

## CHARSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

### ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH

Minutes of Meeting Held on Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2024

**Present:** Councillors Pedgrift (Chair), Moor (Vice Chair), Haird, Laird, Youngman and Pam Hembra (Parish Clerk)

**Attendees:** 2 Members of the Public

		Action
1.	<b>Update on the Parish Council's achievements and activity over the year and on what is being proposed for 2024/2025.</b>  Chairman's Report attached below	
2.	<b>To approve the Annual Parish Minutes of 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023</b>  The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.	
3.	<b>To Receive Reports from Other Organisations.</b> Village Hall AGM Report attached below  Charsfield Recreation Ground AGM Report attached below	
4.	<b>Open Forum for the Public to Raise Questions</b> There were no questions from the public.	

### REPORTS

The councillors have continued to analyse and comment on various legislative documents for ESC and SCC which help shape the future of our village, plus comment on numerous local planning applications.

We play an active part in Carlford and Fynn Valley Community Partnership meetings, Greenprint Climate Forums and Partnership Road Safety Forums as well as various Suffolk Association of Local Councils activities.

Nearer to home the major event this year has been the devastating flooding and subsequent hardship suffered by so many of our villagers, many of whom are not yet reinstated in their homes. As a consequence, the Charsfield Flood Action Group was formed and has worked diligently to gather evidence for Suffolk County Council. They will be meeting with

representatives of the relevant agencies later this week to examine this evidence and working to find a way forward to mitigate any further events. Very grateful thanks to Steve Moor and his team.

The parish council have started to revise the Emergency Plan for the village and the final amendments will be made following the outcomes of the above meeting.

Road Safety and Speeding is always a major topic. Because of diverse problems being flagged up in different areas of the village we undertook a Road Safety Survey. The analysed results will be discussed at our meeting later tonight and possible actions will be prioritised. All this information will then be circulated to villagers. Thanks to Councillor Haird and Simon Rixon and everyone who completed the survey.

We have had a minor success in that SCC Highways have installed new signage at the junction of The Street and B1078 and repainted the roundels. We haven't been so successful with potholes and blocked drains but we persevere.

Charsfield Parish Council took part in a county wide thermal Imaging exercise and fourteen dwellings were photographed and provided with evidence of heat loss, plus advice on insulation.

The council are supporting a renewable energy project – Charsfield Off Grid. A very detailed application for feasibility study funding has been submitted and we await the results. Thanks to John Collins, Steve Aylward and Peter Clitheroe for all their hard work.

This year we have launched a new village website and email system. We have had a few teething problems with the email but we are working on them. Very grateful thanks to Garry Stratton who has been an absolute pillar of wisdom and patience.

Many thanks to Peter Clitheroe who has been carrying out monitoring of the water quality in Potsford Brook. He will be presenting a report at the council meeting later tonight.

This year we have appointed three Tree Wardens for Charsfield, Graham Sagar, Graham Pettingale and Steve Moor. They will be dividing their duties between providing new planting and maintaining and identifying existing trees and hedgerows.

At the present time we have a total of £7131 Community Infrastructure Levy to be used for the benefit of the village and the council will be discussing possible projects during the forthcoming year.

Thanks to Councillor Moor we received a grant of £500 from Communities Together aimed at uniting communities following disruptive events. Some of this money was used to provide afternoon tea for residents affected by the flooding so they could rejoin their community briefly, as well as people who had completed the flood survey form to help with the investigation. The residue will be used for a whole village event later in the year.

Thanks to Fran and Steve and Joyce and Dave for organising another Seniors Christmas event and a beetle drive.

We have just had confirmation from the University of East Anglia that Heritage funding is available for the Akenfield storyboard in our telephone kiosk. We are hoping to have a grand

opening later in the year with showings in village hall of Akenfield and Akenfield revisited which featured local residents. A big thankyou to Alan Ward for all his work on the kiosk.

