

BODIAM PARISH ASSEMBLY 2019

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The Minutes of the Parish Assembly held in the hall of Bodiam CE Primary School, on Thursday, 21 March 2019 at 7.30 p.m.

Please note these are draft minutes until formally approved at the next Parish Council meeting.

Present:

Parish Council: Councillors, Geoffrey Goodsell (Chairman), Richard Mitchell, Barbara Napper, Linda Stevens and Christine Burgess (Clerk)
RD Cllrs Mrs S Prochak and Mr G Browne, Bodiam Primary School, , Mr N Gardner, Canon C Irvine, Ms K Stafford, Mr S Dewey, Mrs S Steed,

Apologies for Absence : Mr G Perin Claremont School, ESC Cllr A Davies, M Porter Pre-School, R McCormick Bodiam Primary School

Councillor Goodsell took the Chair and opened the meeting, welcoming all members of the public and guests. The Chairman signed the minutes of the 2018 meeting and introduced the new Clerk Christine Burgess.

Bodiam Primary School

Mrs M Williams Executive Head Teacher opened by saying that they were very pleased to report that the school was now oversubscribed for the next academic year, and introduced two year 6 pupils from the School Council, who gave us a flavour of what goes on in their school. As usual it had been a very busy year and the children informed us that their School focus was reading for pleasure. Last summer term they had a reading breakfast, the event was very popular and they intend to repeat this again in the future.

At Bodiam they like to be spontaneous and every now and again a bell rings and everyone stops what they are doing and reads for 15 minutes, this is SQUIRT time, Spontaneous Quiet Uninterrupted Individual Reading Time! Sponsorship money from the Brighton Marathon had been kindly donated to the School, which was just under £2000. This went towards the purchase of new books for the school.

The children laid a wreath on Remembrance Sunday at the Memorial. The children thanked the Parish Council for the commemorative WW1 mugs.

At Christmas the children visited Hawkhurst House a residential care home and sang a selection of Carols which the Residents enjoyed and as a result the children have been invited back. A group of year 5 and 6 year children continue to visit every Tuesday. The children have also continued to join in with a range sports activities such as Cross Country, Football and Gymnastics to name but a few.

Sedlescombe Rangers FC: Nick Gardner

Sedlescombe Rangers have been hiring the Recreation Ground for matches since September and games have been played Saturdays and Sundays successfully September to November, but the wet ground has hindered play.

They are a Chartered Standard Development Club affiliated to Sussex FA and were established in 1981. They have 20 teams, ranging from under 7's to under 18's youth and 4 adult teams which comprises of around 300 players, this includes dedicated Ladies Teams, and the club has been awarded Wildcat Status. They have 30 Coaches all of which are volunteers and no paid individuals. The Club takes safeguarding very seriously and have 3 dedicated Welfare Officers.

They play their games at Sedlescombe, Staplecross and St Leonards as well as Bodiam and are affiliated across 4 leagues. Sedlescombe play around 400 matches per year, hence the need for the use of the Recreation Ground at Bodiam which they hope to continue using.

In July they are holding their annual tournament at Bodiam over the first 2 weekends, approximately 150 teams will be taking part ranging from the u7's to the u15's.

The Club have an annual turnover of £40-£50 thousand per year and income is generated through player fees, sponsorship and sports funding.

Sedlescombe Rangers have an online presence www.sedlescomberangersfc.co.uk and also a mobile phone app- <https://login.eazi-apps.com/m/SedsGo/>

St Giles Church: Priest in Charge Canon Christopher Irvine

Canon Christopher considers that the worshipping Community at St Giles is in good heart and five members of the regular congregation were confirmed this year.

The Church has a tremendous stewardship looking after the building and also the churchyard and they are indebted to the people, the volunteers who care for it.

There have been some wonderful services over the year which have been extremely well supported, particularly Easter, St Giles day in September, Remembrance Sunday and at the Christmas Service.

Canon Christopher ended by reminding us that the Church is here to serve the Community, the whole Parish, and welcomes enquiries for Christening, Weddings and Funerals.

Parish News: Linda Stevens

The Parish Magazine is going strongly, but is in need of content from the Community. The distribution is 260 each month and new advertisers are contributing towards the finance. Anybody who has any news please contact Linda.

Footpaths/Trees: Councillor R Mitchell- Parish Footpath Representative

There have been several fallen trees this year more than in previous years, but they have been cleared up quickly. There had been several issues on the footpaths where hedges had been cut mechanically and not cleared up. The only other issue has been at Bodiam Castle with the new fencing that's gone up and the signage. ESCC have been out and certain measures have been put in place.

National Trust: Karen Stafford.

