



MINUTES OF THE TIMSBURY ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

held on

Thursday 11th May 2017 at 7.30pm in the Conygre Hall

1. **The Chairman of the Parish Council, Councillor Veronica Packham**, welcomed all to the meeting.
2. **Apologies for absence** were received from Cllr. Doug Deacon, Peter Bradshaw, Peter Buchanan, Christine Bateman and Felicity Groves.
3. **Minutes of the meeting held on 21st April 2016.**

It was agreed by those present that the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. **Chairman's Report**

Councillor Packham reported that this year has seen much change to both the Parish Council and the village. Just a year ago we were advertising for a new Parish Clerk. At his interview the successful applicant, Chris Gittins, impressed us with his considerable experience of working with communities together with his wish to serve the village where he now lives. We were pleased to confirm Chris' appointment as Clerk to the Parish Council...after, of course, he had satisfactorily completed a probationary period of three months!

The Parish Council

The roll call of Parish Councillors remains the same as last year: Mary Anne Ansell, Sheila Clarke, David Collett, Janet Durk, Mike Horler, Sue Langdon, Dave Lorriman, Ray Merchant, Veronica Packham, Josie Pownall, Derek Wheeler, and Robert Young. We still have one vacancy and would be interested to hear from anyone interested in being considered for co-option. The Parish Council has met 12 times this year and committee meetings have taken place as necessary, all in this hall. I remind you that all meetings are advertised and members of the public are always welcome.

Communications

Last year I spoke of our wish to improve and develop our methods of communication in the village. Some significant changes have taken place over the year. First the newsletter: Let me stress that a change of editor was not part of the plan. Annette Kirkby's work over six years as editor was very greatly appreciated and her wish to retire was a cause of regret, although understandable. We thank Annette for bringing us news and information month by month over this long period. I confess that I wondered whether a new editor would be found to take on this task and had contingency plans A, B, and C in mind in case of need. But this is Timsbury, and an eminently suitable person came forward for the post. Annette worked closely with our new editor, Felicity Groves, to ensure a seamless hand over. So the newsletter continues, now approaching 40 years of publication. In time we would like to introduce more colour. Having looked at the costs we feel we are not ready yet to introduce this change.

It is in electronic means of communication that major changes are to be found. Our new website Timsbury.org.uk is now active, retaining much useful content from the old site which is now closed down. It has all Parish Council minutes and agendas and other documents which the council is obliged by law to display. There is also a new Parish Council facebook page and a new email news system. Use of these electronic means combined with the newsletter and our notice boards enables us to meet the communication needs of all age groups in the village in all formats, paper and on-line. The Parish Council is now able to publicise its activities more effectively.

Streets and Safety

You are all aware, I hope, of the changes affecting all the roads in the village. The 20mph speed limit voted for by 80% of those who responded to the questionnaire in the 2009 Village Plan is now in place. It is the result of

many hours of talks involving the Parish Council, B&NES officers and other official bodies. We achieved some success in making changes to B&NES plans, but not all that we wanted. We accept that the new scheme will not please everyone. But, be warned, your wealth is at risk if you disregard the signs: the police have been active in checking speeds and imposing fines. Some further attempts have been made to improve both pedestrian safety and traffic flow by the addition of some white lines and slight loss of parking on North Road. No measures will eliminate the difficulties and dangers inherent in North Road, but we hope that with due care the road is now safer for all users.

It is good to see the replacement finger post at Wheeler's crossroads now in its original site opposite the Recreation Field. Thanks are due to our district Councillor, Doug Deacon, for his part in bringing this about.

There are many people, often unseen and unsung, who make a real difference to the appearance of our streets: Les, who does so much more than sweep the roads, the Community Payback teams whose work has included clearance of some badly neglected areas, all those who look after the planters season by season, and at last thanks to repair work by the vice chairman, Councillor Derek Wheeler, the green fingers of members of the planting team and an agreement with CURO negotiated by Councillor Janet Durk the butterfly which once lived at the school entrance has now come to rest at Conygre Green.

