

# GREAT WITCHINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Annual Parish Council meeting of Great Witchingham Parish Council held on Thursday 28 May 2015 at 7:30pm.

### 1) **Chairman's Welcome**

The chairman welcomed attendees to the meeting.

### 2) **To confirm the APM minutes of 2014.**

The minutes were not available.

### 3) **Chairman's Annual Report**

The Chairman read the annual report to parishioners – attached as appendix A.

### 4) **Great Witchingham Fuel Allotment Charity - Trustees Report**

The annual reports were read aloud (attached as appendix B and C).

A conversation was held around the £10 fee that the trustees now charged to walk around the lake. Parishioners were advised to write to the Trustees to state their personal circumstance to be considered for an exemption. The PC would also write to the Trustees to ask them to revisit the fee for parishioners as the walk improved the health and wellbeing of the community.

Thanks were passed to the charity for their hard work.

### 5) **Great Witchingham Village Hall: Report of Trustees**

The annual report was read out – attached as appendix D.

Councilors passed thanks to the Trust for their hard work in obtaining a new village hall for the community.

### 6) **To Hear and Discuss Matters Raised by Members of the Public**

No additional matters raised.

Meeting finished at 19.55

Signed: .....

Chairman

## Appendix A

## Appendix B

### **Trustees' Report to the Annual Parish meeting May 2015**

As we look forward to another season we are able to reflect on what another exciting year 2014 has been for the fishery with an unprecedented number of thirty pound Carp caught especially from the Main Lake with up to 36.8lb topping the big fish 'list', but what is especially pleasing is how these fish and others are still developing and growing on, showing 3-4lbs growth rates per annum. The quality of the fishing is improving year on year with large Carp as mentioned, superb Bream reported to 16lb, and several huge Tench over double figures, and careful future stocking and fishery improvements will undoubtedly provide with an outstanding mixed species fishery second to none in the region.

As Charity Lakes has grown in stature and prominence as a top class fishery over the last few years, with huge growth in demand for our permits and a requirement from our members to develop a fishery that meets their needs and provides an excellent fishing experience. Our Fishery Manager has introduced a management plan to provide a fishery that can deliver these needs where practicably possible for all of our members to enjoy. You will have seen some changes over the last couple of years and this year will be no different as we continue to develop a fishery that provides for our members and importantly meets the aims and needs of GWFAC in supporting the many local families who benefit from the fuel allowance charity payments generated by the fishery income.

Our short term aims are to improve the remaining section of predator fencing to ensure our substantial investment in fish is fully protected. We aim to stock with different strains of Carp over the next few years including fish this spring to double figures to ensure our future stock levels are maintained and to add diversity to our Carp population. This will also add to the bio-diversity of the Tench Lake and is intended to address habitat issues in the lake itself. We intend to add additional parking where possible, and our longer term plan is to substantially improve our toilet facilities. These measures will require a considerable investment in the fishery and meet the necessary requirements for its future growth and development.

It is a sad fact of life that locking the gates to our land in 2008 was an unwanted yet necessary step which was not taken lightly and born out the ever increasing amounts of petty crime and vandalism which frequently took place and culminated in several serious crimes being committed. The locked gates have put a stop to all of these and patrons unanimously agree that the environment on our land is now one of safety and security. However, with the increased popularity of the fishery, key management has become an onerous and expensive practice which requires far more administration than is practical to continue. Despite the £10 deposit levied, on average only 60% of keys are ever returned each year and have to be replaced. Hitherto, the cost of provision of returnable keys has always been borne by the Charity. However, the Trustees have resolved that the annual cost of replacing keys must be passed on to patrons of the site and it has been factored into the cost of angling permits which remain the main source of income to the charity.

You will be aware that ancillary to angling, the Trustees also permit associate membership upon application by way of Public Access Permits which allow anyone to enjoy the site. Hitherto, Parishioners have received a free annual permit for which anyone outside the parish paid £5 per annum. To help offset some of the costs of providing public access to the fishery, the Trustees resolved that from April this year all public access members would pay the same annual fee. The sum of £10 per annum was agreed upon as sufficient to meet some of the costs involved and implemented. It appears that the Trustees action was not universally approved. This seems to stem from a misconception that the Fuel Allotment land is 'common land' and therefore should be open to all without charge. It is this misconception that the Trustees wish to lay to rest. It is true that all the land which surrounds Common Lane was once common land. It has

not been so for over 200 years when by Act of Parliament in 1811, common rights were removed and the land enclosed.

