**MINUTES of the ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY of MILLAND**

 **Thursday 03 June 2021 in Milland Memorial Hall**

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**PRESENT -** Mr J Parker (Chairman), Mr C Stopher, Sir J Wigram,

 Mr M Cusack , Mrs M Truss

 Miss V Williams (Clerk) & 21 Members of the Public

**1.** Welcome **-** The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**2.** Introduction of Guests and Councillors

**Mr Timothy Clarkson** – Openreach (OR)

**Cllr Colin Stopher**, Chairman of the Planning Committee.

**Cllr Matt Cusack**, Environment and Amenities Committee

**Cllr Sir John Wigram**, Broadband Project Lead

**Cllr Maureen Truss**

**3.** Apologies

Mr A Farley, Mrs J Pilkington, Mrs S Hoar, Mrs L Myles, Cllr Kate O’ Kelly (County Councillor)

**4.** Minutesof the Annual Parish Assembly 17 April 2019.

These have been on the Council website and on display on the public notice board throughout the year. The Minutes were **Proposed** by Mark Davies and **Seconded** by Trevor Fairhurst

**5.** Speaker – Mr Timothy Clarkson – Rural Project Manager – Openreach

**Introduction by Sir J Wigram:**

* Brief Background of project.
* 3-4 applications have now been consolidated in to 1 community project, covering 320 premises.
* Thanked residents for their patience and replies to the PC communication by leaflets, emails and articles.
* Although some properties currently have usable speeds, even these may be compromised over the coming years, as technology and the internet requirement moves forward.
* Internet provision costs once the Fibre To The Premises (FTTP) is in place cannot be confirmed until the connection is in place but it is hoped it will see only a small increase in current costs.

**Timothy Clarkson:**

* The community fibre programme has been running for 5-6 years, with the aim of bringing full fibre to very rural communities.
* The pandemic has heightened the need for better internet provision and shown the frailty of the existing copper network, there have been 4-5 times as many FTTP projects in the last year.
* The consolidated list has been agreed and will now be costed up, using a high-tech, desk top survey, to create the initial offer. This will take approximately **4-6 weeks**.
* The next step will be to complete the accurate costing. This will take **2-3 months.**
* OR will work with the community on the voucher process. As many premises as possible need to pledge vouchers. Once enough have been pledged to cover the full cost of the project, it will proceed to delivery. Completion is **10-12 months** from this point.
* The Milland project is at a relatively early stage but OR will offer support throughout the process and it is hoped that **the FTTP project could be complete within 18 months.**

**Questions:**

1. **Is there a difference between residential and business?**

**A.** There is a difference in the voucher claiming process, however there is no difference in voucher contribution or service provided.

1. **Are there schemes other than FTTP that would be more quickly provided?**

**A.** There is Fibre To The Cabinet (FTTC) but as this is only to the exchange, the connection degrades over the distance to the property. No other schemes are being invested in by OR.

1. **What does the voucher cover?**

**A.** Vouchers are designed to cover all infrastructure costs, therefore every cost of FTTP is covered. The only cost to the homeowner is that of the internet provision, there may be a connection cost for new router etc.

1. **If the community keep the project moving at the same pace what is the best case scenario?**

**A.** Initial Offer (2 weeks) – Final Offer (4 weeks) – Apply for Vouchers (4 weeks) – Community Voucher Pledging Process (2 weeks) – T & Cs sent out to all pledging households – Delivery (10-12 months).

The delivery process is currently under huge demand, it is a large scale civil engineering project (road closures, permissions etc.) Best case is therefore, 12 months from now.

1. **Do the fibre optics have to be run underground or can they be run overground?**

**A.** The fibre can be laid in an underground duct or overground. The method by which the household is currently served will be how the FTTP will be provided.

