Signed By _____

MINUTES OF ALTHORNE PARISH ASSEMBLY
HELD WEDNESDAY 28TH MAY 2014 @ 7.30pm
PARISH HALL, SUMMERHILL, ALTHORNE

Present:
Cllr P Burgess, Cllr B Noye, Cllr V Bowles, Cllr W Radley and Cllr C Day

In Attendance:
Joanna Jeffery (Clerk) and 7 members of the public

Apologies of Absence
Dist Cllr Boyce and Ursula Benjafield

Approval of Minutes 12th June 2013
Proposed by Cllr P Burgess, Seconded by P Pye

Chairman's Report
Prepared by Cllr P Burgess

You may recall last year's Chairman's Statement was prepared by District Cllr. Tony Cussen, who, on May 29, 2013, had been elected by his appointed three fellow District Councillors. This was a result of your council becoming inquorate (only one councillor), following the resignation, for personal reasons, of three, of the then four, parish councillors. Effectively, Althorne was administered by Maldon District Council.

The district councillors stayed in office until September 25, 2014, when four parishioners offered themselves for co-option onto the Parish Council. They were: Jo Baker, Vikki Bowles, Chris Day and Dan Hull. Thus, with five local councillors, your council again became quorate. Having appointed me as Chairman, the district councillors resigned. Subsequently a former councilor, Brian Noye, and an undergraduate, William Radely, offered themselves for co-option. They were welcomed by the Council. I am pleased to report your parish now has its full complement of seven local councillors.

Before moving on, I should like to express my thanks to the district councillors for their support. They had executive commitments to MDC and Essex County Council. Their attendance was much appreciated. Administering the parish fell to our Clerk, Joanna Jeffery, who, despite considerable uncertainties and difficulties (inadequate bank administration and the disconnection of our internet), performed her task admirably, maintaining continuity of service. On your behalf, I should like to express our appreciation, to MDC, who provided vital financial and officer back-up.

Fortunately, the new council had no major issues to confront, the Budget and Precept having been determined in the previous November. No major programmes had been committed to for fiscal 2013/14, although a second Speed Indicator Device for Summerhill had been provisioned. In addition, a review of the content and

migration of our website from a private hosting site, to one operated, at no charge to the parish, by Essex County Council, had been initiated. Final decisions on both were deferred.

Our major financial transaction, a contract letting the football pitches in the Recreation Ground to the New Latchingdon Youth Football Club, was renewed on the same terms as the previous year. Again there were no major factors, although wet weather resulted in some football pitch drainage issues, which were reviewed and acted upon. A large tree, next to the tennis court, overturned in high winds requiring immediate action, both for the security of the public and to preserve the integrity of the court fencing.

For maintenance, your council relies heavily on local contractors for support. This was particularly true during last year's hiatus, and will be equally so in the future. Your current council is largely composed of parishioners with a full time occupation, so do not have free time available for significant commitment. We have a core of local contractors who, over the years, have supported us. I would like to thank Peter Grimes, Steve Jeffery and Paul Russell for their contributions.

In this context, I would also like to thank, for their valuable contributions, our stalwart external representatives. Ursula Benjafield, Transport, Webmaster, Phil Davies and Jackie Harrop, Footpaths, this year were joined by Janet Cloke, on Health. They enhance the depth and breadth of our stewardship of your parish.

Financially, as opposed to the budgeted deficit planned by the previous council in November, 2012, we finished last year in surplus. In part this reflected project deferrals, such as the SID, which had a budgeted cost in of the £3,000 (in reality undercosted due to the need to include a solar panel). Our staff expenses were also below budget, due to deferred training and statutory increments. Councillor expenses were zero, and the Recreation Ground maintenance spend was well down.

As a consequence, we have fully adequate reserves, although in part this reflects earlier windfall VAT repayments, rather than planned surpluses. In November 2013, your newly co-opted (and it has to be said inexperienced) council, anticipating income again will be boosted by external receipts, voted to hold the precept for the current, 2014/15, financial year at £17,000. In 2012/13, this equated to a Council Tax Charge of £32.64 (c63p per week), part of a council tax of £1,492.77 for a band D Dwelling.

Our 2014/5 Budgeted spend is £22,455, of inevitability influenced by the previous year's profile. It may need to be reviewed, possibly downwards, but it does seems likely that there will be some unbudgeted costs e.g. on refurbishing the pavilion. We do not carry a provision for unspecified expenses.

In addition, it is my intention to evaluate the utility of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) for the community. As envisaged under the 2011 Localism Act, this is a means

of ensuring that the evolution of our built environment is in sympathy with the wishes of the community. For reference, over 420 new houses in the rural parishes are envisaged the MDC Local Development Plan; it seems likely some may be built in Althorne. Note: we cannot prevent MDC planned development, but may be able to influence it.

