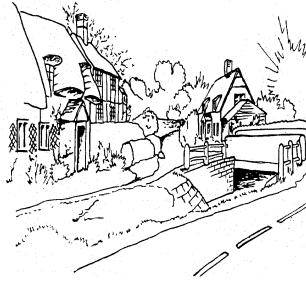


ARKESDEN PARISH COUNCIL



MINUTES of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held in Arkesden Village Hall on

Wednesday 29th April 2015

Those present: 6 Parish Councillors, Clerk to the Parish Council, District Councillor Jan Menell and approx. 27 residents.
Rod Higgins in the chair.

1. Apologies for Absence: Revd. Margaret Davis, Anthea Boon, Peter Shefford, Tom MacFadyen, Robin Coady, Tony and Anne Duplock, John and Debbie May, Tony and Kitty Robertson, Pat Truelove.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd April 2014. These were agreed and signed

3. Matters Arising:

3.1 Gypsy Traveller Site

The Chairman reported on the year's proceedings:

- Meeting with Andrew Taylor confirmed that the ORS report of the GTTA needs assessment would be county wide but would be broken down into a need for each district.
- ORS report published in July identified Uttlesford's need as 26 pitches over 20 years. The Parish Council and others had challenged these numbers and the methodology used.
- UDC engaged Peter Brett associates to assess the suitability of all sites put forward and this report was used by UDC as the basis of the public consultation later in the year. The Parish Council had again challenged the finding that 5 Acres was suitable for 12 pitches.
- An action group – Five Acres Local Community Action (FALCA) – was formed with representatives from Arkesden and Wicken Bonhunt, to argue that 5 Acres was a totally unsuitable and unsustainable site.
- Public meetings were organised by the Parish Council in December and January to provide residents with the facts and to encourage response to the public consultation.
- FALCA commissioned a Flood Risk Assessment and a Traffic and Transport Report as these were seen as key issues in the unsuitability argument.
- At the end of the consultation period UDC had received 696 responses, of which 608 related to the unsuitability of 5 Acres – a fantastic effort by everyone!
- Meetings of the Uttlesford Planning Policy Working Group (UPPWG) were very well attended by residents and many speakers delivered excellent reports to the working group.
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- Planning officers had asked for more information from the owners of 5 Acres and this would mean that no decision would be reached before the election in May. There was much protest that a decision should be made on 5 Acres before continuing with the new Local Plan – now to include Gypsy/Traveller site allocations – and a new Call for Sites.
- Latest position is that UDC had received the FRA from the owners and that both this and the FRA from Strutt and Parker on behalf of FALCA would be assessed by the Environment Agency, Essex Highways and the Historic Assets dept.
- There will be no decision before the elections and the first chance of a decision would now be June/July with a newly formed working group.
- The Chairman assured the meeting that a newly elected parish Council would continue the fight for as long as it takes.

Question: What has happened to the 20 sites at Stansted?

Answer: These had been investigated by UDC and although several were occupied by non Gypsy Travellers, the time limit for enforcement had expired. UDC declared 3 pitches available.

3.2 Affordable Housing

- The four new affordable homes had been opened in May 2014 with a small group of residents attending for “an open house”.
- All agreed that although the project had taken five years the end result had been four well-built smaller homes for local people.

4. Clerk’s Report on Finance

- Expenditure was considerably less than budget (as usual) and coupled with extra grants received, the carried forward balance was larger than expected.
- The council had agreed extra hours for the clerk and a significant increase in proposed legal fees, which had therefore necessitated an increase in the budget.
- Since the carried forward balance was larger than expected, the full increase in the proposed budget was not applied to the precept. Coupled with an increase in the number of houses in the village, the parish council element of the council tax would only rise by 15p/week.

5. Chairman’s Report

- Fewer planning applications than usual although a proposal for 12 houses on Pebblings Field, Quicksie Hill resulted in a village meeting culminating in a list of objections supported by the planning dept. The main objections were: outside development limits; unsustainable development; increase in the housing stock by 12% and that UDC’s five year housing stock was still healthy.
- Despite the cold weather, over 30 volunteers turned up to collect 37 bags of litter.
- The Emergency Plan had been completed and distributed to every household. Road salt, sand and sandbags are stored in the Forster’s barn.
- Some success with highway repairs, in particular resurfacing at the bottom of Clanver End.
- A low turnout of volunteers for the stream clearing means that the Parish Council will consider the option of paying for someone to do this next year.
- In a joint venture with the Village Hall committee the Parish Council contributed to the Flower festival with an entry entitled “Four and Twenty Blackbirds”
- The Parish Council had arranged for the War Memorial to be cleaned with the aid of a grant from central government.

