

DRAFT

MARTIN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Parish of Martin held on Monday 17th April 2023 at 7pm
Martin Club

Present: Cllr J Richards (Chairman, Martin Parish Council), Cllr S Greenwood (Vice Chair), Cllrs M King, B Batten, B Hapke and S Hooper
Melissa Hildreth(Parish Clerk) and 42 members of the public.

The meeting started promptly at 7.00 pm with a welcome from Cllr J Richards. A brief presentation was given about the purpose of the Annual Assembly. It was noted that some typographical errors occurred in the draft minutes from the Assembly of 2022. The clerk hand-corrected the errors and a vote was taken. The corrected minutes were approved.

The following groups were asked to make a presentation about themselves, their accomplishments in the past year and what plans they have for the future.

PCC- The church is open daily from dawn to dusk. Please come enjoy the church. There are toys for the children to play with whenever. News about events happening in the church are printed in "The Courier". This is available by post and digitally. Copies are hand delivered throughout Martin. Each year two charities are sponsored by the church. Anyone can nominate a charity. Services are still live-streamed. Easter Sunday was well attended and lovely. We are grateful for our army of volunteers who help to keep the church and grounds beautiful and tidy. There will be a Flower Festival in May and there is now a little library of books available in the church. We wish to remember Rob and Fran Eardley who moved from the area last year. Sadly Rob passed away not long after. Their presence is greatly missed.

Martin Community Association- Set up in 2010 and includes Martin, Tidpit and East Martin. There is a Committee of 8 members. It is a lovely way for people to get together and interact in Martin. We are seeking new members to the Committee. Events are offered to the community such as Pop Up Pub, Skittle, Carols on the Green and window decorating. Always accepting new ideas from people for events. Some events are held on behalf of charities from in the village and sometimes for those outside. Please let us know if you have any ideas. Thank you to all our wonderful committee members.

Martin Club –We have finished the new roof and are placing solar panels. £83,000 was raised from grants, the church and crowdfunding to cover the costs. The garden has been improved with a play area for children and trees taken down so that the Downs can be viewed. We are looking forward to welcoming you to enjoy these during the summer. Next, we would like to improve the insides of the building with a new heating system and renewed decoration. We are looking for a new name. All members of the Club can vote on the name. Membership is £12 and allows you to be on the committee and vote on matters. The club is a community benefit society. Tuesday craft day is carrying on after the finish of Warm Spaces. Many people use the club from surrounding areas such as Woodyates, Damerham, and Sixpenny Handley. The club is open to everyone no just members.

Blandford Hall – Newsletter has recently been given out in Martin about all that is happening at the Hall. Our goals are to have a clean, safe, well-maintained space. It is a community treasure. We have a great committee who have been working hard. They will be meeting to agree to a 3-year plan. Planning permission has recently been applied for to make changes internally and externally. We are seeking four quotes from builders so that we may seek grants to help with costs. We are working on improving disabled access. It is difficult but we are confident we will find a solution. Blandford Hall was in 1869 built as a Baptist Union chapel. In 1928 it was sold to Blanch Hibbard who was a part of the Blandford family, hence the name Blandford Hall. Blanch gifted the Hall in 1939 to Martin and the committee was created. We would like a modern facility that acknowledges its past history.

Future Farms – Have been looking at our medium to long-term business plans. The farm needs to adapt to change. Currently, could use more help with fruit and veg gardening. Future Farms is breaking even. We have been looking at other farms for ideas. We need more people for our Committee. We currently have four vacancies. There will be a committee meeting at 7 pm on April 18th.

Natural England – Last year we had some problems with hare coursing and a burned-out car. We have done some prevention in regard to those incidences. The land has been bought for a new work base. There is now a new manager of the site. The hot summer last year dried the grass so fewer sheep are out on the Downs. The cattle on the glades in St. Kitts are improving the grasses. Chalk and Chase have been out helping on the Downs and will be helping with the Roman road. Scrapes are being done to help the beetle population. Kew Gardens will be coming out to introduce plants. There will be a large biodiversity survey. If you see a cane up it is for that survey. The turtle dove population is down to 4 from 18 and the butterfly count last year was low due to dried grasses. A member of the public queried if the ruts created by trucks used in wet weather will be smoothed out as it makes it difficult to walk. There are plans to repair ruts.

Dark Skies - Jeff Bailey is the Martin Dark Skies Custodian. He also offers guided star gazing. There are only 21 Dark Skies areas in the world. We are lucky to live by one. Martin Parish Council has asked Jeff to be the Custodian to promote the benefit to the community of the Dark Skies program. He is not here to police anything. He is available for any questions about lighting and how it can be Dark Skies friendly. LED lights have caused an increase in visible light as it is so strong. Jeff can offer an information sheet on the best way to position lights to stop lights leaking into the sky. Tip lights down and use warm lighting. He will be completing light measurements 4 times a year and promoting star gazing so that Martin can become a Dark Sky friendly village.

Parish Council report – Cllr Richards reported that there will be a new table tennis table put on the Recreation Grounds when the ground is harder. The bike path for small bikes will also be improved.

- The Speed Indicator Device had been repaired and another battery was obtained. Since it has been moved to the A354 side of the village it has not worked and the company who provided the SID will come out to look at it.
- There is a new speed watch group and training has just been completed. We should see volunteers out on the road soon. Members of the public ask if this leads to a ticket. No, it doesn't but if you will get a warning letter. If you get 3 warning letters the police will come out to visit you. If there are many offenders the police may come out and conduct a speed watch themselves, which would be ticketed. The speed watch equipment is shared with 3 other Parish Councils in the area, Damerham, Rockbourne and Sandleheath.
- Introduced more cutting of footpaths last year. A total of 2km was done in one day. Many paths had grasses that were waist high so this cutting was welcome.
- 30 trees have been received for the Queen's Green Canopy.
- This year there have been 7 tree work applications and 9 planning applications. The Council gives an opinion on these applications but NFDC has the final say on the decision.
- A chart was shown on how the budget is distributed. 46% is to staff and 25% to grass cutting, 12% to administration costs.
- It is an election year and the Martin Parish had 6 councillors re-elected uncontested. We are seeking a 7 councillor who will be co-opted. Thank you to Michael King for 7 years of service on the Martin Parish Council.
- Members of the public asked if the verges on the A354 could be cut more often. This is done by Hampshire County and it can be reported when it is too high to see to drive. They are responsive and come cut when it has been reported. Another member of the public wondered if the Council would pursue complaints about lights. The Council can ask people to be more aware of the Dark Skies and improve their lighting. They have no way to force people to do so.
- Martin Parish Council is also working on the issue of flooding of roads. Would like to see the clearing of gullies, underground pipes and grates. The Council will be speaking to landowners to help stop grit from clogging water flow. A member of the public made Cllr Richards aware that not all grates are on the highways map and therefore they do not clean them. They are fully blocked.
- Meeting finished at 8.20pm