

WIGGENHALL ST GERMANS PARISH

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 25th APRIL 2021 at 7.30PM, CONVENED VIRTUALLY ON ZOOM.

Present:

Parish Councillors: Rob Keal (Chairman), Margaret Blackburn, David Rust, Robert Ward, Scilla Ash and Mary Fredisdottir.

Parish Clerk – Mike Inder.

Borough & County Councillors – None

Apologies – Cllr Margaret Bunkall, Mrs Katherine White (Ladies Group), Mrs Angela Yeoman (PCC), Mrs Suzie Hayes and Mr Lee Dowers (Magdalen Academy).

Public – none.

1. **Introduction and Welcome:** Cllr Rob Keal welcomed everyone present and informed the meeting that it was being recorded. He explained the purpose of the meeting as the opportunity for the community to hear what has happened since the last meeting and to outline aspirations and plans for the coming year; he also explained that the 2020 meeting had been cancelled as the pandemic prevented meeting in public and the legislation was not changed to hold the meeting remotely in time.
2. **Selection of Chairman:** There being no public present the meeting was chaired by Cllr Rob Keal as Chairman of the Parish Council.
3. **Apologies** were received as noted above with reports submitted in advance.
4. **Minutes of the previous meeting** held on 20 May 2019 were reviewed and Cllr Blackburn proposed them as true reflection, seconded by Cllr Ash. Those present at the previous meeting voted to accept them.
5. **Report from the Parish Council:** Cllr Rob Keal gave his report of the Parish Council's activity since the last meeting. Report included at Annex A.
6. **Reports from County and Borough Councillors:** none received due to purdah for the elections on 6th May 2021.
7. **Reports from Local Organisations:** Community organisations were invited to attend and/or provide a report:
 - a. Mrs Margaret Blackburn gave a report on behalf of the Bowls Club (Annex B).
 - b. Mrs Angela Yeoman submitted a report by the PCC read out by the clerk (Annex C).
 - c. Mrs Suzie Hayes provided a report and expressed concerns which she asked to be raised, read out by the clerk (Annex D)
 - d. Mrs Katherine White provided a report from the Ladies Group, read out by the clerk (Annex E)
8. **Public Forum**
 - a. **Keep Britain Tidy Litter Pick:** There have been several contacts from the community over the last year asking if a litter pick could be organised. Cllr Fredisdottir volunteered to lead the organisation of a litter pick and the Parish Council will publicise it in due course.
 - b. **Open floor,** no other matters were raised.

The Chairman thanked those present for their contributions and closed the meeting at 8.00pm.

Signature:

Chairman

Date

Prepared by Mike Inder, Clerk to Wiggenhall St Germans Parish Council.

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2020 / 2021 Parish Council Chairman's report

I would like to welcome everyone to our annual meeting. I think that it is fair to say that the last 12 months have been unusual for the parish council and indeed the Parish as a whole. Covid-19 has seen the community dealing with a number of challenges, with the continuity of running the Parish council being one of them. Within the last 12 months we have been following the Gov UK Covid-19 guidelines to try to mitigate and effect on the provision of Parish services. Whilst the regular meetings haven't been able to be held in the memorial hall as physical meetings, they have been talking place using Zoom with agendas and minutes on the parish website.

Unfortunately, the online meetings to date haven't seen any attendance from non-councillors. Over the last twelve months our community, the Nation as a whole and indeed globally, there have been a number of losses including his royal highness Prince Phillip, the longest serving consort and a man that was associated with 992 organisations with special interests in science, technology, sport and perhaps more notably in education and the welfare of young people. Our thoughts are with his family and all those who have lost over the past 12 months.

On a more positive note, I am pleased to welcome some of our members to their first annual meeting, albeit for some this is despite being on the council for more than 12 months (with last year's meeting cancelled due to the pandemic and legislation not being in place to allow the meeting to take place virtually).

During the last year, the Parish Council have been consulted on a number of planning applications, whilst sometimes it may feel as though the Parish Councils voice may not carry as much weight as in previous years, I am pleased to say that recent suggestions put forward have seen positive outcomes in final planning. That said, there is still ongoing concern on the strength of infrastructures in some Parish locations to support further developments. As a Parish council we will continue to try to act in the best interests of our parishioners.

Our final set of accounts for the year have been compiled by Mike Inder and submitted to the external auditors for approval which will be published shortly. Thank you, Mike, for your assistance with this, and indeed your assistance in all matters in what has been a difficult year.

