

Graffham

Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Meeting OF THE PARISH OF GRAFFHAM held on Wednesday, 19th July 2023 at 19.00 The Empire Hall Graffham

Present: Parish Councillors: Roger Coakes, John Bracey, Charles MacQueen, Jon Warren, Colin Barker, Gillian Charlesworth, Fiona Jacob, and Rachel Gerrett

In Attendance: Amy Harte (Locum Clerk), several members of the public and speakers.

1. Welcome

Cllr Coakes Welcomed all to the meeting and all Councillors present introduced themselves to the public.

2. Apologies

Joanna Morris, John Cross District Councillor, Tom Richardson County Councillor, Helen Martin, Head Teacher of Graffham Primary School.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Graffham are unavailable.

4. Chairman's Report

So, we move on to a few words from me on behalf of your Council which is new having lost three experienced Councillors who contributed a great deal to the village - Simon Mackie our recently retired Chairman, Howard Charman, a past Chairman and in charge of finances and Patrick Churchward, overseer of our highways and byways. A big thank you to you all and to Sandy McQueen who agreed to stay on for the time being as Chairman of Planning – an onerous but important role.

Graffham suddenly lost its Parish Clerk at the end of last year and it soon became apparent how essential to the proper running of Council affairs the Clerk is. Following the local council elections in May, Tracy Rowe very kindly agreed to step into the void and guide our new Council through the transition period. Her experience as a previous Clerk of this Parish has been invaluable and we owe her a huge debt of thanks. We are also extremely grateful to Amy Harte, who is Parish Clerk of our neighbour East Lavington, who has been persuaded to help us out, at least in the immediate future and, we hope, for longer.

Unfortunately, the transition has been hampered by what I can only describe as data transfer difficulties and I can not thank my colleagues enough for their efforts in helping to sort this out. Unlocking Boris Johnson's Whatsapp phone has had nothing on the difficulty we have experienced in trying to discover correct passwords. This is the reason why there are no minutes of the last meeting and why the Graffham Parish website is more than a little out of date. All will soon be righted, however, and with our newly co-opted Councillors, Gillian, Fiona, Jo and Rachel on board we will be able to concentrate on the matters which really concern us all.

The last year has seen three major National events, the Jubilee, the death of Queen Elizabeth and the Coronation, all celebrated or solemnly marked in true Graffham style. These events take

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enormous effort and time to organise and a big thank you to all involved. Permanent reminders are the Jubilee bench and flagpole at the War Memorial.

These events highlight the extraordinary amount of voluntary work that goes on in the Parish all the time, from the Graffham Health Support Association and The Empire Lunch Club to Carole Kirke's litter picking and the great work of the Graffham Down Trust – if you haven't visited the Reservations you really should. And I must mention the Cardigan Club which has taken on the strimming of the graveyard which now looks very manicured and restful.

There are too many organisations and clubs to mention but it is heartening to see so many of Graffham's new residents becoming involved and giving their time to the village.

We are privileged to live in such a beautiful part of the country with its dark skies and glorious countryside. The Council's wish and aim is to preserve the character of the village but progress and conservation must go hand in hand. This is exemplified by the continuing roll out of high speed broadband on the one hand and the care of the magnificent but at risk, oak tree at the War Memorial, supervised by Colin Barker, on the other.

Planning applications take up a good deal of the Council's time and while the ultimate decisions are taken elsewhere the Council robustly assesses the impact on neighbours and the village as a whole before supporting or objecting to an application.

Matters of concern within the village remain fairly constant and always top of the list is Highways and Byways, a role bravely taken on by Jo Morris. We are fortunate to have living within the Parish Tom Richardson, who is our Councillor on West Sussex County Council and its Highways lead, who has given us encouraging news about work that will be carried out on our badly damaged roads and also the prospect of the introduction of a 20mph speed limit within the village which the Council has supported for some time. A frequent source of frustration for many are the often misplaced and out of date road closed and diversion signs; unfortunately these belong to the utility companies over whom we have little control though Jon Warren negotiated long and hard with Openreach to help prevent them closing our main road into Graffham for a month!

