WOODGREEN PARISH COUNCIL – Minutes of the Parish Assembly
Held on Tuesday 10th May 2016 in Woodgreen Village Hall at 7.00pm

Chairman: Stewart Hall
Councillors: Ed Hollinghurst, Sue Allpress, John Clarke & Julia Wilkie
In attendance: County/District Cllr. Edward Heron, Vicky Eden (Clerk), parishioners, speakers and guests

1. Welcome by Chairman - The Chairman welcomed parishioners, speakers and guests (24 people). He explained that some speakers may speak earlier than advertised due to other commitments; hence items on the agenda would be moved accordingly.

2.Apologies for absence: Apologies received and accepted from Parish Cllr Pete Skinner

The Chairman then introduced the following speakers:

3. Reports from other organisations:
Woodgreen Village Trust - Sue Coatham
Sue gave a brief overview in relation to the history of Woodgreen Village Trust, advising that it was set up by Pat Hall in the 1980s for the benefit of the village by helping local people and organisations. The Trust currently holds £22K for the benefit of the community and undertakes approximately 4 meetings per year. Examples of various projects helped by financial assistance provided by the Trust include the purchase of the defibrillator, the car park at the village shop, Woodgreen Cricket Club, Woodgreen Village Hall. It also owns the freehold of paddocks to the north of Dodgson Close. Although there are none in stock at present, the Trust can also order handsets for villagers requiring access to the Lifeline. At the present time, the Trust is looking for a volunteer to be secretary as Ann Shepley who has been in office for many years wishes to retire and those interested should get in contact.
The Chairman thanked Sue Coatham for her talk and the Trust for supporting the village community.

Woodgreen Community Shop Association - David Mussell
David forwarded apologies from Ron Trevaskis and advised that it was now the 5th anniversary since the opening of the shop. Turnover has doubled and it is now one of the larger community shops in England. Financially, the annual turnover is approximately £500,000 with a sales growth of 10.2% (this financial year the sales growth is expected to be between 5-6%). David thanked the three managers, volunteers, employees, suppliers and customers for making the shop such a success and highlighted that this success is based upon 13-14000 hours of effort every year.
The shop's goal is to provide good quality at reasonable prices and has welcomed new lines this year including BH24 bread from an artisan bakery in Ringwood, ready made meals, coal and logs, Roy Hunt pies and new local wines. Gross profit is kept as low as 20% and 80% of this profit is spent on wages to local people.
Concluding his talk, David suggested that there may be challenges ahead
including the introduction of the National Living Wage which may affect future growth of the business and change the mix of volunteers and paid staff.
The Chairman thanked David Mussell for his talk and congratulated the shop on its 5th anniversary, stressing that it was always pleasure to shop there. Woodgreen Preschool also thanked the shop for all its support towards their activities.

4. Guest Speaker - Craig Daters, NFNPA Ranger - How his role as a ranger affects Woodgreen on a local level

Craig gave a brief introduction to his role. Previously rangers were concerned with land management but now community engagement, with an emphasis on encouraging people to behave responsibly in the New Forest, has become more important. He currently works within a small team whose primary remit is to protect the New Forest, encouraging visitors and residents to enjoy, understand but to behave responsibly within the national park. The rangers try to speak to as many people as possible (approximately 19500 during the previous year) via various channels including local community projects, increasing their physical presence and working with partnership organisations. These include:

- Youth Project for NEETS
- Mobile Information Units (at present, the rangers are highlighting the danger to ground laying birds by free running dogs)
- Re-instatement of the pond in Lover
- Walking for health schemes (a possible scheme could be organised in Hale and Woodgreen and interested volunteers were encouraged to speak to Craig for more information)

Various local issues were then discussed with those present. The protection of nightjars in the local area was highlighted as a concern as 25% of the UK population are in the New Forest and will be nesting March to July. Walkers were encouraged to keep to tracks and, as there are up to 25000 dog walkers within the national park daily, all dogs should be kept under control during the nesting season.