There are a number of key areas that have been and continue to be key focus points:

- Speeding within the villages. Whilst parishioners haven't taken part in any of the council meetings over the last twelve months, we are all aware that speeding is still one of the largest concerns. We continue to utilise the SAM2 speed sign as an active deterrent and are regularly surprised by the speeds that some people manage to achieve, although the overall statistics do show that the majority of motorists are adhering to the posted speed limits. We are always open to suggestions from parishioners on any measures that could prove to be effective to try to reduce speeding occurrences.
- Street lighting. We are now in a position that all street lighting falling under the Parish Council has now been converted to LED which has demonstrated an annual reduction in energy of 8,340kWh, giving an annual saving of £1,843.00.
- Roads, pathways and footpaths. Potholes are still a regular problem on Parish roads however, on the whole, once they are reported to Highway's action is usually fairly prompt. We are still trying to action improved pedestrian access on Sluice road between Wiggshall St Germans and Wiggshall St Mary the Virgin. I would like to thank my fellow council members for their efforts in identifying obstructions and similar on our footpaths.
- Flagpole. As I hope you all know, my predecessor Alistair Done championed the erection of a flagpole opposite the memorial hall, which I am pleased to say has been installed with

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the assistance of Balfour Beatty. The installation of the flagpole allowed us to show our respects in the passing of his Royal Highness Prince Phillip.

- Memorial Hall. We are working with the Memorial Hall Committee where we can try to help maintain services including arranging for tarmac planings to be provided to improve the car park. Our thanks go to West Norfolk Surfacing for the generous donation of the planings and to Mr James Caley for the time and effort provided to carry out the repairs. It is always a pleasure to report on the generosity of others within our Parish.
- Vandalism and Anti-social behaviour. Sadly, over the last 12 months we have had a number of incidents of vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Whilst vandalism is not necessarily a new problem within the Parish, over recent months the severity has increased with the Bowls Club, the Memorial Hall and the Football Pavilion and surrounding area often being targeted. Recent occurrences include an arson attack, with a significant spend attributed to this over the year. PC Ryan Turner has been assisting in trying to identify persons that may be involved, but I am saddened to say that I don't feel that we have seen the end of the occurrences yet. As members of the Parish Council, we are actively trying to determine the best steps to try to eradicate both vandalism and anti-social behaviour going forwards.

Moving on to positives, we have recently seen a good response to the invitation for others to join the Parish Council and I fully expect to see additional new members co-opted very soon. I am also pleased to confirm that AFC Lynn are in pre-season ready for the next football season at the Leonard Towler playing field, with 4 teams using the facility which will have a plaque in memory of Ken Rowe installed by his son David Rowe.

To finish I would like to re-iterate my thanks to our Clerk, Mike Inder, my Vice Chair Scilla Ash, councillors Margaret Bunkall, Bob Rawlings, Margaret Blackburn, David Rust, Bob Ward and Mary Fredisdottir. I hope that the following year allows us to continue to serve our Parishioners to the best of our ability.

Cllr R Keal
Chairman

Annex B

Wiggenhall Bowls Club

Official league games were cancelled in 2020, and all we could arrange were informal Saturday 'roll-ups', limited to 6 participants, during the latter part of the summer. As we were not able to make full use of the Club, members were offered the option of carrying their 2020 membership fees over to 2021. Because of Covid restrictions, we were also unable to arrange our annual Christmas Bingo and Grand Draw night, which is the main fund-raising event for the Club. This drop in our income, made even worse by the lack of 'green fees' normally paid at every match during the year, meant that the Club faced a significant reduction in its finances.

However, we were fortunate to qualify for a Government Covid support grant. This enabled us to purchase essential raw materials needed for maintenance activities in 2020 and gave us resources to cover the expense of the anti-bacterial and sanitizing supplies required for the 2021 season.

It was clear that if we did not keep up the maintenance of the green it would have been unplayable by 2021 and would have needed much more investment to restore it. The Club therefore made best use of the unusual free time in 2020, replacing many of the wooden borders

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to the green in one go, rather than the piecemeal way we would have had to do it in normal times, and taking care of the green itself to ensure that it was ready and up to standard for when we could use it again.

The Club usually enters 4 leagues and also arranges an in-house Pairs competition. For the 2021 season all the leagues are currently intending to play, although the season will be curtailed, some leagues not starting until the middle to end of May, some not before mid-June.

