

GROOMSPORT VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 20th October 2016 at Groomsport School

PRESENT: List attached

1 Welcome

The Chairman welcomed the villagers and invited guests, MP, MLAs, Councillors, Council staff, representatives of North Down Community Network and the Housing Executive to the AGM and thanked Bronagh Wright for letting us use the school buildings. She asked Lesley the Centre Co-ordinator to outline the work being done at the school.

Lesley welcomed everyone to the school and explained that they had around 30 teenage students who were being helped to develop skills which would assist them when they went to look for work. The school has already had some success with one student a finalist in a UK poetry competition, students assisting with the building of a bug hotel for the village and others going on to courses at FE colleges.

2 Apologies: Eric and Mildred McAuley, Mandy Ritchie, Gordon Dunne MLA, Louise Little.

3 Minutes of Last AGM (Thursday 15th October 2015)

Agreed and adopted. - Proposed by Pearl Brown and seconded by Heather Forrest

4 Chairman's Report

The Committee of Groomsport Village Association has been busy since the AGM in October 2015 and we hope that we have continued to reflect the wishes of the majority of members, namely the residents of the village, in what we have been trying to do. We are a Committee of ten people who give freely of our time in an effort to seek to retain and enhance the general character of the village. Our efforts have seen some notable successful outcomes while other issues that we are addressing have not yet been fully resolved and continue as work in progress.

Funding for GVA activities comes mainly from Ards and North Down Borough Council in the form of grants for which we make application. While these monies are to be welcomed, there continue to be issues surrounding lines of communication and the

procedures and processes being applied by the Council. These have made for difficulties in planning for events and in making payments. These difficulties were discussed at a meeting with the Council's Chief Executive on 28th July. A letter received from him over two months later has attempted to address some, but not all, of the matters that were raised.

Members will be aware of the Groomsport Integrated Village Plan of 2013. It continues to form the basis for most of our work. One particular area of focus, and of concern, continues to be the level of accessibility and condition of the Coastal Path between the village and Portavo. Numerous public representatives and Council Officers have been contacted with a view to making sure that the Path is retained as a right of way and that it is maintained to a standard where all should be able to use and enjoy it. While some work has been done by those who have responsibility for it, there appears to be a lack of real determination to address outstanding problems. We would urge the Council not to let this very important asset be lost by default.

Communication, including letters and meetings, was on-going throughout the year with Transport NI (Roads Service) over residents' concerns about a number of issues, among them the speed of vehicles traveling along the by-pass. We were delighted when, after bowing to pressure from a number of sources, the new 50 mph signs were recently put in place.

There remains, however, concern not only about the increasing size of vehicles but also about the speed generally of traffic through the village along Main Street. While the limit is 30mph, there may need to be more signage to that effect but there also needs to be stricter enforcement of the regulation. The same applies with regard to those motorists who park without showing due consideration for others and for local residents.

At the last AGM, I drew attention to the fact that the Playground at Springwell Crescent, though maintained by the Council, was not fenced and so the safety of children was at risk, especially from vehicles using the adjacent car park. While the issue had been raised by other public representatives over time, it was down to Alderman Bill Keery (who was at the meeting) to arrange for the Housing Executive, who own the ground, to have the playground fenced. The playground is now a safe, pleasant place for children to enjoy.

We have continued to monitor planning applications and, as many of you will already be aware, there has been considerable concern about a particular application. This is in

relation to a proposal for an outdoor target rifle shooting range at Ballymacormick Road, close to the village. Along with many others, the Committee of the GVA is unanimous in its objection and we have encouraged residents to make their views known through the appropriate channels to the Ards and North Down Council Planning Officer.

We have also monitored the quality of beach cleaning and the seemingly unending problem of dog fouling. We would again urge the Council to ensure that the regulations regarding dog fouling are more strictly enforced.

On a more positive note, I am delighted to report that the GVA has organised a number of successful events throughout the year. The first was on 27th November when, after a short service in the Presbyterian Church, the Christmas tree lights were switched on by Lady Hermon and some young helpers. This was followed by a visit to Santa, some entertaining activities and refreshments in the Walter Nelson Hall.

Health and Wellbeing featured strongly in the early part of 2016. In January, fifteen local volunteers gathered at the Parish Hall for an intensive one day course on First Response medical aid, together with the correct use of a heart defibrillator.

During February and March local residents enjoyed tai chi classes, reflexology and massage sessions, an historical walking tour of Groomsport, a golf morning and also the opportunity to avail of the services of Action Cancer's Big Bus.

On 12th March the Walter Nelson Hall was the venue for something entirely different, a 'Groomsport's Got Talent' show. This was an amazing afternoon showcasing a group of very talented local people.

A Wine Tasting event on 1st April raised £480 for an automated external defibrillator. This was the GVA's contribution to the £1500 required by Henderson Spar to install this very valuable piece of equipment.

On the evening of 29th April a 'Linking Generations' event was held in conjunction with Groomsport Evangelical Church Youth Club when Club members along with some senior residents of the village helped to plant out some flower planters. On the following day, a second activity, again designed to engage the youth of our community with our senior members, was undertaken at the rocky outcrop behind Cackle Row Cottages where the

area was prepared and some alpines were planted.

The GVA hosted the annual Big Lunch event in the Boathouse on Sunday 12th June. The idea came from the Eden Project in Cornwall back in 2009 with a simple notion of people who live near each other in the same community sitting down together and getting to know one another while enjoying their picnic lunch. We were delighted to combine our festivities with Her Majesty the Queen's 90th birthday celebrations – a great excuse for a tasty cupcake. During the afternoon there was live local music and a visit from the RNLI lifeboat as well as a varied programme of activities: a herb skills workshop, arts and crafts, including making a poppy for the Council's Somme event, hook a duck fun, and a crab fishing competition.

14th September was an important day in our calendar as, for the second year running, the announcement was made that Groomsport had been awarded second place in the Large Village category of the Translink 'Ulster in Bloom' 2016 competition. The Large Village category was the largest with 23 villages entering. Hillsborough and Saintfield were joint third with Cullybackey taking first place.

From early Spring, Roy McWhinney and the volunteers in the GVA's 'In Bloom' committee, together with support from the Gardening Club and its Chairman, Peter Gibson, will have been seen out and about around the village weeding, hoeing, planting and tidying in a practical effort to help maintain and improve our surroundings and also to help heighten awareness that each and every one of us who lives here has a role to play by doing our bit to keep our village clean and tidy.

The GVA has published 3 Newsletters this year and copies of these have been delivered to each household. The Newsletters, together with our website, contain more details of the work and activities that have been undertaken.

At this point, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed: the local businesses; the various elected representatives; Ards and North Down Council and the Council Officers; the Community Network; voluntary organisations and numerous individuals. It is not possible for me to thank everyone individually for their contribution but we do want you to know how much it has been appreciated.

Finally, I would like to say a very big 'thank you' to the members of Committee each of

whom has made such a valuable contribution..... our Vice Chairman, John Crockard, in particular, for maintaining our website; our Treasurer, Brian McBride, for dealing with the finances and for acting as Editor of the Newsletter; Sharon Cummings for her initiative and drive on organising various events; Roy McWhinney for getting people out and about to keep our village looking good; Mandy Ritchie for helping with the Newsletter; Eric Brown who, among his other talents, knows how to organise a crab fishing event; David Martin and Mike Smith for their good sense. I would like to make special mention of our Secretary, Miriam Gibson. Miriam has given generously of her time and skills over a number of years. Not only has she provided guidance and wisdom on numerous occasions but she has fulfilled the role of Secretary with great efficiency and effectiveness.

Thank you to each and every one of you whether Committee or volunteer or in whatever role you have played. Thank you for trying to make a difference in a positive way to life in our village.

5 Treasurer's Report

Brian McBride explained that the Committee had been fortunate to have around £2000 from the time of the Eagle Wing events several years ago. In the past year the Association had received grants from Ards and North Down Council for Running costs, 2 festivals, a project and for Ulster in Bloom. Additional grants had also been received from Linking Generations and a volunteering grant. The accounts had been drawn up and audited by North Down Community Network for the period from April 2015 to March 2016. Income since then had been mainly in the form of Council grants for specific projects.

Pearl Brown proposed the adoption of the Treasurer's report.

This was seconded by Peter Gibson and agreed by those present.

6 Appointment of Auditors

Pearl Brown proposed that NDCN continue as Auditors.

The proposal was seconded by Brian McBride.

7 New Matters notified to the Secretary

Miriam Gibson stated that none had been received.

8 Election of Committee Members

Alan Chambers MLA took the chair for this part of the meeting. He congratulated the Committee on their work and proactive approach.

5 places on the Committee were to be filled as 5 members were elected last year for a 2 year period.

3 Nominations had been received:

Mandy Ritchie Nominated by Roy Mawhinney Seconded by Mike Smith

Eric Brown Nominated by Pearl Brown Seconded by Anita Brown

Brian McBride Nominated by Sharon Cummings Seconded by Roy Mawhinney

They were declared to be elected

Nominations were invited from those present

2 nominations were:

Nicola Patton Nominated by Brian McBride Seconded by Doris Hutchieson

Eileen Thomson Nominated by Doris Hutchieson Seconded by Peter Gibson

They were also declared to be elected.

Any Other Business

9 The following issues were raised for:

Provision of invitations for Rev Pollock to the church service prior to the switching on of the Christmas lights. It would appear that this needs to come from the Minister of the Presbyterian church. The Chairman did point out that this is a community event and is open to all those who wish to attend. In the past both church halls were used but it was felt that since the renovations to the Maxwell Halls it was more difficult to organise the flow of children waiting to see Santa and it was also easier to ensure safe crossing of the road from the church to the Walter Nelson Hall.

Problems with litter bins overflowing especially at weekends. Often dog bags are dropped in the street or the road if the bin is full. Gavin Walker stated that more dog wardens would be employed next spring to help alleviate the dog fouling problems. Alan Chambers pointed out that there is no longer a second lift of litter bins in the summer.

Concern about the volume and speed of traffic on the Springwell road and through the village. It was felt that a greater police presence was needed as speed limits are not being

adhered to.

Cars for sale being placed on the grass verge. Whether this is legal would depend on who owned the land and whether sight lines were being obstructed.

Ulster in Bloom

Roy Mawhinney informed the meeting that Groomsport had been awarded second place in the large village category of Ulster in Bloom. He thanked all those who had taken part in the clean-ups and other activities and listed the things that had been done. These included, new signage at the entrances to the village, planting at Islet Hill, provision of a community herb garden, erection of a bug hotel, planting a rockery behind the Walter Nelson Hall, provision of planters along Main Street. Special thanks went to the In Bloom sub committee, Peter Gibson, Robert Cummings and Merab Opie, Groomsport Intensive Support Learning Unit who provided the Bug Hotel, Alan Crawford from Groomsport Nurseries and Creative Gardens Donaghadee

.The Chairman thanked all those who had attended