

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN THE METHODIST CHURCH
SCHOOLROOM, MAIN STREET, HOUGHTON ON THE HILL,
ON THURSDAY 10TH MAY 2012, AT 7.00 PM**

PRESENT:

Parish Council Chairman Cllr. Mrs. Ann Sleath (in the chair)

Clerk to the Council

18 parishioners including guest speakers Mike Hearn, Huw Francis, Hazel McSweeney, Rob Miles – Vicar of St. Catharine's Church and County/District Councillor Simon Galton

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None was received.

2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 11 MAY 2011

The minutes were confirmed and duly signed by the Chairman.

3. CHAIRMAN'S OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR 2011/12

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

She explained that In May 2011 a Parish Council election had been scheduled but had not taken place because only five candidates stood for election whereas the complement is seven. In February, Peter Duke, who had served the village for many years, left the Council as he was moving to the south coast and the previous Chairman resigned following the July meeting. She thanked all Councillors for their contributions during what had been a most difficult year.

In October, Anita Davies, Parish Clerk, left the Council's employment having worked for the council since November 2006. Steve Derry became Clerk at the beginning of February.

Cllr. Sleath thanked Mike Hearn and John Siddons for their work on the broadband project.

Remembrance Day is an important date on the calendar and the Council again provided flowers, a wreath and contributed to refreshments.

The Parish Council has frequently expressed its appreciation of the work of volunteers and Councillors were delighted to see the new kitchen and other improvements at the Village Hall. The new playground on Houghton Field was also being well used. The Council awarded grants to both organisations and it is understood that more plans are in the pipeline for the Parish Council to consider.

In the autumn Councillors carried out a village walk noting where repairs or improvements were needed. This resulted in various remedial works being undertaken including the installation of a new handrail alongside the grass verge between Home Close Road and the garages. The County Council's reduced street lighting scheme is scheduled to be implemented in late summer.

Houghton Footballers and Parklife received grants in 2010 and 2011 after submitting bids to the Rural Community Forum Meeting. This form of funding commenced in 2010 and is a way of awarding money to local organisations for

local projects which have been voted for by local people.

The Localism Bill received Royal Assent in November although there are aspects still being clarified and Councillors have attended meetings and training sessions to improve their understanding of localism, the work of Parish Councils, and of Community Led Planning.

In December the Council agreed to not increase the precept for 2012/13 and it remains at £21,000. It also decided to move Council meetings from the first Wednesday of the month to the second Thursday, with a start time of 7.30 p.m.

The Council is now considering the installation of additional dog bins and new notice boards. Jubilee projects are also being funded including a reception in the Village Hall on Sunday June 3rd immediately after the morning service at St Catharine's Church to which all parishioners are invited.

In summary she provided two quotes.

The first for 2011/12 Charles Dickens "it was the best of times and the worst of times"

and hopefully for 2012/13 Frank Sinatra "the best is yet to come".

4. INVITED SPEAKER: MIKE HEARN

Mike Hearn had worked with John Siddons on the broadband initiative which had arisen from the 2004 Parish Plan. A questionnaire received an 86% response rate which helped the case which was submitted to the County Council. The funding bid for fibre optic cabling was at an advanced stage with an expected contract signing at the end of the year and an anticipated date for works to start in late 2013.

5. INVITED SPEAKER: HUW FRANCIS

Huw outlined the work being undertaken in readiness for the exhibition to be held in the Village Hall to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee featuring a history of Houghton during those sixty years. Craig Bollard was helping from a national and international perspective. Iconic items would be displayed and thematic exhibits would include clubs and societies, school and religious organisations.

6. INVITED SPEAKER: HAZEL McSWEENEY

Hazel detailed the activities which would be taking place to celebrate the 2012 Olympic Games. Houghton's own Olympics would include torch relays, rowing, basketball shooting, netball shooting, table tennis, bridge and scrabble.

7. INVITED SPEAKER: ROB MILES, VICAR OF ST. CATHARINE'S CHURCH

Rob, vicar of St. Catharine's Church since August 2011, said how welcome he had been made to feel in his short time here. He valued the relationships he was forming and outlined his vision to see the church being at the heart of village life. Many people felt an affinity with the church and he was looking to change times and patterns of services to cater for all ages and backgrounds. Sunday School was now the kids' church and he praised the support provided by the Friends of St. Catharine's.

8.

INVITED SPEAKER: COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR SIMON GALTON

Simon Galton explained the importance of the Core Strategy which maps out the amount and type of development to 2028. Green open spaces can be designated if they are considered important provided that they satisfy certain criteria.

Changes had been made to street lighting although he was disappointed that the public had not been more directly consulted. The need to reduce public expenditure had also led to a major review of bus services and changes to refuse and recycling collection arrangements.

The Chairman thanked all speakers for attending.

The meeting closed at 8.00 p.m.

Chairman
1 May 2013