

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Gurnard Electors held in the main hall at Gurnard Primary School in Hilton Road, Gurnard on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2011 at 7.30pm.

PRESENT: 13 electors, IW Councillor Fuller, Graham Street (speaker), David Green (speaker) and the Parish Clerk.

**1. PRESENTATION: "THE IW BAT HOSPITAL" WITH GRAHAM STREET**

Graham Street has been running the Bat Hospital with his wife Donna since 1997 from a spare room at their Sandown home on a purely voluntary basis, and can usually respond to a call for help within an hour. They care for injured, sick or disturbed bats and have both short term and long term "patients" – about 70% of rescued bats are returned to the wild but long term patients are not. The hospital is fully licensed and about 100 bats are taken in each year. Bats are a protected species and roost in a variety of habitats including roofs & trees. Numbers are declining, mainly due to erosion of natural habitats through changing farming, gardening and other countryside techniques and practices. There is a good network with other bat hospitals both in the UK and abroad, sharing ideas and information. There are currently 17 species of bat in the UK and their natural diet includes crane flies, mosquitoes and other insects, but meal worms are used in the hospital. The hospital is financed solely by voluntary donations with food alone costing about £30 per week, and gardeners can assist with slowing their decline by encouraging insect life in gardens with plantings, and full details are on the Bat Conservation Trust's website. Questions followed and Graham was thanked by the Chairman.

**2. PRESENTATION: "THE ECO-ISLAND PARTNERSHIP" WITH DAVID GREEN**

David Green is the Founder and CEO of the Eco-Island Partnership, which is a Community Investment Company. David has been working with the IW Council since 2003 with a view to growing sustainability on the Island and one success was the Big Green Picnic, but there has not been much evidence of embracing sustainability since! He has since renewed dialogue with the IW Council and also with the MEP and inspired a debated in Parliament looking to move the sustainability plan on the IW forward, and he referred to the recent campaign in Chale. He has also been fundraising and there seems to be plenty of funding available, all of which comes with conditions such as ensuring "whole community involvement" – there is £2.7M that could come to the Island provided the portfolio here "fits" the criteria. He went on to speak of the main challenges ahead: water (complicated) and energy. There is a 30% reduction in generating capacity in a country with increasing demand – HM Government is promoting the grid installation scheme (monitors in houses), but the further embracing of geothermal, tidal, photo-voltaic cell and other renewable schemes is fundamentally important. He added that there are currently power "brown outs" across the UK already which are being passed off as technical problems, but actually these are overload problem which can only get worse. There is also a food hub, and the aim here is to increase local production. David has extended an invitation to visit his own eco-friendly house, which is almost totally self-sufficient energy-wise and he hopes to come off the grid completely soon. One of the main problems to rolling this out is planning and the interpretation of policy – there is much liaison going on at all levels at the moment to overcome this. HM Government's "The Green Deal" should encourage power companies to install energy solutions in houses but this will not be for about 18 months yet, so the local Community Investment Company should be able to help in the interim which, if successful, will be funded up to £1M annually. Communities, and especially Parish Councils, will become more fundamental and a much greater focus under the Localism Bill, encouraging their members and residents as well as implementing local produce schemes such as Allotment Gardens. The greatest challenge of all, though, remains "people's hearts and minds" embracing sustainability properly! More ideas and promotions are needed in communities. Can Gurnard become a leader in this field? Questions followed and David was thanked by the Chairman.

**Refreshments were served at this point**

**3. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Jane McKean, Mike Peskett, Tony Hathaway, Hannah Tew, Daniel Whitehouse and Brian & Chris Brazier

**4. MINUTES**

The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting, held on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2010, were taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**5. MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

**6. REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

a. Parish Council Meetings

Since the last Annual Parish Meeting the Parish Council has met formally for a total of 11 full Council meetings. It has continued to act on behalf of the local community on many wide and varied issues, and also responds as a Stakeholder Consultee for the IW Council, Central Government and other Bodies on several wider local government issues.

The Planning Committee has also met regularly during the year, but only on 5 occasions in fact (10 meetings the year before), in order to respond to planning and licensing applications within the deadlines set by Development Control and Licensing. Up to the end of March a total of only 30 planning applications have been considered and commented upon during the year, which amounts to a reduction on last year of 44.4% (24 less applications). The Parish Council has continued to attend selected Planning Inspectorate appeal site inspections.

The Community Projects Committee, which started work in December 2006, has met 4 times since the last APM and continues to work through the Parish Plan Action Plan.

The Parish Council thanks Ward Councillor Paul Fuller for his support and the regular reporting on events at County Hall as they affect Gurnard during his 2<sup>nd</sup> year in office, and is particularly grateful for his obvious enthusiasm for the role he undertakes in our community.