Karen took up the position of General Manager last October along with Batemans and Monks House in Lewes. Over the last 12 months Bodiam Castle has welcomed 156 thousand visitors; it has been a challenging year with a wet Easter and a very hot summer. The grab and go café opposite is now regularly open the Castle, visitors can take their dogs inside with them. The team are working on themed castle characters to bring the Castle to life in the holidays, there will be a photography exhibition in the winter and Santa Clause will be visiting at Christmas.

Headway is being made regarding the ongoing problem of the odour and a team of experts have been consulted to solve the problem. Karen has raised a substantial amount of money to combat the issue. Planning applications have been made and quotes are coming through. New fencing and signage has gone in and the old information booth will be replaced in the next few months.

Poaching from the moat still remains a problem. The local Police have been really supportive.

As part of the ongoing conservation work the North West Tower is now open to the public and survey work is being undertaken on the Portcullis this year, which apparently jammed in 1390! The wildlife conservation work continues, they have one of the most significant bat roosts sites in the UK. This year fundraising is being focused on restoration work on the Murder Holes.

Kent and East Sussex Railway: Sean Dewey

This year KESR are concentrating on is its branding, the organisation has grown piecemeal over the years and needed to be brought together with one theme, to reflect when steam travel was at its height. The train travels at 25mph over ten and half miles of track, Tenterden to Bodiam. KESR work closely with the National Trust at Bodiam Castle and transport many visitors there over the year. So the branding will reflect the fact that it is an attraction and part of the community.

KESR have two small locomotives the “Terriers” which were used when it was a full working railway. “Bodiam”, which has been in the storage shed, in Honour of its 150th anniversary in 2022 will be overhauled by North Norfolk railway. It will cost circa £120 thousand pounds to fund this and KESR will be starting a national campaign to promote interest for the restoration.

Over the last couple of months the Railway has had almost of a dozen incidents of trespass, which has all be pre-planned by professional organisations, and although The Railway was not affected their neighbours were, so please be very careful in regard to the security of property.

Parker and Ashcombe Trust: Mrs Shane Steed

The Trust was founded in 1888, to provide affordable accommodation for single ladies from Bodiam and the surrounding area. The Trust owns 2 properties in the village, the Alms flats, which comprise four, one bed flats providing the means for independent living, and Rectory Cottage the rental of which contributes significantly to the running

costs of the overall estate. The trust also owns and maintains a small garden, the Parish Room and an Ice House.

As in previous years a fair amount of the Trust's income was used in maintaining the fabric of the buildings overseen by a professional maintenance surveyor who supervises the work. Without the help of Volunteers it would not be possible to continue this facility for the village.

On the residential side, long term and much loved Resident Pam Dando died in July 2018 leaving the Trust with an empty flat. A major programme of refurbishment costing over £20,000 was carried out and has now been re let. The other alms flats were occupied for the full year. The parish room is being using by Bodiam Pre-school and rented out at reasonable rentals to village groups.

Parish Council Report: Councillor G Goodsell, Chairman

The Chairman reported that the Council holds monthly meetings on a Monday, which included an allocated time for public questions, members of the Public are all very welcome. Meetings include a report from our County Councillor and our District Councillor.

National Trust :Cllr Goodsell reported that the odour problem was unpleasant for the residents of Bodiam, but General Manager, Karen Stafford who came along to the meeting in October 2018 has since addressed the issue by raising a substantial amount of money and employing a team of experts who hopefully will be able to sort this out. The Chairman assured the National Trust that the Council would always welcome discussion. Cllr Goodsell had received a complaint from a member of the Public regarding the "Do not feed the Ducks" sign, but was very glad to hear that Father Christmas would be returning at Christmas.

Claremont School : There had been issues regarding the building work, also problems with the lighting shining into the bedrooms causing residents to complain to the Planning Dept at Rother.

Recreation Ground : The Chairman reported that sadly Bodiam Rotary Club no longer use the Ground as it was too small for purposes. Big thanks were given to Pam Marsh for all her work at the Pavillion and keeping everything tidy.

Sunday Bus Service The Hastings to Cranbrook route will be reviewed in September. This service runs without any assistance from County Hall. In 2020 all the routes will be reviewed.

Environment : There had been problems with noise at last summer's music festival and hopefully the organisers will be more considerate if this takes place again. (The Licensing Office recommended reorientation of the stage minuted on 28.01.2019 meeting)

Planning : There have been concerns raised regarding the development of the Junction Road Filling Station, which is not in Bodiam's Parish area but comments have been noted and the Planning is currently monitoring the situation.

Crime : There have been several break-ins over the last year. Cllr Goodsell would like to see a local PCSO back in the Village.

School Parking: Remains a problem and finding a solution continues to be difficult.

Priest in Charge : The Chairman commended Canon Christopher Irvine for bringing the Church together with Ewehurst on a level basis.

Councillor Goodsell finished his report by inviting everybody present to partake of the food and drink at the rear of the hall, and reminding them that they would be always welcome at the Parish Council Meetings.

