

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2016

Held at John Pygram Pavilion, Thursday 19th January 2017

Present: Jerry Wells (JW), Bill Norman (BN), Dave Nightingale (DN),
Dave Curtis (DC), Chris Richards (CR), Albert Lutz (AL)
Paul Pates (PP), Jason Stevens (JS), Jemma Kingsbury (JK), Louis Thomas (LT)

Apologies: Helen Finbow (HF), Darren Pitt (DP)

JW welcomed all to the meeting.

The minutes of the last AGM were approved with no matters arising.

In anticipation of the presentation of the annual review and financial statement for Companies House, JW alerted those present to the fact that the financial statement prepared by BN for the meeting formed the core of the presentation to Companies House and to this end had been signed off by the DFPFA's qualified and independent consultant David Holliday. Similarly the content of the Chairman's annual review presented at the meeting remains the same for the version sent to Companies House and only undergoes a modification to its format.

Chairperson's annual review

JW gave a review on the last year of DFPFA's operations as follows:

2016 saw the 5th anniversary of the new Pavilion's operation and I think all of us on the DFPFA committee must have reflected at some point on what has been achieved in these 5 years and indeed how rapidly the years have gone by. It is probably fair to say that more by coincidence than contrivance the 5 year landmark has seen a consolidation of sorts with respect to the development of the playing field and its facilities. On the financial front the association has throughout the year continued to present a consistently healthy set of figures – this despite a significant investment in measures to counter noise levels in the main hall and the decision to forego the annual Fun Day. Once again we cannot ignore the importance of the financial gains that the installation of the Solar energy system continues to provide and this coupled with the regular bookings for hire of the Pavilion ensures that the association is able to maintain a level of financial protection going forward. Other sources of income were gratefully received in the form of Parish Council's grant which this year amounted £1000 and the annual payment against the use of the field by Wethersfield Primary School which after review will see an annual increase from £800 to £1000 in 2017. The contribution however small against the use of the tennis court by the Special Needs School currently operating out of the former Brewery Tavern pub is also appreciated.

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Focusing on the single but significant expenditure for the year, the association probably took courage from its experience with the solar energy project to invest in specialist acoustic panelling to counter the unacceptable levels of reverberation that had been evident in the main hall since the first day of its operation. While there is no financial gain to be had in this case it is generally agreed that the project which saw the installation of a number of panels on the interior of the pitched roof has seen a net improvement to the sound quality in the hall. In the event that regulation in the future, for instance from early learning bodies, requires more stringent levels of noise reduction than that currently attained, the association can be confident in the knowledge that the hall offers further scope to accommodate extra panels to achieve the required levels.

Statistics shows that hiring of the pavilion is more or less on a par with 2015 with 33 individual bookings for the year of which interestingly 2 were bookings over a 3 day period - evidence that people are looking to programme in extra time slots in preparation for events such as weddings. The Pavilion continues to host its regular users in the form of the History Club, Yoga Club and the Afternoon teas for the elderly which in recent weeks has reached record numbers of tea and cake addicts and which is reflected in a significant financial contribution to the DFPFA coffers. The Petanque activity has also now joined the Cricket club in making regular use of the facilities during breaks from their activities out on the petanque court. The association is pleased also to have welcomed a new Karate club activity to its list of regular users and it is to be hoped that other groups from the community and further afield will want to occupy the time slots still available on a weekly basis going forward. Given the Pavilion's setting in the safe surroundings of the playing field and the wonderful views to the south on offer it is no surprise that it continues to attract users for private functions including a number of children's parties. While this is an encouraging trend the association nevertheless needs to be vigilant in its assessment of those who hire the facilities. This is most certainly easier said than done but at the very least a checking process at or immediately after the clear up of a private function needs reinforcing to ensure that the Pre-School are not presented with the task of clearing up on a Monday morning.

Turning to the Pre-School it is fair to say that once again its operation has seen mixed fortunes in 2016. In a year of indifferent assessments from OFSTED and serious cash flow issues the WPS has nevertheless shown admirable determination in combatting the perennial problem of changes to its committee and a lack of trained support on the ground. The DFPFA is bound to recognize the importance of the Pre-School operation as the primary user of the Pavilion and therefore cannot disguise its concern at the WPS's struggles to keep its services available to the community. The association very much hopes that the various initiatives the Pre-School have put in place to pull it back from what must have been its nadir in the early part of the year will ultimately succeed and the DFPFA assures the Pre-School that it will continue to remain sensitive to the considerable challenges that exist in running this vital service to early learners.

Out on the playing field the cricket club has continued to operate a full summer season of fixtures and the association is pleased to see that it has made very effective reparations to the protective netting on the field's western boundary with the installation of two new supporting poles. The club should also be congratulated in raising the necessary funds to finally realise the construction of a permanent single bay practice facility in the allotted space next to the tennis court. The occupation of this space in a way signifies the

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completion of a development programme which began with the inauguration of the new pavilion back in 2011 and there now remains very little scope in terms of available land for further new initiatives.