The Trustees have considered the opinion of the parishioners and have resolved that the annual Public Access Permit fee of £10 will not be levied upon residents of Great Withingham this year.

The Trustees do recognise that there is a need maintain a balance of public goodwill against income bearing patronage and have no wish or intent to restrict public access at this time, but in order to preserve the income derived from fishing, the Trustees must give precedence for the use of the site to the anglers who are the Charity's main source of income.

It is worth noting that during the last twenty years, the Charity has put back over £175,000 of benefit into the Parish. If the Charity continues on its present course, the annual benefits will undoubtedly be even greater in the years to come.

I regret to bring to our patrons' attention, one unpleasant matter; dog faeces have recently been found on the paths on two occasions. This is unacceptable and against the site rules. If the person or persons responsible continue to defy the rules, the Trustees will have no option other than to completely withdraw the privilege of dog walking on Charity land. I therefore urge all patrons to be vigilant and report any infringement.

## Appendix C

### **Treasurer's Report – May 2015**

With the change in income pattern over the last few years resulting in most fishing income being received during February and March each year, the Trustees resolved to change the Charity's financial year from April-March to January-December. This allows almost all receipts and payments to appear in the same year's accounts and thus simplifying accounting practice. This being the first year to reflect the change, the accounts submitted are for a short year running from April-December 2014 only and therefore reflects little fishing income. Season ticket sales continue to average £30K per annum.

In view of the continued effects of the economic situation the Trustees made another annual payment of £250 each to 60 eligible recipients totalling £15,000.

The sum of £1000 was donated to Great Withingham Village Hall.

Our charity passes 20% of the net income from fishing to the Trustees of St. Mary's Church Lands Charity each year; this financial year amounted to nearly £2800

The appointment of a Fishery Manager has proved invaluable to the Trustees by bringing an angling orientated skillset which has significantly increased income over the last three years.

A public access permit continues to be available, at no cost to residents of Great Withingham and at a cost of £10 per annum to all others to cover the costs of providing access.

The value of our COIF investment shares has been maintained over the last twelve months but dividend yield remains very much at a premium compared to ordinary investments.

The Trustees would like to thank all the people who give their time freely, particularly those who act as volunteer Bailiffs, without whose contributions the benefits that our charity is able to offer would be greatly reduced.

The Charity accounts as required by The Charity Commissioners are given overleaf.

Peter Dilloway  
Hon. Treasurer & Trustee

## Appendix D

### **Great Witchingham Village Hall**

#### Annual Parish Report

It's been a year to remember for everyone involved in the Great Witchingham Village Hall project culminating in the opening of the hall on 31st January 2015. Firstly I would like to place on record an appreciation to all those involved in this substantial project over the years, ranging from individuals in the Community who have supported our efforts in both practical and emotional terms, to those of our past and current Trustees, to enable the fantastic new hall to come to fruition.

Since the hall opened the community hub team has gone from strength to strength. Being able to rely on a group of volunteers has really helped to lighten the load for the Trustees. Our first two community 'Just for the Fun of it Friday' events were very successful with 20 tables taking part in the quiz night and 40 people attending our first Bingo Night, most of whom were residents of Great Witchingham. It is particularly encouraging to see people take on the challenge of organising events for the first time.

Our first 4 months of operation has seen many new user groups using the hall both on a regular basis and for one off meetings, events and parties. Feedback has been extremely positive suggesting that the design layout and facilities meet the needs of our users. Whilst some activities, such as Legs, Bums and Tums have been very well attended, other groups have been less so. We must therefore continue to gauge the needs of the community to assess what groups are likely to be successful.

Heidi continues to monitor potential funding streams. She has managed to secure funding from a number of bodies, which have been used to purchase equipment for the kitchen, bar, meeting room and other essential items for the hall. We are currently working towards raising enough funds to complete the stage area.

A more detailed review of the year, including the annual accounts, will be presented at our AGM on 16th June.

My thanks to everyone that has contributed to the success of the Village Hall through these first months of operation, especially my fellow Trustees.

Chris Cate  
Chair, Great Witchingham Village Hall