

OTTERHAMPTON PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

on
THURSDAY 23 MAY 2024, 7.00pm at Otterhampton Village Hall

PRESENT:

Lindsey Parsons (Chair), Connie Sanders (Vice-Chair), Gina Mear (Clerk), Tina Gardener, Mike Haycraft, Carol Bradbury, Dave Dodge, Steve Parker.

APOLOGIES:

None.

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY HELD ON 04.05.23:

The minutes of the Annual Assembly held on 04.05.23 were approved and signed by the Chair.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

L Parsons presented her report which covered the last year. The full report is appended to these minutes and will be placed on the notice boards and www.combwich.org.uk website.

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS:

1. The Clerk presented the annual accounts to 31.3.24. The total balance with reserves was £57, 729. Receipts decreased by £3,071, largely due to nil CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy). Payments decreased by £2,291.
2. Detailed accounts with an explanation of variances have been circulated to councillors and will be placed on the notice boards and the Combwich.org.uk website.
3. There were no questions. The Clerk will be very happy to answer any queries residents may have on any aspect of the parish council finances and supply an on-line copy of the accounts if requested.

PUBLIC SESSION:

Otterhampton Primary School – Claire Luce

Claire has been at OPS for nearly six years and thanked the community for their understanding due to the large number of cars bringing children to and from school. Claire talked about the School Streets initiative which has been 18 months in the process and will be starting on Monday 3rd June. School Lane will be closed to traffic for half an hour in the morning and afternoons (8.25-8.55am and 2.55-3.25pm). Otterhampton is the first school in Somerset to go ahead with this scheme. There will be exemptions including residents and deliveries and volunteers will steward the closure. The consultation will be open from 3rd June for residents and parents. This scheme has been done through Somerset Council and Sustrans. Claire is keen to get out in the community and have good community engagement. Anyone is welcome to visit the school.

Gardening Club – Steve Parker

The idea for the gardening club started in Steve's shed and is now bigger than he ever expected. OPRA funds the hire of Harbour View bar. Mike Narraway runs a scheme where anyone of a pensionable age can have an hour's free gardening and then a small charge for any more work. The club ran a competition last year and will be putting on a flower show this September and will also have a stall at the church fete.

St. Peter's Church – Jan Church

The congregation has increased with 13 regularly attending the evening service. There is a group of bell ringers. Volunteers that help with the running of the church include cleaners and people who do the flowers. There is a new noticeboard. Money needs to be raised for refurbishment inside the church. There is going to be a consecrated area outside the church for burying ashes. The process to put this in place has started but Jan is unsure how long it will take. There haven't been any weddings this year but baptisms and funerals have taken place. There is a good rapport with the school.

Combwich Boat Club – Trevor Reason

The boat club has been going for 45 years. It is a member's only, not-for-profit club. There are currently 64 members with numbers increasing. The UK Waterski Race took place two weeks ago and this is going to be an annual event but taking place slightly later in the month due to migrating birds. HPC's Haul Road was used for bringing in the boats and campervans. Next year there will be 12-13 boats. The effects on birds at Steart Marshes was monitored and it was reported that the races didn't disturb the birds. The facilities at the club are available for hire. Gig rowing is still taking place every weekend including taking part in regattas. Cllr Sanders asked about the boats in the pill. These are private moorings owned by the Crown Estates. The boat club removed one of the sunken boats at a cost of £500. Regarding the boat that keeps sinking, unfortunately the owner has passed away but another member is hoping to take it on and remove it. Regarding the two boats in a poor state of repair, again one was owned by the deceased member and it is estimated they will cost £500 - £1000 to remove.

Stear Marshes – Nicole Turnbull

Nicole works as the Engagement & Learning Manager for the WWT managing 60 volunteers. It will be the 10th anniversary of the marshes this year. They are currently building a cob roundhouse and engaging with the school.

Choir – Nicole Turnbull

The choir started in 2011 and normally 10 people meet for fun singing. They could no longer afford the rent at the village hall and have moved to the church.

OPRA – Tina Gardener

OPRA was formed in March 2000 and will next year be celebrating 25 years and hope to mark it with some sort of celebration. They were fortunate that a previous committee member had the inspiration to set up a 100 Club and this is now the main source of income. The club has 79 members who between them have 97 numbers which generates about £2,300 a year to use on activities including the Easter egg hunt, fireworks, Christmas trees and Christmas dinner. On 1st June they will be holding the annual cricket match to raise funds for the Brain Tumour Charity in memory of the late Murray Lister who was a parish councillor. Their committee is a friendly group and meetings are usually held in the pub and are quite sociable. There is always space for extra committee members if anyone is interested.

Brownies – Liz Brown

Liz was unable to attend but sent in a report which was read to those in attendance.

2023/24 has been a very active and successful year for the Brownies. Since re-opening face to face after the lock down we had been struggling to keep our numbers up, and did even think we might have to close at one time. Numbers have fluctuated from a high of about eighteen to a low of eight. However, we have now managed to stabilise and keep numbers to about 14. We began last summer term with 18 girls and a year later we now have fourteen Brownies, including eleven who were with us last year and six who have been with us since 2021. We take girls from Combwich and the surrounding villages which often leads to new friendships being made. It is lovely to have such a mix of girls and we wouldn't be able to keep our numbers up without them.

We belong to a very active District and Division both of which often put on exciting combined events for Rainbows, Brownies and Guides, recent ones have included a trip to Flip Out in Wellington, an activity day centred on recycling and culminating with a fashion show in Wembdon, a trip to the cinema and coming up very soon a sleepover to achieve a special Night at the Library Badge at North Petherton Community Centre/ Library.

We have also made the most of events offered by South West Region, notably a sleepover at the Bishop's Palace in Wells over the Coronation weekend last year, where the Bishop himself joined us for supper al fresco. Coming up very soon is another regional event which we have managed to secure places for – a very exciting Night with the Tigers at Dartmoor Zoo, which all but one of our Brownies are coming to.

All these things are in addition to our normal Monday evening meetings where the Brownies follow an interesting themed programme to learn new skills and, more importantly for them, gain lots of badges. We have a very important evening coming up in a couple of weeks as two of our older Brownies have gained their Brownie Gold Award (the highest achievement in Brownies), so we will be having a presentation evening to celebrate their achievement, gained by hard work over the last few years. Hopefully they will then move onto Guides in Bridgwater to continue their Guiding journey.

We are also always very keen to have a community presence and are still hoping to invest in a memorial bench for Jean Kibby, to be placed in the Brownie copse where we also have a plaque marking the spot where our time capsule is buried. We already have a sum of money towards this, and in the autumn we are hoping to have a fund raising event, in the form of an open morning, to raise the rest of the money we need to complete this project.

We hosted a very successful Christmas tea party for some of the older residents of the village last December. Our guests took part in games, crafts and singing with the Brownies and were then treated to a luxurious tea, all of which was prepared and served by the girls.

Our leaders have also received awards recently. Karen Barton, who is also the current Bridgwater West district commissioner received her 25 years service award, and Liz Brown her 50 years long service award. Over the past year we have welcomed Jennie Arend on board as a leader in training. We hope she will soon complete her training and spend many happy years with the unit.

We always have room for new members, especially seven and eight year olds and any publicity you can give for this would always be welcomed.

CONFIRMATION OF MEMBER'S INTERESTS

The register of member's interests is currently being completed.

The meeting ended at 8.10pm

Signed:
(Chairman)

Date: 23.05.24