

Rowde Annual Village Meeting

**Monday 22nd May 2017, 7.00pm,
Rowdefield Farm**

Attendees: 18 people

1. Welcome: Apologies were received from Neal and Jackie Bawden; Chris Stevens, Alan Watters, Rev Ruth Schofield.

The Chair explained that it is part of the Parish Council's duties to host the annual village meeting.

2. Agree the minutes of the Annual Village Meeting of 13/5/16. Minutes from the last meeting were approved: proposed by J Hawkins, J Dalley.

3. Presentation of the Parish Council Accounts for 2016-17. The draft accounts were presented to the village meeting. These had been previously discussed at the Annual Parish Council meeting on 10th May 2017. The accounts have been scrutinised by the internal auditor (who is external to the Parish Council and the village) and they will be lodged with the external auditor after the final approval at the Parish Council meeting on 14th June 2017.

The Clerk explained variances in income and expenditure in the financial year 2016-2017, compared with the previous financial year. The funds that have been ring-fenced for various groups and projects were also listed.

4. Annual Reports – Village Groups

St Matthew's Church – Sarah Bowler

Reverend Ruth sent her apologies to the meeting. Rev. Ruth was licensed in post on 30th March 2017.

Sarah Bowler introduced herself as the Administrator for the Benefice of Bromham, Rowde and Sandy Lane.

- The Nave and North Aisle roofs have been stripped and re-tiled and the associated leadwork renewed.
- A roof intruder alarms system has been installed. A tree surgeon has carried out major trimmings of the large Yew trees on the north side of the Church.
- The first service of every month is a family service, which centres around the 'Open the Book' programme which is presented at Rowde Primary Academy in the week leading up to that service.

- The Junior Choir continues to grow in number.

Parish Council update – Steve Mundy (Chair)

A written report of the Parish Council’s activities over the year was circulated at the meeting.

The Chair made the following additional comments:

- The Parish Council will support anything with ‘village’ in it.
- The Parish Council made donations of £2250 to village groups last year.
- J Dalley & D Packer were thanked for all of their hard work on the large playing field.
- R Berry & P Hale were thanked for all of their work in arranging for the replacement and the refurbishment of the Heritage sign on the Hill.
- The textiles recycling container has finally been removed as it was attracting a lot of fly tipping.
- The Village now has fibre-optic broadband, for which we must thank E Ibbetson for her persistence with BT. It was noted that the fibre-optic broadband is now fully subscribed.
 - A question was asked about whether anyone further can receive it. BT will add another rack to the box when they have sufficient requests to do so.
 - A question was asked about whether BT will mark a hatched area around the box to prevent it from being damaged. The Clerk will ask BT. **ACTION: Clerk**
- Three planters have been placed in front of the BT box on the High Street to clear a visibility area for residents pulling out of Manor Lane. J Butler has kindly offer some top soil to put in the planters.
 - There are plans to build another 2 planters for this area.
- The Village has a new grounds maintenance contractor.
 - It was commented that they do not know about caring for crociii as the crociii around the wooden posts on the Hill were cut too early again this year.
- Further grounds maintenance work is carried out by Tim and Martin at HfT. They have carried out some great work cutting back hedges and keeping paths clean around the village.
- The Chair noted that there are not enough circular walks in the village and it is hoped that the Parish Council will be able to create and help maintain more footpaths.
- Cllr Cuthbert has been returned as the County Councillor for the ward of Bromham, Potterne and Rowde.
- The Area Board for the Devizes Community Area meets every 6 weeks and gives out grants and funding to local people/groups that apply.
- The Chair noted that a meeting was held in March 2017 with representatives from Poulshot, Potterne and Rowde Parish Councils to

discuss local road safety issues, concentrating on the accidents that have occurred on Caen Hill.

- A further meeting will be arranged when the new Parish Councils have settled into business.
- The Parish Council lost four Councillors at the last election: G Sartin, A Seedhouse, L Stewart, and D Revell. If anyone would like to join as a Parish Councillor, they would be very welcome.

