

CHARLTON HORETHORNE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Julie Ferguson. Chilthorne Knapp, Chilthorne Domer, Yeovil, BA22 8QZ

Tel: 07783 475200

E-mail: clerk@charltonhorethorne.org.uk

Minutes of a virtual meeting of Charlton Horethorne Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 5th May 2021 at 18:00hrs

Present – Councillors

Michael Hutchings (Chairman), Julie Ferguson (Parish Clerk), and 13 members of the public.

01 To receive apologies for absence

Hayward Burt (District Councillor) had sent his apologies

02 To approve and sign as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED: Due to no minutes being presented for approval, it was agreed to defer approval of the minutes to the APM in 2022

03 Chairman of the Parish Council's report

All meetings have been held by zoom.

Thank you to Julie for keeping her head above water and making sure we have held meetings, and taken necessary actions, according to the rules.

Brief reports on major issues:

Planning: One or two individual private house developments received approval; plus somewhat larger developments at Cider House Farm and Gunville Farm.

Broadband: Wessex Internet are in the process of extending superfast broadband into Sigwells. Steps are being taken to bring superfast to Stowell as well. Ian is managing the process of extending the Wessex Internet network into the heart of Charlton Horethorne.

Speeding: we are in consultation about sharing a speed indicator device with another parish.

Footpaths: Jane Jeanes (with much hands-on help from Simon, and from a number of local farmers) has brought about great improvements in a number of footpath access gates and stiles.

Covid: thanks are due to Anna Mike/Northam for coordinating a group last year that ensured supplies of groceries and medical items for vulnerable people who could not get to the shops during the first lockdown.

Shop: Tom and Caroline are to be congratulated for keeping the shop open and expanding its range, and for assisting in the distribution of groceries during the first lockdown.

Communication: Jenny takes credit for keeping vigilant about people moving into the village, so that as many as possible village residents are kept informed about Parish Council and other village matters.

Thank you to my fellow parish councillors for having done the lion's share of the PC work over the past year.

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04 County Councillors report

No report had been provided.

05 District Councillors report

No report had been provided.

06 Charlton Horethorne Village Hall report

We've been closed for what seems like ages, but the good news is that we will be re-opening from Monday 17th May in line with Step 3. And it will be open as a polling station for the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections tomorrow

There will be restrictions when we re-open - and we are limiting numbers to 30 initially - and so a number of the village activities are unlikely to re-start until Step 4, hopefully on 21st June. But many of the exercise classes are planning to return from the 17th of May, the Gardening Club is hosting a talk on Tuesday the 18th and we hope that other groups will follow shortly afterwards.

Despite the lack of activity over the last few months, we have been pretty busy, and – helped somewhat by some Government COVID grants - we have taken the opportunity to do a few things such as:

- redecorate the bar area, some of the loos, and the entrance hall;
- purchase a new storage shed for the lawn mower and other equipment;
- replace many of the windows;
- and we have given the hall a thorough spring clean including polishing the floor of the main hall, so it is now looking spic and span and ready for activities to start from the 17th.

Worth reminding everyone of the wide range of regular activities that use the hall:

- Short mat bowls on Mondays and Wednesday;
- Pilates and Yoga, also on Mondays and Wednesdays;
- Fine Folk on Tuesday mornings;
- The Arts and Crafts Group which meets every Wednesday morning;
- And Evolve Fitness, which runs 7 classes during the week at various times of the day.

So lots there for every for everyone, plus of course:

- Bill Closs's monthly coffee mornings for the Over 60s on the Second Thursday of each month;
- The village Pantomime Society (CHAPS) - usually starts in September and runs through to their performances in late January;
- The Youth Theatre - runs from January and through to early April.

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And the Hall remains a wonderful venue - and great value - for private parties, events, meetings and talks, so do get in touch if you want to use the hall at any stage. Contact details and information for all the main groups can be found inside the front cover of the Parish Magazine and you can find them all via the Village's website on the Groups and Activities page.

And – worth noting that the website features a prominent link to the Parish Council Website – so you are only one click away from Parish Council business

Finally – a plea for volunteers. As we all know, the Village Hall is a vital community asset. But it relies on the effort and good will of a small group of volunteers. We are delighted to have welcomed Chris Nicholson and Terry Edwards recently, but we still have 3 vacancies. So – if you want to help and make a difference – please do get in touch. It would be great to hear from you.

We look forward to opening on the 17th.

21/07 Millennium Green report

Simon Purcell provided a report on the Millennium Green, being very much open throughout the pandemic in contrast to some of the village's other resources, as a well visited green space. There are currently 4 trustees consisting of a treasurer, events manager & 2 other trustees looking after general maintenance & upkeep. A significant event with the Shakespeare Players was a successful & well supported event, however it would be unlikely to be repeated due to the significant costs involved unless a sponsor could be found. Future events at the MG would likely be on a smaller scale & lower key. The Parish are continually indebted to the people who look after the green, including those who regularly visit, this being a credit to community in general & thanks go to all. The Chairman thanked Mr Purcell for taking on the mowing of the grass, saving the PC a significant amount of money.

