ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in the Itchenor Memorial Hall on Monday 19 May 2014, chaired by the Chairman of the Parish Council.

Present:	Parish Council	Mr M Chater OBE, Mr G Colbourne Mr J Hartley, Mrs S Taylor, Mr A Spencer, Mr C Watson
	Residents	57 Residents
	Guests	Dr J Godfrey
		Mr R Marshall (CDC), Mrs P Montyn (CDC, WSCC)

1. Chairman's Introduction.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that he had recently been elected as Chairman of the Parish Council. The Chairman reported that Cllr Chater, the previous Chairman, had served 19 years on the Parish Council, the last 4 of those as Chairman. He expressed his thanks to Cllr Chater for the significant contribution he had made to the community and those present applauded him.
Cllr Chater thanked the Chairman for his kind words and introduced Dr John Godfrey, Deputy Lieutenant for West Sussex. Dr Godfrey was a former Chief Executive of the Sussex Police Authority and had recently completed 40 years in local government.
He is currently Chairman of the Gatwick Airport Consultative Committee and is heavily involved in a number of local voluntary activities including, South Downs Society; Trustees of Weald & Downland Open-Air Museum; Sussex Heritage Trust; National Trust Regional Advisory Board for London & South-East; Court of University of Sussex; and is a Writer and Lecturer on Landscape History.

2. Dr John Godfrey.

Dr Godfrey reported that he was not a stranger to Itchenor having been Clerk to Chichester Harbour Conservancy for 20 years. He recognised some faces in the audience. H was made a Freeman of Chichester Harbour and explained that meant he did not have to pay harbour dues and was allowed to fly the Conservancy burgee on his mast.

Dr Godfrey came to Sussex 50 years ago this year as a student of the University of Sussex. He had a happy time there and has remained associated with University.
He has been settled in Sussex for 40 years, living in Arundel in an 18th Century house in a conservation area on the edge of the national park.

Dr Godfrey's father and grandfather were both clergymen and moved around a lot. He explained that he felt very at home in Sussex. Locality, landscape and a sense of community were all important. He explained that Sussex was historically the kingdom of the south Saxons. Its natural boundaries were the sea and to north the watershed of Surrey. He mentioned that Kent was an old Saxon word meaning edge.

He highlighted the fact that Government changed boundaries from time to time but that the fabric of the Country was made up counties, cities and parishes which were all important to people. Much depends on the physical geography of area. He likened Sussex to Neapolitan ice cream. The pink representing the Wealds, based on clay soil making it difficult to farm but with an abundance of woodland. White was the chalk of the Downs and green the coastal plain. These two being very productive agriculturally.
The three bands don't run parallel with coast they start in the north west of the county and run to the south east. There is little agricultural land in East Sussex and the Chalk downs run down to Beachy Head. There is more agricultural land in the west than the east. West Sussex was historically conservative, East Sussex tending towards more radical puritans. West Sussex was for the King. East Sussex for parliament.

Dr Godfrey commented that there were questions as to whether people should be marking the centenary and if so what should the response be. The War was important as it coincided with change at the time. Ireland was a particular issue there being far more prospect of civil war in Ireland than war with Germany. Women's groups were also coming to the fore. The Trade Union movement was newly born which had given rise to strikes and more conflict. The war had an impact, with these other changes going, the war has hastened them.

When the situation in Europe deteriorated in summer 1914 the British Government had been aware that some conflict was likely. A lot of work had gone on to strengthen the military position. Britain did not have a big standing army it was far more reliant on the Navy. Foreign forces were much more equipped to go to war.

In Sussex there is a county regiment. Royal Sussex Regiment was based in Chichester. There were 2 battalions (1000 men in each). The 1st battalion was permanently based in India, the 2nd at home and in Ireland.

Not long after troops were mobilised on 4 Aug 1914 it was realised that more troops were needed. The Territorial force established with a large number of part time soldiers who were called to the colours. Reservists were called up, reporting to barracks at Chichester or depots at Worthing or Horsham. It takes time to train troops and it was soon obvious that numbers were inadequate. Lord Kitchener was put in charge of recruitment and during the third week of war his infamous poster appeal for 100,000 men to join the army was sent out. The appeal for to people to defend Sussex had posters showing images of lowland landscapes and country cottages. Local land owners played a leading role in this. The Duke of Norfolk was heavily involved in the Territorial Army. Local recruitment meetings were done under the patronage of local land owners such as the Duke of Norfolk and Duke of Richmond.

The recruitment campaign produces around 3000 volunteers which gave rise to 3 more battalions of Sussex Regiment. A large number of Shiphams employees joined up. People were encouraged to join up in groups of people working together or from local villages. 100 men from Shiphams went to enlist with the encouragement of Ernest Shipham. He and his wife then correspond with the men whilst they were fighting and making up parcels of meat paste which they sent to the men on the front line. In the County records office there are the replies from the men giving news of other colleagues and asking how things were going on in the factory.

