



Reports from outside bodies

October 2016

Yateley Village Hall

Held at Yateley Village Hall on 16 September 2016

Village hall exterior had been painted since previous meeting and wasps' nests found removed. also rotten window cill, damaged by overflowing guttering (which was remedied some time ago), replaced. During decoration, the necessity for some wall remedial work was discovered and agreed to be rectified as soon as possible. The foyer needs repainting and a quote for new lounge carpet sought.

Bookings have been steady, but hiring costs of other halls in the area have been researched to consider hall charged for next year at the next meeting. Bar prices will also be reviewed next month. Hirers' deposit increased to £100. New application form introduced and users' set up time will in future be charged at half hall hire rate.

New contract cleaner has started, replacing committee volunteers, and the results have shown a noticeable improvement. As a consequence out COSHH Manual needs to be reviewed.

Finance report shows that debtors are high at £1500. Annual report almost complete and AGM set for 21 or 28 October depending on confirmation of hall bookings. Now that we are introducing paid staff, the question of PAYE is being addressed by our treasurer and auditor.

Hire costs of other halls being taken into account to revise village hall charges, for consideration next month. New charges to apply from January.

HALC Meeting

Held at Eastleigh on 17 September 2016

Attended by Cllrs John Keane and Tony Spencer

Matters arising from meetings discussed unparished areas and localism, and that principle authority can close down parishes. The recent HCC parish workshops demonstrated the importance of parishes and that new communities should be encouraged to form new parishes. Parishes clearly want the tools to do job, funding, protection and training. Hampshire currently has 263 parishes. The workshops demonstrated that unitary authorities in Cornwall works, but that is not the case elsewhere. The Government devolution drive for mayors appears to be reduced since the PM change to Mrs May. It was thought that Solent might approach other districts in order to strengthen their bid for unitary authority status. No great love for HCC was expressed in Basingstoke due to remoteness and funding issues. Also boundary commission changes touched on. On major criticism coming out of the Workshops was footpaths, clearing rubbish and verges

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Village of the Year 2016, sponsored by Fuller's Brewery, was. Enham Alamein.

NALC representative report, membership fees limited to 2% this year and next year. More positive contact with government ministers, and 12 of 60 Hampshire MPs were seen by HALC, better than any other county. Only 17 parishes not signed up for audit. Hampshire is in the top half dozen CALCs, showing a significant improvement under present administration.

A celebration of Olympians from Hampshire was also mentioned.

Net meeting: Saturday 3 December 2016 at The Holiday Inn, Leigh Road, Eastleigh, SO50 9PG at 10.00am
The main business will be to elect a new County Board, and to appoint suitable individuals to represent the ALC's interests externally.

YELAbus Meeting

Held at Yateley Town Council Offices on 20 September 2016

In Andy Whitaker's absence, Wilf Hardy Wilf elected as acting vice chairman so that accounts could be signed. Andy's Year-End Chairman's report for the Trustees Annual Report & Annual Accounts has already been drafted.

Matters Arising apply for grant from Blackwater & Hawley for £1000 Wilf to deal with. John was going to brief Luke regarding the website and emails, held off for next time.

Wilf's Review was recommend, an Accident Procedure will be drafted by Tony for next meeting and Hirer Contracts T&C revised.

Jane was looking into possible government funding which is geared to younger users, which may be applicable.

VAT reporting needed Andy's log in details. Ellen has applied to take this on because VAT returns needs entering by 7 October. Wilf will contact Mr Ings at HCC about the requirements of the quarterly report we send them, usually handled by Andy.

There will be a Christmas party for the drivers, organised by Mo, in liaison with Tracey.

Stagecoach meeting

Held at Yateley Town Council Offices on 23 September 2016

Richard Tyldesly represented Stagecoach in a meeting attended by Cllrs Collett, Spencer and Jane Biscombe.

A move by Surrey Heath to close Camberley bus lanes was of concern to Stagecoach as this would severely affect schedules, including Route 3. Reliability concentrating on getting buses on time.

Sunday 30 October will see the new timetable.

Route 1 has increased the number of buses to 16, so timing is every 7.5 mins at peak time. In November some gold double decker will be included, a double decker holds 75 with only 43 for single deckers.

Routes 2 and 3 are being combined, which should make schedules more reliable. Last bus will be 20.50, with the current last bus leaving Frimley hospital at 20.32.

Under consideration for the future is a possible route to Farnborough main station via Watchmoor Park from Yateley, but this will not happen this year.

Free WiFi is now available on some of the buses, including charging points for mobiles and tablets through USB connection.

Hampshire Town and Parish workshop

Held at Andover Wellington Centre on 27 September 2016

Cllr Roy Perry addressed 58 councils in the Test Valley area, one of 5 workshops in the county. Life is changing, the Secretary of State has also changed, who admits they know nothing about parish councils, but local councils account for 25% of expenditure and therefore feel there's room to make savings. By 2020 £480 million will have been saved by Hampshire so far and further cuts becoming more difficult to make. This is a reduction of about 40% of the budget. The Government wants USA levels of social spending but expects Scandinavian levels of service. Principal authorities recognise the need to be in partnership with local councils.

John Coughlan CE spoke explain the context of Devolution and the development of a southern powerhouse. in September 2015 HIOW put forward a plan of a combined authority, preserving existing councils. The sticking point introduced at the 11th hour was the Treasury's insistence on an elected mayor. Then Solent put in a counter bid, while a bid from Heart of Hampshire is being considered. Deloitte found that a unitary authority would bring £40m in savings and reduced council tax.