Some of you may be aware of the Communities Infrastructure Levy (or CIL). This is a charge levied on developers within the SDNPA and distributed to Towns and Parishes to be used for improving local infrastructure. We have a number of projects including the recently completed patio area next to the Pavilion. Plans for the complete overhaul of the Playground area are nearing completion and you will hear more about these from John Bracey in his Recreation Ground report. Also in the pipeline are the refurbishment of the old phone box at Pescods to house a second public access defibrillator and the refurbishment of the fingerpost signs which are all rather shabby. All of these projects will both enhance our facilities and give Graffham a bit of a facelift. We are always pleased to hear of new ideas for projects which will benefit the village and be an appropriate use of the CIL funds.

Finally communication, which is so important. As you know all our Council meetings are open and we welcome questions and suggestions either at the meetings or via email. But in the wider context of village communication I would like to pay tribute to Michael Blunt and his team for producing such a wonderful, entertaining and informative Graffham Parish News. A truly valuable village asset. Well done Michael, Phillipa and Bill.

Parish Council Finance Report

A copy of the finance report is attached as Annex A

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5. Graffham Infant & Duncton Junior School Report

Lavington Park Federation

Graffham CE Infant School

Annual report to Graffham Parish Council July 2023

I must apologise for not bringing this to you in person this evening; the end of term is a very busy and exhausting time.

We have had a busy and challenging year at Graffham and Duncton Schools. We welcomed 18 children to school last September, and they have gained their confidence as a lovely Reception class full of happy and very curious learners. We will welcome 20 new children in September 2023, which we are very pleased about, as this is a low birth year across the county. We will have 59 children at Graffham in September. This is especially important to us, as our school budgets continue to struggle with rising costs in schools. This will continue to be an issue as we move forward and will take some very careful budgeting.

We continue to appreciate additional funding from various sources to support the additional, enrichment of our curriculum and support for families. We have requested some potential funding for the school therapist to increase her hours in school; we fund her purely from funding from trust funds locally. The need for families with parenting support is ever increasing; and these therapeutic parenting sessions and play therapy for children makes an important impact on family and school life. We are sadly saying goodbye to our office manager at Graffham, Mrs Kathie Gyles, after 12 amazing years of her working with us in the office and sorting us out every day! Kathie was a Governor at the time of the Federation and so has given 20 years or more service and care for Graffham and Duncton Schools and we thank her for her kindness in this role.

You may have seen our handpainted images of the children that have appeared along the fence at Graffham- they have been masterminded by our Assistant Headteacher, Mrs Sarah Jane Wethered and our Art teacher, Ms Dominique Kenway, and are very beautiful. Each children created one, with the help of their parent in a very messy and fun day in school!

We have supported the whole school community following the tragic death of one of our parents at Graffham; the school came together for a school memorial, on the Duncton School grounds, to support the children and families at this difficult time. The school community has gathered around each other and continues to look after each other more than ever before.

Thank you for the continued support from the village of Graffham.

Helen Martin

Headteacher

6. District Councillor's Report:

John Cross, the District Councillor sent his apologies.

7. County Councillor's Report

Tom Richardson, the County Councillor sent his apologies.

8. All Saints Trustees Report

All Saints Cottages repairs have been carried out during the year. They offered the site for a Village Christmas Tree. The Chapel continued to benefit from the ministry of the Reverend Vivien Turner as Priest-in-Charge of the Parish of Graffham with Woolavington,

The three cottages remain fully occupied and there were no changes to the occupying tenants in the current year.

The tenants continued to maintain their gardens and to keep the Chapel clean, tidy and appropriately heated in accordance with their occupancy agreements.

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There were no changes to the existing trustees in the year. The trustees have adopted online banking. Repairs were carried out to the front path leading to the cottages from the road and in particular in front of No 3. The electrical rewiring was completed in No 3.

Thanks to Tim Crowe treasurer for all his help and to Mary Coakes.

Clive Rowntree

9. The Empire Hall Report

Good evening everybody,

I was pleased to be appointed by the Hall trustees as Chairman of the Empire Hall Committee in January 2023 and tonight I'm delighted to provide my first Chairman's report to the Annual Village meeting.