Village amenities

There was much concern last year as we faced the possible loss of our Post Office. We felt that the process was badly handled by the Post Office managers, who also failed to have the new office open on the advertised day. Only under pressure from the Parish Council did the Post Office fulfil its obligation to provide transport from the village to another local office. We appreciate the service now provided by McColls and feel quite fortunate in contrast to our neighbours in Paulton, a much larger village which no longer has a post office.

It's all change too at The Seven Stars which has recently undergone a major refurbishment and has a new manager. His determination to make a success of the pub together with the financial investment by the holding company are encouraging signs that Timsbury will not lose its last remaining hostelry. The Seven Stars is listed as an Asset of Community Value. We must play our part in making this statement a reality. All Timsbury businesses need our support.

Planning

We have received fewer planning applications for our comments this year, a total of 20, of which 5 were for work on trees and 3 were withdrawn. Now that B&NES no longer sends paper copies for us to study, the council has purchased the necessary equipment to enable us to see applications on-line. We thank the Conygre Trust for their assistance over this change. One advantage of the new system is that visitors to our meetings can also see what is under discussion.

An application of particular concern in the village was a plan for a large housing development on Loves Hill opposite the Cheshire Home. The Parish Council raised strong objections. Following a refusal by B&NES to approve the application the developers launched an appeal which was heard by a Government Inspector last November. We were disappointed that the hearing, at first scheduled to take place in Timsbury, was moved to Bath but pleased that such a large number of residents attended. Not until February did we get the result: the appeal was dismissed. Good news indeed for Timsbury, especially when we look at the reasons for such a decision. I feel that the final statement in the inspector's report is so important that I would like to read it:

"I have found that the proposal would be materially harmful to the distinctive character of both the village itself and the wider landscape. I consider it would have a considerably negative impact on the setting of Lynch House, eroding its isolation and materially impacting on its significance within the landscape."

This evidence of the importance attached to such factors as the character of the village and the landscape is most timely. It comes just as we are becoming involved in a new local plan for B&NES for the period 2016 -2036, a plan which will also contribute to the housing and economic development requirements of the West of England Joint Spatial Plan. We feel that it is now extremely important that we complete work on a Neighbourhood Plan for Timsbury and we are seeking help from all groups and interests in the village. Please come and talk to us if you are interested in working with us.

If anyone needs an introduction to the beauty of the local countryside let me introduce you to the ideal book, "Twenty circular walks in and around Timsbury". Our thanks and congratulations go to Peter Bradshaw, Larry

Cunningham and Sue Fraser for this excellent publication, full of interesting observations and beautifully illustrated. No house in Timsbury should be without a copy. Don't miss the lovely views which have been opened up since the Parish Council arranged to get the Ha-ha hedges cut back.

Finance

From the financial report which follows you will note that the council continues its support for many village activities and organisations. This is a practical way in which we can assist them and show our appreciation of their valuable work which is so important to the quality of life that we enjoy. In addition to helping our "regular clients", this year we have supplied a new mat for the Short Mat Bowls Club and also sponsored an exciting new event, "The Taste of Timsbury". We are pleased that this was such a success and hope that it will become a regular feature of the Timsbury calendar of events.

We know we must be prepared for more changes in the years ahead. The mobile library service is likely to end next March. We are already looking to see how we can provide a better service to replace it, not just a few hours a fortnight as long as the van is roadworthy, but perhaps a few days a week depending on demand and the help of sufficient volunteers. Other services could also be available. We need you and other residents to talk to us about what you think might usefully be provided. We are thinking of a "hub", a source of information and help as well as a place for books. Please come and talk to us.

To finish, a change that will be of interest to several people here tonight. What was once called 106 money, is now called CIL, short for Community Infrastructure Levy. This is a levy by local authorities on building and development taking place in their areas and is used to help provide a wide range of necessary infrastructure. Now 15% of this levy is passed to Parish Councils to spend on projects in their parishes. This figure rises to 25% where a Neighbourhood Plan is in place. Our accounts show that we have received a payment in respect of a new house in Conygre Green. A further payment has been received in the current financial year for a development in Greenvale bringing the total to about £5300. There are of course rules about how this may be spent and I expect there will be no shortage of ideas for consideration. We also wish to discover just what happens to the 85% of the levy which is retained by B&NES and what we can do so that Timsbury benefits from this portion too. This is another subject you might wish to talk about later.