21/08 Charlton Horethorne PCC report

2020 Annual Report and Accounts for the PCC of St Peter & St Paul, Charlton Horethorne with St Mary Magdalene, Stowell.

Background

If there is one word to summarise the year 2020, it is COVID – most specifically the Coronavirus-19 Pandemic. The year dawned with no hint of the wholesale disruption to all walks of life on a truly global scale from March onwards that the virus would bring. As I write nearly a whole year has passed since the nation was plunged into a total lockdown on 23rd March including the absolute closure of all churches until a partial and tightly controlled re-opening in late June. There have been 2 further lockdowns of varying severity; for the whole of November, and then from around December 27th – this most recent of which is on-going as I write in early March 2021. These lockdowns and their associated restrictions and prohibitions have had an enormous impact on the church and our worship patterns.

Notwithstanding the extraordinary level of disruption and limitation to our worship, 2020 saw a remarkable resilience amongst the congregation. Our Vicar Rev. Sarah Godfrey has excelled in leading the church through an unprecedented period. She is to be whole heartedly thanked and

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congratulated for her dedication and creativity in seeking ways to stay connected to parishioners, to continue her work with the school, and to provide support and guidance to all who requested it.

Review of the year

The year started very positively with the introduction of the "Big Village Breakfast" events. These were a new initiative stemming in part from the church's "Blue Sky" thinking event held in mid 2019, and a desire amongst some of the parents at the primary school to find a way in which the whole community could come together – young and old, to meet and socialise. There were 2 of these breakfasts held – one each in January and February in the village hall.

They can only be described as a complete success with well over 40 coming to both events to enjoy a full cooked English breakfast with tea and coffee, to meet and make friends, and to enjoy the company of others in a relaxed and informal setting. Breakfasts were free however those attending were requested to make a donation towards the cost of the food and hire of the hall, with any surplus to be shared between the Primary School and the church – both events more than covered their costs which is a tribute to the generosity of those coming. Breakfasts were cooked and served by a different team of volunteers drawn from both the church and the wider village community. While deliberately not official "church" events, there was a low key but unmistakable Christian "flavour" to them with the vicar saying Grace before food was served, the Gospel for the day printed and distributed on all tables along with a few thoughts for the day, and faith based quizzes for those who wished to complete them.

Sadly, the COVID lockdown meant plans for further breakfasts had to be cancelled however the model has been tried and tested and is clearly popular so these will re-start as soon as they are permitted.

There were 5 PCC meetings during the year with 3 meetings held in person while the other 2 were online via Zoom. The Church remained open daily from 10am to 4pm for private prayer and casual visitors from Jan 1st until the first lockdown, after which the church had to be locked until further notice. That point came in June with the beginning of a gradual easing of restrictions, since when the church has been opened every Sunday and Wednesday between 10am and 3pm.

Following completion of a risk assessment as directed by the Diocese in mid-June carried out by the Vicar and church warden, it was agreed by the PCC to re-start physical church services from July onwards. The risk assessment concluded that a congregation of 30-35 could be accommodated safely in the building while maintaining the required social distancing of 2m between individuals or those "bubbling" together. This number also applied to weddings and funerals which were permitted once more. Regrettably bell-ringing and singing were banned despite the re-commencement of worship in the church building – a ban that has yet to be relaxed.

On another positive note, the introduction of online worship services via the Zoom platform has allowed members of the congregation of St. Peter and St. Paul's to join with others from the wider Benefice in a weekly act of worship on Sundays at 10:30 ably led by Vicar Sarah. While not an entirely satisfactory substitute for physical services, these Zoom services have been most uplifting and it is encouraging to note that on average there have been 50+ congregants joining these services.

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The COVID related restrictions imposed on the church have had an impact on all aspects of church life. Most activities which have traditionally been performed by volunteers such as church cleaning, provision of flowers, etc, have all had to be largely suspended, though there was a partial re-start to these between July and October when a limited number of physical services were held. As I write, a recent appeal via the Parish Magazine has resulted in 3-4 new volunteers stepping forward, however the true impact of COVID on volunteer numbers will not be clear until well into 2021 when a gradual relaxation of restrictions is expected coinciding with the national vaccination programme.

Another area of church outreach that has been negatively impacted by COVID has been the work done by Rev. Sarah in the Village Primary School. That said, Sarah deserves tremendous credit for continuing to engage with the school's children and parents throughout the Pandemic again using Zoom to good effect. Unfortunately Bill and May Closs have had to curtail their stalwart contribution to school music and outreach since the start of the first lockdown.

