

COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN (HART), (CCH).

Minutes of the 18th Annual General Meeting held at the Crookham War Memorial Hall, Church Crookham, on **Tuesday 1st March 2022**, commencing at 7.30pm.

Draft minutes.

The executive committee members being present were:

Chairman and Group Leader:	James Radley	JR
Vice Chairman:	Simon Ambler	SA
Secretary:	Jenny Radley	JRR
Membership Secretary:	Gill Butler	GB
Deputy Group Leader:	Alan Oliver	AO

There were 18 members at the meeting, including district councillors: Tony Clarke (TC); Tina Collins (TCn); Wendy Makepeace-Browne (WMB); Angela Delaney (AD) and Katie Davies (KD).

1. Introduction:

The Chairman welcomed those present to the 18th Annual General Meeting of CCH. He thanked everyone for coming out on such a wet and dark evening to this meeting. It only seems a short time ago since our last AGM, but it is good to see friends again.

He made a quick introduction of the team to the members at the meeting, and decided to progress quickly with the business of the meeting. The most important part is to get to the Open Floor section of the meeting so that members have a chance to ask questions. The group welcomes any feedback on what they are doing.

2. Apologies:

Apologies have been received from: Julia Ambler (Election Agent), who is away on business; Chris Axam (Treasurer), who is on holiday; Sara Kinnell; George Coutts; Mr and Mrs Asprey (we wish John a speedy recovery after a nasty fall); Mandie Bedford; and David and Gerry Tucker.

3. Minutes of the last meeting:

The minutes of the previous AGM, held on 24th March 2021 were recorded as a true and accurate record. There were no questions or matters arising from the previous minutes.

The motion to accept the draft minutes was proposed by Ange Delaney and seconded by Tina Collins. The minutes were accepted by majority vote. There were no objections.

4. Topical Updates from the Chairman and Executive Members.

4.1 Challenges last year:

The Chairman explained that the group have had a challenging year. The Election in May was very difficult. There were both district and county elections, because the district election in 2020 had been deferred due to the first Covid lockdown. We had asked our members whether they wanted us to canvass residents last May and their response at that time was no, because many people were still rightly quite wary of picking up or passing on the Covid virus. We had to simply rely on delivering our newsletters and election leaflets, but there was not the same chance to talk to people face to face. Instead we asked people to call us and we were happy to visit those people who wanted to talk to us in person. At the same time we were also faced with some very negative and confusing posts on social media, organised by our opposition, which was a deliberate attempt to undermine our candidates. Sadly this had an impact in Fleet, where Wendy Makepeace-Browne lost her seat in Fleet Central district ward and Mandie Bedford was not successful in gaining the seat in Fleet West district ward. We also lost John Bennison in the county council division of Church Crookham and Ewshot. Katie and Ange put up a strong defence for the group on Social Media with factual information, but some people seemed to believe the misinformation and lies that were being put out about our group. The Chairman explained that we will give a better account of ourselves in the run up to the coming election.

Meanwhile there are ongoing challenges at Hart District Council. There have been difficulties with planning the budget for the next year. Grants from Government have been cut back and there is still

much to pay for, and yet revenue over the past year has been low. For example, car parking charges during the Covid restrictions have been much reduced. There have been challenges with waste and recycling collections due to staff sickness and self-isolation periods for those staff who test positive. There was also the problem with lorry drivers being tempted away to better paid HGV jobs. Revenue from selling recyclable material is also reduced, as some of the various outlets to sell waste material have closed down. As a result staffing costs have had to be cut in order to reduce costs, but in turn those can have an impact on services to residents.

The Chairman introduced the next topic which will be presented by Cllr Katie Davies.

4.2 Civic Quarter Regeneration:

Katie Davies (KD) introduced herself as one of the district councillors for Fleet, she is on the Civic Quarter Working Group. She pointed out that she would welcome any input from any of the other members, who were also involved in the project.