This report cannot be complete without a sincere, though brief, expression of thanks to the many who contribute in so many ways to make Timsbury such a remarkable place to live. Just read the house agents' advertisements about this "vibrant and sought after village". I also thank my fellow councillors for all they do in the service of this community. This is a time of so many changes but it is also bringing new opportunities for us to make a real difference here. Please stay at the end of the meeting, and join us for a drink. We really do need to hear your views on the future of our village.

5. Financial Statement

The Parish Clerk, Chris Gittins, presented the financial statement for the year ended 31st March 2017. He reported that a parish grant of £2,330 had been received from B&NES and this is being phased out by 2018. From Expenditure of £69,562.69 and Income of £63,383.94 the balance of funds held by the Parish Council at the year-end totalled £47,668.63 and with VAT of £2,699.20 to be claimed in 2017. It is likely that B&NES will be seeking to hand over some of the services they currently provide to parish councils and Timsbury Parish Council therefore wants to ensure that the funds held by the council are adequate to fund these services to ensure they are retained.

Questions from the floor:

A question about Taste of Timsbury was answered explaining that it is a grant to the ToT local charity towards the costs of running the popular event such as publicity and hall hire.

A question regarding reserves; the Clerk explained that the deficit resulted in a reduced year-end balance reserve from £55,879 to £50,367 after the VAT of £2,699 is claimed back this year.

The financial statement was then approved by the meeting.

6. Conygre Trust Report

Mat Bramley the Treasurer presented the **Financial Report** of the Trust, as follows:

Whilst the accounts have not been independently scrutinised yet, I believe they are an accurate summary of the year's finances of the trust.

This year we have a significant surplus of £10,657.82.

The 5 year position is + £15,672.30, (annual + £3,134.46) and 3 year £25,584.67 (annual + £8,861.56)

Our current account opened with a balance of £33,154.57 and closed with £44,357.64

We maintain a reserve account that has a balance of £16,372.02. It is important that I put this into context; this is less than 32% of our annual income (discounting the one off hypothecated stage refurbishment grant). This could only pay for two or three roof repairs similar to the one we undertook in 2015 or replacing fascias and guttering as in 2017 at £6,080. We already have an overhang of major electrical work from last year and are engaging contractors on this currently.

Analysis

Overall the sum of repairs and refurbishments for 2015/6 and 2016/17 are similar. (£925 less this year)

Our main source of self-generated income remains hall bookings; this accounts for around 73% (72%). This revenue stream is the main support our work both inside and outside of the actual hall. We have seen our hall booking revenue rise from £35,825 to £38,064 (+£2,220 or +6.1%). We continue to benefit from free hall management provided on a pro bono basis by Jeff Sluggett. I conservatively estimate that this is equivalent to perhaps £7,500 per annum. Taking this into account gives us a realistic long term surplus of about £3,200.

We remain responsible for the maintenance of the recreation field and play equipment. This year the trust is arranging cost effective repairs to several items of play equipment including replacement seat for helicopter-bouncer, a new spring for spinning bouncer, and arranging for a replacement slide to be fabricated. The trust is also supplying labour on a pro-bono basis. We estimate that this will save well over £2,500 for Timsbury Parish Council and the year has only just begun. Whilst we are pleased to work with Timsbury Parish Council which continues to support the trust by reimbursing the trust for the costs associated with the pure public uses of the field, the fact that the play equipment is now rather old, means that future repairs will grow in scale and frequency. Inevitably, some items may not be repairable (we are struggling to source a new slide) and we ask PC to plan for replacements and expensive repairs.

Outlook

As in previous years, I have to suggest this year we need to review our charging structure. This will allow us to maintain and refurbish our estate in a planned way and also to rebuild reserves to cope with any large one-off costs. Similarly, any large expenditure items that are discretionary must be subject to careful scrutiny to ensure we are financially stable in the long term.

