

UPPER CLATFORD
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8TH MARCH 2023
AT 6.30 PM IN
THE KING EDWARD VII MEMORIAL HALL
Draft until approved

Present speakers:

- Cllrs P Heslop (Chairman),
 - PCSO'S Spyridon Mouzakitis & Max.
 - Maggie Shelton Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and 10 Parishioners.
 - Minutes: E Attwood Parish Clerk
- Also present: 5 Parish Councillors

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and due to time constraints the Chairman rearranged the agenda to Allow the Police update first.

Police report: PCSO Spyridon & Max reported on the following.

- 55 Parishes to look after
- Be aware of shed break ins
- They recommend alarms and cameras to make the burglars lives difficult.
- Report all minor crimes as it identifies patterns
- A school governor of Clatford School reported on the problems with the school bus unable to gain access through the village and stated that the bus has had to reroute to avoid going through the village due to blockages. *PCSO's reported that it was outside their remit. They can have a presence to encourage sensible parking. Cllr Drew will be requested to write to HCC Highways as they have the responsibility for parking along the street.*
- Speed check data results were shared with Police. *PCSO'S reported that although it indicated speeding they needed their own data to be able to carry any enforcement. It was suggested that a speed watch group was set up.*
- The PCSO's were asked to target the Parish with speed cameras.
- Cllr queried speeding car along Foundry road but there was not enough evidence to pursue the culprit.

The Chairman thanked the Police for attending the meeting.

Maggie Shelton Watercress and Winterbournes Community Catchment Officer Hampshire and Isle of Wight Trust reported on the following:

- Funded by the lottery
 - Can train local people to check the health of the rivers.
 - Works with groups of landowners
 - Test's what is living in rivers and the quality of the water
 - Records data for website
 - Triggers Environment agency when high pollution is triggered
 - Work with landowners to pull invasive plants
 - Identifying when minks in the area. Some identified Anton River and if waterfowl disappears usually due to presence of mink.
 - Ensuring water vole population remain healthy
 - Education officer
 - Badges for Brownies and Scouts
 - £5000 funding for community projects
 - Agreed to train PC how to use water quality kits
- The Chairman thanked Maggie Shelton for her informative talk.

Chairman's report as reported at the meeting for all to read

Welcome everybody. I'm Peter Heslop and I've been Chairman of your Parish Council since June 2017. The Parish Council has 10 seats, and I am pleased to say that (in contrast to many other Parish Councils) we still have the full quota of 10 Councillors.

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Members of the public are welcome at all of our meetings (normally the second Wednesday each month) and all residents are encouraged to attend. The records of the meetings are published on the village website, upperclatford.com, and hard copies are posted on the notice boards in Anna Valley and just outside this Village Hall.

We continue to be well supported by our Test Valley Borough Councillors for Anna Ward, Cllrs Maureen Flood and David Coole (David is also one of our Parish Councillors), and we're grateful for the grant aid they've been able to facilitate over the past year. We are also effectively supported by our Hampshire County Councillor, Cllr David Drew from Goodworth Clatford.

Very significant to the continuity of the Parish Council this year was the appointment of Eveline Attwood as our new Parish Clerk following the resignation of our previous long-standing clerk Charles Emmett. I'd like on behalf of all of the Parish Council to express once again our thanks to Charles for his sterling service over many years, and also to welcome Eveline. Eveline brings with her a wealth of experience, not least a previous stint as Clerk to this Parish Council in previous years.

Our accounting year ends at the end of March. Spending details are published in the minutes of the monthly Parish Council Meetings. This year we anticipate spending approximately £39,628, slightly below the anticipated budget. This expenditure is met from the Precept (£32,195) rent from the Old Chalk Pit (£11,968) and grants (£2000), giving a small surplus over the year, enabling some restoration of earmarked funds for ongoing maintenance of items including playpark equipment, safety play surfaces and fences around play parks and the chalk pit.

Next year we do not intend to increase the Precept, which will remain at £48.56 per annum for a Band D household.

Looking back over the year, I'd like to pick out just some of the activities your Parish Council has been involved with, on your behalf. I think it illustrates that Parish Council business is about substantially more than just the "bins and grass cutting" of popular belief!

Regarding the progress of some major Planning Applications of local interest, I will mention the TVBC project known as Bury Hill Nature Reserve, to restore a large area of land which was previously farmed, to chalk grassland and give public access adjacent to Bury Ring: you will have seen that work on the new car park for 20 cars off Red Rice Road is currently under way.

Whilst welcoming the extensive tree planting which has already taken place, and the prospect of public access to large open area of restored chalk grassland, the Parish Council still has some concerns about likely volumes of traffic, parking on verges (if the new car park is full), and the possibility of more litter and dog mess. We now have improved liaison with TVBC who now provide the Parish Council with regular updates, and we will monitor closely the popularity and success of the project.