Sadly the Pandemic and attendant restrictions meant there were no Lent lunches, nor were there any services in church over Easter. Other casualties on the church calendar were the annual Music for Pleasure event, the Patronal festival, farm service, annual act of Remembrance, and Christmas Carol service.

While there was no Harvest Supper there was a Harvest Festival service, and the Annual Gift Day was woven into the much delayed APCM held on 11th October. A highlight for many was the very beautiful Darkness to Light Advent Carol service held in early December between lockdowns – in some ways the absence of singing was completely mitigated by the organ playing of John Mathew and recorded carols on the church's sound system. There was a wonderful quiet solemnity to the service and the gradual spreading of light was very magical. Happily we were able to hold a Christmas Day morning service which provided another highlight for many – standing outside the church door on a crisp, sunny morning with thick frost everywhere and being able to sing a carol together to welcome the Christ child.

The Parish Magazine deserves a special mention and Lucy Beney (editor) a particular note of thanks. Far from letting the COVID Pandemic obstruct production and distribution of the magazine, she has used it as an opportunity to document the impact of the Pandemic on all aspects of village life inviting contributions from school children, university students, a local GP, a Samaritans volunteer, amongst others, to comment on their experiences of life under COVID. The magazine has been produced and delivered every month into every house in the Parish – during the first lockdown by Lucy in person to avoid having to call on the usual band of distributors most of whom were obliged to self-isolate. Furthermore Lucy has set up a Parish Magazine Facebook site to ensure important village news, as well as a summary of Rev. Sarah's weekly sermon are available to the younger generations who rely on social media for news and information.

We have continued to maintain the fabric of the church, with a series of regular jobs despite having to cancel the traditional Spring and Autumn churchyard "Clean-up" events. The churchyard has been maintained and cut by Martin Hunt along with other tasks as they arise. Another highlight has been the felling and removal of some 20 self-seeded "false" acacia trees in the churchyard following the recommendations of the tree surgeon employed by the PCC in 2019 to develop a tree

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management plan for the churchyard. This has opened up a large hitherto inaccessible area of the churchyard.

Special thanks are owed to Paul Springett who not only manages church finances in a highly efficient and professional manner as our Treasurer, but has devoted much time and energy to on-going efforts to cutback the undergrowth, repair the perimeter walls, and generally provide sound guidance and help in all aspects of maintenance. Paul has also arranged to have the lead on the church building tagged with "Smart Water" as a deterrent to thieves, and has overseen the replacement of several older light fittings inside the church with modern LED lights that are both brighter and much more energy efficient.

The "Re-ordering" exercise kicked off in 2019 has been put on indefinite hold as a result of the Pandemic.

Our grateful thanks go to our organist Mr. John Mathew as well as Mr. Bill Closs. While singing has been prohibited as a result of the COVID restrictions, both have played the organ and/or the clavinova during the services that have been permitted in the church. As noted earlier the Bell ringers have been largely unable to ring during most of the year, however we are grateful to Mrs. Catherine Mathew our Tower Captain for her dedication to our Bells, their maintenance, and the occasional ringing when permitted.

So in close, 2020 has been a remarkable and very memorable year the like of which has never been seen, and hopefully will never be seen again. As I write, the nationwide vaccination program is proving an enormous success and is well ahead of target. It is hoped that this, with it's allied protection from the worst effects of the virus, will result in the steady and irreversible return to some degree of normality as enjoyed by most prior to the Pandemic. Let us hope that we can look back in time, and console ourselves in God's ever present care and encouragement, and on a lighter note, that we can "unlearn" the new language of the Pandemic which has given us such memorable terms as "bubbling", "social distancing", "stay safe", "protect lives, protect the NHS", and last but not least..."you're on mute"!!

Charlie Beney – Church Warden on behalf of the PCC March 2021

21/09 Any other reports

A member of the public spoke about the volunteer driver scheme which had been running in the village for many years but lately forgotten about and was now being regenerated, with the service still available and 12 people having put their name forward as volunteer drivers. The service can be used for local trips to doctors, hospital, collecting prescriptions etc. with details being published in the parish magazine to serve as a reminder.

A report was provided by the Community Land Trust, who have been seeking to construct 6-10 affordable homes in parish over the last 4 years, with no suitable land (ideally less than 1 acre) becoming available. In recent times the most favoured option had been the 1.5acre Glebe land site, opposite the church and next to the school. Efforts to purchase the land had failed in recent years as the church refused to sell, but recent change in culture within the Church of England and staff within the Diocese of Bath & Wells have given them reason to try again. If they are unsuccessful,

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the CLT may decide to put themselves in abeyance due to significant running costs, however if land does become available, they will likely take it forward.

10 Public open session

There were no further reports.

19:00 – Meeting closed