**Annual Parish Meeting**

The Annual Parish Meeting (APM) of Harting Parish was held at 6pm on Thursday 20 May 2021. The meeting was held remotely via Zoom as a result of the continued Covid-19 restrictions**.**

The meeting was chaired by the Chairman of the Parish Council Mr Andrew Shaxson and 25 members of the public were present.

**Welcome and introduction from the Chairman**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting for 2021, and noted the unusual circumstances meeting via Zoom as a result of the continuing pandemic which had

also caused the cancellation of the previous year’s meeting.

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Sheridan Bowman and Angela Church.  **Minutes**

The minutes of the last Annual parish meeting held on 15 March 2019 were approved as a correct record.

**Reports by Parish Organisations**

**Fetherstonhaugh, Warren, Weaver, Feoffee and Henry Smith Charities**

The Trustees comprise of the Emma D’aeth (Chairman), Pauline Barnfield (Treasurer),

Sue Small, Jane Healy, Liz Lawrence, Steve Walker and Hatti Cossart.

Finances are received from the Henry Smith Charity. The trustees continue to distribute vouchers and finances to those in particular need. Vouchers are distributed at Christmas and finance is provided to the village hall to specifically assist disadvantage children.

Figures for the three Charites for 2020

Current A/c £5,172.11

Reserve A/c £585.36.

Henry Smith Charity £4,000.00

Tesco Vouchers @ Christmas £1,000.00 . Persons in Need £1,050.00

The Trustees have not been able to hold a meeting for over 18 months but business has been continuing via telephone and e-mail. Henry Smith Charity have kindly increased our donation to help over the pandemic. Should there be anyone in need, please contact a Trustee.

**Fetherstonhaugh Charity for Poor Men**

A capital sum of £265 was left in 1896 by Miss Featherstonhaugh and passed into the hands of the charity commission in 1916.

Interest is paid annually. In December 2019 and 2020 five sums of £10 were paid to 5 men in the parish.

The trustees are Mr Paul Glue, Mr Stephen Walker and Mr Kevin Clue.

**War Memorial Playing Field**

This has been an extraordinary period for everyone and of course this impacted on the Playing Field and what was permitted.

Year May 2019 - May 2020

This year saw a normal start with most sports carrying on as usual, until of course March 2020 when the Coronavirus first lockdown started.

The Football and Cricket Clubs completed their league matches as best they could, with the Tennis Club membership carrying on with roughly the same number of members playing. The Covid rules of course meant that all play had to cease in March 2020.

The Football Club, now being run by a new group of players, became a force again and we were impressed by their enthusiasm at the regular meetings.

The upkeep of the Field and Pavilion was maintained as usual and the committee decided to invest in a new mower which could cut the Field to a high standard. This was financed by the PC Grant and we also received a welcome Festivities Grant of £1,000. A new sign was designed and purchased for the entrance.

It was decided that the Pavilion would need replacing in a few years’ time and a plan for a new pavilion was drawn up by Passmores in Kent, who specialise in timber framed traditional pavilions. Fund raising and applying for grants was the next plan but with the Coronavirus situation it was decided for the time being to delay this until the UK economy improved.

The Pavilion was broken into twice with only petty theft occurring but with substantial damage to the back door and garage store doors. This resulted in an insurance claim and the repair and replacement of these doors to a higher standard to deter further break-ins. CCTV cameras were also installed on the Pavilion as a deterrent.

Year May 2020 – May 2021

This year was a stop/start affair with the Football Club however managing to play more games than usual and making a special donation to the Field for the extra matches played which was very welcome as other non-club income completely stopped. The Cricket Club did not complete any fixtures during the summer of 2020. The Tennis Club membership increased during this period and play took part when permitted. The Football Club took

delivery of two high standard aluminium goal posts that they remove after every match. They kindly erected one of their old posts with a net behind the tennis court for practice and this has proved to be very popular with the younger children and younger adults.

The Cricket Club have recently been practising in their nets and are therefore hopeful of a normal season of matches.

The repair work to the Pavilion was completed with the insurance claim covering this cost apart from the excess. At the present time the expenditure over income is £1157 but the Cricket and Tennis Club subscriptions are shortly due as well as the PC Grant. We are keeping all expenditure to a minimum and hopefully extra income will be generated from visiting groups (runners etc.) as in previous years in the near future.

The Field is being kept to a high standard with the new mower.