Rowdefield Farm – John Butler

- Open Farm Sunday will not be held at Rowdefield Farm this year. It has run over the last few years and the format may have become tired as less farms are signing up nationally to take part.
- Rowdefield Farm held a very successful session for local families with the Rowdey Cow, where similar activities to those at Open Farm Sunday were put on.
- The educational suite has been running for a couple of years now. Many school visits have taken place, including from Rowde Primary Academy. Children get the opportunity to grind the wheat, use a juicer for rape oilseed, measure potatoes and milk the cow.
 - 870 pupils have visited the farm so far this year.
- The suite is also used for meetings and conferences. There have been 282 trainees through the doors since November 2015, on a variety of courses, for example how to drive a small tractor and vertebrate control (rats and mice).
- A range of courses are planned for coming months, including dog first aid and a telehandlers course.

Rowde Village News - Julie Baker

Alan Watters had sent his apologies to the meeting.

- Julie explained her role as 'Advertising Manager' for the Rowde Village News. The magazine is non-profit making and relies on advertisers for funding. The Rowde Village News' finances have improved since reporting at this time last year.
- The magazine costs £350 per issue to print: black and white with a colour cover. If a colour spread is added, the cost rises to £500. It was noted that the magazine is in colour on the website.
- A request was made from Alan to ask if all content or ads can be submitted by 15th of the month. This enables Alan to begin working on the magazine earlier in the month.
- A request was made for distributors to join a reserve list to cover in the event of holiday or sickness of regular distributors.

Sports Field – John Dalley

J Dalley oversees the running of the sports field.

- The grounds maintenance contract has recently been awarded to a new company.
- It was noted that there are currently no football teams booked to play on the field this season. This has not occurred since the 1970s.
- J Dalley confirmed that the Youth Council members are maintaining the skate park and the bmx track area.
- Thanks were given to D Packer for all of the work that he has done and continues to do at the large playing field.
- During the last 12 months, the Parish Council has paid for a survey to be carried out on the condition of the pavilion. Further surveys need to be carried out before a decision can be made on the future of the building.
- The Parish Council has agreed to purchase some archery sessions for children. It is hoped that this could kick start an interest in the sport in the village. It was noted by a member of the audience that there are some professional archers in the village.

Planning - John Hawkins

John Hawkins is the Parish Councillor with responsibility for over-seeing the planning applications. John checks each planning application against the criteria for objecting, in the main material considerations. John makes recommendations to the Parish Council when they decide whether to support or object to an application.

- It was recommended that if people have an objection to a development, that they write individually to the planning department as each letter has to be addressed individually.

Bungalow development

- Wiltshire Council will take Practical Completion of the site by 9th of June, with a view to residents occupying the bungalows at the end of June/early July.
- All of the bungalows have been allocated. Unfortunately, there were no eligible bids from residents in Rowde.

Malthouse Farm Development

- An outline proposal to build houses on the redundant farmyard at Malthouse Farm was presented to the Parish Council at the meeting on 9th November 2016. A further meeting was held for residents to look at the proposal in more detail and to ask the planning consultants questions.

- The proposal is currently being re-designed.

Community Speedwatch – A written report by Tony Jeffries

The Community Speedwatch programme is run by volunteers and is funded by the Police & Crime Commissioner for Wiltshire and Swindon.

- Rowde currently has 6 active volunteers. The only requirement is for volunteers to be over 18 years of age.
- In March 2017, 85 speeding drivers were recorded, 11 were driving at 40 mph in the 30 zone, one at 44mph.
- The equipment is now shared with Bromham and Poulshot on a strict rotation.
- If anyone would like to volunteer, please ring on 07879 413847.
- Tony thanked all of the volunteers for their hard work over the past year, especially when they have gone out in all weathers.