The problem with dog fouling in the New Forest was then raised and Craig stressed that the rangers were trying to communicate that all dog waste should be bagged and taken home. Dog owners are being encouraged to use biodegradable bags although it is a concern that 'poo bags' are being left on trees and hedges. The general consensus is that there is not enough publicity in relation to the anti-dog fouling message within the national park and Craig encouraged people to write directly to NFNPA and the Forestry Commission to express their concerns.

In terms of increasing engagement within the local area, Craig reiterated that the rangers were keen to work with communities and were in contact with local schools as well as increasing their use of social media.

The Chairman thanked Craig Daters for his interesting and informative talk.

5. Minutes of previous meeting: The minutes of the Parish Assembly held on 26th May 2015 were unanimously agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

6. Chairman's Report: Parish Cllr Stewart Hall

The Chairman advised that 2015/16 had been another busy year where matters that were mentioned in last year's report continued to take up much of the council's time. The village has now finally gone live with faster broadband and some parishioners are receiving broadband speeds of up to 35MB. Thanks were given to Ed Hollinghurst Edward Heron and Colin Tregenza-Dancer for all their work in achieving this service for the village.

Ed Hollinghurst and John Clarke also continue to represent the Parish Council at the Western Escarpment Conservation Steering Group meetings where their continuing concern has been the verge damage to the crown land in all the villages of the Western Escarpment. The Forestry Commission has now chosen to start their remedial work in Woodgreen. It was hoped that the work would have been completed by now but due to a delay from the contractors and the Forestry Commission answering concerns of the residents in parts of the area affected, the work has not commenced but is due to start very soon. Maps have been displayed on the notice board of the areas where the existing and new ditches are to be dug and where dragon's teeth will be replaced and put in new areas to try and stop the erosion of the verges which the Chairman believed is generally welcomed by most people in the village. One point that has come out of these discussions is that the Forestry Commission will only repair tracks

which they are likely to use for access to their managed woodlands and heath, so the repair of tracks leading to residential properties is therefore the responsibility of all the property owners using the track and it is presumed that the cost of repairs should to be paid for collectively.
The Chairman advised that John Sanger has taken over the responsibility of managing the work of the village Lengthsman Marcus Noke, who took over the role in July last year and John has been pleased with the work he is doing. The Parish Council is grateful that the County Council has continued the support of the Lengthsman as the service is used fully. Stewart advised those present that if there were any suggestions for small jobs that could be undertaken by the Lengthsman that they should contact John directly.
Planning applications have continued to come for comment of the Parish Council and it has been noted that the Park Authority often use Woodgreen and photographs of property in the village to emphasise good design. The Parish Council was very pleased this year when it nominated the rebuilding of Cherry Tree Cottage as it went on to receive a building design award from the National Park Authority. Stewart believed that the National Park received an above average number of applications from householders in the village for tree works and this reflected that people are being responsible and applying for permission for work in their gardens.
In June last year the Parish Council welcomed Vicky Eden as the new Clerk, who was already Clerk to the Sandleheath Parish. In Woodgreen she has to deal with not just the New Forest District Council but the National Park Authority as well and so it has been a steep learning curve for her, in particular looking after cemetery matters. The new Clerk has reviewed the Council's standing orders and financial regulations which involved a great deal of extra work. Although Woodgreen is a small parish this does not mean that the time the Clerk has to necessarily spend on matters is small and so the Clerk has been asked to keep a time record over the next quarter to review the hours that are needed to properly fulfil all the duties undertaken. The Clerk is also getting to grips with the parish council's website and increasing the information shown which is necessary under the transparency rules which are being put in place for all councils. Thanks were given to the Clerk for all her hard work.
Thanks were also given to all the parish councillors in their various roles for dealing with issues including planning, tree works, cemetery, transportation, roads and ditches, hedges and footpaths, maintenance of council property and attending meetings of the Parish Liaison, the North West Quadrant of Parish Councils, Western Escarpment Conservation Area and Downton Link.
The Chairman then moved onto the Parish Council's finances (the latest set of accounts for the year ended 31st March 2016 having been distributed to all present). The accounts were still awaiting audit but gave an up to date statement of affairs.

