

**Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Parish of Pegswood held at Pegswood Welfare Hall, Pegswood on Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2007**

The Annual Assembly was opened at 7.00pm by the Chairman of Pegswood Parish Council, Councillor Jim Burley.

**1 PRESENT:** Councillor Jim Burley (Chairman), Peter Basnett (Clerk) and twelve members of the public.

**2. REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF PEGSWOOD PARISH COUNCIL**

The Parish Council has had another busy year. We welcomed two new co-opted members, Juliet Oakley and Mel Christie. Three members resigned during the year, George McCabe on health grounds, Carl Sanders for business reasons and Ian Layton who no longer had enough time to serve the Parish Council.

I thank them for serving as Councillors and for the time and effort devoted by them to the people of Pegswood.

A major development during the year was the opening of the new-by pass. This was the culmination of over forty year's public demand encompassing work by County, Borough and Parish Councillors. It would be invidious to name individuals and I thank them all.

Village improvements planned as part of the by-pass works by the County Council include the provision of parking facilities adjacent to the Co-op together with some landscaping work in the Village and, hopefully, this will start in the near future.

The By-pass has greatly reduced the traffic flow through the village making it a safer and more attractive place to live.

Plans have also been approved for the redevelopment of The Terraces with 78 new properties including 12 affordable dwellings. This will tidy up a run down part of the village and is greatly welcomed.

The hat trick was completed by the removal of the waste transfer station and skip hire business from near the village school to the outskirts of the village. This was supported by the Parish Council and improves road safety and ensures that a local business stays in the village maintaining employment opportunities for Pegswood residents.

The Parish Council has improved facilities by replacing the stone bus shelters with state of the art modern bus shelters supplied by Adshel. The stone bus shelters whilst looking good proved to be dark and unsanitary with the public reluctant to use them.

There are six new bus shelters, two of which have been purchased by the Parish Council, two have been provided free by Northumberland County Council. These four are

maintained by the Parish Council and the other two provided and presently maintained by the County Council will be transferred to the possession of the Parish Council on 30 September 2009.

In response to public demand the Parish Council has supplied another 10 litter bins making 22 in total and another four dog waste bins making nine in total. Another three dog waste bins are on order.

The value of the Parish Council assets including the above additions has increased from £79,841 last year to £94,695 this year.

The Parish Office has moved to the ground floor of the Union building allowing for better access especially for the disabled with a bonus of a saving on rent and business rates for the smaller office.

The Parish Council has proved another notice board sited at the Post Office and I welcome the re-opening of the Post Office which provides an invaluable service for the Village.

There has been a great reduction in the amount of crime in the village in the past year as detailed in the monthly reports made by the Community Police Officer, PC Mick Leybourne. This is greatly welcomed and contributes to the improvement in the quality of life enjoyed by the residents of Pegswood. I thank PC Leybourne for his work in the Village.

The Parish Council's newsletter has been well received and was used during the year to invite comments on the maintenance of play areas. As a result the Parish Council resolved to maintain the play area at Patton Way. An access footpath is planned for the near future. I particularly wish to thank Pat Pierpoint for her voluntary role in editing the newsletter.

The Parish Council's web site is well used with over 1000 hits per month. My thanks go to Councillor Simon Willcox for setting up and managing the web site.

The Council houses in the village have not been maintained to an adequate standard due to the lack of money available to Castle Morpeth Borough Council so the news that the housing stock is to be transferred to a housing association has received overwhelming public support.

There was a disappointing response to the Parish Council election to be held on 3 May 2007 with only six candidates for the nine places on the Parish Council. As a result there will not be a contest with the three vacancies to be filled by co-option. The vacancies are being advertised and expressions of interest will be greatly valued.

The lack of candidates means that the Parish Council will have to wait at least another four years to the next election before being able to apply for quality status. This is a

major disappointment as I believe that we meet most, if not all, of the remaining criteria for qualification.

The voluntary sector in the Village goes from strength to strength and the Parish Council has given support by making grants of £7,715 this year compared to £3,530 in 2005/2006.

This includes £2,495 to Pegswood Welfare, £1,120 to the Scouts and £800 to the Guides with smaller grants made to other organisations.

During the year the Parish Council received a donation of £477.42 being the closing balance of the defunct Pegswood Forum and, at the request of the Forum, this was shared between the Scouts, Guides and the Village Church.

The grants budget for 2007/2008 stands at £7,780 and £1,910 has already been paid out. Grant requests are welcomed with application forms available on request.

I congratulate all the voluntary bodies in the Parish on their work during the last year and thank them for providing facilities and opportunities for the residents of Pegswood and improving the quality of life in the Village. I wish them all well for the next year.