Large training camps were located at Shoreham and Newhaven. Shoreham accommodated 100,000 men. Extensive training exercises were held including the building of Nissan huts and digging of replica trenches. Archaeologists are just now revealing these.

A second wave of recruitment took place enlisting a further 100,000 men who were known as the South Downs Brigade. Many of the men came from villages around the South Downs. Much of their strong sense of identity became apparent when reading the letters and memoirs of the men where they drew parallels between their home villages and the area of France where they were fighting.

Royal Sussex Regiments fought in Flanders and Picardy. 1915 saw them fight in the first battle of Ypes, 1916 the fought in the Battle of the Somme and by 1917 they were back in Flanders. It is mentioned that the soldiers were more at home in the landscape of Picardy, which resembled the South Downs, then in Flanders.

60/70,000 men fought in the First World War. The Infantry made up the majority of these with smaller numbers involved with the Navy and Air Corps. Around 10,000 men died, about 7,000 from the Royal Sussex Regiments. Their names are recorded in the Regimental Chapel at Chichester cathedral. Whilst it was terrible that 10,000 men died it is important to remember that 60,000 didn't. The total number of British men who died was around 2% very much lower than other European nations. By the end of the war the census revealed that the population was not very different to 1911.

The rate of casualties was greater in the infantry and higher in officers than in men. This was because the Officers led the men over the trenches and with their distinctive uniforms they were easily spotted. The Officers were called by Germans 'spindly legs' because of the style of their clothing.

Many wounded soldiers were brought home. Sussex was very important for dealing with these casualties. Graylingwell Hospital was taken over as military hospital and the mental patients were moved out. There were also military hospitals in Brighton and Hastings. Brighton was significant for Indian soldiers with the Royal Pavilion being converted to a military hospital. This was because the Borough Council had given the premises free of charge. It catered for a number of different religions by creating several kitchens and had several different water supplies for each of the religions.

One impact of the war was the loss of men from different occupations. Here you see the women's story come into play. In 1916 conscription came in for all men and unless you were in work of national importance you had to go to war. An increase in the need for food for men fighting as well as horses that went to the front line meant that women had to take on work in agriculture.

When the war ended and men came home they discovered the world had changed. Archive photos show women driving trams and other such vehicles looking very proud. The prejudice of males against women was changing. Homes fit for heroes did not materialise, the economy declined and the depression set in. Many wounded service men struggled to find work and stories of them selling match sticks on street corners was not uncommon.

The First World War assisted an important process of social change although it took a while to work through. Over time attitudes changed and it was felt that their sacrifice was not in vain.

Thanks were given to Dr Godfrey for his highly entertaining talk.

3. Parish Reports

Broadband

The Chairman showed two slides relating to the present broadband situation. The first was from an American website and highlighted were the sections 'FTTC' and 'FTTP'; both were indicated to be installed in 2014. He went on to explain that FTTC is Fibre to the Cabinet, those green roadside boxes, one at the junction of Shipton Green lane and the B2179. The other is on the verge adjacent to Roseanne. Connections from the cabinet will use the existing wiring. FTTP is Fibre to the Premises, meaning that the fibre optic connection could be made direct to individual houses and businesses. No specific timetable is available to the Parish Council at the moment other than connections may be offered from mid 2015. The second slide, from the UK site showed that the Birdham exchange had been scheduled for upgrade to fibre optic capability.

Village Pond

Planning

The Planning Committee is scheduled to meet every two weeks. However, due to a lack of applications this has not been the case and the Planning Committee has met only 14 times in the last 12 months.

With one or two exceptions applications have been uncontroversial. There appears to have been an increase in the number of demolition and rebuilds and a decline in extensions.

One particularly controversial application is the subject of an appeal, the second on the same land in less than 12 months. The District Council has submitted its statement and we await a decision from the Planning Inspector.

Planning can be a very controversial issue and arouse strong emotions in residents. Sometimes objections to an application are made setting out what the objector considers to be a valid ground for objection and they are surprised and irritated if those reasons appear not to have been considered and the Parish Council does not object to the application. The Parish Council can only take certain issues into account when considering an application for planning permission or other consent.

