

Boldre Parish Council - Annual Assembly held on 20th March 2017

Minutes of the Parish Council Annual Assembly held at 7.00pm in
Boldre War Memorial Hall

Council Members present:

Mr Oliver Moore (Chairman)	Mrs Angela Grainger	Mrs Alison Bolton
Mr Ken Thornber (County Cllr)	Mr James Eden	Mrs Pam Keen
Mr Lester Mortimer		Mr Peter Lock (Clerk and RFO)

Two guest speakers were in attendance. Mrs Joan Hawkes (Boldre Women's Institute) and Mr Nick Wardlaw (The Forestry Commission).

There were 10 members of the public in attendance

Apologies were received from:

Mrs Carol Morris, Cllr Colin Wise and Cllr Patrick Kempe.

Introduction

Parish Council Chairman Oliver Moore opened the meeting welcoming everyone to this year's Parish Assembly. His report is shown below:

The minutes of the last meeting were approved by the Parish Council at a meeting shortly after the holding of last year's Assembly. They are available on the website for reference.

Chairman's Report for 2016/17

Hello everyone, and welcome to the Boldre Parish Assembly 2017. I'm glad to see so many of you here. I would just like to take a few minutes to review the last year and look forward to the next 12 months.

The last 12 months have brought a large amount of change to the council. For those of you who attend these events regularly, you will notice that this is my first Annual Assembly as Chairman as Colin Wise chose to stand down from that position. This year has been a bit of a learning curve for me personally and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Colin in his new role as Vice Chair and the rest of the council for the support they have given me.

The last year has also seen further change in Council members, with several longstanding contemporaries stepping down. I'd just like to thank Tony Broomfield, Paul Tanner and Alan Wooldridge for their contribution over many years and hope that we may see some of them stand again in future.

With the loss of council members there is always the opportunity for other members of the community to take part in our business. I would like to welcome Lester Mortimer and Pamela Keen to the council and I look forward to working with them. We do still have places available, so if anyone would like to put their name forward we would be glad to consider them.

Signed & dated

Page 1 of 5

Boldre Parish Council - Annual Assembly held on 20th March 2017

In addition, the day to day activities the Parish Council carries out such as ensuring that community facilities are maintained, reviewing planning documents and working with other bodies, the council tries to make longer term improvements to the community.

A major focus of the last 12 months has been the perennial issue of Shallows Lane. A large amount of the challenges we experience here are due to flooding; access by unsuitable vehicles, lack of maintenance by landowners and fly tipping are major contributors. Since the last assembly we have been successful in making significant progress here, with a combination of the Lengthsman scheme to clear back vegetation and land owners to clear ditches. Shallows Lane is now a more pleasant experience to traverse.

The Council also try and work with local businesses and other bodies to maintain the Parish. A good example of this is the work Martin Boxall and his team from Roydon Woods did clearing the fallen poplar trees near Boldre Bridge.

At the last Annual Assembly, the issue of electoral boundaries was a very hot topic. The proposed solution of placing Boldre Parish with Lymington was met with concern by the community and the Parish Council, amongst many others, strongly objected to this. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts the Local Government Boundary Commission for England determined that Boldre would be placed with Lymington. The main reasoning behind that decision seemed to be balancing the size of the electorate under each County Councillor, as opposed to keeping parishes with similar outlooks together.

Though this is disappointing result, the Parish Council is looking forward to building new working relationships with our colleagues in Lymington to the benefit of the community.

As this year is an election cycle for Hampshire County Council, we do not know who will represent the parish at a County Council level but we look forward to working with them.

Looking forward to the next 12 months, I would like to start by mentioning the precept that forms part of Council Tax. The precept for next year has been fixed at £26050. This is 47.2 pence per week (£24.52 per annum) for a Band D home (the middle band) and is included in the total council tax each of us bears.

For this the Council runs and maintains the recreation ground, the seats across the parish and the greens in Boldre & Portmore. It helps with funding for the cemeteries at St John's and St Mary's and contributes a small grant to the Citizens Advice Bureau in Lymington.

The precept has been increased from last year and I want to provide some further detail on that. One factor in the increase is a general increase in costs, both in terms of the contractors we use and the safety and other regulatory requirements the council has to meet in order to provide safe facilities.

This coming year we have also provided a sum of £4000 for two main projects:

- The first is to allow us to get professional advice on the possibility of providing a much improved entrance and car park to the recreation ground. These plans are still at an early stage but the Council needs to make this investment in order to allow us to move forward. Should the project be

Boldre Parish Council - Annual Assembly held on 20th March 2017

deemed viable, the council anticipates that it would be majority funded by grants or other donations but the Council will require funds to facilitate this initiative.