I thank Pegswood Welfare for allowing us to use their premises for the Annual Assembly and congratulate them on rising phoenix-like from the flames of the devastating fire in January 2006. I wish to pay particular tribute to Margaret Davison, the Chairman of the Welfare, for her hard work and the work of her Committee on restoring the Welfare.

When you are here please have a look around at the facilities now available.

Pegswood is blessed with community facilities such as those provided by the Welfare Hall and Project House. We must all work together for the benefit of the people of Pegswood.

In closing I would like to thank all the members of the Parish Council and the Clerk, Peter Basnett for all their hard work and support during the last year.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Mrs Juliet Oakley, a member of the Council housing stock transfer Shadow Board, gave a brief report on the progress of the council housing stock transfer. It was expected that all the housing stock would be brought up to a satisfactory level of repair by 2010.

### **3. DRAFT PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTS 2006/2007**

The Clerk presented a report on the accounts which were subject to audit and answered questions.

#### **1. Receipts**

- Precept reduced from £49,000 in 2005/2006 to £47,500 in 2006/2007 a reduction of £1,500 equivalent to 3.06%.
- Bank Interest received increased from £1,337 to £1,863 an increase of £526.
- In 2005/2006 the Parish Council received £230 in costs and restitution awarded against the former Clerk. Nothing was received in 2006/2007 and the Council's solicitor is presently taking steps to recover the remaining £14,854.34 owed to the Parish Council.
- There was a recovery of £176 in 2006/07 for business rates due to a move to a smaller office.
- A one-off grant of £2,654 received in 2005/06 was not repeated in 2006/07.
- Donations received were £300 in 2005/06 and £477 in 2006/07, an increase of £177.
- Allotment rent income received was £1,247 in 2005/06 and £1,219 in 2006/07 a slight reduction of £28.
- VAT recovered was £905 in 2005/06 and £4,617 in 2006/07, an increase of £3,712. This was due mainly to £911 VAT recovered in 2006/2007 in respect of 2005/06 and £3,706 for 2006/07 mainly for the purchase of new bus shelters, litter bins and dog waste bins.
- Year on year there was an overall increase of income received of £139.

#### **2. Payments**

##### **Salaries**

There was a reduction of £260 due to fewer additional hours worked by the Clerk.

##### **Administration**

There was a reduction of £3,808 on the previous year due mainly to:

- £779 saved on rent and service charge due to moving to a smaller office

- £2,808 on reduced expenditure for professional fees
- £299 reduced expenditure on equipment.

### **Maintenance & Repairs**

There was as reduction of £18 on the previous year.

### **Parks & Open Spaces**

There was a reduction of £3,001 on the previous year due mainly to a saving of £2,919 on the flower bed maintenance contract, due to replacing flower beds with shrub beds.

### **Grants & Donations**

There was an increase of £4,185 in grants and donations made, due to an underspend in the previous year of £2,495 carried forward and £1,690 budgeted increase in grants made in 2006/07. An overall underspend of £1,280 in 2006/2007 is carried forward to 2007/08 as an earmarked balance.

### **Projects**

There was an increase of £14,701 year on year for projects due mainly to:

- £1,750           Renewing play area safety surface
- £439            additional dog waste bins
- £2,269          additional litter bins
- £10,625        two new bus shelters

### **Allotments**

There was an overall increase of £211 year on year due mainly to an increase in water charges.

### **VAT**

VAT paid increased from £1,751 in 2005/06 to £3,707 in 2006/07 due mainly to purchase on bus shelters, litter bins, dog waste bins.

### **3. Earmarked Balance carried forward**

	<b>£</b>
Allotments	1,195
Clerk's retirement gratuity	1,265
Grants	1,280
Legal costs	7,000

Repairs & Renewals Fund	16,000
Office equipment renewal	382
Working Balance	18,280
<b>Balance carried forward as per cash book balance at 31/03/2007</b>	<b>45,402</b>

## Assets

The value of assets held increased from £70,839 to £79,841 due to the demolition of 3 stone bus shelters and purchase of two new bus shelters and the gift of two new bus shelters from Northumberland County Council together with the purchase of litter bins, dog waste bins and a filing cabinet for the parish council office.

The balance of the sum that the former Parish Clerk defrauded the Parish Council, £17,133, was reduced to £14,854 in a Morpeth Berwick County Court judgment claim number 5MP00889, the balance of £2,279 being written off – Council minute 452.

Total assets at 31 March 2007 - £79,841 plus £14,854 = £94,695.

## 4 REPORTS BY VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

### 4.1 Pegswood Welfare Centre – given by Margaret Davison (Chairman)

As reported at last year's meeting, the Centre suffered fire damage. Which resulted in its closure for ten months.

This meant activities had to stop and some found alternative places including the boxing club, which was to be run by Glen McCrory.

However we are now refurbished and have just had our official opening day (Friday 20<sup>th</sup> April) which was very well attended.

