

HEPSCOTT PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at 6.30 pm on Thursday 19 May 2016 in Hepscott Parish Hall.

1. Present

Philip Ashmore (Chair), David Cowans (Vice Chair), Fred Dye, Malcolm Paton, Ken Reed, Carolyn Reid, Sylvia Johnson (Parish Clerk)

Apologies

Glen Sanderson (County Councillor), Ian Lindley (County Councillor)

In attendance

PC Andrea Teasdale, Neighbourhood Beat Manager, Morpeth Neighbourhood Policing Team

2. Nomination and election of Chair for 2016/2017

Philip Ashmore was proposed Fred Dye, seconded by David Cowans. There were no other nominations and Philip was duly elected chair for 2016/2017.

3. Nomination and election of Vice Chair for 2016/2017

David Cowans was proposed by Philip Ashmore, seconded by Ken Reed. There were no other nominations and David was duly elected Vice Chair for 2016/2017

4. Confirmation of Committee Members

Philippa Raper recently tendered her resignation to the Parish Council. All other members stated their willingness to serve another term. This leaves one vacancy to co-opt a new member onto the Parish Council.

5. Chairman's report for year 2015/2016

Philip Ashmore read out the Chair's Annual Report for the year April 2015 – May 2016 (copy below).

6. Matters arising from Chairman's Report

An expression of thanks was given to Phil Ashmore for all his dedicated work as chairman over the last year and for the many hours both he and David have put into the development of the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan on behalf of Hepscoth Parish Council.

7. Financial Report for 2015/2016

Sylvia Johnson (RFO) had forwarded members (via email) a statement showing the full expenditure for the year 2015/2016, together with a Financial Statement for that year, showing both income and expenditure. The figures were agreed by the meeting. The accounts have already been to the Internal Auditor and will be sent to BDO for External Audit as soon as possible. This year the unaudited accounts have to be made available for public inspection for a 30 day period, which will begin on 3 June 2016. The relevant information will be uploaded to the website to enable this inspection.

8. Contributions and questions from members of the public

There were no questions from members of the public.

The AGM was followed by the usual meeting of Hepscoth Parish Council, minutes of which are produced separately.

Minutes prepared by Sylvia Johnson, Parish Clerk/RFO, 5 June 2016

Signed as a true copy:

HEPSCOTT PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT May 2016

Events of the last year have centred not just around the village, but also the wider Parish and Morpeth and district.

A couple of innovations were introduced to try to stop speeding in the village and along the A192. We have a strengthened Speed Watch Team, trained in the use of radar guns, and they have been active in the village and beyond. We also had 2 speed indication cameras erected on the A192, and first indications are that they have improved the situation, especially at Barmoor and Coalburn. Many thanks to all those involved in trying to get the public to drive more safely in Hepscoth.

Much of our activity has concerned Planning issues. We have dealt with about 30 planning applications in the last 12 months and your Parish Council has continued its hands-on approach in an attempt to conserve the best features of the Parish. Difficulties have centred on where developers have sought to put, in our opinion, obtrusive development in prominent positions in the village and we have objected, sometimes with effect and sometimes not, but always with genuine concern for our Parish at heart. Changes to the Planning procedures at County level have meant that the process is now, we believe, less democratic and we rely more heavily on our County Councillors for support, readily given. But these changes put more power in the hands of Planning Officers and give us less opportunity to articulate our views. They are of great concern.

The last 12 months has seen the Barratt development started, but progress, in many ways, appears slow and the site looks pretty bare of houses. Original expressions that they wished to be "good neighbours" have, I have to say, rung a little hollow on occasions, with several complaints having to be pursued, about early morning working, mud on the roads, and, it seems, a lack of any urgency in complying with the pre-conditions set by the Planning Inspector in December 2014. It is increasingly difficult to meet with them and they have not fulfilled statements of intent to attend a Parish Council meeting. They would still be most welcome and we will of course continue to try to work with them.

But like a shining beacon of hope through all this is the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan. Having passed the referendum with 93% support in February it has finally been 'made' (10th May) and is now brought into legal force. It has taken nearly 4 years of hard graft, some very rocky times when it felt as though it would never materialise, but finally it has emerged and been validated. It now forms part of the legal Development Plan for the Morpeth Neighbourhood Area, including Hepscoth. A tight settlement boundary has been drawn around the village, and around Morpeth, with development outside those boundaries very restricted. The land between Hepscoth settlement and Morpeth, and the vast majority of our Parish, is due to be designated Green Belt by the County's Core Strategy, and so development of another 'Barratt-type' site is much more unlikely. Large scale housing development should now be where the community wants it, not where

developers happen to have land. The 4 years in the making and its completion is in no small way due to the overwhelming support of the local community. My thanks go to each and every one of you. Hepscoth Parish can indeed be proud of the part it has played.

The Parish Council continues to look to the future and has recently set up a Flooding Sub Group with a view to reducing the flood risk in the Parish and village and getting some help with flood alleviation.

I am blessed with some excellent people on the Parish Council and am always sad to see anyone leave. But I am particularly sad to say cheerio to Philippa Raper, a conscientious Councillor for 7 years and a 'doer', someone who could always be relied upon for help. The Parish, and especially the Barmoor Bank area, has a great deal to thank her for and she goes with our gratitude and best wishes.

We have had another busy year and I want to give my fellow Councillors a huge vote of thanks for their help and support, with planning issues, with the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan, with speeding issues and all the many other things that we have been faced with in this last year. Special thanks to our gem of a Parish Clerk, Sylvia Johnson, who runs our Parish Council so efficiently, keeps us straight and ensures we all do what we should, when we should, and is so pleasant in doing this. Great thanks also to the County Councillors, Glen Sanderson, a constant support and provider of funding for the speed awareness cameras, and Ian Lindley. And of course thanks to the people of Hepscoth for their loyalty and fantastic support.

We look forward to the next year.

Phil Ashmore
Chair

16 May 2016