She started with a brief explanation of the site in question and recent history. The Civic Quarter is the largest asset owned by Hart District Council. It includes the site of the Council Offices in Fleet, The Harlington and the Gurkha Square. It should be noted that Fleet Library is owned by Hampshire County Council.

In 2019 Hart District Council (HDC) decided to launch a vision exercise to help decide what local people really wanted from the Civic Quarter. The aim was to provide a community centre that would be able to provide for functions and events and gatherings for all local residents and interested parties. HDC set up a cross-party working group, including councillors from Hart District Council, Fleet Town Council and a representative from Hampshire County Council, along with a team of architects to help put together some options and designs for a new Civic Quarter. No-one wanted to relive the previous problems that had happened a few years ago, when there had been an outcry about plans to rebuild the Harlington that involved losing part of Gurkha Square. This time there will be public involvement and consultation from the start, and the aim is to optimise the space available. The old and failing Harlington building needs to be removed and replaced. Every resident in Fleet will be invited to join in and asked what they want and expect from the new Civic Quarter. The expectation is that there will be more open space. The group hope to discuss a wide range of elements that people might want for a new town square that connects the high street to The Views. They want to make sure that the plans will help to bring the town to life. There will be public engagements on-line and also live events, and these are expected to be arranged in late May and June, avoiding the purdah period in the lead up to the council elections in early May. The aim is to find out what is important to residents and what they would like to enjoy and be proud of.

Thank you and any questions? There were no questions or comments.

The Chairman then asked Alan Oliver to tell the meeting about the changes about to take place in Fleet Market.

4.3 Fleet Market:

Alan Oliver first explained that he was not on the Civic Quarter Regeneration working group, because he was probably too passionate and interested in the matter, and because he was also a long serving member of Fleet Town Council (FTC).

He explained that FTC was responsible for the market in Fleet Gurkha Square. He pointed out that some people who have visited Fleet's market on Saturdays in the past 6 months have been quite disappointed. The Market Operator has not been investing in the business there and is planning to leave. He has terminated his contract with FTC, so the Council has decided to set up a Community Interest Company (CIC) to run the market instead. The CIC will be tasked with putting together a business plan to entice local craftspeople to set up stalls at the market and expand the range of stalls and attract more people to come into Fleet. They hope to improve the market experience which should attract more people to the town in general and increase footfall in the town. They intend for this to become a self-financing operation, but to start with there will be an arrangement to provide the Gurkha Square site for free, for the first year. It normally costs £12,000 to cover car-parking revenue. FTC also want to help kick-start the scheme by using £24,000 funding from Government for the Help High Street initiative, which could be used to provide equipment and support to stall holders, such as gazebos and tables, and provide a manager to support and advise stall holders and to talk customers to help improve the market

experience. They want to help encourage more people to come to Fleet, so it becomes a more popular shopping destination. The businesses in Fleet are supportive, as they all want to have a more vibrant town centre. He also added that they would not want to poach people from other local markets, such as Elvetham Heath market, that would not be acceptable at all. Elvetham Heath has a successful market so they hope to help to compliment both markets and help to increase footfall for all.

AO added that they were not engaged in social media posting that complained about the town. What good does that do? Fleet is really not so badly off, in fact it is doing much better than many other areas. They consider that it is very important to help promote and talk up Fleet, with its high street and markets. It makes no sense to criticise the town, far better to make the effort to improve the shopping experience. They have also tried to talk to the owners of the Hart Shopping Centre, but it is a private company and tended to have very little contact with the local councils. It is not possible to sort out the problems with the shopping centre but they hope that they might be interested in supporting any improvements they plan for the town. AO was interested to hear what the members might suggest.

Jim Storey asked: Was Fleet BID able to help?