We were able to resume some activities in November and currently have Kick Boxing, Bingo, Carpet Bowls, The Friendship Club and Ellington Colliery Band and just recently a Dance Group.

Now the refurbishment is complete we are now focusing on new projects/activities, some of which will be ready to start in the next few weeks. This includes an Active Age Project, which will have new age curling, circuit classes and tea dances as part of the project. After these are up and running we will be looking at the possibility of a luncheon club and a drama club.

We will also be advertising the hire of the hall and rooms for functions and events.

We would like to thank the Parish Council for the grant to refurbish the floors and the remainder being used towards the disabled toilet. Your help has been greatly appreciated.

#### **4.2 1<sup>st</sup> Pegswood Scout Group - Clive Rich (Group Scout Leader)**

The last year has been a very positive one for the Group. In the Spring on 2006, the numbers of Cubs who were becoming eligible to move to Scouts meant that reforming the Scout Troop was not only feasible but essential. We were pleased to welcome Lesley Bradley as our new Scout Leader to start the Troop in September. In October we held a very public investiture ceremony for the new 8 Scouts an occasion made more special by the number of villagers who joined us for the event. The Scout Troop has been very successful and numbers of Scouts (10-14 yrs) have now increased to 15. We have been climbing, walking (Morpeth Riverside Walking Festival), camping (Kielder in February !!) and orienteering. They represented Pegswood in the County 5-a-side competition and they will shortly be able to try canoeing and sailing.

Cubs numbers suffered a little from the loss of so many moving to Scouts, but still manage 10 members. At Easter, Fiona Hislop stood down as the Cub Leader, after 4 years in the position. Fiona 'rescued' the Cub Pack from closure 4 years ago and is a sad loss for us. We need to find a new Cub Leader before September or the Pack will have to close. The Cubs have been active and had the chance to attend the District camp at Dilston, Corbridge last summer.

Both Scouts and Cubs took part in a 3 week first Aid course with the Red Cross in November, so the village has 25 young people who know what to do in an emergency (and of course all 5 leaders are fully training in emergency response too!!)

Lisa Johnstone and Heather Colonel have continued to do some great work with the Beavers, including an ice-skating trip. I am pleased to see most of these moving onto Cubs when they are 8. As a first, the Beavers will get the opportunity to visit the District Camp in June – a real adventure for them.

It was pleasing to see a good turnout of young people at Remembrance Day and at a Mothers Day service/parade at Longhirst church.

Despite continually rising costs, more fundraising activities have kept the balance without having to increase subscriptions. Our committee have worked very hard, and certainly the pie-and-peas bingo nights have been very popular. The Scout Summer Fair will be held again this year, building on the success of the last 2 years. We were able to get a grant from the Borough Council to replace our cooking equipment and buy new tents for the Scouts – these were used at the Kielder Camp in Feb.

Lastly I again thank the Parish Council for its continued support of the Group in its grant funding to cover the cost of the School hall hire and our training costs. These donations are allowing us to continue to deliver an exciting and adventurous programme for these young people.

#### **4.3 1<sup>st</sup> Pegswood Brownies - Julie Stephenson (Brownie Guider)**

Unfortunately the number of girls wishing to join Guides went down to four, during Autumn 2006, and as such the company was not viable and it was closed after Christmas 2006.

The Brownie numbers are also down with only 12 girls between 7 and 10 attending on a regular basis.

Some of the decrease in numbers is due to fewer children, and some is because girls are now able to join the cubs. I have questioned the Brownies and they want to continue as they are, doing "Brownie" projects, which usually involve lots of glitter!

Despite our small numbers the Brownies have attended various Count, Division and District events, including an international Night at Widdrington, and a sports day at Morpeth, they are currently looking forward to a Celebration of song at Alnwick Gardens.

On the community front, they have attended the Remembrance Service, made Christmas cakes, cards and potted plants for twelve elders of the village, and delivered them with carol singing, instead of having their Christmas Party.

The Brownies also made peppermint creams for the Mothers Day Service at Longhirst Church.

Badges gained this year include, the Season badge, Cooks, Hostess, Crime Prevention and Agility.

Both myself and the Brownies are very grateful for the money the parish council give us, especially as our numbers are small, and the hire of the school stays the same.

Thank you once again for your support.

#### **4.4 Pegswood Toddlers Group – Michelle Pitcher (Chair)**

The past year has seen a slight increase in the number of new members; however we have lost some members due to children beginning Nursery school. In September again there will be a substantial loss. We are waiting to see how this effects the group and if needs be intend to do a leaflet drop around Pegswood to encourage new members.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Parish Council for their grants which enabled us to organise an Easter trip to Whitehouse Farm and to buy some new equipment and outdoor toys. We are currently looking into applying for funding from The Local Network Fund for Children and Young People. We hope this will enable us to tidy up the garden area, buy good quality safe outdoor equipment and safety railings. This is subject to approval from the Church Committee also.