It remains my objective to help my fellow trustees to manage the finances of the trust in a way that is sustainable in the long run and brings the most benefit to the whole community we serve. Many thanks to our booking officer – Malcolm Tucker and to Jeff Sluggett who as hall manager has been a great asset to the trust and our community. I am also grateful for the support of my fellow trustees.

The Trust Chairman's Report was presented by Mat Bramley on behalf of Peter Buchanan.

The Conygre Trust is the registered charity which is responsible for managing the Conygre Hall and Timsbury Recreation Field. The Trustees, who form the management committee, have met 11 times in the past year. 14 Trustees served in the past year: two (Mike Horler and Chris Bateman) were nominated by the parish council, two (Jeff Sluggett and Jan Merchant) were elected at this meeting last year, 9 are nominated by village organisations specified in the Trust Deed, and there is one co-opted Trustee.

Peter Bradshaw Badminton Club
Jack Beever Over-60s club
Kelvin Hancock Timsbury Athletic FC
Sue Langdon WI
Howard Nowell Cricket Club

Peter Buchanan Theatre Group
John Gardner Short Mat Bowls
Ray Merchant Horticultural Society
Sheila Matthew Natural History Group
Mat Bramley Co-opted

There are some organisations who are entitled to nominate Trustees but do not currently have a representative: Timsbury Toddlers, Timsbury Preschool, Timsbury Snooker Club.

Trustees are appointed for one year at a time and most of the current membership will be carrying on for the 2017 -2018 year. Only two of the current Trustees are under 65 and some new blood would be very welcome! It is worth mentioning that Trustees do not have to be members of their nominating organisation and the Trust has the power to co-opt, so new Trustees are welcome.

Recreation Field

The recreation field and play area are very well used by a large number of people from Timsbury and nearby villages. The grass-cutting and other routine field maintenance is carried out by Crocombe Services, a Timsbury firm run by Martin Stevens. After a competitive tendering process earlier this year, we have re-appointed Crocombe Services for another 3 years. The Trust thanks Martin for his excellent work, which is much appreciated by the football and cricket clubs. Thanks also to Les Robbins.

The Parish Council reimburses the Trust for the routine maintenance of the grass, trees, hedges and other work which is for the general good and not related to the specific requirements of the sports clubs.

The children's play area is a major feature of the Rec, and the Trust commissions regular safety inspections which are carried out by B&NES staff and paid for by the Parish Council. If repairs are needed, Trust members engage contractors, and manage the work. Up till now, the Parish Council has paid for these repairs, but the pot of money which funded this is now exhausted. The Trust believes that the play area should continue to be financed by the Parish Council, as it is for the general good and does not generate any income for the Trust (unlike, for instance, the football pitches). Some of the play equipment is reaching the end of its life and decisions will need to be taken about what level of finance will be available for its replacement.

The Trust is keen to improve the tennis court to make it suitable for a variety of sports – this would involve resurfacing, improving the fencing, and (ideally) upgrading the lighting so that it can be used in the evenings all year round. The Trust was very close to obtaining a £30,000 grant for this work in return for allowing a mobile phone mast to be sited on the Rec, but the offer was withdrawn when a proposal to erect a mast on the Sleight was approved. We are still hopeful that some improvements can be funded and we are intending to go ahead with improving the fencing very soon. Some of the vegetation which was damaging the fence on the Sunnyside Gardens side has been cut back with a bit of help from the Community Payback team.

Conygre Hall

The Hall receives no public money and is entirely funded by its letting income and occasional grants, together with rent from the Cricket and Snooker clubs. The hall is very well used by a wide range of village groups, commercial hirers and public bodies, as well as many casual hirers.

One of the reasons why the hall continues to thrive is the excellent team who deal with the hirers. Malcolm Tucker as booking officer and Jeff Sluggett as hall manager are people whose response to an enquiry is almost always positive. Malcolm does receive a small honorarium based on booking income and is reimbursed for expenses. Jeff, being a trustee, cannot be paid but claims some expenses.

