the Parish Council on the applications for planning which were about to be submitted and to outline the schedule of work in the village and the organisations affected by the siting of the viaduct and the traffic issues.

Over the past two years CGPC and the CGRA have been working on developing a community plan. The plan is jointly owned by the Parish Council and Croxley Green Residents' Association and following the publication of the survey results there has been a period of analysis and reflection. There were several hundred written responses to the 'white box' questions and these needed to be categorised and edited and this is a detailed task. Suggestions for improvements included a swimming pool, coffee shops, better public transport, and indoor play area, a bank, longer library opening hours, provision for the elderly, mother and baby drop-in, a youth club, snow clearing on pavements and more adult education.

The data has already been used to support the Land Acquisition Group, which is in discussion with TRDC about transferring the ownership of the Green and Stone's Orchard. My thanks to Cllr Nik Bennett for leading on this. Last year you saw a presentation on the possibility of developing a village centre and Cllr Chris Mitchell is continuing to lead on this. Elements from all these initiatives have brought together a number of individuals and organisations dedicated to improving Croxley Green and making sure services are delivered to the benefit of all those who live here.

In January TRDC accepted the Parish Council's application for the designation of a Neighbourhood Plan area, which is for the whole Parish boundary. A Neighbourhood Plan is a major task and must be aligned to district and national planning policies and structures. This is the major project for the forthcoming year.

A number of planning issues impact on the Environment and Amenity Committee and I am grateful to Cllr Dudley Edmunds, Chair of E&A, for his input and assistance on issues such as the green belt and Croxley Rail Link.

My thanks go to all the Councillors who sit on P&D and their diligence in considering all the issues which come before us, especially Cllr Bennett as Vice-Chair. My thanks also go to the Clerk and the Administrative Officer for their help throughout the year.

Cllr Wendy Jordan
Chairman of the Planning and Development Committee



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Environment & Amenity Committee Report

Looking at Cllr Seeley's report for last year it seems that some of the issues are still very much with us. She mentions the proposed development at the bottom of Baldwins Lane and that has not gone away, indeed it is now even more pressing and also threatens erosion of our Green Belt.

Your Parish Council is still in discussion with TRDC regarding taking over ownership of the Green and Stone's Orchard. Matters are proceeding very slowly but we will continue to work on this and we now have a "Land Acquisition" group headed by Cllr Nik Bennett. It is hoped that discussions will recommence after the forthcoming elections and that the PC will be able to take ownership of our Green and Orchard. On the subject of Stone's Orchard I hope that you will agree it is looking particularly good at the moment. This is (perhaps) partly due to another successful and well attended Wassail in January and definitely to the work put in by our two Rangers. I am delighted to welcome this year, Philip Hinton as Senior Ranger and he has already made a noticeable and entirely positive impact on our local environment. Grateful thanks to Philip and Mark for the excellent job that they are doing. The Friends of Stone's Orchard (FOSO) is now firmly established and I am pleased to report that Cllr Leighton Dann is Chairman of FOSO and bringing his professional expertise to the Orchard. Last year there was an absolute profusion of wild flowers in the meadow area and it was gratifying to see the number of people, of all ages, enjoying the sights and sounds of Stone's Orchard.

You will be aware of the issues regarding the attack on our Green Belt. The situation is far from clear but I would encourage all of you who value the preservation of our Green Belt to make your thoughts and views known to your Parish Councillors, District Councillors and David Gauke our MP.

Soon work will start on the Croxley Rail Link and there is likely to be considerable disruption in terms of noise and traffic. The upside is that, hopefully, our local businesses will profit during the process. The new viaduct will certainly add something to Croxley Green! I would like to thank the members of the E&A committee for their time and input this last year and also to pass thanks to Cllr Wendy Jordan, Chairman of the P&D committee for her assistance with E&A issues that have a planning aspect. Equally, thanks to Cllr Nik Bennett for his Chairmanship of the Land Acquisition Group as this initiative is an integral part of the E&A activity and one that we hope will be much greater when (if?) we obtain ownership. E&A meetings are open to the public and I encourage you come along and speak on any agenda item that interests and/or concerns you. Will really do like to hear your views.

Cllr Dudley Edmunds
Chairman of the Environment and Amenity Committee



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Finance & Administration Committee Report

I can advise that for the year ending 31 March 2014 our income was £266,000 and expenditure is £229,000. There is a surplus of about £37,000. This is mainly due to the lack of a second Ranger during last year, but also due to a few other savings and unspent items. This will go towards the overall general reserves that we should have anyway. However, we are using some of these reserves, around £8,000 if needed for next year's budget.

The budget for next year is projected to be £275,000.

Budgets have been tight, and there is a grant that we get that is reducing that comes via Three Rivers District Council from central Government. We decided that we did not want to cut services, so have a small increase. It works at an average of £1.10 per year per household.

There are some risks, one being a charge from Three Rivers District Council for election costs from 3 years ago. This being £13,887.10. We had allowed for some of this but not that much. So there is a discussion to be had.

In general we are on track and not overspent, but the years ahead could get very tight.

Cllr Chris Mitchell
Chairman of the Finance and Administration Committee