1. **Is the final costing based on a physical or tabletop survey?**

**A.** 10-15% of projects do have a full survey. However, as teams are always working on the ground, a lot of the required information is already held by OR and therefore a tabletop survey is sometimes sufficient. A physical survey can increase the time of the process by up to 2 months. It is therefore hoped that Milland’s final costing will be generated using the sophisticated desktop survey. The final cost is the final cost and will be honoured by OR.

1. **Is Starlink satellite service is likely to overtake FTTP?**

**A.** Difficult to comment on another company, it is though understood that the satellite service may provide a more costly internet provision. FTTP is a more future proof way of bringing broadband to the community.

1. **Are the T & Cs likely to put homeowners off?**

**A.** These are not particularly onerous, they require that anyone who takes a voucher agrees to take on a 12 month internet contract which guarantees to double the speed of the broadband to the home.

With support from OR and Government (Gigabit vouchers) topped up by additional funding vouchers from West Sussex County Council (WSCC), the ultimate goal is to cover all costs of installation.

6. Overview of 2020-21 – Chairman Jeremy Parker

**The Council**

Since the elections in 2019, we have said goodbye to Auldeen Allsopp and Nigel Cartwright and welcomed Sue Hoar and Louise Myles to the Council as co-opted members.

**Clerk**

Apart from Covid, the big event of the last year was the retirement of Lorraine Grocott as our Parish Clerk and the recruitment of her successor. Lorraine has been the beating heart of the parish for over 30 years and her devotion to this community has been quite extraordinary. Her involvement in so many aspects of village life, her wise counsel and her sheer determination to make things happen have made Milland the great place it is.

Recruitment of her successor started in 2019 with the creation of a parish business plan, which identified the half dozen or so key activities that we want to take forward over the 4 year life of the Council – and against which we could produce a job spec for the new Clerk. Thanks to the interview panel and all the interviewees themselves, who made down-selection a difficult job for us. I am delighted to say that Viki Williams accepted our offer. She spent a couple of months as understudy to Lorraine, before taking over at the November meeting.

**Milland Volunteers**

The parish response to the pandemic was remarkable; thanks to a small team ably led by Hugh Williams, a support group – the Milland Volunteers – was established in very quick time, with a dedicated phone line, and website, plus dozens of willing volunteers.

**Business Plan**

This sets out the Parish Council’s vision for our 4 year term, identifying near-term objectives and providing a basis for establishing future budgets. In summary, our objectives are:

1. **To ensure continued compliance with all relevant legislation and financial regulations.**

**2.** **To review and update the MNDP.**

**3. To improve communication between the Council, community groups and parishioners.**

**4. To improve the play facilities in the Recreation Ground.**

**5. To improve road safety in the village.**

**6. To be prepared to provide a Parish Office.**

**7. To encourage, support and facilitate community groups.**

**Spring Clean**

Every March, councillors are allocated a stretch of road in which to pick up litter and we had a successful clean-up this year, with a small mountain of rubbish deposited by the millstone for special collection by CDC. Littering seems to have got worse and we are looking at having an autumn clean-up too and would like to involve everyone.

**Footpaths**

Not strictly a parish matter, but the past year has led to a dramatic increase in the use of all our footpaths, which is wonderful to see. The County Rights of Way Team has been very active in the parish, replacing stiles and improving access. Do please report any broken or damaged stiles and gates to the Clerk, who has already developed an excellent working relationship with the Ranger team and will also encourage landowners to do their bit too.

**Finance**

The Clerk will review our finances in a minute, but I want to reiterate a point I have made several times before – huge financial pressures on all levels of local government above us have led to cuts to a wide range of services. Parish Councils are unique in that central government cannot impose caps on our expenditure. So, if we want things done in our community that were in the past done by the District or County Councils, but no longer – or to a much reduced standard, we must pay for them via the parish precept, rather than through council tax. As a result, the precept has risen steadily over the years. Last year, we precepted some £37,000 – up from £34,000 the previous year, largely in order to cover the costs of recruiting a new Clerk and setting them up with IT etc; I am delighted to say that this financial year we have actually reduced the precept by nearly 12% to just over £33,000.