AO answered: He explained that BID stands for 'Business Improvement District'. Fleet BID is an arrangement for all the 160 or so businesses signed up in the town to work together, each paying an annual sum of money to help make improvements, run events and publicise in the town in general. They provide the Find Your Fleet newsletter, which people should have seen. BID was set up for a 5-year term, but that ends in March. Apparently they are not able to help financially with the Fleet Market project, because they are coming to the end of their term of office. They may be able to continue and help, but that is yet to be decided by a ballot later in March.

4.4 District Elections:

The Chairman explained that the next round of district council elections is scheduled for 5th May 2022. CCH will be putting forward 5 candidates:

Gill Butler will be standing for re-election in Crookham East,

Sadly Simon Ambler is standing down in Crookham West and Ewshot, but we are fortunate to have our experienced member Wendy Makepeace Browne, who is very happy to stand as our candidate instead, Alan Oliver is standing again in Fleet Central, and Ange Delaney is standing again in Fleet West.

We hope that all goes ahead as expected, and we look forward to canvassing once again and talking to our residents. We will also all be out to meet and greet people at the polling stations on election day.

5. Annual Treasurer Report and Statement of Accounts:

The Chairman explained that Chris Axam, the CCH Treasurer, is unable to attend the meeting today. Before he went he made sure that he had provided the Chairman with the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for this meeting, as part of the official business for this meeting.

The Chairman explained that everyone should have a copy of the Statement of Accounts on their seats. He presented a brief summary note about the accounts, from the Treasurer. As people will see the expenses for last year were quite expensive. That was mainly because we printed an edition of our newsletter shortly before the Covid lockdown was announced, and we were not allowed to deliver it ourselves by hand. Instead we had to pay the Royal Mail to deliver to all residents in Fleet and Church Crookham. However, that will probably not be something we would do again in future. We believe the distribution was very patchy, it seems that some residents may have missed out on our news, but it is hard to prove. Although our money is down it is a lesson well learnt, and we will survive.

Notes on CCH Accounts, as provided by CA:

1. The accounts are prepared on a cash accounting basis, which follows local government guidance.
2. We have 2 sources of income. The first is our annual membership fees and the second are donations made by all our elected representatives, from part of their monthly council allowance.
3. Income and expenditure for the year 2021 has remained steady. We saw a decrease in balance over the year, due to the cost of posting the newsletter.
4. The net result was a decrease in the cash balance at 31st December 2021 of £2829.68. When added to our opening cash balance as at 1st January 2019, this gives a closing balance at 31st December 2021 was £2,106.30.

Please find the Treasurer Report and Annual Report and Statement of Accounts 1st Jan 2021- 31st Dec 2021, as attached as **Appendix A**.

The Chairman asked if everyone was satisfied with the Statement of Accounts, if so he would put it to the membership at this meeting for acceptance.

The motion was proposed by Wendy Makepeace Browne and seconded by and seconded by TCn. The vote was taken and accepted. There were no objections.

6. Election of Officers:

The Chairman asked if all officers were happy to stand again for re-election at this meeting. Gill Butler offered to take over as Secretary and Tina Collins offered to share the role of Election Agent alongside Julia Ambler. When the Chairman asked for any other nominations, no one else made any suggestions or put themselves forward for election to these posts.

Chairman:	James Radley proposed by AD and seconded by WMB
Vice Chairman:	Simon Ambler proposed by JR and seconded by AO
Treasurer:	Chris Axaam proposed by JR and seconded by AO
Secretary:	Gill Butler proposed by WMB and seconded by TCn
Membership Secretary:	Gill Butler proposed by JR and seconded by AD
Election Agent:	Julia Ambler and Tina Collins proposed by AD and seconded by AO

All Officers were elected by unanimous vote, as proposed.

7. Open Floor session:

The Chairman asked for any comments or questions from the members at the meeting.

Question 1. Alan Jones asked what stance did the CCH have on brownfield development.