The Committee encourages participation in all sports that can be played on the Field and the various Club contact details are being repeated for parishioners in the Parish Magazine together with other news from the Field. New sports groups are most welcome of course and the Committee look forward to helping any group that may come forward with their ideas.

We look forward to having a better summer this year!

Harting War Memorial Committee May 2021

The excess of expenditure over income was £2755.

**Harting Community Hall**

In 2020 our biggest expense was to have the drains cleaned out as we were having bad flooding on the school corner of the car park. A slight exaggeration but tons of earth was piped out between the main entrance and that corner. It was suggested that we put in a drain and grid where Pease Croft road abuts our property but would have cost several thousand pounds: so we decided that we could manage by just having the front drain cleaned out when required as that cost just under £600.

We also completed installing LED lights throughout the hall so, in combination with our solar panels, we are doing our bit to help the planet.

The panels saved us £365 in electricity charges during the first year.

The Film Nights are now a well established and popular social event in the village and will be re-established as soon as it is safe to do so.

Daphne Gammon was a serving trustee of the hall from the time it opened in 1986 until her death earlier this year. It has been agreed to rename the old surgery in the hall to the Daphne Gammon Room and a plaque will be placed on the door.

At the start of the pandemic last year the government gave us £10,000 to help us maintain the hall. Julie has been on furlough throughout the lockdowns and will remain so until the Autumn. We have been fortunate in that the preschool has remained operational since last Summer and took over the hall cleaning so that we could furlough Julie, who is also deputy leader of preschool. The recent election helped to put some money in the confers too. We remain solvent but naturally our finances have taken a bit of a bashing.

We are in urgent need of people to come forward as members of the Hall Management Committee to fill some vacancies. We are also looking for a new chairman as I am resigning at our AGM on July 8th after 11 years’ service to the hall.

Vivien de Beer

Chairman of Trustees

**Harting Parish council chairman’s report**

Last year we were unable to hold an Annual Parish Meeting. I wrote a detailed report which listed not just the work the Parish Council had carried out in the previous 12 months, but also the lockdown and emergency measures that had not long been put in place. Here we are, 12 months later and fingers crossed we are coming out of what has been a very difficult time for so many people. It could have been so much worse and inconvenient if sufficient people hadn’t volunteered to be buddies, to ensure that any people with a problem brought on by Covid, social distancing and the lock-down would know who to contact and could be directed towards a solution. A sincere thank you to those people. The Council’s Emergency Group enacted this process in March 2020, and they continue to meet once a week by Zoom to monitoring the situation. With the vaccinations getting on top of Covid-19 they have recently started work on arranging a parish gathering, planned to take place on the War Memorial Playing Field on the late afternoon to early evening of 14th August. This is to encourage people to get together again. The format it will take will be published near the time. Back to the buddies and their work. Many have been involved, it would be difficult to list them all. I must however state that without the determination of Stephanie Gaterell and Sally Bull and the others involved to start to create a comprehensive Emergency Plan for the Parish two years ago the situation could have been very different.

Like so much, the replanting of the trees in the Warren has been affected by the coronavirus. We had planned to have public planting sessions, but because they couldn’t happen contractors have planted the majority of trees needed to replace those removed. Last autumn a number of ‘socially distanced’ volunteers identified hundreds of tiny regenerating saplings and put spiral guards on them to protect them from being nibbled by rabbits and voles. The erection of the deer fence at the end of September will allow all the trees and bushes within it to grow uneaten. The very dry start to this spring has been a worry, but as the cold weather held back tree growth until the rain arrived a fortnight ago we hope that most of the saplings planted by contractors in March will survive and become established. We will know by the autumn. The fencing and planting was not cheap, but as reported in the Parish magazine the Council were fortunate to secure a grant of more than £32,000 from Railtrack via the Tree Council which covered almost all the cost. Whilst the pressure of needing to think about the Warren most days is no longer an issue for those directly involved, we cannot sit back. We need to protect the trees in the first few years of their life, which will not only entail replacing them if they die but also ensure that they are not choked by brambles, old man’s beard and other weeds. Having gone to this trouble to establish them, in about 10 years’ time we will start to thin them out. We hope much of the work in the meantime will be done by volunteers, numbers of whom have already signed up. More are welcome. Before I leave this topic, I would like to thank Sheridan Bowman who, having taken on a lot of responsibility for management of the trees in the Warren before she left the Council two years ago, volunteered to remain involved. Her help has proved to be, and remains, invaluable. Allied to the Warren many will have seen that we have recently had barrier gates fitted north and south of the Council owned land. Without them, would the travellers who trespassed on Harting Down a few weeks ago have attempted to return to South Gardens?