Rother District Council : Sue Prochak

Local Taxation: All authorities have again raised their local tax: ESCC, Sussex Police, East Sussex Fire Authority and Rother District Council whose increase is 2.9% bringing in total a Band D for this Parish to £1,959.76, an increase of £76.96. Rother's share of this is £179.45. The Police part has gone up by 14%, and recruitment is now taking place for PCSOs.

The biggest problem for Rother District Council this year has been a lack of Staff and the Planning Office the Enforcement Officers are down to two due to austerity measures.

Housing: These has been an increase in homeless applications by 103% last year and this year a further 26%, ie 128% in the last 6 months.

As a result of the lack of affordable housing, and increases in homelessness there was a working party set up in 2018 to understand these issues and make recommendations to help solve these problems. One recommendation is setting up our own housing company similar to one going successfully for some time in Eastbourne.

Joint Waste & Recycling Contract: Kier have come to an agreement with Rother to exit their contract early. The new contractor is Biffa and they start on 29 June. Kier specialize in Waste Collection, so we expect this contract to deliver a better service. It's a seven-year contract costing £1.5m pa more than the existing contract. The main change will be that glass and other recyclable materials will be collected together.

My Alerts: This email communication informs you when your bin day is and planning applications near you. Subscribers have been removed that have not interacted with My Alerts in the last 2 years, or where emails no longer exist. Do register for this useful service.

Civil Parking Enforcement: This means that ESCC will take over parking enforcement. The proposal is that all the parking restrictions will be enforced and the 19 Time Limited parking spaces will require parking tickets – 10p for 5 minutes, 40p for one hour. Rye, Battle, Bexhill and Robertsbridge are affected by these proposals.

District Elections: The local elections are on 2nd May , the deadline to register to vote is the 12th April (15th April to apply for a postal vote). Bodiam was part of a two-member ward with Hurst Green, Salehurst and Robertsbridge. With new boundaries across Rother, Robertsbridge will be a one-member ward for R D Council. Bodiam will be a two-member ward with Ewehurst, Northiam and Beckley. This means after 16 years I say rather a sad goodbye to Bodiam.

Finally : Thank you to your Chairman and Councillors, to the new Clerk and to your County Councillor. Things get done if we work together, so thank you.

Rother District Council: Councillor Graham Browne

Cllr Browne added his thanks to D C Cllrs Prochaks to the Parish Council for making him very welcome, unfortunately Cllr Browne has had 3 other committees who also use Monday Evenings and has not been able to attend as many meetings as he would have liked. Cllr Browne commended Chairman Goodsell on his dedication to the Village over the years.

Chairman G Goodsell

Cllr Goodsell thanked Cllrs Napper and Davies for their work organizing the commemorative mugs, the Council had received a lovely letter of thanks from a pupil on behalf of the school. Cllr Goodsell informed the Assembly that there were still a few left to purchase. from Cllr Peters.

Cllr Goodsell went on to thank D C Sue Prochak for all her work for Bodiam Parish Council.

Answers to Public Questions

- (a) Commemorative mugs can be bought from Cllr G Peters.
- (b) Kent and East Sussex Railway operates between Tenterden and Bodiam, the land next to that is owned by Rother Valley Railway and they are building the extension, KESR will not be involved until that is built and a licence is granted to operate. The Public Enquiry that was going to be held June this year has now been deferred. There has to be an enquiry because it is the Ministry that grants the licence to operate.
- (c) Claremont School were not represented tonight as Mr Giles Perin had another function on at the School. Enquiries are still ongoing into why the Claremont Coaches are now parking on the road outside the school rather than on their drive.
- (d) In the coming year the Council will do all they can to support the Village eg the odour from the National Trust property Bodiam Castle. It would be wonderful to finally take this off the agenda.
- (e) Concern was expressed regarding parking at Bodiam Primary School, and the safety of the children and Bodiam Primary school have previously been invited to a meeting but as yet the Council have had no reply. A lay-by may be a possible option if it could be properly laid with hardcore etc but is would be under the remit of East Sussex Highways Department. In regards to Claremont School if residents make a note of times and perhaps take a photo to send to the Highways Dept.
- (f) Sedlescombe Rangers promote football from all the surrounding areas including Bodiam and there are children from Bodiam who play at the moment.

- (g) The secondhand Bookshop at Bodiam Castle is at the back of the Tea Room.
The National Trust now do a membership for a Child for just £10 per year. With reference to a previous mention of feeding the Ducks, the sign was put up “not to feed” to protect them from being overfed and the food attracts vermin such as rats.. In the near future Lucy the Ranger will be doing a feed the ducks session with the children and small bags of food will be on sale more suitable for them to eat. Bread is very bad for the ducks and causes bloating.

Close of Meeting

There being no further business the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting. Attendees were invited to remain for refreshments.