The latest planning application on The Three Horseshoes was refused by East Suffolk. Hopefully freeholder Edward Bolton will now realise his best option is to market the pub at a sensible price, allowing it to be restored and re-opened as a pub either under private or community ownership.

Sadly the Baptist Chapel will be closing after over 200 years of worship in the village.

We continue to support the recreation ground and increased our funding as a one off this year to assist with the charges for the newly installed electricity and water on the field

Representatives of the council have arranged to meet Hartog Hutton prior to their commencement of the development of the land behind 15 St Peters Close (to be known as Blythe Meadow) to try and minimise disruption to the village and the residents of St Peters Close

Thanks to John Fox, our village historian, for the informative displays around the village and his very popular Christmas quiz.

We have finally lost the bus service to the village. We are trying to book a speaker from Connecting Communities to come to the next Prish Council meeting to explore other transport options.



## Charsfield Village Hall

### Minutes of Charsfield Village Hall Annual General Meeting Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Present: Trevor Boyd, Chris Haird, Pam Hembra (PJH), Garry Stratton, Amanda Little, Viviane Ward, Peter Holloway, Pauline Llewellyn

Members of the Public: Jan Pedgrift, Lynn and Ian Miller

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Martin Lyne, Liz Holland, Nikki Hind

**2. Minutes of Last AGM dated 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

Were signed as a correct record by Trevor Boyd

**3. Chairman's Report – see below –**

Received and approved with thanks and thanks to Trevor Boyd

**4. Treasurer's Report – see below and attached**

Received with thanks – approved by all

5. **Other Reports**

**Technology** – see below – received and approved

**Hall Hire** – see below – received and approved

**Bar Report** – problem with mold on labels

**General Maintenance** – see below – received and approved

6. **Election of Committee**

The Committee stood down.

The following were the nominees to the Village Hall Management Committee:

Chris Haird

Peter Holloway

Martin Lyne

Viviane Ward

Liz Holland

Trevor Boyd

Pam Hembra

Pauline Llewellyn

Garry Stratton

Amanda Little

Nikki Hind

All were approved and agreed and will continue in their current roles

Trevor Boyd was nominated as Chair of the Village Hall Management Committee.

Margaret Salter – non-voting member – co-opted

7. **Any Other Business**

Ian Miller had looked at the kitchen door but feels it should be left until next year now to be painted as it is a little damp.

Jan Pedgrift registered thanks from the Parish Council for all the work the Committee does.

Chair Report for Charsfield Village Hall AGM - 19th October 2023 - Trevor Boyd

The year has seen good usage of the Hall with increased hire hours and income. The Committee appreciates our loyal regulars, Cotton Club, Pilates, Stretch & Tone, Bowling Club, W.I., Rec. Ground, who together with various private bookings provide the majority of our hall income. Thank you to Viviane and Nikki for managing bookings, publicity and looking after the hall. A mention goes to Peter, as social event organiser, for bringing CADS back on stage this year, with full houses and substantial charity fund raising, and for a sold-out band night in the autumn. We welcome any opportunity to further attract hall hirers and increase the use of the hall.

I am pleased that the Hall continues to be an active meeting place for the village. In particular the community bar is established as a regular fortnightly date in the diary, broadening appeal with table tennis and board games. We look forward to seeing you there. Thank you to Amanda for tirelessly keeping the bar fully stocked and to Margaret for patiently organising bar volunteers throughout the year. Should the Three Horseshoes ever reopen then the bar would have to cease so we take care not to be dependent on bar income.

I.T. facilities continue to be maintained and enhanced by Garry. Notably, the Hall website has been integrated with the Charsfield website, together forming an exceptional village website. Have a look if you haven't already. As usual, Peter has attended to various maintenance tasks on the hall structure. Sometimes enlisting welcome village volunteers, for example, you may have noticed the front door newly repainted.

Main project/capital spends for the year have been the new cookers installed and hall speakers replaced. Ongoing, potential projects have been listed for review and future implementation commensurate with available funds. Also the Committee annually reviews a 'risk register' to ensure that operational risk and safety issues are recognised and managed.

