

**OUSDEN PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting**  
**7th May 2019**

**PRESENT:** Parish councillors John Gale (Chairman, Alan Johansen (Vice-chairman), Sylvia Pettitt, Ian Harding, Guy Holland Bosworth, Joanne Kirk (clerk), County Councillor Mary Evans, Chris Ingham (Ousden Village Hall) and 17 members of the public.

**APOLOGIES:** Apologies were received from parish councilors Geoff Ingham and Chris Ridge and Helen Gale from Neighbourhood Watch

The meeting was chaired by Parish Council Chairman John Gale

**1. Approval of the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2018 were confirmed and signed as correct by the Chairman.

**2. Report from Councillor Evans**

Mary Evans spoke about the following:

- Good progress has been made in Suffolk Schools
- Problems with County Lines (drugs being brought into the county from cities)
- Suffolk County Council's budget and the high cost of adult and social care with the remaining money going to Highways, the Fire Service and other services.
- Highways – she is now Deputy Leader of the County and portfolio holder for Highways. She has been looking at ways to improve the performance of Highways and ways to make street lighting more efficient. They will be reviewing their grit bin policy.

**4. Village Hall Report**

Chris Ingham, Chair of the Village Hall Management Committee (VHMC) presented her report:

- Numbers on the VHMC have increased to 7 which includes John Gale who represents the Parish Council. Bookings have been low due to the condition of the village hall, though the bowls clubs still uses it. The VHMC needs to raise £5,500 just to keep the village hall running which is unsustainable. The VHMC has to try and raise funds just to break even.
- They have had a lot of expenses this year. A new fire alarm system had to be installed and all the electrical systems checked as well as tree works outside. The cricket club continues to use the playing field.
- The Open Gardens last year and Royal Wedding tea party were particularly successful events. The main focus of the VHMC has been to investigate the possibility of building a new village hall and to try and raise funds to do this. They are hoping to consult residents in June about the plans. They are considering the possibility of selling part of the playing field to raise money for a new village hall. The amount of money needed will be considerable.

**5. Neighbourhood Watch Report**

Helen Gale is still Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator and her contact details are published in the Ousden News, but she has not received any reports of local crime from any Ousden residents during the past 12 months.

A lady in Genesis Green reported a suspicious van near her house in March, but the registration number she gave was incorrect by one digit. She was advised that it would be better if she reported it to the Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator for Wickhambrook, as Genesis Green does not fall under the jurisdiction of Ousden Parish Council. Helen Gale did report it to Bob Hall though, who runs Rural South Watch. He checked out the vehicle and explained which letter he thought had been misread on the number plate, but there were no reported suspicious sightings/activity in relation to that vehicle.

Helen receives regular emails from Rural South Watch and Police Connect about incidents/crime in the local area, but fortunately there have not to her knowledge been any reported incidents in Ousden.

**6. Chairman's Report**

The Parish Council Chairman, John Gale presented his report.

- There are seven parish councillors and the clerk.
- County Councillor Mary Evans and Borough Councillor Clive Pollington regularly attended meetings. Clive Pollington has now resigned and his replacement is Mike Chester.
- No police issues have been raised during the year.

- The defibrillator has been installed near The Fox. John Gale explained that in an emergency the first step is to call 999. The defibrillator and the ambulance service will then give instructions to the caller. The Parish Council will be offering some free training and leaflets will be distributed to residents.
- Affordable housing. The clerk and Ian Harding have been looking into affordable housing and how the Parish Council would go about deciding whether or not there is a need in Ousden. The first step would be to gather evidence of need in the village, land would then need to be found. Several other local villages are looking into the same issue.
- Village Hall. A lot of work is going on in the background, but it is a tough task. The Parish Council supports the VHMC and gives funds as and when it can.
- Speeding is a continuous concern in the village. The Vehicle Activated Signs work to a certain extent, but there are still vehicles travelling excessive speed and recent results show that speeding is increasing. The data has been passed onto the Police but it remains to be seen whether speed checks will be carried out. Mike Chester said that there are Vehicle Activated Signs which register vehicle numbers but Mary Evans said the Police do not have the resources to police this.
- The phone box. Does anyone have any ideas about what to do with it? It was felt that there would be no problem finding a use for the phone box once it has been refurbished. Could the phone box be sold? John Gale said that this is possibility which could be considered.
- The Chairman thanked Mary Evans for attending the meeting, his fellow councillors and the clerk.

#### 7. **Financial Report 2018/19**

The parish clerk presented the Council's financial report. The full report is available on the parish council website at [www.ousden.onesuffolk.net](http://www.ousden.onesuffolk.net).

One resident said he felt that the Parish Council was remiss in not raising the precept to help pay for the Village Hall and playing fields. The clerk explained that parish councils have been under pressure from Central Government to show constraint when setting their precept requests and that numerous costs are being passed down from Suffolk County Council and West Suffolk Council whilst the Parish Council Support Grant was cut as well. The Chairman asked for detailed figures about what additional costs are needed and for a formal request to be submitted so that the Parish Council can consult residents about the possibility of raising the precept.

#### 8. **Any other issues or concerns which residents would like to bring to the attention of the Council**

No other issues were raised.

**The meeting closed at 9.25pm**

Signed .....

Dated.....