The Trust continues to make improvements to the fabric and facilities of the Hall. All the main rooms including the bowls court, the foyer and toilets are now lit by LED panels. All the fascia boards and guttering were replaced. The recent 3-yearly electrical inspection recommended that the main fuse-board should be replaced – we are in the process of getting estimates for this and we expect the work to be carried out this summer.

Last year, we reported that the Trust had obtained a lottery grant of £10,000 for refurbishment of the stage area, the major part of which involved installing a scaffold grid to carry all the backcloths, lights and other stage apparatus. The work has been completed at an overall cost of just over £12,000 – the shortfall was funded by Timsbury Theatre Group, whose members did most of the non-specialist work.

I'd like to thank Malcolm, Jeff, Sam Murphy the hall's cleaner, and all the Trustees for their hard work and support in the past year. Finally, I would like to thank the village organisations for their continued support.

Questions from the floor:

- In response to a question about booking level of the hall and rooms, it was confirmed that the bookings are healthy though not full, and are competitive in prices of other local venues.

- In response to a question about insurance Mr Bramley advised that no insurance claims were made last year. The Conygre Trust has public liability insurance of £5m and the policy includes cover for the buildings and contents, public and employer's liabilities and indemnity for the trustees.

Election of Trustees. Mr Jeff Sluggett and Mrs Jan Merchant were proposed by David Collett and unanimously re-elected to serve as trustees of the Conygre Trust for the year 2017-18.

7. District Councillor's Report

In the absence of Councillor Deacon his report was read by the Clerk.

I am pleased to report on another busy year representing the residents of Timsbury on B&NES. Financial assistance through my Councillors Initiative Allowance has provided:

- The finger post road sign at Coalpit Crossroads was refurbished and re-installed.
- A new Mat for Timsbury Short Mat Bowls Club, matching the one funded by the Parish Council.
- Flower Boxes provided outside Timsbury Pharmacy in the High Street.
- Financial support for the Taste of Timsbury group.
- Some safety barriers for Timsbury Football Club.

Other Items:

- Blocked Drains at Timsbury Bottom have been actioned.
- 3 new waste bins have been provided; further Waste Bins to be replaced in the near future.
- Road Traffic accidents at Bloomfield Road have been investigated and speed checks are taking place.
- Seven Stars officially listed as an Asset of Community Value
- New white Lines have been provided in certain areas of the village.
- Bus Shelters at North Road and Lansdown Crescent were upgraded for wheelchair access to public transport.
- Bad road surfaces at Rectory Lane, Newmans Lane and Mill Lane have been reported to B&NES.
- Complaints concerning parking on pavements are being dealt with by the police.
- Fly Tipping has taken place, officers are installing CCTV at Fly Tipping Hot Spots.
- Parking problems at North Road near the Coop are being investigated by the Police and B&NES.

8. Planting & Spaces Report by Parish Councillor Mary Anne Ansell:

She outlined difficulties with managing and watering of the 48 planters in the village. The PC Committee leading this has decided on a more sustainable planting regime with drought resistant plants and perennials.

9. Hub / Library Initiative

Mary Anne Ansell gave out a questionnaire to ask residents, groups and businesses about what they would like such a service to include, should an appropriate venue in the village.

10. Timsbury Road Safety Group

Sheila Clark presented a report on behalf of the Timsbury Road Safety Group. She explained that members of the group are village residents who share a concern for road safety in the village. The group is open to anyone to join and is non-funded and non-political.

11. Items raised by parishioners

- Rev Martin Blewett announced that Scarecrow event will be running again on 15/16th July.
- Chris Fiddes from British Legion Branch expressed disappointment that the Parish Council has not agreed to moving the war memorial to the Miner's Memorial Garden. He is hoping that a more prominent war memorial would be developed either there or somewhere else, perhaps as part of the 2018 remembrance. As the British Legion itself may not be forever on its land, there may be a risk of losing the memorial entirely. A suggestion for an article asking where people think what should be done and where. The Chairman expressed support for the principle of the need for progress, whether or not in the Memorial Garden.

12. The Chairman concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for attending and taking part in the meeting which had been very interesting and informative. She invited residents to stay for post-meeting drinks.

Approved and signed as a correct record of the meeting:

Chairman: _____

Date: