

Minutes of the Annual meeting of Boxley Parish held at Weaving Village Hall, Weaving Street, Weaving, ME14 5JP on 2 April 2024, commencing at 18:30

Councillors Present: V Davies - Chairman, I Davies, B Hinder, P Dengate, C Sheppard, A Brindle, Heidi Bryant, P Sullivan and Mick Beckwith together with Mrs D Baylis – Parish Clerk and Heidi Pearson – Assistant Clerk and 5 members of the public

1. **Apologies and absences**

None received

2. **Minutes of the 2 May 2023 Meeting**

All agreed.

3. **Matters Arising From the Minutes**

There were none. **Matters for Decision**

4. **Boxley Parish Council Chairman's Report**

This has been a very difficult and challenging year for me and some other councillors who have had to deal with personal attacks in person and on social media from an individual who is not a resident of the parish. This has taken up a lot of valuable time for the office staff and the Councillors involved that could have been put to better use on other issues.

I would like to thank all the Councillors who dedicated so much time and effort in trying to prevent the Lidsing Garden Development being put forward on the Local Plan. Special thanks to Cllr Bob Hinder who voted against his party whip to stand opposed to the development. Sadly all the work was in vain and the Local Plan was passed on the 20th March with the Lidsing proposal still included. It is now our intention to get the best possible outcome for residents as the plans progress through the next stages.

We formed a new Woodland Management Committee to look after all the trees in the parish. The main focus of this Committee has been setting up the management plans and way forward for the Walderslade Woodlands and looking at the investment of the enabling fund to provide an income for its care in perpetuity. This Committee is led by Cllr Heidi Bryant who is doing a lot of work with the Community Beat Officer to look at ways of stopping nuisance motor bikes and quad bikes and problem dogs. I would like to thank the Walderslade Woodland Group for the outstanding job they do on maintaining the woodland and carrying out inspections of problem trees. They have all worked incredibly hard on helping us meet our legal requirements.

Many thanks to the hard working members of our Committees who give their time and expertise in helping to make the Council run efficiently. A new Committee formed this year is the Personnel Committee which focuses on personnel issues easing the workload on the Finance and General Purposes Committee and allows for more speedy resolutions. We've also formed a Long Term Investment Working Group.

I would like to thank all Parish Councillors for their attendance and input and a special welcome to our new members who've joined us this year.

I would also like to thank all of our community volunteers. The trustees/management committees of Grove Green Hall, Weaving Village Hall and Sandling Village Hall. The management committee and trustees of Vinters Valley Nature Reserve. The volunteer groups, Friends of Weaving Heath, Boxley Village Society, Friends of Boxley Church. I would also like to thank every volunteer who litter picks in the parish. All of these wonderful people make Boxley Parish a nicer place to live.

Finally a very big thank you to our office staff who have had a very trying year but have come through it with flying colours.

It has been a privilege to serve as your charman this last year but I will not be putting my name forward for the coming year.

5. **To receive the audited accounts for the year end March 2023**

The Accounts were received and noted.

6. **To receive reports from local organisation**
Reports were received from:

Rob Burrows of the Walderslade Woodlands Group

We reported last year that we had acquired a grant from the Forestry Commission to have a felling license approved, which had to be accepted by all 3 local planning authorities. This has now happened, so there is no need for us to inform the appropriate local authority of any work we undertake.

We have also had a detailed survey made, which tells us the condition of all our trees, and what action is required to manage any safety issues. The trees which require immediate action are our top priority, and are being dealt with, immediately.

Ash dieback has had a major impact on our woods, and we are actively replanting with ancient woodland trees, in the worst affected areas. We are also looking for more significant stock, so that we can spread the age and recovery of the woods.

We now have two fully trained chain saw operatives. Well done to Derek Price, and Patrick Fox.

As usual, we could not function as a group without the participation of its members and I want to congratulate the group for its massive efforts, over the past year, and especially Derek, who has held the group together over the past few months.

Also, I would like to say many thanks to Boxley Parish Council, for their continued support of the group.

Steve Akehurst from Sandling Village Hall

Sandling Village Hall has continued to serve the local community , with a wide range of activities happening throughout the week. We support some pre Covid clubs and some new clubs' groups post Covid. Our club/ group bookings are now back to pre-Covid levels. Over the past year we have had several bookings for children's parties and other special occasion parties.

The hall has remained self-sufficient with the revenue generated from the bookings. We have also continued with our maintenance/regeneration program. Over the past year, having completely refurbished the toilets and entrance hall area, this included replacing all the toilet white ware, boxing in the pipework, new automatic lighting, and air extraction in all three toilets, the addition of a baby changing facility within the multi-use toilet. All three toilets have also had new doors, door furniture and signage complemented with new flooring. All internal walls, ceilings and woodwork within the foyer and toilet area have been decorated.

Although not purchased and fitted yet, we have agreed within this part of the hall improvements to this area to purchase and install an internal defibrillator.

We would like to thank Boxley Parish Council for providing the ground maintenance program for the hall car park and surrounding areas.

Vic Davis from from Grove Green Village Hall

Our biggest single challenge in the past year has been the increase in energy costs. As this is our largest expenditure it has hit us enormously and we have had to pass on the cost to our hirers through the hire fees. We monitor the situation continually and may have to have a further increase.

The year brought us sadness as our Honorary Treasurer passed away. James, in his relatively short time with us, did a fantastic job bringing our financial system up to date, introduced us to online banking, and produced monthly reports. We have been very fortunate in securing the services of Anne as our new Treasurer who is continuing as James was doing.

The hall continues to be well used by a large cross section of the local community, with most time slots are filled.

Unfortunately, the hot water tank failed, leaving us without hot water at the hall. We have had a different arrangement installed, removing the need for a hot water tank. The hot water is now supplied on demand straight from the boiler. Hopefully this will save quiet a lot on energy costs. We are extremely thankful to Boxley Parish Council for their very generous grant to cover the cost of this repair, and for all the help they have given us over the years. All the halls in Boxley Parish are fortunate to have such an understanding and caring Parish Council.

We are blessed to have dedicated and caring Trustees/management committee members who give their time freely to ensure the smooth running of the hall. Pat Overland continues to be our fantastic caretaker/booking secretary.

Martin Cox from Vinters Valley Nature Reserve

Thanks were given to Boxley Parish Council for their ongoing support. The reserve would struggle without this support. The reserve has one employee and about 20 volunteers. They have struggled this year with the adverse weather conditions causing trees to come down. All trees have recently been surveyed.

The Reserve's open day is on the 23rd June this year from 12-4pm and all members of the Parish Council were invited to attend to learn more about the reserve first hand.

They have a fantastic group of volunteers who run things but do not do the day to day management. They are losing their Treasurer who is moving away and she will be hard to replace.

They have concerns about the Aldi appeal.

7. To receive questions from residents

Martin Cox asked is the halls in the parish had considered solar panels. There is a 2nd round of grant funding available. The Chairman explained that both Weavering and Grove Green halls had applied for the funding but been turned down as although Boxley is a rural parish the halls are not considered rural.

Meeting closed at 19.05 pm.

Signed as a correct record of the proceedings.

Chairman Date