Locality working, deeper devolution by giving power to the parishes, with potential to take over local services. Like Cllr Perry, he keeps talking about the 2-tier system, ignoring the frustrated mutterings from the assembly of parish councils, so why are we wasting our time being here?

John Tickle, Hampshire Rural Affairs officer, spoke of improving locality working, the first officer to mention the three tiers of local government. Whatever restructure government selects, there is no threat to town and parish councils, perhaps like the oft-quoted Cornwall model, parishes may be organised into local area teams, local area boards, collaborations or clusters. He recognised that principal councils need to engage with local councils and listen to local voices, building on good practice such as lengthsmen and village agents. Wanta a specific Hampshire model but look also at how others tackle the problems and are more responsive, such as area boards in Wiltshire.

First workshop posed "What governance model do you think would best enable improved local influence?" James Jordan was county facilitator, with parish and district representation from Test Valley, Andover, North Hampshire, Barton Stacey, Micheldever, and Upper Clanford. Of most concern once we got in our collective moan about most of the lectures had been about the top or top two tiers of local governance, was grasscutting currently carried out by three different uncoordinated levels, all to different standards. The smaller councils were concerned about taking on anything extra, while the bigger councils were happy to take the lead and include all rural parishes in area teams/boards.

Stuart Jarvis, Transport officer, told us of opportunities for deeper devolution. although these were not mandatory, It is all about choices and opportunities. Not a case of one size fits all, so there must be a range of options. There would be no evasion of statutory responsibility, nor could schemes be disruptive to countywide service. Cornwall and Wiltshire demonstrated that new relationships take time to gel.

Report from Representatives on Outside Bodies

Criticism from the audience was that there should be more monitoring of current highways services, and we should have a local representative responsible for highways.

Joint delivery or service enhancement is a service benefit. Currently 120 parishes have joined the Lengthsman scheme. Current agency agreements, there is no reason why these shouldn't be devolved down to Town Councils. There is already devolved service delivery, such as parking wardens at district level are enforcing onroad parking as well as car parks. Also full service or asset transfer to local councils, such as a crematorium. So far these are only being devolved to districts.

Steven Lugg, CE HALC, was the first speaker to emphasize that there were THREE tiers of local government and that any system adopted should be mission driven and not finance driven. We need a Royal Commission to avoid having 5 or 6 different models of local government, it makes no sense having the present chaos.

The Cornwall precept level has doubled overall since the unitary authority was introduced in 2009. Parishes need to ask government what are your ambitions for deeper devolution, and we should be stating that we are up for this responsibility, and Council officers for all departments need to take responsibility to liaise with parish councils.

Next steps

The results of the Workshops will be on Hantsweb and will get the feedback sent to each council.

My summary of the exercise

The biggest negative lectured by all the speakers except the last one, in fact the only one to pick up the clearly audible mutterings of the audience of parish and town councillors, was the insistence that local government was either unitary or two-tiered. It was as if the organisers had no clue who they were addressing or, more likely, that they wanted to put us firmly in our place at the bottom of the pile while giving central government the impression that they were delivering some form of "all-level consultation". Only the last speaker Steven Lugg, CE of HALC, pointed out to the other speakers that as far as this audience was concerned there were three tiers of local government and that we were actually of some importance in the scheme of things. He also stressed the important point the others missed, that local government needed to work to a single pattern, rather than the 5 or 6 models that successive changes of central government had saddled us with.

All Cllr Perry and the HCC officers seemed concerned with was their stand that HCC were marvelous compared to all other counties and the other two proposed unitary authorities, and their vision for devolution was best. John Tickle, the officer in charge of highways, tried to disguise his discomfort at being in front of his ultimate stakeholders by mumbling through his speech and promising us pictures in his presentation.

But to us pond feeders, sorry parish councillors, this workshop was like a gathering of Persil and Daz users at an Ariel washing powder demonstration, where the dirty washing was still in the machine cycle so they could only fob us off with sweet-smelling glowing white laundry that was "prepared earlier".

At the group workshops, which we thought was the whole point of the exercise, they were basically an angry going over of the old ground about how distant, inefficient and incompetent HCC were, mostly on highway, verges, uncompleted unsupervised road schemes and grasscutting plus the woefully degree of monitoring of their contractors.

Most of the concerns of the councillors on my table were those from the smaller of the 58 parishes in the Test Valley, where that felt they were too small to take on even the crumbs of devolution offered to parishes, while the reps from Yateley, Andover (and a councillor who wore all three hats of parish, district and county), pointed out that what HCC called clusters and other "unitary" authorities called local area teams or boards, could be used to involve them more closely and with more influence over performance of devolved services.

Cemetery costs review

Held at Yateley Town Council Offices on 4 October 2016

Working party attended by Cllrs Chris Barnes and Tony Spencer, officers Maureen Daws and Alison Blanchard.

Prices reviewed in light of other local authorities and that the £18k costs are only partially mitigated by income of £9k. Recommendations were made for consideration by the next Community and Environment Committee meeting on 31 October and Friends of Heathlands Cemetery informed and may have representation at that meeting.

Refreshers' Fair

Held in the Rose Rent Room at The Tythings on 6 October 2016

An Older Person's event showing what facilities and interests are available for retired people, held in conjunction with Big Lottery Fund and Citizens Advice, with stands from The Tythings Coffee Club, Yateley Society, Yateley Lions, PALS, NHS Recovery College, Willow Gardens Care Homes, with free refreshments and opportunities to try crafts and graffiti. The Fire Service even turned up for the event.

