

## ELHAM PARISH MEETING

**16<sup>th</sup> January 2018**

**7.30pm at the Village Hall**

Chairman: Cllr Geoff Clements (Chairman of the Parish Council)

Minute taker: Cathy Skinner (Clerk to the Parish Council)

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Geoff Clements opened the meeting by welcoming the large gathering.

Angie Scott gave an outline of the running order and stated that she believed most were aware of the circumstances surrounding the previous Chairman of the Parish Council's resignation but this is not the forum for further discussion on that subject. The aim of this meeting is to have subjective discussion on an open and non-confrontational manner. There would be a Q&A session at the end of each agenda item. The group calling this meeting believe that the Parish Council should work for, and with the community. There is concern that the parish will decline if action is not taken.

Kevin Scott – Reiterated that we can do more and that the Parish Council can also do more.

Pippa Hope- Highlighted the loss of retail facilities e.g. post office and butchers.

Clive Stanyon – Believes that the current Parish Council is like a used car and needs to be replaced by a newer model. Elham deserves better.

Sylvia Scott – A previous Vice-Chairman of the Parish council is seeking to develop connecting partnerships.

Tony Rossi – We need a council which proactively supports the community.

Sharon Jacob – Would like to see more engagement and better use of funds from the Parish Council.

Peter Swain – Concerned that respect is not shown to parishioners by the Parish Council.

Valerie Swain – Appreciates the work done by volunteers.

Dr. Karen White – Has observed that most good initiatives have been completed by volunteers, not the Parish Council. Elham Parish deserves better and is confident that after this meeting it will get better.

Anna Leva – The Parish Council has not helped with the mobile phone signal problem or poor broadband. Again, Play for Elham was created by keen volunteers with little help from the Parish Council.

## **What Do We Think the Parish Council Should Provide/Support?**

From the floor, copies of presentations were requested as they were hard to read.

Clive Stanyon - Recently, only the parish survey was delivered. The Parish Council should be leading the call for improved mobile signal, this was first talked about 3 years ago and still nothing delivered. SDC Local Plan – It is important that these are examined closely, the Parish Council did not respond to the Places & Policies consultation which offered a chance to protect recreation areas. Speeding outside of the school was an initiative led by the school, not the Parish Council. Churchyard and churchyard wall – discussions started 2 years ago regarding who is responsible for the wall and there is still no documented proof and £2,000 has been spent with a further £10,000 ring fenced for future costs. The Gore, used for dog walking and informal sport. The lease has been under negotiation for 2 years and only made progress when parishioners stepped in. Defibrillator – project took 3 years to implement.

Tony Rossi – Budget: Major items are road safety £6,000 (a good idea), £6,500 for grounds maintenance, £11,000 for clerk/office/administration. In summary, a care and maintenance budget. £41,728 available with expenditure of £36,200. 60% is spent on administration and 30% on grounds maintenance. With no new initiatives pending, the £5,000 surplus will inevitably bring a future deficit.

## **Q&A**

Geoff Clements - Mobile phone signal, a meeting is scheduled with Damian Collins MP and representatives of mobile phone companies. The Gore is privately owned and since a football club used it the lease issue has not been resolved. At present there are 3 vacancies for councillors who could join the Parish Council by co-option. In 2019 there will be an election when all seats become available.

Brian Swan – commented that he had met interested parishioners and trustees' representative to discuss the future of The Gore. This included a suggestion that a shared project with Play for Elham could be advantageous. This took place 9 weeks ago and since then no further contact has been made.

Mike Donnelly – A defensive interchange is not constructive. Parishioners have allowed the situation to arise as when a vacancy on the Parish Council arises, there is an opportunity for 10 electors to call for an election. Suggests that the current Parish Council stands down to allow for an election.

Frank Hobbs (KALC Area Committee Chairman) advised that elections costs are high if there is a by-election.

## **What Do You Want From Your Parish Council?**

A video was shown of a community which has taken over many local services in their area. (Upper Dales Community Partnership). It was noted that preventing loss of local facilities is very hard to accomplish. Judy Ufton called for support for the village shop which is struggling, if everyone spent £5 a week there, success would be ensured.

Sylvia Scott spoke about the parish survey – 700 leaflets were delivered but only 74 returned. From the survey, 41 parishioners showed interest in participating in projects. The results of the survey were not fed back, neither were they actioned. A key request was for better joint working with the Parish Council.

### **Open Discussion – Ideas and Wishes**

- Connect & Care Day – support for older people.
- Want value for money
- Volunteers are needed but it is usually the same people who come forward – new faces needed.
- Would new councillors be welcomed? Geoff Clements confirmed that they would be and commented that the Parish Council has always been short of members.
- Tony Rossi – what do parishioners want? For example, affordable housing?
- Defibrillator training – The ambulance service has been asked to provide this, 10 volunteers needed.
- Jan Stanyon – the War Memorial has become an eyesore and needs cleaning and maintenance – Derek Boughton responded by saying that it is usually done by volunteers, in addition the memorial was refurbished a couple of years ago at considerable cost. The memorial will be cleaned this year for WW1 commemorations.
- Problems with road signs – the Parish Council is not responsible for these and reports any issues to SDC.
- More dog bins needed.
- No. 18 bus service may end – Stuart Peall explained that KCC are responsible for the bus service subsidies but if necessary SDC and the Parish Council will step in and look at alternatives.
- Tony Rossi will take a summary of this meeting to the February meeting of the PC. A show of hands was requested to the question “Do you have confidence in the Parish Council”, by a majority ‘no’ was recorded. The meeting agreed that ‘this group’ should continue to liaise with the Parish Council going forward (85 agreed)

### **Options:-**

1. Wait for 2019 elections : VOTES 75
2. Co-opt new members to the Parish Council : VOTES 9
3. For a Residents Association : VOTES 78
4. Call for a Parish Poll – cost is estimated at £2500 and would not be mandatory on the PC, it could also divide parishioners : VOTES 0

A parishioner asked for a 5<sup>th</sup> option, that a by –election is called now. It was commented that if an election is called now it can only be for the 3 current vacancies.

**In conclusion:**

15 parishioners have confidence in the Parish Council

55 do not

34 abstained.

NB. Votes to be verified

Presentations are available upon request from Mr and Mrs Scott.

END.