A strong and positive relationship has also been maintained with the Cowes Safer Neighbourhood Officers (Police) and the IW Council's Neighbourhoods and Environment Officer, and the Parish Council is indebted to Police Constable Mark Thomas and PCSO Steve Oatley for their enthusiasm shown by attendance at Parish Council meetings to give reports. The Environment & Neighbourhood Officer (Neil Perry) is not able to attend meetings but there is regular communication

b. Gurnard-in-Bloom Jubilee Fund

This organisation continues to serve the Village well and everyone can see the fruit of their labours. The Parish Council is hugely grateful to the small band of people who create such colour in the Village, and it has been a pleasure to continue to support their work. The Parish Council has provided financial and other support during the year. The team continues to be concerned and frustrated by what they see as prolific parking on grass verges especially by contractors working in the Village, which undermines their work. The Team has also worked with the Police recently, providing work for vandal youth offenders on the various planted schemes

c. Waste Management

A wheelie bin has been supplied for the tourist season for the past 6 years, and is in place again now on the Esplanade and will remain there until the autumn half term holiday. There are 16 dog bins in the village, 11 of which the Parish Council funded and continues to service. The Parish Council declined to take part in the Beachwatch litter pick and survey exercise in September 2010, but in its place is now running a series of 3 local litter picks in the Village in March, June and October. The next clean-up campaign is planned for Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June – meeting at Woodvale Pumping Station at 10am if you can help.

d. IW Walking Festival

Gurnard featured in the 2010 walks programme and, thanks to our Walk Coordinator Jo Moore, there is another walk included in the 2011 programme that will take place on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> May starting from the Little Gloster on the Marsh at 2pm walking the 3½ miles to Thorness and back. There is also a 1 mile story walk in the morning, setting off from the Watersedge Restaurant at 10.30am.

e. Parish Councillors, Committee Members & Youth Advisors

The next full Parish elections take place in May 2013, but since the last APM there have been 2 seats that have become available due to resignations (Ben Hollis & Elaine Butler). One was filled by co-option as an election were not demanded, but there is still one vacancy for which cooption applications will be received until 30<sup>th</sup> April. New to the Parish Council since the last APM is Daniel Whitehouse. Some chairmanship training has been undertaken by Councillors this year. There are or have been Parish Council representatives on the IW Assn of Local Councils, Cowes

Youth Club Management Committee, Island Waste Advisory Group, Marsh Road Residents Association, the May Queen Committee and the Cowes, Northwood & Gurnard Community Transport Forum, and all of these have involved outside meetings and other activities from time to time. One Parish Councillor also serves as a Parish Tree Warden alongside Richard Bolwell. Attendance by Parish Councillors at Full Council meetings from April 2010 to March 2011 managed 100% for 2 meetings during the year, but only averaged 76% for Full Council meetings during the year, which is a drop from 82% last year and 89% the year before. Membership of the Community Projects Committee has remained full for the whole year. The Parish Council has benefitted from the input of some Youth Advisors on committees, working groups and Full Council meetings since the scheme was 1<sup>st</sup> launched in 2008. Originally there were 6, with 2 coming from Solent Middle and 4 from Cowes & Medina High Schools. The Parish Council is very grateful to efforts of Hannah Tew (who we lose in September – University), Harry Collier, Zoe Divers and Mark Adair.

f. Grants

The Grants programme runs during March and April, and the Parish Council approved grants totalling £575 on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2011. Full details of all grants paid last year (2010) are in the financial statement.

g. Grass Cutting.

In addition to the verge cutting undertaken by the IW Council, the Parish Council has continued to fund the maintenance of the grassed areas at Pond Green and Gurnard Heights. The local contractor appointed in 2009 & 2010 continues for this year. Some major shrub and tree pruning work was also undertaken again during the year at Pond Green.

h. Website

The website has continued to be regularly updated, and is increasingly being used by both residents and people from outside the Village as well as some from many Countries across the world – hits are fairly steady at between 300 and 500 visits per month, which is about the same as last year. The forum is still not used much.

i. Traffic Management Plan

The Parish Council's Traffic Management Plan Working Party, which consists of 10 members including 3 Councillors, has met 3 times in total during the past year with the next meeting scheduled for next month. Issues dealt with during the year include speeding, school buses, Highways and general safety problems.

j. Village Hall

The Parish Council continues to be indebted to the Hall Management Committee for all its hard work. The Parish Council has supported the work there both in kind and financially this past year. Improvements continue under the excellent and enthusiastic leadership of Carolyn Sibley.

k. Projects

The main project this past year was completing the Play Area on the Village Green, and this included the installation of 4 memorial seats and the completion of a usage survey for the funders, which our Youth Advisors assisted with.

The initial work undertaken last year to consider what to do with the primary school site after the school moves to the Solent Middle site has been taken over from a resident's group by the Community Projects Committee. No hard commitments have been made as consultation with the Village did not produce a mandate, but an expression of interest has been submitted for the fields, the orchard and the swimming pool should the site become the subject of an asset transfer.

The Gurnard Community Association (charity) has continued to function, albeit in a low key mode. The committee has met just twice during the past year, one meeting of which was the AGM. This will primarily be used to draw down funding for projects that the Parish Council is unable to apply for, but where voluntary groups can. The committee is once again up to full strength.

