

Minutes of Ruscombe Parish Council's Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday 8th May 2019
at 8pm in Twyford Room, Loddon Hall

Parish Councillors In attendance: Mr J May (Chairman), Mr M Evans (Vice Chairman and Planning Chairman), Mr C Bell (Planning Vice Chairman), Mrs K Robson, Mr P Cassidy

Guest Speakers: Mr J Jarvis – Twyford Community Hub and Library, Mr J Halsall - WBC Councillors for Environment and Stephen Lloyd – Ruscombe Ponds

Public: 15 members of the public

Justin May - Chairman Report

Justin opened the meeting at 8pm and introduced himself. All councillors present introduced themselves. Justin reported that RPC had 5 goals for 2018, these were

Admin – This has been achieved by having a consistent Clerk for the Parish Council. RPC have been on time with all admin tasks, end of year Internal Audit completed quickly and with ease because paperwork was all in order.

Finance – RPC raised the precept last year, the biggest expense for 2018/2019 has been the Campaign to Protect Rural Wokingham (CPRW) at £5000. RPC have got a good level of reserve money should it be needed.

Neighbourhood Plan – RPC and a group of volunteers have started a Neighbourhood Plan.

Spend CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) - £47,656 received in 2018/2019, so far £3,000 has been spent on CCTV for Loddon Hall because they were experiencing vandalism. RPC have also been investigating the possibility of creating some car park spaces on the grass area in Pennfields, this is still being considered.

Communication – RPC have set up a Facebook page with a few people following but this doesn't really meet the demographic of Ruscombe. RPC have done three door to door deliveries, these have given a very good response rate.

Ruth Reid - Finance Report

Ruth reported that at the start of the financial year RPC had £18,757 in the bank, they have received £84,658 in income from precept, VAT refund and £47,656 from CIL. RPC have spent £24,284 £3,540 of that is CIL spend. On 31st March RPC had £79131 in the main account and two savings accounts with £4,910, giving a total of £84,041.

Stephen Lloyd – Friends of Ruscombe Wood

Stephen explained that there are 3 historic ponds in Ruscombe. Econet have working parties to keep the ponds clean and maintained. Early in 2018 Econet cleaned the pond by the crossroads, Most recently they have cleaned the pond behind New Road, this is a seasonal pond but it is still used by newts and other wildlife. Ruscombe Wood is well known for its bluebells but it is also home to 3 species of Orchid, which Econet have been caring for, the year before last they counted 169 orchid flowers, last year there was 200 flowers, they will count them again when they flower in June. The wood had a tree fall down in a storm which had to be cleared. Econet have installed some wood planks along pathways over areas that are commonly wet, this makes the wood more accessible for

walkers. Stephen informed RPC that the pond at Castle End road has a power line going over it and a tree nearby, the tree needs trimming but the Econet volunteers cannot do this because of the power line. Stephen believes that the energy company are responsible for trimming the tree, RPC will take this as an action to request. The hedges opposite St James Church also need trimming but Stephen recommends that RPC find out what will be happening to the land behind the trees, if it is to become a graveyard then there's probably no point in trimming hedges. Econet can also get extra help from CROW – Conserve Reading On Wednesdays.

John Halsall - WBC Environment

John Introduced himself, he is the WBC Ward Member for Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe and responsible for Environment, Leisure and Libraries with Graham Howe who is a Ruscombe Parish councillor but gave his apologies for not being able to attend. John started the Campaign to Protect Rural Wokingham because of the threat of development in Ruscombe, there has been huge support for CPRW from Ruscombe residents and RPC. John is very pleased that it seems that Ruscombe has been taken out of the list of potential development land within the WBC Local Plan. Early indications show that the Local plan will name Grazeley as the area to be developed, West Berkshire have said they will provide £250,000 to help build Grazeley into a new town. There are 12,000 homes with planning approval waiting to be built in the Wokingham Borough. That is enough homes to meet the WBC precedent of building 800 homes a year for 17 years. It is expected that the new Leader of WBC will relax the 5 year land supply requirements, not build any new homes for 2 years, then begin building the 12,000 as approved. The responses to the Local Plan Update questionnaire have contributed to the Local Plan and John expects we will see the WBC local plan produced in Autumn 2019. John updated that Star Works waste disposal proposal for Knowl Hill has been removed from the local Minerals plan. WBC are working to achieve the UK Climate Emergency, unless something is done, the UK will fail to meet the threshold for progress. WBC have begun food waste collections. Before collections began 30% of the blue bags' contents were food waste, WBC aim for food waste recycling to reduce that to 15%. So far the scheme has been a huge success and in week 3 we reached the quantity of food waste WBC would like us to recycle, WBC are very pleased with the speed of uptake of residents using the service. The food waste will be pasteurised into manure and sold and the bags are being incinerated to produce energy. Twyford crossroads are one of the points in the WBC area that have high levels of pollution, there are various things that can be done to reduce the intensity of the pollution levels, fans under the roads, sitting the cars at the traffic lights further away, even growing Ivy can help reduce pollution. WBC have 2 sites they are preparing to use as cemeteries, neither of these are in Ruscombe, despite the Oxford Diocese planning to sell land opposite St James Church to WBC for cemetery land. John believes WBC are intending the new cemeteries to be multi faith spaces so opposite a church is not ideal for this purpose. Twyford is included in the WBC executive paper for Libraries, the plan is to convert the old Polehampton boys school building into Twyford Community hub and Library. There is a variety of funding provisions in place but still to be processed. There is widespread support from WBC, residents and local Parish Councils.