Firstly I would like to introduce you to the committee, which is a relatively new team of hall Trustees. In September Gillian Charlesworth was co-opted as Maintenance Secretary, joining Carole Sargent as Treasurer, Fiona Mackie as Secretary, Diane Bellis representing Thursday Club, Sarah Lydiard-Wilson representing the Health Association, Jill McLean representing Lunch Club, Patrick Churchward as Parish Council representative and myself with the additional role of Booking Secretary, in anticipation of a volunteer taking this over in due course. Fiona retired from the Committee in January with our warm thanks and Gillian took on the role as an interim measure while we looked for a new Secretary. Liz Nicholson also left the marketing support role she had held during the previous three years, with our warm thanks for her work during some difficult years.

I am very pleased to announce that we have welcomed recently Stephanie Jenkins for the secretary role and from May 2023, we have a new representative from the Parish Council in Jon Warren.

Thanks to our predecessors, we took over the hall in good condition but now several years down the line it needs a bit of TLC in some areas. You might have noticed for instance the cupboard fronts under the stage have been beautifully renewed thanks to Phil Tupper. We are in the process of replacing the stage drapes, which will provide a smarter appearance to the stage and provide more flexibility for all the exercise groups using the hall. If anyone can offer some leftover stair carpet, we would like to get the floating stairs re-covered too!

We are about to see the badminton lines on the floor repainted, have installed a very welcome dishwasher in the kitchen, and are working to raise funds for a new projector and screen. Gillian has worked tirelessly on all these maintenance aspects, as well as keeping the humdrum duties up to date, such as boiler service, etc.

We continue with our faithful regulars leading exercise classes in the hall – details are on the noticeboards. Also we have Anna Shawcross who runs a very successful osteopathy service from the Treatment Room at the back of the hall, also used by Vicky with her podiatry services and now also by Serena Cooper offering Physiotherapy. And a regular badminton group every Wednesday evening.

We have seen many fun events happening in the hall. From September we have had plays – such as the Chinese Boxing and Bolt in Neck - and bands such as the Chic tribute band, Le Freak , to entertain us and those further afield. Thanks to the excellent marketing of these events locally and well beyond our borders, the events we host are often sold out before everyone in the village has managed to procure them! There is an awful lot of hidden work involved in putting such wonderful events on the stage here and I'm sure we and the village would like to show our appreciation to Jim Kirke who takes on the informal mantle of events manager, with the focus of providing entertainment

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for the village as well as filling up the hall's coffers. Please look out in the parish magazine and Graffham noticeboard for Jim's autumn events and do come and enjoy what's on offer.

It was wonderful also to have had Chaps Choir to cheer us up in the autumn, and the return of a very colourful Easter Market with new stallholders offering everything from French soap to pottery to hats, as well as the famous produce table groaning with homemade fare from Graffham bakers. We had a lot of fun and generated healthy profits for the hall! And everyone now has a hat.

The hall was used widely in the autumn and even on Christmas Day for a family Christmas dinner. We had a few wakes remembering past village members once very active on behalf of the hall, in the village and on the Graffham Reserves, as well as a large family party for Barbara Kemp's 100th birthday.

There have been the usual village group events and we are grateful to St Giles Church, Graffham Garden Group and Graffham Down Trust amongst others, for using the hall for their monthly and yearly events. Also to Clive and Harriet Rowntree for running the very successful annual Burns Night, with all profits going straight to the hall.

There were also lots of children's parties, including a Halloween Party for the whole of the school during the autumn – the word is still going round that the hall is a great space for children to have fun too!

And of course we are all very grateful for the return of the much-treasured Post Office on Tuesdays, following their absence as a result of the security breach they suffered in another outreach location. The hall is happy to have them back with the additional necessary procedures to safeguard the operation of the service, and with a buddy system organised by Jim Kirke to see them in and out of the Committee Room.

The summer has meant very few bookings for the hall, apart from the regular exercise groups, but we look forward to seeing everyone using this tremendous village asset to the full in the cooler months ahead. The Empire Hall annual general meeting is on Wednesday, September 13th at 7.00 and we look forward to welcoming you there.
Thank you.

10. Graffham Recreation Ground Report

John Bracey:

- A number of projects outlined at last year's meeting have been completed. The Lleylandi trees have now been removed and chipped on site to provide the basis for the new trackway and car park on the east perimeter of the recreation ground to give access and provide parking for the bowls club.
- The remains of the old storage sheds have been removed together with all the old mowing equipment that was not in a usable/repairable state. The sheds have been replaced by two 20ft metal containers in which will be able to store all the mowing and grounds equipment securely
- Last summer Family Fridays were introduced at the Recreation Ground, during the summer period, organized by Sonia Gillespie. These social evenings were very well attended by young families and are proving very popular – they have been continued this summer combined with a Tennis evening .

