

Beckley Parish Assembly Report 2018

The annual village assembly was held on Wednesday 16th May in the village hall, Beckley. The event was well attended with approximately 20-30 villagers present, along with Councillors Rowe, Mrs Dobson, Mrs Ongley, Mrs Langmead, Mrs Parsons and Mrs Evans, outgoing Chairman Christopher Broadbent, RDC Cllrs Jenkins and Mooney and ESSC Cllr Ms Davies. Annual reports from Cllr Jenkins and Ms Davies were available to read in the room. The meeting was presided over by Cllr Mrs Dobson, Chairman.

Christopher Broadbent opened the meeting with a reflection on the parish council's activities over the past couple of years. He thanked his fellow councillors for the progress they had made in a number of areas, including the new website and plans for the new park. He stated that he had decided to step down due to work commitments and wished the council well in the year ahead. He gave a particular vote of thanks to Clerk, Valerie Ades, for her tireless work on the Council's behalf and also noted her 'sparkly wardrobe'! Councillor Mrs Dobson thanked him for the huge contribution made over the last 7 years and most in attendance applauded in support.

The meeting then heard from Mr Simon Thurston, Head teacher at Beckley C of E primary school and Angie Lewis, Chair of Beckley pre-school. Mr Thurston outlined the celebrations taking place over the coming months to celebrate 200 years of the school and invited villagers to get involved where they could. In particular, week commencing 4th June would see the school pupils and staff dressing as 'Victorians' for the week and all were invited to attend a school picnic on the afternoon of Wednesday 6th June. Mrs Lewis outlined the challenges currently facing the preschool as a small rural setting and asked for continued support from parents and volunteers.

Cllr Rowe introduced a session from Mr Graham Maunders of the Sussex Community Housing Hub. Mr Maunders gave a presentation explaining the principle behind community land trusts and took a number of questions from the floor. Mr Maunders welcomed follow up questions by email and would be happy to attend future village meetings.

The assembly broke for refreshments, kindly prepared by Cllrs Mrs Parsons and Mrs Evans before a short session from Cllr Mrs Dobson on the new play park plans and progress. The new park will begin to be installed the last week of May or first week of June and will be ready for a grand opening at Beckley's Big day out on the 30th June.

Cllr Mrs Ongley thanked all those who had attended the village sign unveiling in April and those who had taken the initiative to raise the funds and drive the project to completion. She also thanked all those involved with speed watch and confirmed some sessions with police were imminent. The annual tree report was available to read at the meeting and Cllr Mrs Ongley pointed this out.

There then followed a series of short presentations from various village groups.

- Mr Roger Thomson spoke on behalf of the Beckley players.
- Mrs Deidre Bull raised awareness of the Beckley Trefoil Guild who celebrate their 75th anniversary this year
- Ms Mary Howse reminded everyone about the village hall lunches that take place on the 2nd Thursday of the month and the Farmers' Market that takes place on the first Saturday of the month. For June there will be a summer supper at 7pm on the second Thursday of the month instead of a lunch, all welcome, and the cost is £8.50. Mary also thanked Paul Lewis for his efforts with the Farmers' Market and confirmed the road race would take place as usual on the first Sunday in November.

- Mr Chris Fairman and Mr Spencer Hall spoke on behalf of the Friends of Beckley Church. The Friends is a small group of volunteers that do their best to raise funds for the upkeep of the church. Many members are elderly and new committee members are needed to help continue the work. £50-60K is currently needed to repair the damaged gable end and all ideas are welcome.
- Mr Trevor Jones from the Bowls Club encouraged attendees to consider joining. There is a practice every Tuesday evening at 6pm and new members are always welcome
- Mr Phil Maynard addressed the meeting on behalf of the Horticultural Society. He explained the summer show would be happening during Beckley's Big Day out on 30th June and encouraged everyone to enter at least one entry to ensure a tent full of flowers and vegetables on the day.

Cllr Mrs Dobson invited questions to the parish, district or county councillors. Mr Bernard Baverstock took the opportunity to highlight some inaccuracies on the website and Cllr Mrs Evans undertook to deal with the issues as soon as possible. Mr Baverstock asked what the Parish Council's intention was for filling the new vacancy. Cllr Mrs Dobson said nothing had been decided yet but that co-option was a possibility if there was no other interest. Mr Baverstock asked why the vacancy wasn't yet on the noticeboard as was required under local government legislation. Cllr Mrs Dobson undertook to rectify the situation but on investigation found that the council was indeed correct and the vacancy would not be advertised until after the Clerk had given notice to Rother, which is an essential part of the procedure.

The evening finished with the drawing of the raffle to raise money for the new play equipment.

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