The Finance Report: Parish Cllr Stewart Hall
The following items were highlighted:

1. Receipts – The date for paying interest on most of the cemetery reserve has been changed to 1st May and this meant that in 2014/15 the accounts only reflected interest on the monies held in the National Savings Bank. In May 2015 interest was received for the previous 14 months for the Santander account and included in the figures for 2015/16 accordingly.
2. Cemetery Fees – It was noted that these were up a little.
3. Hall's Field – Stewart advised that the tenant had paid his 2014/15 rent a little early so the monies appeared in the previous year's accounts. No expenses were incurred on Hall's Field so the Parish Council continued to pay the Village Hall the rent that was received thereby honouring the agreement for the Parish Council's ownership of that land that any profits have to be donated to the village hall.
4. Cemetery Expenses – These had reduced considerably as remedial work was not required throughout the year.
5. Insurance – The Parish Council has changed insurance company and

agreed a 3 year premium deal which has brought about a £500 annual saving.

6. Website – The increase in website costs relates to a £750 fee paid in April last year to the company that hosts the Parish Council's website. This was for training and support to enable the Clerk to input more information on the website herself, as it was cumbersome to continually do this through a third party.
7. Overview - In 2015/16 the Parish Council actually has a surplus for the year of £2100. However this includes a carry-over of £1,000 put aside for replacing the fence and gate at the top of Steels Drove, delayed due to the contractor's illness. In addition funds of £2,101 are held which were left over from the Parish Plan reserve that do not have to be repaid. These have been added to the working balance, giving a healthy total of £9,217.37.

As there were no questions relating to the finances, the Chairman concluded his report accordingly.

7. Reports from other organisations

County Councillor's Report - County Cllr Edward Heron

Edward stressed that all areas of local government were undertaking cost cutting measures (with Hampshire County Council (HCC) losing a quarter of its budget) & focused on two consultations:

- Household Waste Recycling Centre Consultation - Some sites may be closed in the future and villagers were asked to respond should they wish to support the site at Somerley.
- The future of Hampshire Library Service - As part of cost cutting measures, the mobile library service has now ceased but consultations are ongoing in relation to other parts of the library service. Edward stressed that local libraries are only viable if they are used on an ongoing basis and do offer fantastic facilities. If villagers feel that facilities are not sufficient, they should contact either the library service or Edward so that their concerns can be addressed.

Woodgreen Village Hall - Parish Cllr Julia Wilkie

Julia advised that the village hall was thriving with a large number of bookings for this year and next, especially for weddings, which is a lucrative boost to its income. It was decided not to increase rental costs this year for both regular users and occasional bookings. The heating does continue to be a large expense during the winter months so enquiries have been made regarding an alternative to the costly and quite inefficient storage heaters and the favourite seems to be an air source heat pump. New windows will also be needed in due course. As mentioned previously, the Hall's next project will be a replacement lighting system. It is hoped that this will be achieved with grant aid from HCC at an estimated cost of approx. £16,000. The Hall has also had a grant from the Veolia Environmental Trust which funded the installation of the cattle grid at the side of the hall.

The cream tea season will start on Sunday June 19th although only two public teas are arranged at the moment due to hall availability. There are some 'private' teas booked, where the Hall caters for diverse groups of people.

Julia concluded her talk by reminding those present that the Woodgreen Village Hall Annual General Meeting will be held on Friday June 17th at 7pm and any queries, comments or fundraising suggestions would be most welcomed.

Downton Link - Parish Cllr Julia Wilkie

Representing the parish council on the committee of the Downton Link Association, Julia gave an overview of the work undertaken by the Link such as transportation for hospital appointments, dentists, hairdressing etc. It was highlighted that whilst there is no set charge for this service, a donation is expected. There are several clients in Woodgreen but at the moment there are no drivers from the village. Julia advised that if people would like to use this service or know someone who may not be aware of its existence or who are interested in becoming a driver to look in the parish magazine and on the notice board at the shop for the contact details. A mileage allowance is paid to drivers and hours can be as minimal as volunteers wish.