Answer 1: JR responded to explain that Hart District Council carefully maintains the Brownfield Land Register for the district. Each planning authority is obliged to provide an up to date list of available Brownfield sites within their boundary, so this is not something councillors have any choice about. They have to follow the rules, which are quite clear. Every planning authority has to put a call out each year to local landowners, asking for sites they would be able to provide for residential development. It is not a matter of simply looking about and spotting land that might be available. **The Brownfield Land Register has to show available and deliverable land.** The fact is that most landowners are ahead of the situation. If and when they have land they are prepared to put forward for development they often make contact with the planning authority and/or a developer. No doubt the cost of land has a great deal to do with their decision to put their land forward.

The CCH do take this matter very seriously. Our councillors regularly go through the latest Brownfield Land Register to understand where available land is coming forward. GB and AD have looked at this recently and there are only sites available for about 77 properties at the moment. Clearly there is not an unlimited supply of land in this district. Once sites are known about they tend to be taken up by developers quite quickly. For instance there were 2 planning applications in Hartley Wintney that came up at Planning Committee in recent weeks. One was the former Grey House School site that now has permission for a care home. It is interesting to see that many rural parishes are keen to know about the Brownfield Land Register, and sometimes it seems when one comes up for planning permission in their own parish area they are prepared and often strongly opposed.

N.B. Sometimes land owners decide to take their sites off the register, so this list is quite fluid.

GB added that when they checked the list recently, they had noticed that every site that is on the list has been built or is already in the process of an application for planning permission. Certainly the available yield on the Land Register at present is for less than 100 houses.

With regard to possible brownfield sites in Fleet, there is a possibility for the district council to put forward the Church Road car park, but first they would need to make sure there was other suitable

parking. Some people seemed to be suggesting that underground car parks could be built instead, but that is not sensible. Ambitious speculation about brownfield sites in Fleet is often not helpful, but might help people in other parts of the district assume that development could be focussed there. There was some talk about the possibility of using the Travis Perkins site, but the fact is that they want to stay in Fleet, the site is simply not available.

There was general agreement that some of the local political opposition were very keen to see future development centred on Fleet and Church Crookham, rather than near more rural parishes.

There was some discussion about the former Pyestock site, now called Hartland Village, which was clearly a brownfield site but had serious limitations. Initially it was given permission for development as a massive warehouse and distribution facility, but the developer came back with a plan for houses instead. However, as a brownfield site there were serious issues with regard to the need for very costly de-contamination of the land, in order to bring it up to the standards required for housing. The developer was able to plead for financial consideration to be taken into account, so they got away with providing a much lower percentage of affordable houses on the site and a relatively small contribution for some affordable houses to be built elsewhere... Brownfield sites are not always an easy and cheap option. There was discussion about how important it was for infrastructure to be provided to support new development. A crucial need is for local school capacity and there seems to be a delay in providing the primary school on the Hartland Village site. Apparently that is now the responsibility of HCC, who do not seem to think this is required just yet, but raises the question about where any new children moving to this site will be allocated for schooling.

AO added that in fact it is generally much cheaper for developers to use greenfield land to develop housing, rather than brownfield sites.

Q 2. A lady asked for an update on local development and what proportion of houses will be affordable.

A 2: The Chairman replied that the Hart District Local Plan was working. Sites were coming forward that were included in the Local Plan and it was protecting us from inappropriate development elsewhere. At the moment sites were being built on Watery Lane in Church Crookham and Hareshill on Hitches Lane. Those applications had been allowed on appeal because it was before the Local Plan had been adopted. HDC's policy is for all major development sites to provide 40% affordable housing.

There is still some talk about the possibility about development on Shapley Heath, but that is not part of the current Local Plan. If the government change the planning regulations and increase housing numbers again then Hart District Council will have to look at where those extra houses would have to go and revise their Local Plan. The council would need to have a plan with available and deliverable sites.

Q 3. A lady asked if Naishes Lane is now adopted by HCC now that Crookham Park is completed.