They include:

- Whether a proposed use is a suitable one for the area
- Whether the appearance and size of a new building is in keeping with its neighbours and the surrounding area
- Whether external alterations to an existing building are in character
- Whether adjoining residents will suffer any overshadowing, overlooking or loss of privacy
- Whether there will be any increase in noise and disturbance, for example from the comings and goings of extra traffic
- Whether new roadways and accesses and adequate parking will be safe for road users and pedestrians
- Whether, in the case of an application for an advertisement, the proposed sign is too large or unsightly
- Whether a public footpath is affected
- Whether there is any visual affect upon the landscape, e.g. loss of trees and hedgerows
- Whether the proposal conflicts with Chichester District Council's planning policies

They do not include:

- Loss of view
- Boundary and other disputes between neighbours, e.g. private rights of way, covenants
- Loss of trade from individual competing businesses
- Loss of property value

As the draft Local Plan has not yet been adopted the District Council are using the Saved Policies of the 1999 Plan. The draft Local Plan has now been submitted to the Secretary of State. As the draft Local Plan progresses the policies in it will carry more weight in regard to planning.

The District Council is advised by Government to approve an application unless there are good planning reasons to refuse it. Conditions may be attached to an approval to cover the points which may be of concern, or the applicant may be prepared to amend the plans to overcome such concerns.

Flooding

The Chairman showed a number of slides highlighting the extreme rainfall last December, January and February. The average rainfall for those three months is 198mm, the actual was 562mm, an increase of 283%. A number of slides showed the effect of this rain on

various points around the village, particularly the pond area. There were no known flooding issues with houses and the Chairman thanked all those who assiduously maintain the ditches and culverts in line with their riparian obligations. He then reported on the planned scheme to produce a details drainage map for the village, covering surface water and sewage. This project is being fully funded under the West Sussex County Council (WSCC) 'Operation Watershed' scheme with no direct cost to residents. The project should be completed later this year and is worked in conjunction with WSCC, Chichester District Council, Southern Water, the Environment Agency and others.

Speed limits

The Chairman reported that the Parish Council had been working to try and reduce the speed limit from the barns to the hard. West Sussex County Council has undertaken a number of speed surveys and all was looking good. Subsequently the Parish Council has been given a number of additional issues to address. The Chairman and the Clerk will be meeting with County Council representatives on the 9 June to progress matters.

4. Residents Questions.

The Chairman invited questions from residents.

Q: Mrs Talbot asked what was happening about Old Haven.
A: The owner put in a planning application which was rejected. The Parish Council is now waiting for an application on amended plans to go in.

Q: Mrs Payne asked if the District Council could not force removal of the hoardings.
A: This has been discussed with the District Council, if the hoardings are taken inside the building no action can be taken. The District Council tends not to use enforcement action very often.

Q: Mr Marshall asked if the Parish Council knew anything more about the application for land behind Greenleas.
A: A planning appeal is in progress and the Parish Council is still awaiting the outcome.

Q: Mrs Green expressed concern about dogs drinking from pond in light of the comments from Cllr Watson about the quality of the water. She asked if a notice warning of the possible dangers should be put up.
A: Cllr Watson will take further samples for analysis. If the results are significant then the Parish Council will take action.

Q: Mr Roose referred to the possibility of installing fibre optic to properties and thought that BT charged more for this. Will this apply to Itchenor.
A: Yes. Fibre optics to the home are an optional extra and residents would need to check charges with BT or their internet service provider.

Q: Mrs Dukoff-Gordon asked if there were plans to extend the 20mph limit to the rest of the village.
A: Not at the moment. The only chance to get the speed limit reduced is if people are already driving close to that speed. It would require all residents to drive at 20mph all the way down the village on a regular basis.

Q: Mrs Dukoff-Gordon also asked if the Parish Council was giving further consideration to putting markings on the road to give the impression it was not to wide.

A: There needed to be a balance between speed enforcement and too much urbanisation. The best people to enforce the speed limit are the residents.

Q: Mr Edwards referred to the concerns about dogs drinking from the pond and stated that there were a large number of active rats in area and he had seen no dead bodies. In addition the local deer were still using the pond.

Q: Mr Green reported that Sussex Police had infra-red speed guns for use by parishes. They will take action if speeding motorists are recorded by trained operators. Might this be an option to pursue.

A: If people are interested they need to give their name, address and date of birth to the Parish Council and it then will organise training and borrow apparatus. Mr Arnold and Mr Goddard are already trained. The only place where this apparatus can lawfully be used in on Shipton Green.

Q: Mr Christmas asked about the skid risk signs

A: These were erected in advance of the road being redressed. Balfour Beatty are due to return to do this shortly. It was noted that the road from Shipton Green to Piggery Hall Lane crossroads was not going to be done.

Q: Mrs Trevelyan asked if the Parish Council knew what caused the excess water by the pond.

A: There was a blockage in the gully drains and this had now been cleared.

The Chairman thanked the Parish Councillors and members of the Itchenor Society who regularly attend meetings adding that meetings were always interesting and residents were warmly welcomed to attend and see what the Parish Council were doing.

He thanked everyone to taking the trouble to attend the meeting and invited everyone to partake of the refreshments offered.

The meeting closed at 7.51pm

Signed :…….. Dated:…….
Chairman, West Itchenor Parish Council