You may be aware that a Planning Application submitted recently by Acorn Bioenergy to build an anaerobic digester facility at Cowdown (adjacent to the Solar Farm) is partially within our Parish. The application has received national press coverage and widespread objections, and its acceptance or otherwise has yet to be determined by Test Valley Borough Council.

Also of local interest, the Planning Application for the so-called Conservation and Ecological Enhancement Scheme on land at the bottom of Sam White's Hill (which will involve the excavation of

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large lagoons) is still under consideration by Test Valley. Natural England has stated that further information is required on the nutrient neutrality of the proposed scheme.

Regarding Cowdown Solar Farm, we still have no success to report. Having concluded that the Parish Council does not have access to the resources which would be required to take legal action against the original developers, or the current owners of the Solar Farm in pursuit of the “generous” community benefit fund which was promised to our community as part of the original Planning Application process (but never honoured), we decided to change tack and appeal to the reputation of the current owners with requests for specific monetary support for local projects. I’m afraid this approach although resulting in warm words from the company concerned (Equitix), no contributions have yet been forthcoming.

The health and cleanliness of our rivers continues to cause wide concern both nationally and locally. Last year I spoke about the so-called Pan-Parish Forum which had been set up by the 8 parish councils which comprise the Pillhill Brook catchment area, with the intention of monitoring and influencing the activities of Southern Water in their ongoing attempts to improve their infrastructure in order to reduce (and eventually remove) the need for routine and extensive use of tankers to relieve pressure on the sewerage system. Those familiar with the area will know that this winter once again we have seen tankers deployed around the clock at locations including Mullens Pond at East Cholderton. The use of road tankers to transport sewage is not only expensive and environmentally damaging, but also clearly unsustainable in the long term. Southern Water has carried out extensive sewer lining upstream in the parish of Kimpton, and next on their list is Fyfield. The Pan Parish forum has weekly progress meetings with representatives from Southern Water, and quarterly updates where senior managers from Southern Water also attend.

Why is this important to us in Upper Clatford? Whilst tankering operations are not currently taking place within our Parish, we all remember 24-hour tankering at the Little Ann Bridge pumping station (at the junction of Foundry Road and Salisbury Road) last winter, and also two years ago when Southern Water placed notices at several places along the brook in Anna Valley warning people to keep children and animals out of the water due to untreated sewage discharges further up the valley.

The fact is that when the use of tankers can no longer cope with excess flows, Southern Water is allowed to discharge sewage directly into the brook, and of course whatever is put into the water further up the valley will find its way into our stretch of the brook including its passage through private gardens in Anna Valley and along the edge of Balksbury Bridge playing field. So I believe it’s very important that your Parish Council remains engaged in the Pan Parish Forum in order to be able to press for further improvements by Southern Water.

Periodic water quality testing is currently carried out by the Environment Agency, but they have limited resources and the Parish Council has decided in order to have an independent view of our river water quality, and to be able to respond quickly to any pollution event, it would be advantageous to have our own water testing kit. Our intention is to raise the necessary funds to purchase the specialist kit required, then to involve volunteers from our community to carry out regular water sampling and testing.

Suitable training will be offered to volunteers wishing to get involved in the sampling and testing, and I would ask anyone who is interested to contact the Parish Clerk.

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Last year we looked at the feasibility of a footpath to run between Upper Clatford and Goodworth Clatford in order to reduce the risk to pedestrians on the road which currently has no footpath. Whilst this remains a long-term objective, there are many obstacles to overcome. However as a first step, the Parish Council is implementing a plan for a permissive footpath to run along the eastern edge of the Sports Field (just inside the hedge line), so for at least this stretch of road pedestrians will have the choice of walking inside the hedge line rather than on the road.

Having received requests from parishioners for the provision of allotments in our parish, we have commenced a process of looking for suitable land that the Parish Council could buy or rent, to be made available to residents for this purpose. We are still looking for the most suitable site within the Parish, and I would ask you all for your help in this. Please email the Parish Clerk if you have any ideas in this respect.

The speed camera (or more correctly the Speed Indicator Device) continues to be deployed in its various locations around the village, encouraging motorists to observe the speed limit. The data gathered shows that the vast majority do drive within the speed limit, but there are (and maybe always will be) just a few who drive irresponsibly.

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Regarding the Sports field, it became clear to the Parish Council recently that the agreement between them and the UCYFC under which the football club has exclusive use of the field, was unclear as to rights, responsibilities and allocation of running costs between the two parties and required a complete revision. That out-of-date and unclear agreement has now been terminated by the Parish Council with effect from the end of the current football season.