- The Chairman thanked his fellow councillors, the clerk and both our outgoing District Councillor, Jan Menell, and our proposed new District Councillor Edward Oliver. Thanks also to Satu Lawrence who will be standing down in the May elections, for her work over the past eight years and especially her work on the village website. She had agreed to continue with the Footpaths correspondence.
- The Chairman made a special presentation to Cllr. Jan Menell who had represented the Littlebury ward for forty years as District Councillor as well as being the village midwife for a number of years. Jan had attended almost every Parish Council meeting over the last twelve years, but boundary changes mean that Arkesden will now be in the Clavering ward. She has been a great supporter of the village and had helped in the recent Affordable Housing scheme and protested vehemently at recent planning meetings over the proposed Gypsy Traveller site at 5 Acres. Whilst Chairperson of UDC she had set up her own charity – the Buffy Bus- and the Chairman presented her with a cheque for the Buffy Bus charity in appreciation of all of her hard work for the village.

6. Report of Village Activities.

This will be a VERY brief summary of the organisations reports and further details are available from the clerk should you wish to check anything:

6.1 Parochial Church Council

- Steady attendance with very good attendance at festivals
- Arkesden hosted the Remembrance Day service with children telling the stories of Arkesden servicemen who had died in the First World War.
- An Easter workshop was much enjoyed as was the Christmas tree.
- Thanks to the Friends of Arkesden Church for their support and for organising the Flower Festival.
- The Womens Prayer Group continues to meet about monthly.
- The fabric of the building continues to be maintained and, looking ahead, the church is hoping to modernise its facilities by installing toilets and a kitchen.

6.2 Friends of Arkesden Church

- Good year with the Flower Festival and Marion Shave's Art Exhibition in September raising nearly £4000.
- Ongoing sale of Marion's Christmas cards means ending the year with a healthy bank balance.
- Always looking for new recruits as some people have left and others are leaving the village.

6.3 Bell Ringers

- The bells are rung most Sundays and especially at Christmas, Easter and Remembrance Sunday.
- We continue to mark the 100th anniversaries of the deaths of World War I soldiers who lived in Arkesden with 100 tolls.
- Under the continued leadership of Tower Captain Steve Elvidge, the Arkesden bell ringers have met every Wednesday evening for practice, followed by refreshments at the Axe.
- Always looking for new blood – no experience necessary!

6.4 Village Hall

- A successfully quiet year with the Quiz night and Christmas Bash both well attended and raising a combined total of just over £1000.
- Thanks to Charles Rawlinson for the gift of a new piano.
- Maintenance work is required on the outside of the building and will be carried out in the future.
- Financially, the Village Hall accounts are in good shape with a bank balance of nearly £9000. The main source of income is still the letting of the hall to various groups.
- The Hall is available for use by all villagers and the committee actively encourages this.

6.5 Arkesden W.I.

- The Arkesden WI will shortly be disbanding but anyone interested in re-forming the group should talk to either Langley WI or Wendens Ambo WI.

6.6 Millennium Field Committee.

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6.7 Arkesden Village News

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6.8 Arkesden Cricket Club

- Decent season with good wins against Chrishall and Elmdon. Lost one – a midweek game against Wendens Ambo.
- Awards went to Ben Findlay, Jamie Williams and Luke Bailey.
- Always difficult to field a full side but other teams also struggling with Rickling and Langley CCs closing.

7. Any Other Business

7.1 Superfast Broadband

- Clerk explained that the delays encountered with County Broadband were due to the problems of getting the signal to the church tower.
- A new solution involving the use of a radio mast at Castle Camps would mean a contribution from the village of £17000 and the clerk had had limited response from interested residents.
- Although the Parish Council is still willing to make a contribution, the bulk of the finance would have to come from residents.
- There is a possibility of some funding from Cambridge CC for small businesses but the VAT implications may well rule this out.
- There was little support for this project from the residents present.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.

Steve Coltman (Clerk)

Rod Higgins (Chairman)