

Whessoe Parish Council

MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting of Whessoe Parish held at Whessoe Parish Hall on Monday 23rd May 2022, at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor S Goldfinch (Chairman) Councillor J Bennett
Councillor F Minay Councillor D Woodley
Councillor S Dawson Councillor T Musson
Councillor S Patterson

One member of the public.

Parish Clerk – B Goldfinch

Apologies: Borough Councillors P Crudass

Welcome

Councillor S Goldfinch welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting.

Annual Report and Action Plan

Annual Report

I've been proud to have chaired Whessoe Parish Council for another year and am pleased to be able to bring you this report, that confirms that we have not only survived the Covid pandemic without it causing us any serious issues, but to be able to say that as a Parish Council we are going from strength to strength and engaging more with our community than we ever have before.

Last year I talked about the difficulties we'd faced during the pandemic and how we were coming out of the other end of that. I talked about our action plan for 2021-22, and firstly would like to update on our achievements against that action plan:

- ❖ We continued with our reopening of the Hall, and despite giving every regular hirer 3 months' free hall hire to assist in their getting back to normal, we have had healthy growth in use of the Hall (and income generated)
- ❖ We installed 2 x 65-inch TV screens, which are available for all hirers to use
- ❖ We *eventually* succeeded in getting DBC to agree to grant a 3-year licence for us to take over management of the green on Harrowgate Farm estate - though we have still not received any paperwork for this and are continuing to argue with DBC about grass cutting. We have therefore NOT yet held any events there - but more on that later
- ❖ We tried to engage with developers as they finalised their Reserved Matters applications. Unfortunately, DBC policy (unlike Durham CC) is to NOT allocate any S106 monies to parish councils, and to allow us only a very limited voice in influencing plans, and so building works

have started without our being able to benefit from monies that might have helped us improve the facilities available locally

- ❖ We are tracking and monitoring councillor training, encouraging councillors to ensure their training is up to date

Aside from all of that, we've done other things this year. Notably

- ❖ We've continued to challenge and comment on planning applications, hosting developers so that they could offer local residents the opportunity to comment and have input to their plans and proposals
- ❖ We continued to invest in the Hall and its facilities including
 - redecorating the Hall in January
 - commissioning a Condition Survey that will inform our future maintenance and improvement plans
 - Installing a key safe and changing the code frequently, so that we could better control keyholding and access to the Hall
- ❖ To bring the community together we have
 - Since December, hosted regular Quiz Nights in the Hall. These are well attended, and all proceeds are in aid of our adopted charity St Teresa's Hospice. From Dec - Mar these raised £583 and in April £233 - a total of £816 so far. St Teresa's Hospice is our adopted charity for the financial year 2022-23. A Jubilee Quiz Night is planned for 27th May
 - Held a Christmas event with a competition for children. The Christmas lights should have been switched on by the Mayor and the young winner, but when the mayor was held up the lights were switched on by the local child instead. This worked so well that it's how we plan to switch on the lights this year too and we will be running a competition in the lead up to December to identify our young celebrity.
 - Arranged a Jubilee Street Party for residents of Harrowgate Farm estate (who form 80% of our population) to be held on the green on the estate on 4th June.
- ❖ Received a £200 donation from Borough Councillors Clarke and Bell, that has been used towards the Jubilee celebrations mentioned above
- ❖ We have supported the start-up of a Coderdojo by a local resident, introducing him to Borough Councillors who were able to direct him towards funding opportunities, and we have directly supported through offering free use of the Hall. This is a club run by volunteers to help 7-15 yr. olds learn about computer coding in a safe environment.
- ❖ We are in the process of setting up a Working Group to advise on and help to organise events on Harrowgate Farm green. Terms of Reference have been drafted and volunteer residents from the estate have come forward to be part of this. They will meet for the first time after the Street Party.
- ❖ We've installed new signage on the rear of the Hall and at the front, to increase visibility and promote events

- ❖ We've set up a Staffing Committee to oversee employer/employee relations including hours and rates of pay

Action Plan 2022-23

Turning towards the coming year, we will

- ❖ Continue to encourage the community to come together for social events both at the Hall and on Harrowgate Farm
- ❖ Continue to maintain the Hall and encourage new users, particularly those who can enhance and enrich the lives of local residents
- ❖ Continue to seek opportunities to improve and increase the facilities we can offer

Open Forum

The resident raised an issue on Patches Lane concerning the illegal use of quad and trial bikes on the bridlepath. They gave a detailed explanation of the problem and answered questions raised by Councillors. They think the solution is for another gate to be placed at a strategic point on the lane.

It was agreed that they would provide photographic evidence of the issues and put together a specification for a potential solution with cost estimates. The Council would then visit the site location with them and Borough Councillors Crudass and Lee to discuss the best way to fund the project.

Close of Meeting

Councillor S Goldfinch closed the meeting at 7pm