- The second project is to address the issue of unsuitable vehicles on Shallows Lane. The council is currently working with Hampshire Highways, residents and other stakeholders to have this lane reclassified. This would allow us to place removable posts at agreed locations to prevent large vehicles from entering and causing damage. The intention of this work is to reduce the overall maintenance effort in this part of the Parish and ensure the lane remains open to pedestrians, cyclists and other users. As part of this, there will be formal plan agreed with Hampshire Highways along with all other parties and this will be made available to the community prior to implementation.

If these projects do not proceed we shall reduce the precept next year with any unspent amount. In addition to these specific projects, the Council will continue to work with the community on other activities such as retaining the phone box in Norley Wood, maintaining community facilities and supporting community interests.

With the mention of community interests, I just wanted to highlight one notable event coming this year which is the anniversary of 100 years of the WI in Boldre. I won't steal our presenters thunder, but this is a major achievement and should be congratulated. I know our local community has benefitted significantly from WI activities over the years and long may it continue.

Thank you for your time this evening. We will take any questions or issues you would like to raise with regard to the Parish or with the presentations given once the presentations have been completed.

Mr Nick Wardlaw (HLS Contract Manager, South England Forestry Commission) spoke about "Restoring and enhancing the internationally-important habitats of the New Forest"

The New Forest Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) Scheme is the largest environmental improvement scheme in England and is restoring internationally-important New Forest habitats.

So far, the scheme has returned more than nine miles of streams to their natural meandering routes, protecting the New Forest's internationally-important wetlands by slowing water flow.

The project aims to increase the New Forest's resilience in the face of modern day pressures, such as population growth and increased visitor numbers. It

Boldre Parish Council - Annual Assembly held on 20th March 2017

is a rare opportunity to conserve fragile habitats and support commoners on such a large scale.

The project is now expanding its monitoring work to gather an even greater range of scientifically robust evidence concerning the effectiveness of its various restoration techniques. The work will shed more light on the environmental benefits of the scheme and any improvements that could be made in the future.

The 10-year HLS agreement with Natural England is held by the Verderers of the New Forest. The scheme is managed by them in partnership with the Forestry Commission and the New Forest National Park Authority.

With illustrative slides Mr Wardlaw gave a very informative talk highlighting a return to meandering streams and forest drainage, removing humped straight channels (aimed at drainage to improve grazing land). A return to more New Forest 'lawns' is envisaged along with the removal of non-native species such as rhododendron.

Questions & discussion included:

- Brexit – EU funding secure until 2020
 - Site locations – next 3 years can be found on the Forestry Commission (FC) website
 - Norley Wood mire – habitat work done, species monitoring will follow. Dead trees will be left in situ, larger timber sold by the FC
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Mrs Joan Hawkes then gave an amusing and entertaining talk about the first 100 years of the Women's Institute in Boldre.

Mrs Elizabeth Perkins – a dominating personality, who challenged the status-quo, is credited with promoting the group from Boldre Bridge House. The group grew from an initial 18 members to providing regular school meals, with vegetables in abundance, plus hot milk puddings. The visit(s) of a dentist to the parish was a particularly interesting event.

Cllr Moore then introduced Hampshire County Councillor, **Ken Thornber**. Partly as a result of the boundary changes, our long standing County Councillor Ken will be standing down at the end of his term. He has long been associated with Boldre Parish Council and has been instrumental in many activities throughout the years. He has always taken a keen interest in using his influence in the County Council for the communities' benefit, raising issues with Hampshire Highways and providing grants for suitable projects.

Boldre Parish Council - Annual Assembly held on 20th March 2017

On behalf of the council Cllr Moore presented Councillor Thornber with a framed historical map covering much of Boldre Parish as a small token of our appreciation for all his hard work and the assistance to Boldre Parish council over his many years of service as a County Councillor.

Cllr Thornber responded with his thanks for the gift from BPC which was exactly what he would have wanted. He mentioned his 40 years' service with Hampshire County Council, 14 years as Leader then chairman. He stressed his disappointment with the decision to link Boldre with Lymington, away from the New Forest Brockenhurst Division. He also revealed that 80% of his postbag continued to be about highway issues in the New Forest thanks to the initial poor quality construction of tarmac on gravel based structure used many years ago. He concluded by with his best wishes to Boldre Parish in the future.

Questions and discussion with local parishioners

Mrs Joan Hawkes asked about the heavy vehicles seen recently in the vicinity of Friar's Wood. This was due to the construction of a lake and associated landscaping.

Mrs Lesley Boyt asked about the continued danger of potholes and erosion of verges. She mentioned that pothole edges were sometimes painted, but that the paint often wore away before any remedial work was completed. Cllr Moore stressed that everyone should report, and continue to report, potholes to the County Council. Verges were being investigated by BPC in several locations. These were sometimes the responsibility of the Forestry Commission, sometimes the County Council, and sometimes the adjacent landowner.

Cllr Moore closed the meeting at 8:15 pm

Peter Lock

Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer to Boldre Parish Council