The Parish Council worked alongside the Sailing Club on a project to reintroduce the Gurnard Regatta last year, and this 1<sup>st</sup> such event for some years now took place on 14<sup>th</sup> August and was a real success – there is a full account of the day on the news section of the Parish Council's website. The event is being repeated with a couple of additional attractions this year, and this is set for Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> August from 12.30pm to 4.30pm. If anyone wants to help out with anything on the day, do contact the Parish Clerk.

In spite of about 5 years of work, the Parish Council's efforts to have the footpath behind the houses in Gurnard Heights formally adopted by the IW Council came to nothing – the project fell victim to the financial cuts, but Rights of Way has said it will give some basic maintenance to it.

The Parish Council continues to work with the IW Council on the monitoring of the Public Toilet Block. Councillors complete an inspection report on cleanliness twice a week and a 3<sup>rd</sup> weekly inspection is carried out on the fabric.

The Parish Noticeboard had a complete overhaul during the summer which was very necessary due to a bad leak.

The Parish Council will be working towards the reaccreditation of its Quality Council status later this year.

The latest project is community transport - with the demise of the Wightbus scheme, the Parish Council has been working with Northwood Parish Council and Cowes Town Council on creating a replacement service to run from 1/9/11. The partnership working has been very positive, but there is still much to do. If anyone wishes to volunteer to assist by becoming a volunteer driver, please do contact the Parish Clerk.

l. May Queen

One Councillor continues to serve on the May Queen committee and the Parish Council will be attending the fete officially for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time on 2<sup>nd</sup> May and this year's event will be used to consult and inform on 2 issues, so do come along and say hello.

m. Affordable Housing

This project has marked time this past year, and in fact it could also have regressed in that the Rural Housing Enabler post has been withdrawn. The project is on the back burner waiting for better times, or proper Government funding for land purchases.

n. Victorian Water Fountain at Woodvale

This time last year refurbishment work was on-going, but it was finally completed last summer and looks great. The Parish Council assisted by providing about 30% of the cost.

**7. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

The Parish Clerk presented a summary of the accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011, which has been approved by the Parish Council subject to audit. Income for the year was down from £102,820.19 last year to £34,866.83 this year – last year's income was inflated due to the receipt of outside play area funding. Expenditure was also down from £97,877.33 last year to £38,551.58, again almost totally due to the lack of play area equipment expenditure this year. The General Fund (carry forward figure) at the end of the financial year has reduced from £31,272.01 last year to £27,587.26 this year, which was almost totally due to some play area expenditure being incurred this year, when the income for it was received the previous year. £800.00 was paid out in community grants, and there was a £2,339.78 under-spend (general budget) for the year when comparing the annual income with expenditure, and this was due to under-spends in budget headings election, street furniture, and the contingency fund. Questions and comments made included the level of carry-forward to the following year.

**8. NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH**

Ken Chapman was not able to attend the meeting.

**9. SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS**

PC Mark Thomas attended and crime remains low on his beat. There have been 104 crime reports for 2010/2011, which compares with 101 for 2009/2010 and 104 for 2008/2009. Criminal damage has fallen from 28 reports in 2009/2010 to 25 in 2010/2011, which is about 50% of the previous 2 years. 17 report of violence were received, 2 fewer than 2009/2010. House burglaries for 2010/2011 were 7, up from 1 in 2009/2010 and 5 in 2008/2009 – most burglaries take place from unsecured premises, so the advice to home owners is be more security conscious. Motor (and contents) thefts have dropped from 16 in 2009/2010 to 11 in 2010/2011, but recently have dropped to zero following the arrest of a 24 year old male who has been charged with thefts from motor vehicles. Crime has seen a rise in Cowes in the last 12 months, but the previous year was unusually low.

**10. NEIGHBOURHOOD AND ENVIRONMENT OFFICER**

Neil Perry was unable to attend the meeting.

**11. IW COUNCILLOR**

Councillor Fuller outlined what had been a busy year for him and this included his role in the Ward and representing the community. Details of his surgeries and availability were included, and he went into some detail on his involvement during the year giving a calendar account of his activities which were many and included planning, new schools, highway improvements, launch of his blog, concessionary travel for students, older voices, the SGN gas pipeline works, parking permits, public transport, development in the village, budget matters and libraries. He closed by giving a full accounts of his allowances and expenses and listing his aspirations for the forthcoming year.

**12. PRESENTATION OF PARISH AWARD**

The Parish Council wished to recognise Mike & Wendy Peskett and Brian & Chris Brazier for their service to the village community, often above and beyond what was expected. Mike Peskett and Brian & Chris Brazier were not able to attend the meeting, but Wendy Peskett received the award for Mike and the Chairman will present the Braziers with a framed certificate later at the shop

**13. OPEN SESSION**

Comments included a dying tree on the Village Green and the desire that it is NOT replaced, noise from the Play Area, the imposition of a curfew for the play area and “keep quiet” signage, overflowing litter bins on the Esplanade, the provision of more litter bins and dog bins and the spending of more of what was called “Parish Council Reserves” on projects. Concerns were also expressed about commenting on and/or calling a public meeting about the latest Island Plan consultation, and especially the identified sites for developable and deliverable sites in the Parish (SHLAA).

The meeting closed at 10.15pm.

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CHAIRMAN