Village Shop – A written report by Jan Barber

- It was noted that the Village Shop returned a profit last year and that it is in profit at this time.
- The shop has installed a new fridge in the porch area for fruit and veg. This was funded by an Area Board Grant. It will help to prolong the veg life and help with less wastage
- The Village Shop has received a letter from Claire Perry, MP thanking them for the valuable village asset to the community.
- The staff and volunteers were thanked for all of their hard work and for making Rowde a better place to live.
- Everyone was thanked for supporting the village shop.

Village Hall – written report from Barrie Barrett.

- The Village Hall has received outstanding reports from the Hallmark 1 and the Hallmark 2 teams.
- The committee were congratulated on their understanding and the manner in which the documentation was laid out.
- Fund raising events have been held throughout the year. The money raised has been used for internal and external improvements, such as clearing overgrown hedges and replacing with post and rails.
- It was noted that grass cuttings had been fly-tipped on land at the back of other Village Hall. It was hoped that this would not occur again.

5. Looking Forward

The 2016/2017 Precept

Copies of the precept planning document and the budget were circulated to the audience.

The Chair spoke about the role of the Parish Council, and that all Parish Councillors are volunteers. The Parish Council's role is to manage the precept, which is collected in tax locally and passed to us by Wiltshire Council. The precept is set every year in January.

The amount payable by residents depends on the band that their house falls in for Council tax purposes. The Parish Council decides upon and requests an amount of money (the precept) from the village. This was £34,000 this year. This total amount is then divided by the tax base (the number of band D houses in the village), to work out how much each household pays.

There were financial constraints that were considered when the Parish Council set the precept in January.

- The Parish Council has a decreasing surplus. It is commonly agreed that the Parish Council should maintain a contingency of £5000.
- Central Government discussed last year the possibility that local councils would have their precepts capped. The decision on capping precepts will be revisited again by Central Government this year.
- It is expected that inflation will increase to 4%.

The Parish Council would like to improve the village infrastructure and is considering a couple of large capital projects in the village: renovation or rebuilding of the pavilion, and the creation of a footpath in Tanis (schematic of possible layout was circulated at the meeting).

The Parish Council is also talking with other parish councils about having a shared parish steward who would be employed on a contract basis.

As a result of these aims, it was agreed at the Parish Council meeting in January 2017 to increase the precept by a larger amount than we have done before.

- The precept had a 0% increase two years ago.
- Last year the precept was increased by 4%, which was keeping in line with inflation.
- Rowde increased its precept by 19% for 2017-2018.

The Chair noted that Rowde's precept is still below the average for Wiltshire, which is £90.35 for a band D House. Rowde's precept is £69.54 for a band D house. It was commented that Bishops Cannings' Parish Council raised their precept by 43% in 2016-2017.

6. Question Time

- A request was made for the grounds worker from HfT to cut back the hedge on the High Street leading to the church drive. **Action: Clerk**
- A comment was made on the 19% increase in the precept and it was requested that a fuller article is submitted to the Village News outlining the

reasons for the precept as some people may see it as a waste of money. The Clerk confirmed that the Parish Council would submit a further update on the precept outcome in the Village News.

- The Chair responded that the Parish Council had been cautious with precept increases previously.
- D Packer was thanked for all of his hard work repairing the Sands Lane track. It is hoped that now the recycling bins have been removed and the track is no longer used by heavy vehicles that the repairs will hold for longer.
- A question was asked about why the Parish Council does not charge for the use of the Tennis court. It is thought that as the tennis court is out of view of the public that it is not overly used. This decision can be revisited if the situation changes.
- It was asked why no football teams wish to use the pitch now. J Dalley responded that Sunday Football is declining in popularity and believes it is the effect of the FA and the fines that they impose on players for yellow cards, etc. It was commented that it would be more suitable for the playing field to be situated near the school.

Everyone was thanked for attending the meeting.

The Parish Council meets on the second Wednesday of every month (except August) at 7.30pm in the Village Hall. There are currently vacancies on the Parish Council if anyone is interested in joining. Members of the public are welcome to attend all meetings.

Signed:

Date:

Chairman of Rowde Parish Council