A 3. The Chairman answered yes, he believed that most of it was. Naishes Lane was associated with the development on Crookham Park, because this was the main access route for much of the development period. Changes were made to the road by the developer. In fact the main problem was that the roads within the Crookham Park site took time to be adopted by HCC. The developer has to bring the roads up to standard before HCC can take them over and they took a long time to bring the spine road up to standard.

There was discussion about whether the developer, Taylor Wimpey, was planning to develop further. The Chairman replied that the developer had tried to extend that development to use Stillers Farm, but that site was not included in the Local Plan and planning permission had been rightly rejected.

Members were also quick to point out that Hart's Local Plan had also worked well to reject the planning application for a major development at Pale Lane. That case went to appeal but was not allowed because Hart was able to prove they were meeting their housing need and this site was not required.

There was further discussion, because many developers often try to expand their large sites. It is much easier for them to expand rather than set up new sites, but it is good to know that our Local Plan is helping to control local development.

The Chairman was keen to point out that the Hart Local Plan is only effective until Government changes their housing policies again, and there is already talk about that probability. Planning authorities are expecting that government will decide to increase their housing numbers and are therefore having to think carefully about what they would need to do in that situation. It is highly unlikely that housing numbers will be decreased.

HDC have been talking about what options there are, such as increasing housing density in urban areas. When we think about Fleet they could look at the Blue Triangle area where housing density is lower than most parts of the town. This area could be considered to be brownfield, and be open for more development. There are also some people who seem to like what we call the ‘Woking version of development’ where the centre of Fleet could be intensified and built upwards. These are very difficult choices and we have to remember that it is very hard to retrofit infrastructure into the town. Expansion of Fleet and Church Crookham would have serious consequences. Fleet is the largest town in England without a trunk road, most traffic goes through the centre of the town. So there are big issues for the local council.

If the Government decide to increase housing numbers the Local Plan will no longer be valid, so we do need to plan ahead.

There are 3 main choices to develop more houses in the district:

- Intensification in urban areas
- Bolt on development onto large developments
- Construction of a new town, such as Winchfield, which would have to be an option because there is suitable available land and they already have transport infrastructure, including a railway station and links to main roads

There is a lot of work to be done to identify suitable development sites. It is important to investigate the evidence to support any options. As we know there is a strong lobby from some parts of the district to deny the need for a new town in Winchfield, but a district wide consultation previously showed majority support in this district for this option, so it cannot be ruled out.

Work is already being carried out to gather evidence to show whether a new town option is valid and more work also needs to be done on the intensification and bolt on options.

Q 4. Mr Rutherford asked how long the current Hart Local Plan will last.

A 4: The Chairman replied to say that the current Local Plan will last until 2032. However, we also need to revise the Plan every 5 years to ensure that any government policy updates are covered by our housing numbers. The Local Plan needs to be ready for any changes. Part of the Plan requires the need to show a 5 year land supply plan, which is where Hart have to show that they have deliverable sites to provide for the allocated housing numbers for the next 5 years. The fact is that Hart currently have a supply for the next 10 years, unless the number of houses is increased by the Government. But we know there is no guarantee that the current Local Plan will last until 2032, because Government have changed policy several times in the past. We simply have to be ready to make changes as required. We recognise the need to have a properly adopted Local Plan in order to control inappropriate development.

Q 5. Mr Rutherford followed up asking what plans there are to provide secondary school capacity. How big is Calthorpe Park School and can it be expanded further?

A 5: The Chairman pointed out that Calthorpe Park has expanded significantly in recent years, in order to accommodate new development around the town. This is one of the main responsibilities for HCC. If there is an increase in housing for the district the new settlement option would provide a new secondary school in the right location, and that should help to avoid further expansion of the current local schools. We know that Court Moor School is constrained and is at full capacity. It is not able to expand further, so Calthorpe Park is the only secondary school that could take any more children in this area. In fact it is already one of the largest secondary schools in the county. The problem is that the site is already well developed, any extra classrooms will have to be built on green areas.