You can see from Chris' financial report that our finances are in good order, showing an improvement year on year and, excluding project/capital spend, a satisfactory operating surplus. Thank you to Martin for maintaining our various contracts. We value Pauline and Liz's contributions on the Committee and a special mention goes to Angela for taking excellent care of the hall garden. I am indebted to Pam as secretary who, along with the rest of the team, makes my role as Chair an easy one. We look forward to further enhancing the use of the hall and continuing to support village social activities.

### **Charsfield Village Hall – Chris Haird Year End Accounts 2022/2023**

In summary:

	<b>31/07/23</b>	<b>Prior Year</b>
Income	£9,382	£12,048
Expenditure	£9,504	£8,444
Excess income for period	(£122)	£3,604
Excess income less Grants	(£122)	£937
Project / Capital expenditure	£1,570	
Excess operating income for period	£1,447	
Barclays Bank	£40,940	£41,070
Petty Cash	£402	£394
Bar Stock	£835	£740

2023 was our first fully operational year with no Covid drag on activities. Overall, the financial results are another improvement year on year and bring us more or less back to pre-Covid status. It should be noted that heating oil was purchased, the benefit of which will be multi-year, the electricity bill benefited from a one-off discount of £400 and also the water bill is still to be received. Due to our status and size, we prepare "receipts and payments" accounts which show that we made a small loss for the year, however, if we remove the project/capital spend we made an operating surplus of £1,447.

The key financial difference in 2023 was the increase in Hall Hire income which in turn re-balanced our overall income from bar receipts towards Hall hiring. Much credit goes to our hiring team for recruiting brand new hirers and especially for increasing the hours of usage by existing hirers. There is always a balance between hire fee and Hall usage while attempting to

secure the long-term future of the Hall. This year, during the cost-of-living crisis, we did not increase Hall hire fees or bar prices.

The Committee has established a multi-year project list of potential improvements to the Hall infrastructure. This year we replaced the two kitchen ovens and the main speakers at a cost of £1,570. Next year we will begin by refurbishing the main hall floor and begin the process of repainting the entire Hall.

As noted above, reducing our reliance on bar receipts is an important step, as we are committed to closing the regular Community bar when/if the Three Horseshoes re-opens so that we do not negatively impact their cashflow. The fortnightly Friday Night Community Bar opened 20 times this year. It continues to provide a local village drinking establishment with average evenings takings roughly the same as last year at £105. With regular openings this year the stock management is no longer an issue and the bar profit is at a sustainable level.

It is very important to the Committee that the Village Hall remains both affordable and is regularly used by our Community at all times of the day and week. We will monitor closely and react to, the current rising cost of living and its impact on the number of hirers and also the cost of operating the Hall, especially the cost of utilities and government mandated licences/certifications which we are required to hold. We will continue to run Community bars on a regular basis and also invest in core projects which enhance the usage of the Hall.

### **Hall Hire – Viviane Ward**

Village hall hirings have gone well this year and we have reached pre-COVID booking levels. We have had a few new bookings - stretch and tone on Fridays, Minecraft holiday session for kids. CADS has returned which provides a good contribution to hiring. The regular hirings have also continued e.g. Pilates, WI, bowling, cotton club. We are continuing to advertise in the parish magazine. The main challenge is to now increase hirings further, using the day time which is largely free.

### **Hall Maintenance – Peter Holloway**

As most of you are already aware, the hall floor has been repolished, the front door painted, and the ovens installed.

The fire extinguishers and boiler have both had their annual service and a carbon monoxide alarm fitted above the boiler.

The second shed has been re-roofed.

The kitchen door still needs to be painted, just awaiting a volunteer.

The gutters will be cleaned by Trevor and myself when time and weather allow.

In regard to fundraising a dance has now been arranged with a five piece band 'Infrared' Saturday 25th November. This will be for the VH building fund. Please support and spread the word.