7. Report from County Councillor – Kate O’Kelly

**County Councillor report Milland Parish Council 3rd June 2021**

Over the last year I have been on the Health and Adult Social Care scrutiny committee.

We have covered wide ranging topics including

* Out of hours social workers to support mental health assessments
* Mental health services for older people
* Covid recovery plan for the NHS

I have also been on several member working groups including

* The Election Vehicle Group – looking at the roll out of EV charging points
* The Transport Group – looking at the new WSCC Transport plan – now in draft
* The cycling group - advising the cabinet member on development of the cycle network

**County Election result**

The new council was elected on 6th May – The Conservative Group retain overall majority control of 70 member council, the new political balance of is

Conservatives – 48

Lib Dems -10

Labour - 9

Green – 1

Selsey Alliance – 1

Other Independent – 1

Our first full council meeting was on 21st May when committee places were confirmed, and other roles decided. I am back on Health and Adults Social Care Committee and the Governance Committee.

A new cabinet member for Highways has been appointed

A new cabinet post for public health and well-being has been created

**Covid**

**Latest data 9 new cases in Chichester District – 78 new cases in West Sussex for the 7 days up to .**

**Test and Trace Support Scheme**

This scheme has been extended up to 30 June 2021 and remains under review by

the Government. For further information please visit

<https://www.chichester.gov.uk/helpwithfinances>

I have restarted my Drop ins – next one Harting White Hart 14th June 10.30-12.30

8. Planning Report – Colin Stopher

**Planning** – covering 2 years as there was no APA last year.

* The Council had been consulted on 69 applications in the past twenty four months, which equates to approximately 1 in 10 properties.
	+ 2019-20 – 31 applications
	+ 2020-21 – 38 applications.
* This reflected an upward trend, in a time when Planning Officers are short staffed and due to the pandemic largely working from home, this had led to some delays and missed deadlines.
* Planning Committee posted:
	+ 4 Objections.
	+ 5 Support.
	+ 51 neutral / no objection - 30 small extension / alteration and 21 larger projects including 1 rebuild
* There are currently 10 applications still in progress.
* The Planning Committee now receive weekly lists from CDC and SDNP, which are then looked at in detail via a planning portal.
* If not contentious, applications are dealt with via an exchange of emails between the committee members. Site visits are carried out where more detail is needed.
* 2 formal planning committee meetings were held:
	+ Smugglers Copse – Approved May 2021
	+ Black Fox Inn – Refused 2020

**Neighbourhood Plan**

* Published in 2016, this is consulted by both the PC and Planning Officers.
* A review commenced in 2020, this is had been restricted by the pandemic but is extremely important to confirm the relevance and credibility of the plan.
* 6 person review panel, with meetings being held in October 2020 and January 2021 to review the policies. A meeting in May 2021 has started reviewing the projects. A further meeting to be held complete this phase.

9. Finance Report

**Report on Internal Audit for Accounts 2020-21**

* The accounts are prepared using the Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England March 2021. Mark Mulberry has been appointed as our Internal Auditor for 2020-21. Moore are the External Auditors. The accountability and audit framework are ‘risk-based’ and the parish council is required to assess and to set how it manages its risks. The parish council has prepared a Risk Management document, which includes our physical and financial risks. This document is reviewed on an annual basis.
* Due to a change in auditors, there were some issues brought to our attention which had not previously been corrected. These are all now being addressed by the Chairman and RFO, the Council will undertake an interim audit in the Autumn to ensure all issues have been fixed.

**Audit Recommendations**

* The financial regulation be reviewed and day to day practices updated. I recommend the council review and approve the risk assessment annually.
* The council review its privacy policy for councillors.
* Reserves are low and council will need to have careful cash flow management going forward.
* The VAT reclaim is made part of the year-end process to ensure regular receipt of VAT.
* The council review and approve the risk assessment annually.