TC pointed out that increasing capacity in schools has become a problem, especially with airborne pandemics. It is simply not possible to expand corridors and classrooms to allow pupils more space, in order to be safely distanced. They should not be expected to fit more children into the schools than they are already.

Q 6. A lady asked how the brownfield site on Beacon Hill Road was developed for Aldi.

A 6. The Chairman explained that the Aldi site could not be considered for housing because it is within 400m of the Special Protection Area (SPA). Research that has been accepted by Natural England shows that domestic cats owned by householders can wander up to 400 m. Any residential sites within this distance of the SPA will normally be rejected because cats can predate the endangered species of birds,

reptiles and mammals that live within SPAs. Tony Clarke also added that some developers have been able to build on sites within this distance, but they have to prove that they are able to prevent any cats from reaching the SPA. He knows of one site that installed a water filled trench on their boundary, to prevent cats getting across onto the SPA.

There was further discussion about the new Aldi retail building on Beacon Hill Road, which is due to open on Friday 11th March. Many people were deeply concerned that the road would become much busier. There were no formal pedestrian crossings and they wanted to know why the entrance was not put in at the roundabout to make it safer? The Chairman explained that Hampshire County Council Highways team were satisfied that the application was suitable but time will tell. JRR added that it was not just this site but the one next to it that will also add to the traffic and road problems. We do not know what is going in there yet but for some reason HCC do not seem to think there will be a traffic problem. But if there are any problems it will be important to report them to HCC.

Q 7. Josie Dickenson asked whether Bourley Road had finally been adopted by HCC.

A 7. The Chairman and a few other councillors seemed to think that Bourley Road had been adopted by HCC, but this is a matter that has been going on for many years. Most of the road was owned by Defence Estates, because it crosses the Army Training Area of Bourley and Long Valley.

We know that HCC have paid for significant road drainage and camber improvements in recent years, at considerable cost, in order to bring the condition of the road up to HCC standards, in preparation for adoption. The speed signs have been agreed and set up and once the road is adopted the speed limit rules will apply. The advice is that these signs are no longer advisory, they are already enforceable by the Police.

JRR said she would check the situation with HCC.

Please find the comments below:

The former county councillor said:

Well the quick answer I think is yes, it is now adopted.

Back in May last year the last I heard was that all the legal niceties had been done between the HCC and defence estates and it was just dotting the eyes and crossing the tees this had been going on for well over a year! I was led to believe that when the speed limit changed at the Rushmoor end from 60mph down to 40 that would've meant the traffic order came into effect and it was adopted by HCC, this I believed happened in about June or July last year 2021.

Meanwhile JRR has also had a reply from the local Highways Officer at HCC, in June 2022, who said that the adoption has not yet happened, they still expect it to go ahead in the near future...

Q 8. GB asked if the landowner will be replanting the trees lost in recent storms on Beacon Hill Road

A 8. The Chairman answered that one side of the road is owned by Defence Estates and the other side by a private landowner. They have cleared a great many trees from their side of the road, this woodland area was not protected so there is no obligation for them to replant. However, this action seems to have exposed the trees on the other side, which have suffered badly in the recent storms. Thankfully the big trees that have fallen away from the road, but it could so easily have been the other way. This may have created a tunnel effect in the recent high winds, so there will be an ongoing risk to any trees in this area. We believe that Hampshire Highways owns land on either side of the road to a depth of 1 metre. The chances are that these trees will not be replaced because of the risk to road users. If you have serious concerns they should be raised with HCC.

He added that on the positive side we now have a magnificent view as we drive down the road.

There were no further questions.

8. Close:

The Chairman thanked everyone once again for attending and engaging in the discussions this evening. The group really appreciated this valuable support from members. If anyone has any questions feel free to contact their local councillor who will be happy to respond. Meanwhile we will keep people updated with important information in the future newsletters and on the web-site.

There being no further business, the Chairman was happy to draw the meeting to a close.

We hope to see everyone again next year.

The meeting was closed at 8.30 pm.