At the beginning of February we adopted a Healthy Eating policy. To try and minimise tooth decay, we now offer only milk and water to drink and healthy snacks such as fruit, vegetables and cheese. This has taken off with great success.

We have a close relationship now with the Reverend John Parks, who will often call in to chat to some of the parents. Some members of the toddler group have attended Christmas, Mothers Day and Easter services and activities. We are hoping that this will bring members of the community closer together.

The group always has a list of planned activities and events, such as themed days, arts and crafts, outings etc. We are now able to have regular visits from Vic Evans who runs a Music movers and shakers group which proves to be very popular with the children.

We will regrettably have to close the group on Thursdays during the school summer holidays. We expect a poor attendance during this period and we are unable to meet the costs of the rent for this reason.

We intend to hold a Children's toy/clothes/equipment/cakes and candy sale in September which we are hoping will raise funds for the group by charging a seller and entrance fee.

We look forward to the year ahead and welcome any new members be it parents/grand parents or carers. We hope to see our numbers continue and have advertising in the Herald & Post, Post Office, Newsagents, Health Clinic and Parish Council Website.

#### **4.5 Pegswood Project House – Tom Graham**

**copy to be forwarded**

#### **4.6 Babes in the Wood Toddler Group – report by Margaret Kerswell (Chair) read by Christine Hill (Health Visitor and Group Facilitator)**

We meet on Tuesday mornings at the Project Centre. Normally 7 – 14 parents attend with their children. Initially we relied on the Toy Library to provide toys, but this year we have bought some of our own. But storage is a problem at the Project Centre.

On our Let's Get Physical Day on August 6<sup>th</sup> 2006, we borrowed equipment for an obstacle course which was held on Pegswood Sports Field. Equipment was borrowed from the Toy Library.

The Beep Beep Day on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2006 was a success when our children were sponsored for the Break Charity, which aimed to teach them Road Safety. Again the road layout was borrowed from the Toy Library. The children provided their own bikes. The Morpeth Herald carried the story.

We have had many outings over the year: to the beach to collect stones for painting; White House Farm; Alnwick Gardens; Banana Beach; various swimming pools and parks with subsidised entry where possible.

Our weekly activities have included: healthy cooking demonstrations; egg hunts; dental advice; design and painting T-shirts; moulding footprints; music making; resuscitation training, gloop and jelly play. This all makes for lots of fun and friendship!

The costs of our healthy fruit snacks and room charge take up the majority of the low cost charge per session of £1.50. We are grateful for your donation, without which we could not plan for future events.

#### **4.7 General**

In a free for all session information was exchanged on the activities of the groups present. There was a request for the Parish Council to produce or fund the production of a publication giving details of organisations and activities in the Parish. The Chairman promised that this would be considered by the Parish Council.

There was a request for the Parish Council to organise meetings of voluntary organisations in the Parish for the exchange of information and mutual help.

The Groups were reminded that they could post their details on the Parish Council website.

### **5. MATTERS RAISED BY ELECTORS OF THE PARISH**

#### **5.1 Welfare Sports Field Changing Facilities**

These were considered to be in an appalling condition and not fit for use. The Chairman reported that the facilities were the responsibility of Castle Morpeth Borough Council but that he had approached ENERGI who were examining possible sources of funding for the replacement of the changing rooms.

#### **5.2 SureStart**

It was reported that plans were well advanced for Surestart to create a new children's centre at Pegswood First School.

#### **5.3 Litter Problem**

The Chairman said that the Parish Council paid for litter picks at the worst sites and that there had recently been a litter pick at the allotments. It was suggested that Castington Young Offenders Institution be contacted for help from their work in the community activities.

#### **5.4 Lack of Youth Facilities**

There was concern at the lack of facilities for young people. The Welfare had had damage and vandalism when the youth club was operating. Project House gave details of the various activities for young people including after school groups, mixed drop-in nights, girls night.

There was also a disco at one of the social clubs in the village.

Councillor Burley said that the Parish Council had considered the provision of a youth shelter in the village but the problem had been in choosing a suitable location.

There was a suggestion that CCTV be provided in a bid to reduce vandalism.

#### **5.5 Spring bulbs**

It was suggested that Community Groups be involved in planting bulbs in the Parish. The Chairman said that the Scouts and Guides had been involved in the past and that other Groups could be involved in future.

#### **5.6 Remembrance Day Service**

The Chairman said that he attended on behalf of the Parish Council and found it very worthwhile. Although the Scouts and Brownies attended he suggested that other voluntary organisations in the village should attend to remind everyone of their country's heritage and of the sacrifice made by past generations.

A vote of thanks was expressed by the assembly to Councillor Burley and to the Pegswood Parish Council.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.08 pm.