John Jarvis – Twyford Community Hub and Library

John introduced himself, he is a chartered builder and he explained the UK did 300 hours without using coal last week because of all the renewal energy the UK uses now.

John explained the Twyford Community Hub has 7 trustees. The Hub has been in the planning stages for 3 or 4 years but now they are ready to start building it. They will be a registered charity once the relevant registration process is complete. The Community Hub will be in an extension of the old

Polehampton boys school, the school shut in 1963 and the building has not changed much since then. It is Grade II listed so the inside and outside of the walls cannot be changed which does make insulating the building difficult, but they might be allowed to add extra inner glazing to the windows and a new roof will help. The land surrounding the school building and the disused public toilets are Twyford Parish land, the building is owned by Polehampton Charities and the building will be gifted to the Twyford Hub Charity. The Twyford Hub will be asking for financial support from Ruscombe Parish Council, Twyford Parish Council, Hurst Parish Council and Charvil Parish Council because its their residents that use the current Twyford Library. They recently hosted a seesaw event in the school building which gained huge media interest and raised about £2000 towards the project, they are hoping to erect the seesaw structure at the Twyford Donkey Derby on Sunday 2nd of June to further the local interest and awareness of the project. David Turner brought the 3D model of the proposed building up for everyone to see. In the Hub as well as the library there will be a café and a keep fit class. The approved planning application expires in October 2019 and the team need to have made a substantial start on the build for the planning application to remain approved, otherwise they would need to apply again which can be costly. During the See-Saw event they held a survey of visitors, most people that responded said they would be happy to pay an extra £3 to £4 on the precept to have better library facilities in Twyford. The Twyford Hub is very close to the current Twyford Library, it is hoped that most users will walk to it but there will be a small number of parking spaces as well.

Mike Evans - Neighbourhood Plan Update

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

A Neighbourhood Plan is a document that defines the future housing for an area.

Why does Ruscombe need one?

To protect the Green belt land from housing development. A Neighbourhood Plan cannot override a Local Plan but it can influence the Local Plan. Once a Neighbourhood Plan is adopted , any development done in the area would give the Parish Council 25% of the CIL money, currently the Parish Council receive 15%, RPC do not want large housing development but if it were to come RPC would want and need the 25% to provide increased infrastructure in the area.

Ruscombe Parish Council and a team of volunteers are completing a Neighbourhood Plan and they are progressing well. A questionnaire was delivered to all residents in Ruscombe and had 156 responses, that's 33% of residents, which is a great response level. Volunteers are working hard, they have written parts of the plan, the project plan and scope, helped produce the Questionnaire, analysed the questionnaire response and continue to take on further work. The next stage will be to divide volunteers up and give them specific area of the plan to work on. RPC will need to gain residents views on the plan again before it goes to a referendum vote before it is adopted. RPC aim to achieve this within this year. The Village Design Statement (VDS) is still very relevant, Ruscombe is largely unchanged so the VDS will be used within the Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire largely concluded what RPC expected residents would want, this is to protect the Greenbelt, any houses built to be in keeping with the ones surrounding, natural environment is important. Residents are not so worried about the parking for their own cars but are concerned about people driving into Ruscombe to park for what we/they assume to be for Twyford train station. Residents are very concerned about the amount and speed of traffic in the area.

Ruscombe Parish Council have the opportunity to comment on planning applications but do not make the final decision on them. Over the year the applications submitted have included St James

Church meeting room and toilet, extensions, cottage rebuild, parking changes. Generally planning applications have been quiet over the year, especially the last few months

Justin May - CIL

In 2018/2019 RPC received £47,000 CIL money. RPC are considering using the money to build parking spaces in Pennfields but would be interested to know residents' opinions on this, this project would cost a minimum of about £50,000. Currently about 6 to 10 cars are parking on the grass. Other ideas include the Twyford Hub, Polehampton Swimming Pool renovation, grassland opposite St James Church.

A resident thanked the people looking after Ruscombe wood, everyone agreed.

Justin May closed the meeting at 9:15pm.

Signed _____

Date _____