It is the intention of the Parish Council to consult with parishioners as to the future long-term use of the sports field, to ascertain whether a new long-term agreement with the UCYFC is the preferred option, or whether alternative recreation activities should be considered.

In the consultation, we will invite ideas and proposals that could work alongside the continued use by the football club or as an alternative to the current use as a football pitch, while still respecting the wishes of the original donors of the field.

In order to provide time for such a consultation to take place, the Parish Council has offered a one-season extension agreement with UCYFC, the terms of which would allow the football club to continue for a further season whilst working closely with the PC to minimise running costs and jointly to apply for grants to assist with, for example, pitch improvements.

I'm delighted that the football club has formally accepted this offer, and we look forward to working closely with them.

Regarding the Chalk Pit (an important PC asset in Anna Valley) we have recently concluded negotiations with the current tenant (ANT Structures) following an independent fair rent assessment. The term of the new lease will be 5 years, and will realise £15,000 pa, to be uplifted by RPI each year.

A word about traffic in our Parish. Following another road traffic accident in Watery Lane when the small bridge parapet was once again demolished, the PC has flagged to HCC Highways the dangerous nature of this lane (one of our main links into Andover) due to the blind bends, the narrow carriageway, the lack of a footpath, and the seemingly ludicrous 60mph speed limit. Hampshire Highways has so far failed to engage with us despite the intervention on our behalf of Cllr Drew. The

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mix of vehicles and pedestrians on this narrow road appears to present particular risks, however the lack of fatalities or serious injuries to date seems to prevent any action being prioritised to reduce the risks. We hope it will not take a death or serious injury to prod Hampshire County Council into some sort of action. In the meantime, you are encouraged to report any near-miss incidents either directly to HCC or via a form on the Parish Council website.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank not only my fellow Councillors for all the valuable work they have done over the past year , but also some of our unsung volunteers: Jane Cooke, who manages our defibrillator at the Village Hall; Keith Williams, who manages the Speed Indicator Device, moving it on a regular basis as required by the HCC licence and downloading the data captured; Alan Wylde who provided First Aid cover for the annual Bonfire on Nov 5th.

Not strictly a Parish Council activity, nevertheless worthy of a mention this evening, (and worthy of your support), the Environmental Group led by Cllr Richard Bennett continues to do valuable work around the parish, which has included clearing ivy growth from trees, clearing footpaths and cutting back undergrowth. The group meets for a couple of hours on the first Saturday of each month, and if you'd like to help out I'm sure Richard and the rest of the group would be delighted.

A mention too for Julia Shah, whose Facebook group called "Mayflower Stephen Hopkins and your English Heritage" has proved so popular particularly in the USA amongst the descendants of Stephen Hopkins (one of our most famous ex-residents) inspiring an increasing number of Americans to visit Upper Clatford.

Often overlooked, I would also like to pay tribute to those who regularly pick up litter throughout our parish. I will unashamedly mention my wife Lesley Heslop who is out around the local lanes most weeks picking up litter. The amount of litter deposited and picked up is quite incredible. I'm sure it's a growing problem nationally, but we need to thank our local litter pickers, without whose efforts our lanes would be in just as disgusting a state as some neighbouring highways. Lesley is particularly interested in identifying the person who regularly deposits empty Foster's lager cans from the bottom of Sam White's Hill all the way up Red Rice Road.

Thank you to all councillors, officers and volunteers.

In the year ahead, we look forward to

The May fayre on Monday 1st May, the theme this year will be Cartoons

We're also looking forward to celebrating the Coronation of King Charles III with a street party on Sunday 7th May. Planning of this is in the early stages, but it is likely to take place in the area outside the Crook and Shears with some tables and chairs provided, with live music, and an invitation to bring your own food and drink. Cllr Crosthwaite-Eyre is coordinating the recruitment of volunteers for this event. If you would like to help with the planning, the logistics or just to help on the day, please contact Charles.

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We look forward to the opening to the public of the Bury Hill Nature Reserve, on a date yet to be announced

And also the commissioning of the new permissive footpath along the edge of the Sports Field, potentially the first stage in what could become a footpath between Upper Clatford and Goodworth Clatford.

Finally, I would like to remind everybody about the local elections in May this year when all Parish Councillor positions will be up for re-election. If you are interested in serving your community as a Parish Councillor and want to know more please talk to our Clerk, Eveline Attwood, or any of the existing Councillors.

Thank you all for your attention, I am now happy to take any questions.

Items raised by members of the public:

- 2 sections of fence missing at Bawksbury Bridge Play Park with a car parked
- Thanks expressed to Julia Shah expressed

Meeting Closed at 7.25 pm