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- The tennis club is extremely well supported covering all age groups with coaching, matches and a full social program. In the Autumn both tennis courts will be resurfaced ready for the 2024 season
- The Bowls Club is well supported with a full program of matches
- The committee are always looking at ways to expand the uses of the recreation ground which already has activities for all age groups and to remind everybody the Pavilion is available for hire for a your own private function.
- Earlier this year a patio was built on the south side of the Pavilion to provide an outside eating area with four table/chair sets. This is finished with a raised bed on the west side which has been planted with lavender plants.
- Our final project for this year will be to replace any damaged wood on the exterior of the pavilion and repaint with barn paint prior to next winter
- We are as ever very grateful for all the volunteer help which we receive and without which we would not be able to function. Richard Gyles & Beetle Clay who keep our field in such magnificent condition with their weekly mowing, Carole Kirk who looks after flower beds and our committee members who man the bar and help with organizing events. Also we have had a very generous private donation which has paid for the four sets of table/chairs on the new patio + a donation towards the cost of the lavender plants in the new raised bed for which we are very grateful.
- This year the village fete will be on August Bank Holiday Monday and I hope you will all be there to support us. This yearly event is the main source of income for the recreation ground so local support is a very important element to its success.
- The project to replace the playground whilst having had some disappointing delays after being refused a grant by the National Lottery has now gained new impetus with a totally revised concept which is exciting and more importantly affordable. Sonya & Giovanni now have valuable additional help & input from a newly formed group of local parents which Rachel will now tell you about.

Rachel Gerrett:

Since the last update provided in 2022, lots of activity has gone on behind the scenes:

Funding - thanks to Giovanni and Sonia, upwards of 20 applications have been made and circa £40k agreed. This will get us started but the cost of equipment is high so we are having to think creatively and be resourceful.

Working Group formed - John and I, Giovanni and Sonia have been joined by Serena Cooper, Russell Smithers, Katie Donald and Bianca Pitt to form a busy, able and committed group of local parents.

Feedback taken onboard - Key concerns re increased traffic unlikely to be a concern given the scale of plans compared to other local playparks. In terms of look and feel we are all keen to move away from the current structures, metal, rubber and towards something far more in keeping with its location and excited about the opportunity to start again.

Conceptually, we are aiming for a community space, suitable for all ages, in tune with the South Downs, rustic / wooden play equipment, natural materials wherever possible, to include a sensory garden, natural boundaries, undulations, wildflowers, and tree planting. Maintenance plans are being discussed and are a consideration.

We would like to share further details re our plans as soon as we can and will set up a meeting at the Rec in due course.

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11. Public Questions

Playground Plans - how are the Deer going to be managed? A sum of money was given from the Parish Council annually to maintain the playground, this was stopped. Is the Parish Council going to support the maintenance of the playground? J. Bracey – explained that the new equipment will be more natural; wood, the Parish Council do intend to financially support the playground. Funding from both recreation ground and from the Parish Council.

Question to Sally – Fundraising to get a projector – would that mean returning to film nights. Someone would be required to run these and at present there is no one to do this.

School – pupil number is at 59, this is really encouraging as the maximum number is 60 – so congratulations to Helen. They have also been incredibly supportive following the sad death of one of the Parents.

These minutes are an accurate record of the meeting.

Signed
Graffham Parish Council

ANNEX A

Graffham Parish Council Finance Report 19th July 2023

The 2022/23 financial year ended on 31st March 2023 and the final accounts have been prepared.

Graffham Parish Council **Financial Report 2022-2023 Graffham Parish Council**

Balance b/fwd at 1/4/22	£28,727
Precept	£13,000
Receipts	£26,795
Expenditure	-£25,297
Balance c/fwd	£43,226

Income

Funding for recreation	
Ground	£10,681
Recovered VAT	£2,400
CIL Receipts	£2,092

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Expenditure

Recreation Ground Works	£10,507
Clerk Salary and expenses	£4321
Jubilee Event	£1837
Insurance	£159
Grants	£2,500

Amy Harte, Locum Clerk & RFO

DRAFT