## **Technology Report – Garry Stratton**

### **Stage Lighting**

The Village Hall is served by a sophisticated stage lighting system, which has been used successfully for performances during the year. Familiarity with the operation of the lights by members of the committee continues to increase, providing good coverage for events.

### **Website**

The Village Hall website continues to run smoothly with no issues reported during the year. The hall booking system, implemented last year, enables quick and simple online booking and payment, and is proving to be an efficient way to manage bookings.

During this year the Charsfield Village website has been redesigned and relaunched. This provided the opportunity to more closely link the Village and Village Hall websites and improve our online presence.

### **Data Management**

Many Village Hall documents are stored electronically in secure Google Drive folders. There are no current operational issues.

### **Wi-Fi and Data**

The current Wi-Fi and broadband configuration continues to provide a largely adequate service. The service was originally configured for the hall automations and limited internet access, eg occasional email access. Since then, expectations have changed along with increased demand.

There have been instances of internet access dropping out, or the service being very slow, particularly at events that fill the hall.

A Wi-Fi extender has been installed behind the bar to help alleviate problems with cashless payments. Performance continues to be monitored and any further improvement to the service would require investment in new technology.

### **Automations**

Automations are in place that enable remote monitoring and control of heating and lighting, as well as equipment such as the bar fridges. While not always intuitive, these systems generally work well.

### **Sound System**

A simple two channel stereo sound amplifier is available for the playing of music and use of a microphone. This equipment has proved to be easy to use and meets the requirements for, eg background music for the Community Bar, and basic public address.

Where higher specification sound equipment is required, eg for performances, discos etc, then this is been provided by the performers or hirers.

An occasional and apparently random noise has been experienced by some people when using the microphone. This continues to be under investigation, but it has not been possible to reproduce the problem during testing. Apart from this, no issues have been reported with the sound system during the year.

**17<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

### **Charsfield Recreation Ground Chair's report**

#### Summary

1. 2023 has been a challenging year for fund raising. However there were some notable contributions.
2. The new toilets have finally been commissioned
3. ROSPA report
4. Recreation ground maintenance
5. Tennis
6. Suffolk Wildlife Trust report
7. Looking ahead 2024

#### 1. Fundraising

#### Charsfest

- Lack of human resources resulted in Charsfest being cancelled. There were too few volunteers available to erect marquees, run events oversee stalls etc.

#### Other events

- Notable contributions from our community – Thank you all for your support

#### Particular thanks go to:-

- Margaret Reeve who organised the village garage sale
- Val Voltz who organised the golf day
- Dave and Joyce Whitley for the Sunday “Banger Brunch”
- Andy Wyatt for the Autumn quiz
- Donations from CADS and individuals from the community

### **Toilets**

- The new toilets have been commissioned. This gives us a valuable asset which it is hoped will boost the overall usage of the recreation ground, including by the local school which has been notified of our new status.

One issue that the toilets bring is the annual standing charge for the utilities which mean a significant cost, even without their use.



- Toilet access – access is by keys that will be stored in a key cabinet with combination access.
- Charsfield school has been contacted indicating to them that the recreation ground now has toilet facilities. It is hoped that this will encourage further use of the recreation ground by the school.

## **ROSPA report**

- The ROSPA report identified a number of issues with the children's play area equipment. One "Amber/Red" issue identified related to the rope climbing frame. The report suggested that consideration be taken to decommission the equipment before end of life. The condition of the main post was known about, however it appears some of the remaining posts are also deemed to be deteriorating. A decision was taken by the committee to take the apparatus out of use. This decision was made in conjunction the committee exploring a possible grant to replace the climbing equipment with a new climbing frame.
- The wooden supports of the infants' swings were also identified as decaying and although not critical at this stage will need refurbishment in the near future.
- The rubber chippings base also needs to be improved/replaced. This was highlighted again in the ROSPA report.
- The remaining wooden edging was also highlighted and it is obvious by inspection that these need replacement soon.
- Looking at the report overall and by visual inspection it appears that a number of the children's equipment are showing their age and will require replacement in the future. Meanwhile a number of maintenance tasks and repairs need to be undertaken, either by volunteers or by contractors.
- Potential plans for the future include fencing off the children's play area to prevent dog fouling and wild animal damage..

