King's Somborne Annual Parish Assembly

Minutes of meeting held Monday 15th April 2024 at 7pm in the Epworth Hall

Present: Cllr Searle (chair), Cllr Hughes, Cllr Jaggard, Cllr Webb, Cllr Qassim

In Attendance: Miss Jordan Dudley, Clerk to King's Somborne Parish Council

Also present: Two members of the public

24/01/APA **Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologises were received from Cllr Beacham.

24/02/APA **Approval of the minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 15th April 2023**

Resolved:

The minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held 15th April 2023 were approved as an accurate record.

Proposed: Cllr Searle Seconded: Cllr Webb

23/03/APA **Parish Council Report – 2023/2024**

Cllr Searle presented the Parish Council report, highlighting the following key Council achievements:

A key focus and achievement was in finalizing and making the Neighborhood Development Plan (NDP). Attention will now shift in the next year to the continued implementation of the policies within the NDP, including through the main live planning applications, and ensuring that the parish has its say in how it develops over the next 15 years.

We are a Parish blessed with open space, with huge scope for these areas to be a source of beauty for many years to come. The last year has seen some of that green space begin a lasting transformation, with grants for the Coronation of King Charles 111 enabling tree planting in both Up Somborne and Kings Somborne. A line of oaks, dubbed "Coronation Walk" have been planted in Kings Somborne, and future grants have allowed for additional trees, and a new hedge. Wildflowers are being planted in the copse, and the intention over the next year is engagement across the Parish, with young and old having opportunities to plant further trees and flowers, to enhance the beauty of our parish for future generations.

While the Bourne is a visual highlight in the parish, its brings its own challenges, not least when the weather is as wet as it was for much of 2023. The PC has worked with a variety of stakeholders, including the EA, to ensure it is properly managed and also owes a great debt to the volunteers who gave up their time to clear it towards the end of the year. This will continue to be an area of focus, along with securing a lasting solution for water more generally. The PC along with everyone else, yearns to see the back of the tankers outside Crown Cottages. However, they are doing an important job in a time of need, and resilience against the worst is something the PC has been working on over the past year. In partnership with SSE, a wide array of items that may be needed in an emergency have been sourced, to ensure the PC can help protect residents and property if the worst were to occur.

2023 was a year to celebrate, but also one of hardship, with inflation running rampant, and pressure being placed on the finances of many within the Parish. Where possible, the PC will continue to make grants to groups that are grappling with this while trying to offer valuable services to the community. The PC has also bucked a general trend and has not raised the precept for the next financial year. It is a small thing in a wide ocean of price increases, but the PC feels it important to not add to the burdens of the parish.

2023 was also a year of change internally within the PC, with local elections, long standing Councillors bidding adieu, and new faces stepping up to help the parish. We also bid farewell to our Clerk Liz Manship, and welcomed Jordan Dudley into the fold as her replacement, following a period of excellent stewardship by Sara Sawyer. Jordan will be an asset to the parish over (hopefully) many years and will once more connect the office of clerk to the parish being served.

Councillors

All Councillors were re-elected. Nick Gilbert joined the council whilst Katie Hughes returned from her travels and Ute Brock resigned recently and there is now a space available on the council.

Finances

2023 was a hard year with inflation pressures and concerns over the costs of administration. Sara helped simplify the system and the clerk's wage was set to be consistent with other councils. The precept was held at the previous year's level with scope to reduce next year.

Playground

All playground equipment has been repainted to preserve it and the gate at the recreation ground adjusted. The padlocks have had shields installed due to continuous removal. Equipment for older children is now being investigated.

Trees

As a part of the Jubilee celebration and in conjunction with the school, six oak trees were planted. In conjunction with Hampshire County Council the following trees were planted; three elms, two replacement oaks, two field maple, two sorbus, one hornbeam, one whitebeam. As part of a new initiative for a community orchard, a grant was received for three plum and four apple trees.

Grants

Thanks to the KS Horticultural Society for the grant to tidy the copse adjacent to the playground with the addition of a bench and bulb planting.

The family of the Marsh sisters donated a bench and bin sited adjacent to the copse looking over the John O Gaunt field.

The Parish Council will continue to make grants to groups serving the community that are under financial pressure.

Resilience

The local Resilience Forum is TVBC's emergency planning group. Peter Storey has kindly volunteered as a member of the group.

A grant was received from SSE for resilience. A container will be purchased to store portable generators, sandbags, fuel cans, electrical leads and pumps in the event of an emergency.

Generator

The generator at the village hall was serviced last April and a test run was completed.

Bourne

Thank you to all the volunteers who worked exceptionally hard to help clear the Bourne. The Environmental Agency will be contacted to establish when they intend to manage the Bourne over the next year.

Questions:

Firstly, Peter Storey thanked the volunteers for all the work they do around the village. Without those volunteers the Bourne would have flooded. Peter also thanked Sue Jackson and the Speedwatch group for all the work they do for the community. Peter spoke a little on community engagement and asked Council if the website can be upgraded. Cllr Searle responded that the website is a work in progress.

Cllr Hughes suggested asking parishioners opinions on certain topics or plans going forward to create more community engagement.

The public thanked the Parish Council for all their hard work.

With no other business to discuss, the meeting closed at 7.30pm with the Chair thanking everyone for attending.

Signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Chair: ……..

Dated: …….