Police Report - Unfortunately a police representative was unable to attend so no report was given

Neighbourhood Watch (NW) - Norman Henstridge (Woodgreen) and Sharon Barnett (Hale)
The two local co-ordinators spoke about recent problems with charities knocking on doors after dark, causing worry and concern to elderly people. Complaints were forwarded to the Anthony Nolan Trust (ANT), the charity concerned, and also last year to the Red Cross. ANT responded and apologised for any stress and disturbance caused, but confirmed that the rules that they are governed by state that they can fundraise between the hours of 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. They work to ensure that this type of fundraising happens only within those times. They also suggest that anyone who does not wish to be called upon, displays a "No Cold Calling" sign at their front door and villagers were encouraged to contact the NW co-ordinators if they wanted these signs. In this respect, ANT have also said that they are happy to pass on the street name concerned to their fund-raising agency so that they can blacklist those addresses to ensure that no further fund-raising occurs. This will also deter other charities that may be fund-raising in the area. NW can also contact ANT again to request any future help from them in this respect. ANT stress that their representatives are trained to be polite and respectful of those they speak to, and also to be aware of vulnerable people, and not to press any further with the fund-raising request. Villagers were advised that a copy of the letter received from ANT is viewable on Woodgreen Village News website or can be forwarded to anyone who hasn't got internet access.
Villagers were reminded that if they have any queries or are concerned or suspicious about anything, even if their concerns may seem trivial, to contact their local NW co-ordinator who will always help if possible. A request was then made for villagers to forward their email details as this information will enable NW to pass on important information or any urgent warnings. NW is not just for crime related issues, it can also help with other matters as well, such as a lost dog for example.
Sharon Barnett also made the audience aware that Hale has a procedure in place for dealing with travellers should they set up camp in the local area and this information has been passed to Norman Henstridge.
In conclusion, Sharon thanked Norman Henstridge for all his support and highlighted that he was doing a sterling job for NW and Woodgreen.
Villagers then raised concerns about recent break-ins to outbuildings and Norman advised that he was not always made aware of such incidents but would put a note win the parish magazine.
The Chairman thanked the NW co-ordinators for all their hard work and advised that it was reassuring to know that the two parishes were working together.

Woodgreen Preschool - Kirsten Davies
The Chairman introduced the speaker and congratulated Woodgreen Preschool on achieving its Outstanding status in its recent Ofsted inspection. Kirsten gave a brief background of the registered charity and the management team in place. At present, the preschool operates term time Monday to Thursday (9.15am-1pm) with late afternoons on Tuesdays. For various reasons, children numbers are decreasing (including village demographics, competition from new nurseries and change in culture with working parents) but the preschool is actively fundraising and engaging with the local community in the following ways: engaging with local head teachers; infiltrating parent groups at the right times; Easter egg hunts; barn dances; possible bingo nights and auction of promises. Kirsten thanked Woodgreen Village Hall for the reduction in rent and encouraged the community to spread the word to keep the Preschool in place.
Villagers asked whether the preschool held records of alumini so that alumini events could be held. It was also suggested that testimonials from head teachers could be publicised to encourage parents. It was confirmed that the preschool co-operates with the one in Hale and Kirsten was asked to forward literature to Hale Parish Council for inclusion in the Welcome Pack.

The Chairman thanked all the members of Woodgreen Preschool for all their hard work and wished them every success in the future.

8. Matters to be raised by the public

One villager raised a concern about planning applications relating to the construction of boundary fences and it was felt that new homeowners to the village should be made aware of any restrictions prior to work being undertaken. The members of the parish council do try to inform residents as soon as they are made aware of any concerns and distribute relevant leaflets accordingly.

Cllr Ed Hollinghurst then gave a brief overview of the work of the Western Escarpment Conservation Steering Group, in particular its recent input with the Verge Protection Programme. Loss of grazing ground caused by damage by vehicles has become a significant problem. For example, bell mouths should only be 12ft wide (and not 30ft as one in the village has become). All authorities are currently working together on this matter.

It was reiterated that any building work (including that relating to boundaries) within the New Forest should always be undertaken once correct advice has been sought from the Planning Department at NFNPA. Although there are a variety of fences within the New Forest, there are rules to follow in relation to new fences and the Planning Department will take enforcement action in the event of any breaches. Various leaflets are available on request and are currently being distributed throughout the village.

The Chairman thanked all those who attended and closed the meeting at 8.50pm. Refreshments were then served.

These minutes were approved at the Annual Parish Meeting dated 9th May 2017