We are required to hold an Annual Parish Meeting between 1st March and 31st May. Even though it is held remotely, this meeting legally ticks that box but unlike a face-to-face public meeting it isn’t easy to raise and discuss matters of general public interest. Extraordinary Parish Meetings can be convened at any time, and we do hope to have such a meeting later in the year, where not only various matters can be discussed but also the public can view the stalls that some parish organisations plan to ‘set up’ to make people better aware of what they do, and encourage more people to join them. We had an extraordinary meeting last autumn to air concerns that some people had about the tree work carried out in the Warren. A notable criticism was that communication had been poor, and as result the Parish Council has stepped up its efforts in that area. Over 30 people attended; they appreciated hearing more about the history and future plans. On the subject of communication, not only can a lot of information be found on the upgraded Council website but when we can we will restart the drop-in surgeries that had to be abandoned because of the pandemic. Also, be in touch with the Clerk or one of the eleven Councillors.

During the year, an extension of West Heath sand quarry has been allocated for the digging of approximately 950,000 tonnes of soft sand. On a number of occasions we have expressed our concerns both to the SDNPA and the Planning Inspector not only about the choice of this site but specifically about a number of issues. These include the fact that the site is wet, that as a result of the development at Sky Park farm there will be a noticeable increase in the traffic using narrow Durford Lane leading to the A 272 across Durford Bridge, the need for measures to be put in place to ensure that bridge is less prone to damage, and the landscape and other implications on the area between the two quarries as a result of sand being moved from the new diggings to the old quarry for processing. A detailed planning application must be made, and be assured the Council will raise all pertinent issues, expecting them to be properly addressed.

An advantage of virtual meetings is that that Councillors do not have to leave their warm houses to drive to the Village Hall on dark evenings. This and the fact that they have spent almost the whole of the last year at home has meant that attendance at meetings has been very good – noting that one committee meeting was chaired from Norfolk. That attendance is only a small part of the work involved, and I would like to thank all the Parish Councillors for their work during the last year keeping things running smoothly at this difficult time. I have already and rightly mentioned the Parish Councils Emergency Group, but others have been busy. Sheila Bramley has chaired the deliberations of the planning committee through several quite contentious applications and issues, including not only already mentioned quarry extension but also a travelling showman’s site application at Goose Green. We are one of a number of neighbouring parishCouncils who are endeavouring to change for the better what might loosely be called the work practices of Chichester DC planning enforcement officers. There is much room for improvement.

Tim Bonner as chairman of the Finance committee has ensured that committee monitors the considerable amount of money we are entrusted to use to benefit the parish. A group affiliated to that committee is currently carrying out a re-assessment of the Council’s assets. Anthony Palmer has steered the Highways and Byways Committee and where necessary communicated with WSCC in aiming to get things done to the 21 miles of highway in the parish. Whilst pothole maintenance has improved, we are currently unable to get them to replace white lines in areas where for public safety they are needed, and repair listed Durford Bridge that was damaged two years ago. We are also trying to clarify the ownership and responsibilities of the 14 black and white wayposts in the parish. WSCC effectively abandoned them to be looked after by Parish Councils more than 15 years ago, since when Harting Parish council has spent many thousands of pounds of your money on the ones in this parish, and intend to maintain all of them. We are striving for confirmation of the legal status of the use of our money on WSCC property. Our footpaths and other rights of way have seen a noticeable increase in use during the pandemic and have largely stood up well to it.

Lastly but definitely not least I would like to thank Trish, for what she has done over the last year for the Council and thereby benefitting you. Time flies; she has now been our clerk for five years and by attending relevant courses has not only become increasingly skilled but is as keen on carrying out the often demanding task of Clerk as she was when she first joined us. The Post Office’s loss was indeed our gain.

Andrew Shaxson

**Open Forum**

**Joyce Whateley** gave a vote of thanks to the Parish Council for all the work done on behalf of the community, in particular the setting up of the Emergency Group buddy system. It had helped many people who were vulnerable and in need of support.

**Vivien De Beer**  echoed the thanks given by Mrs Whateley.

**Hugh Twiss** thanked the Chairman and his fellow councillors for the work carried out on behalf of the community.

**Sally Bull**  noted that the initial call out for the Emergency group volunteers had culminated in 100 volunteers in just 2 days.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and hoped the 2022 meeting would be held face to face.

The meeting was closed at 6.46pm.