**Financial Review**

Precept for 2020-21: **£37,760**

Precept for 2021-22: **£33,170**

Total Gross Payments - **£51,148**

**Miscellaneous costs: £5,896** which included a new computer and printer for the new Clerk £599; Village maintenance including extensive work to the ditches, hedging, mowing and general upkeep £2,339. Covid-19 website £1,800 (which was paid for in part with a £900 SSEN grant).

**Public Works Loans x 4 -** Milland Stores balance - £20,964 (total payment £4665)

**Grants/ Donations £9,300:** These include Recreation Field maintenance & renewals £7000 BVH £1,200; Garden Club £200; Cartersland Wildflower Group £200 (includes sum for mowing); Friday Lunch Club £100; CAB Petersfield £50; Samaritans £50; Air Ambulance £50; churchyards £450.

**Subscriptions:** WSALC £281; AirS £144; CPRE £36.

**Other**: Website + Domain £214; Zoom for remote meetings £119, Clerks Salary £9525; PAYE £2695; Expenses £133;Insurance £505, Gratuity payment to LG £13,900.

Ringfenced funds – Tennis courts resurfacing fund £3,070.

**Receipts:** As well as the precept £37,760, the Parish Council received a Grant from SSEN for disruption caused by the ongoing works £900, which helped to fund the Covid Website. CDC contributed a grant of £250 towards the VEJ bench at Durrants pond and the Parish Council received £333 from SDNPA for CIL payments which was put towards the new playground tower.

**Overview of the year:** The parish councilhas continued to support community assets and groups, especially the Milland Covid Volunteers including paying for a bespoke website.

Conscious of the difficult year, the Parish Council are pleased to have reduced the precept by 12%.

There has once again been more attention given to miscellaneous hedging, ditching and verge maintenance particularly in view of another wet winter.

**Expression of Thanks:** To all Councillors. To Rob Findlay for his management of the Recreation Field and ongoing maintenance of the Parish.

***Victoria Williams, Clerk to the Council. RFO, 12 May 2021***

10. Looking Ahead to 2021-22

In the coming year, we will continue to focus on moving forward with the Business Plan and in particular:

* Aim to complete the MNDP Review.
* Establish the new website and expand use of our social media channels.
* Assist where we can in facilitating the Superfast Broadband project, not least by providing information on progress, especially when it comes to the actual work.
* Engage with Highways to see what can be done to improve road safety on the Fernhurst Rd by the School turning – without adding to the street furniture clutter if at all possible.
* Develop a proposal and indicative time-line for replacement of the timber balance course on the Rec.
* Support the Clerk in her formal training to gain the qualifications necessary that will allow us to retain our General Power – which gives the Parish Council most of the rights and freedoms of action available to private individuals; especially in deciding on what we can spend your money.
* Support and encourage the return of the Rural Fair in 2022, not least by seeking grants, assisting with publicity and encouraging volunteer organisers. The fair is key to the long term survival of the MVN – and is able to make grants to other parish groups, so do please consider how you can help, especially in the planning stages.
* On top of all this, we will continue to care for the everyday infrastructure around us - ditches, footpaths, trees, hedges, drains, pavements, signs, fences, verges, litter picking, children’s play equipment, benches, bus shelters – the everyday bread and butter for our Parish Clerk.

11. Questions from the Audience

Louise Pearce, headteacher of Hollycombe School gave an overview of the year including the struggles caused by the pandemic and how these were overcome to allow the children to thrive through such a difficult year. She asked that if anyone would like to become a Governor of the school to contact her.

12. Summary and Closure

* If you are not already a volunteer, do please think about signing up for something. There is no shortage of opportunity.
* If you have ideas for improving the parish or would like to start a community group in Milland - do please let us know – our role as a Council is to try make living here as good as it can be for everyone.
* Thank you for coming!

Conclusion of meeting 7.45pm

Chairman ............................................ Date .............................

*These Minutes are unconfirmed until signed by the Chairman*