As an outdoor sport, Club members have been able to start using the green in April, and we are planning officially organised training/practice sessions on Saturday afternoons. We cannot at the moment invite spectators to join us, but welcome enquiries from anyone interested in finding out more about our club activities.

Margaret Blackburn

Secretary,

Annex C

Wiggenhall St. Germans Parochial Church Council Report

Along with everyone else Wiggenhall St. Germans Church has had to make changes and adapt to the situation under Covid-19 regulations. Sadly, we were not allowed to open during the first lockdown, either for services or for private prayer until July 2020. We had to close again from November to December 2020 and again from January 2021. Services have resumed from 28th March 2021 and, although we are unable to open the church daily due to having the manpower to clean the church each day after use, we have been able to provide an open church on a Sunday and a Wednesday which continues. At such a difficult time for people the PCC felt that we should endeavour to keep the church open for anyone to come in for a time of quiet and reflection. Although the church was not always able to meet together, we are very grateful to Mark Wright, our Licensed Lay Minister, for keeping all the congregation in touch by providing a weekly newsletter. This still continues on a monthly basis for all those who are still shielding or are unable to attend church at this time. Mark also arranged for deliveries of groceries from the village shop to those who were unable to go shopping themselves. The PCC would like to thank everyone who volunteered to help.

We were also very grateful for the help provided from the Parish Council, especially Mike Inder, to set up a system online to help organise a central contact number and records. As it happens the demand for help did not reach the level, we thought it might, as friends and neighbours rallied round to offer their support to those in need. It was so encouraging that during such a difficult time, especially during the first lockdown, people worked together to help one another.

The church members were sad to hear of the passing of Rose Storf earlier this year. Rose has supported church events for many years and was of course our contact for booking the village hall. Rose will be greatly missed.

The church has not been able to hold any events since March 2020, but we are looking forward to being able to start up again as and when the government restrictions allow.

The Youth Club, which was held monthly in the Memorial Hall, has also been unable to meet since March 2020. We hope to restart this as soon as restrictions allow.

Angela Yeoman
Church Warden
PCC

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Annex D

Magdalen Academy Report

As you can imagine it has been a challenging year at school. We have been open throughout providing provision for all of our children of keyworker families and vulnerable families. We are now fully open and it has been great to get back to some sort of normality in school – albeit with social distancing and bubbles in place – and hear the children laughing again.

Our young people have been so resilient throughout and have coped really well with all of the challenges they have faced.

I do have a few slight concerns about the anti-social behaviour of some of the children on the park and out of school. Not sure whether this is going to be raised this evening. Obviously, we can only deal with things in school, but we have been working very hard with all our children on understanding their role in community and how they need to be kind. We will continue this work in school.

Many thanks,

Suzie Hayes

Joint Head of School

Magdalen Academy, St Germans Academy & Wimbotsham & Stow Academy

Council response to the concerns re ASB: The Council is aware of the many issues surrounding both ASB and criminal damage in the community and has worked closely with the Police and several young people have been identified and are on the pathway to more severe interventions. Reporting of ASB and crime to the police is the most effective way of ensuring it is prioritised appropriately by the constabulary. The Parish Council hopes to soon pick up with its strategy with the next steps being to improve youth engagement and to listen to their aspirations to seek ways to encourage and sustain more positive use of their time and energy.

Annex E

Report on the Wiggshall St Germans Ladies Group

Since our last meeting in 2020 we have only been able to be in contact by letter, which we have tried to do each month. Birthday cards are another means of communication too. Christmas cards and a small gift were sent out in December and we had many lovely cards and messages back from our Ladies.

At our last Committee meeting in October last year when we discussed having a meeting in April 2021, hoping that COVID restrictions would have ended but as everyone knows that has not come about.

If the restrictions ease in May to allow up to 30 people to meet outside, we hope to have a Committee meeting to discuss the feasibility of having a meeting outdoors in, perhaps June or July this year. It will really be dependent on folk having had their jobs and of course, on the weather. Perhaps a “park party” with food and catch-up gossip as the theme.

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We had a variety of speakers lined up for this year and are planning on getting as many as possible back for these talks. For example, a talk by Tom Clayton on the restoration of the Baden Powell. This meeting is to open to guests as a few of the members' husbands expressed an interest in this speaker; a second visit by a local Family History expert, whose first visit was in danger of overrunning due to its fascinating content and Pippa from West Norfolk Befriending are among some of the speakers we hope to reschedule.

Of course, all of this depends on how the rules and regulations play out over the next few months.

Katherine White