In contrast to this success story however it must be regretted that Shalford Football Club's use of the playing field came to an end this year. An apparent lack of player resource has forced the SFC to contract its operation which has meant that the use of Wethersfield Playing field as an 'overflow' pitch is no longer required. The DFPFA nevertheless thanks both Darren Pitt and Ian Butcher who oversaw the football activity at the playing field and who worked consistently hard to ensure the proper use of the field and facilities over the past few years. The association wishes the club all good fortune going forward.

Ironically the announced discontinuation of the football activity came shortly after considerable efforts had been made by the association to fulfill its part of the agreement with the new owners of Brooks Farm on the protection of the south western section of the playing field boundary. A 4 metre high net is now installed along that section of the boundary fence sitting behind and to the left and right of the goal mouth on the understanding that the owner of Brooks Farm Hilary Westgarth would be erecting a 2 metre high fence along the whole length of her boundary. The two measures are meant to negate the need for people to cross into the neighbouring field to recover footballs and cricket balls and thus the need for the iron step ladders that currently straddle the fence but in the continued absence of the Brooks Farm 's contribution to the solution the steps are to remain in place. Only time will tell if Brooks Farm intend to carry out its work.

2016 saw the first 5 year check on its electrical infrastructure which for the most part was routinely given a thumbs up. One of the issues outstanding however was the external path lighting system which was discovered to be unearthed and therefore unsafe. After much head scratching as to where the fault may lie the source of the problem was found at the lamp support nearest to the car park which displayed an almost clean cut through the cable. As I was present when the engineer made the discovery I have to admit to feeling a little red-faced as the realisation dawned on me that my over enthusiastic strimming along the base of the hedge during the summer was almost certainly to blame!

The Pre-School summer recess normally gives the association a window to carry out general remedial tasks in and around the pavilion and this year saw an exercise in de-cluttering both of the interior and of the external storage areas. In a concerted attempt to combat the squirrel-like tendencies we have to hang on to things come what may, a skip was hired in and a rule imposed which stated that if a reason for keeping something could not be conjured up within 10 seconds it got the heave ho! This approach proved to very effective and the skip was filled to the brim within a morning's work! The clear up has proved effective especially in the external store where the vital pieces of heavy equipment are now clutter-free and can comfortably occupy their allotted space.

A series of gridded tiles around the petanque court to protect the court edges from damage and overly invasive weed growth was laid down in the early part of the year and can be said to have largely succeeded in this regard. The use of this plastic tiling was also seen as a test for its possible extended use in an initiative to open up a drop-off parking area next to the Pavilion. This project was put on hold for 2016 and it will be interesting to see if the tiling can be judged as a suitably durable surface should the association decide to tackle the parking project in 2017.

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Other initiatives approved by the association in 2015 for further consideration but which for financial prudence have continued to remain on the back burner for 2016 include the construction of an additional window in the kitchen and installation of roller blinds on the main hall's windows. These ideas and no doubts others yet to be formulated will be reviewed in the usual way at future meetings but the association is not inclined to commit to any further developments unless significant financial support can be identified and preferably obtained from third parties.

2016 has seen a couple of issues drag their feet throughout the year unfortunately:

- The plans for relocation of the glass recycling units sited in the playing field carpark remain unresolved. The DFPFA has sought to cooperate with the Parish Council in finding a solution but at the same time it has been stressed to them that any new proposals to keep the units in the car park is not supported by the DFPFA for reasons of safety and inconvenience to users of the car park.
- The offer of section 106 money extended to the DFPFA by the Parish Council to the amount of £1400 has stumbled over proposals of how the money should be spent. The association has ultimately responded to the Parish Council's insistence that the money be spent on an item or two for the children's playground with relevant quotes for said items.

Turning to the playing field itself I think it is fair to say that its overall condition has not improved over the year. As the person who works directly on the field during the summer I believe this to be due to a combination of problems in firstly getting the field treated at the right time this year by the contracted service and secondly in dealing with an exceptionally dry period of weather towards the end of the summer and into Autumn. In direct contrast to 2015 when the grass continued to grow right into December due to the exceptionally mild wet weather, 2016 saw the grass retain its summertime scorched status until late October. The ever growing presence of the 'Fairy Ring' fungal condition across wide areas of the field continues to be a concern and in the absence of known effective treatments the cricket club will need to keep its fingers crossed that the condition does not engulf the cricket square more than it already has.

In the closing months of 2016 the Parish Council has sought to follow up on the concept of greater cooperation between the village's main organisations. To this end one of the ideas tabled is the organisation of a weekend festival which attempts to bring together over a single weekend a number of events that traditionally take place at different times in the calendar. The thinking in part is to try and better balance the effort required to put the infrastructure in place against the perceived benefit/reward for the community. Other initiatives tabled include a dinner at the VH for the community as a fund raiser for the VH and a special commemorative event in 2018 for the 100th anniversary of the WWI. At the close of the year there was no consolidation around these ideas but we should not forget in any case the effort members of this association makes towards other events and thanks go to Bill Norman and Dave Curtis in particular for supplying the festive throng once again with burgers and alike at the year's Xmas lights switch on.