As a statutory process the NP has inevitable costs, relating to presentation and public consultation. This will involve expense, but our reserve position should enable us to absorb some, if not all, without a major charge on ratepayers. We are a small parish, but if we proceed, be assured the costs will be appropriate to our scale and resources. Irrespective, we will continue conservatively to exercise our stewardship your money, adopting best practice.

Finally, a comment on the Parish Hall. This is run by a separate Trust, where your councillors are Trustees. Structurally it appears sound; recently it has been redecorated, inside and out; its catering facilities are adequate. However, due to a lack of hiring income, following the loss of its core contract, it is running at a significant deficit. Short-term there are modest reserves to cover this position. Please promote this facility when considering or, advising on, a function. To ensure its sustainability, for the benefit of the community, urgently we need many more hire hours.

COUNCILLOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Chairman: Cllr. Paul Burgess

Vice Chairman: Cllr. Vikki Bowles.

Secretariat:

Administration: Cllr. Vikki Bowles; alternate,

(*Office/Finance*) Cllr. Chris Day

Environment: Cllr. Paul Burgess; alternate,

(*Planning/Highways*) Cllr. Brian Noye.

Amenities: Cllr. Chris Day: alternate, Cllr

(*Rec. Ground*) Dan Hull.

Community Cllr. Jo Baker: alternate, Cllr. (*Emergency Planning*) William Radely.

District Councillor's Report
None
County Councillor's Report
None

Signed By _____

Planning Report
39 Planning applications, Althorne Parish Council supported 19, objected to 13, 2 unable to comment, 4 appeals and 1 tree preservation order.

Finance Report
Precept £17,000, Large reserves this year are due to an underspend last year. The new parish council will be looking to spend money this financial year and the following may be taken into consideration pavilion maintenance, Recreation ground tree survey, Wall plagues to be mounted, tennis court needs assessing, up keep of war memorial and the office computer needs updating.
The speed indicator device needs to be sited in a different position, costs for neighbourhood plan, fun days, meet your councillors and superfast broadband.

Health Report
No health report available

Recreation Ground Report
It has been a testing winter with rain and wind, concerns has been raised with regards to drainage and hopefully this will be addressed before next winter.
There are potential problems with the goal mouths due to the wet weather.
The parish council will be obtaining quotes for windows, doors, gutters, soffits and fascia's for the Pavilion. Additional sand is needed for the play area. Hopefully, a clean and tidy day will be organised in the near future for Councillors and Parishioners, date to be advised.

Police Report
The Police and Crime Commissioner has held a meeting at Plume School, Maldon.
PC Pateman has asked Parish Clerks for meeting dates.
Any ongoing problems can be directed to Maldon Police Station.
It is a statutory requirement for the police to engage with local communities, the next meeting will be held October 2013.

Highways Report
Cllr Burgess reported it had been an uneventful year, the solar panel has been fitted to the Speed Indicator device on Burnham Road.
Re tarmacking, gulley gratings and a stop cock have also been carried out outside Fords of Althorne.
P3 Rep Jackie Harrop has confirmed that a full survey has been completed on all footpaths.
A parishioner commented about vehicles mounting pavements and accidents occurring. Photographic evidence has been shown to Althorne Parish Council, this will be emailed to Dist Cllr Cussen to take forward to the Highways meeting.
A Parishioner informed that a quality inspection of work should be carried out as various potholes have now formed due to poor workmanship.

Transport Report
Ursula gave a short talk on real time information boards. A discussion took place regarding |Community Infrastructure Levy's.

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Cllr P Burgess Thanked Ursula Benjafield for getting the overgrowth cut back at Station Road.

Matters from the floor

A parishioner enquired who would be undertaking the cleaning of the Pavilion and Parish Hall, the clerk will be undertaking these duties until the vacancy has been filled.

P Davies commented on items from the last Parish Council meeting, Cllr Fluker responded to Mr Davies comments regarding the Parish Hall, and has offered to meet with Mr Davies prior to the next meeting to discuss the matter.

The Clerk is to item the Parish Hall on the next agenda.

Responsibilities are to be considered collectively and District Councillors will look at items as and when they happen. Once new Councillors have been co-opted, responsibilities will be delegated.

P Davies formally withdrew his co-option request.

A Parishioner asked the way forward for Althorne Parish Council, response was advertising , hopefully 6 seats will be filled. Maldon District Council are not behind any changes to the Act of Parliament.

Dist Cllr Boyce informed that District Councillors are looking to fill all 6 vacancies before they step down and leave. So therefore they will be happier co-opting 6 vacancies as opposed to just 2 if the council becomes quorate.

If more than 6 applications are received, then a selection process will take place.

Ursula Benjafield proposed a vote of Thanks to the Parish Council old and new for all their hard work.

Linda Keeble commented that although Parishioners may not want to be on the Parish Council, they could still volunteer to help should they so wish.

P Davies commented that Declaration of Interests are only on Maldon District Council website for two parishes and not all in the district. It was also commented that personal signatures are protected data and therefore are no longer on the website.

Meeting closed at 9.55pm

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