## **Recreation ground maintenance**

- This year has presented a different challenge to previous years. From a weather perspective in previous years it has tended to be drier (especially last year). This year we have had a lot more rain. This has been a blessing in that the managed spraying and fertilisation has led to a much thicker/lush grass area. Weeds have also been suppressed. However the conservation area has seen more weeds and brambles and the children's play area has seen encroachment of thistles and blackthorn. We had a number of complaints in relation to the weeds in the children's play area.
- The conservation area has been a bone of contention in the village, depending on individual viewpoints. There is also an issue with access from St Peter's Close as this passes though the conservation area. Suffolk Wildlife Trust has been consulted and a report has provided us with guidance and suggestions on how we might improve the management of the area, including the weeds, especially the thistles and ragwort. Further details are addressed in section 5 Suffolk Wildlife Trust report
- Sheds – the smaller shed's floor is rotten and it has been discussed whether it would be best to remove and to relocate important items into the tennis shed.
- The tennis shed needs maintenance, including wood treatment and attention to the board cladding

(Spring of 2024)

## Tennis

- 23 annual household permits have taken out for this season (24 in 2022), and a good number compared to previous years.
- The spread of the permits obtained this year was unusual as so many came later on in the summer - 13 by end of April and just 1 in May/June, then 9 more July to October.
- The booking system using a WhatsApp group continues to work well. Based on the evidence of this, it would appear that about 25% of permit holders play a lot, 50% just a few times (3 or less) and the remainder never used the court at all!
- The courts (tennis and MUGA) do need more attention than I have given this year (John Fox), particularly weed removal. They are essentially in good condition and will likely last until 2025 before needing their next professional maintenance - cleaning and minor surface repairs.
- Grateful thanks must go to Richard Crone for running Pickleball sessions during the second half of the summer on the MUGA, Monday evenings and Saturday midday.

## Suffolk Wildlife Trust report

The report focuses on 4 main themes

- *Wildlife habitat* – The report identified a number of **Species of principal importance NERC Act Section 41**, in the adjoining area (radius of 1km), including the hedgehog, small heath butterfly, dunnoek, house sparrow, linnnet, starling, skylark, yellow hammer, bullfinch. **Birds of Conservation Concern, red listed** included the swift and greenfinch.
- *Wildflower area* – the “barren area” to the north of the pathway between the tennis courts and St Peter’s Close was identified as an ideal area for wild flowers. Detailed advice on how to manage the area was provided within the report.
- *Weed management* – the report suggested how thistles near to the path and towards St Peters Close could be managed and the wider area indicated as a conservation area.
- *Sign posting and events* – the report suggested that sign posts could be erected at the main entrances and adjacent to the pathway running alongside the conservation area. The purpose would be to show the diversity of wildlife. It was also suggested that a small number of events such as Invertebrate hunts, butterfly counts, moth nights, bird watches, bat nights, flower spotting etc could help the wider community and local school connect with biodiversity on “their doorstep”.

## Looking ahead 2024

- Charsfest- volunteers have been asked to support next year’s Charsfest. We have a number of younger members of the community that have indicated their support. The date for next year’s Charsfest will be agreed at the next committee meeting so that people can put the date in their diaries.
- Access from St Peter’s Close – pathway incomplete. The original planned access was to the northwest corner of recreation ground. The path was to be provided by Park Properties and was to intersect the existing tarmac path. However this changed to the current access with Park Properties provided the path to approximately the same length. This has led to a gap between the toilets and access to St Peter’s Close that has

not been laid with a suitable surface. An estimate has been received and this task is under consideration.

- Fence – the fence is broken along the south border close to the storage sheds. The work to do this by volunteers has been estimated and now needs to be progressed.

DRAFT