Just when I thought we would get through the year without something raising its head from left of field we unfortunately had precisely that! Many of you will have heard about proposals for the development of housing sites within the community as part of the BDC's Local Plan and the specific proposal to use the field on the playing field's eastern boundary

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for luxury housing necessarily gives cause for concern for the DFPFA and for the clubs whose activities take place on the playing field. At the time of writing the level of concern has increased across the community as a result of a misinterpretation of the Parish Council's recommendation to the Local Plan's subcommittee in late November which effectively has locked in the designation of the proposed sites for development. Quite apart from the opportunistic nature of the proposals for the Hudson's Hill site which will not remotely contribute to the government initiative to provide affordable housing, the implications for the DFPFA is particularly reflected through the activities of the cricket club which already has ongoing difficulties with residents on the western boundary. The doubling of the problem with development on the eastern boundary can only be seen as a direct threat to the way the playing field is currently used. Looking ahead to the immediate future the DFPFA will need to focus on this issue in vigorously defending the open setting the playing field and its facilities currently enjoys to the east and to the south.

More than ever in 2016 in moments of reflection at meetings on what has been achieved in the past 5 years the association's thoughts have inevitably turned to the future and the likely scenarios for the DFPFA over the coming years. Central to this discussion has been the need to prepare for the moment when the operative core of the current committee will for differing reasons look to step back from their present levels of commitment to the association. The committee will need to be mindful therefore that wherever there is evolution there is also the risk of extinction and that for the DFPFA to continue as a totally voluntary organisation there will be a need to persuade residents from the local community to step forward and 'do their bit' if they wish to continue to enjoy the benefits of the playing field and the facilities that reside within its boundaries.

In conclusion I take the opportunity to thank the entire committee for its continued loyalty throughout the year and I would like to draw particular attention to the efforts of David Nightingale this year who since his retirement from the day job has immersed himself in the considerable task of managing the pavilion bookings and who more often than not ensures that the pavilion is opened up, cleared up and closed up for the many events that take place throughout the year. Grateful thanks also go to David Holliday for his professional assistance every year with our financial statement to Companies House. Required less in 2016 without the Fun Day but nevertheless not forgotten are our occasional volunteers from the wider community and the many wives and partners of committee members whose vital support is often overlooked. Finally I would ask the committee to join with me in wishing Albert Lutz all the best as he struggles with poor health and a speedy recovery.

TREASURERS REPORT / SUMMARY

Full details of accounts will be published upon completion of the financial statement prepared for Companies House

BN provided his report which is a simplification of the more comprehensive version submitted to Companies house.

BN drew the attention of those present to the negative excess of income over expenditure for 2016. The **-£2,008.92** figure was explained in large part by the combined impact of the absence of the any Fun Day revenue and the significant cost of installing the acoustic panels in the main hall. Other contributing factors were the reduced grant from the Parish Council, the slightly reduced takes from the solar energy FIT payments and the tennis court and

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bouncy castle hirings. BN pointed out that although the acoustic panel initiative had proven to be money well spent it was clear that the association could not continue to engage in such ventures year upon year without first establishing specific funding to finance them. In conclusion BN said that despite the overall spend for the year of **£14,241.57** the association continued to show a healthy closing balance of **£18,493.14**.

JW thanked BN for all his hard work.

JW asked those present to endorse the annual report and the financial statement as presented at the meeting.

Annual Report: AL proposed and DN seconded acceptance - unanimous approval.

Financial statement: CR proposed and DC seconded acceptance - unanimous approval.

TRUSTEES

HF had informed JW (in her absence) that she wished to continue as trustees for 2016

RL (representing WCC) had given notice to step down as a trustee.

PP was proposed by BN and seconded by DN to become a trustee representing the WCC

All other trustees present agreed to continue for 2017

JW stated at this point that all officers of the committee were to stand down and asked those present to propose new officers for election to the committee. New officers were proposed and elected as follows:

Chairperson:	JW	Proposed by DN	2 nd by BN	Accepted
Treasurer:	BN	Proposed by EV	2 nd by JW	Accepted
Secretary:	No proposals forthcoming			

DIRECTORS

JW reminded the meeting that the company membership was a total of six and therefore the required minimum number of company Directors was now two.

HF provided written confirmation that she was happy to continue as director of the company.

CR and HF (by written notice) approve the re-election of JW as a Director

In accordance with the rule of retirement by rotation, CR stood down as a director.

HF was identified as due to retire by rotation next year.

CR endorsed JW's continued role as company secretary.

AOB

LT was invited by BN to consider becoming a trustee but was also encouraged to take time to reflect before making a decision either way.

There being no other business JW closed the meeting.