

LURGASHALL RECREATION ASSOCIATION

MINUTES of ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING on TUESDAY 26TH JUNE 2018 AT 7.30PM at LURGASHALL VILLAGE HALL

1. Apologies :
 - 1.1. Apologies were received from Gina and Laurence Reed, Erica Meyer and Roland Shepherd.

2. Introduction :
 - 2.1 Chairman Malcolm Caird introduced the purpose of the meeting, which was to conduct the formal proceedings of the AGM, approve accounts, report on LRA activities in 2017 and discuss current plans.
 - 2.2 There was a reminder that LRA formed and became a charity in 2012, with the field being purchased in 2013, and a reminder of LRA objectives.
 - 2.3 Minutes were to be taken by Miles Fairston.

3. Accounts :
 - 2.1 Copies of accounts were handed around to all attendees, who wished to receive a copy.
 - 2.2 Attention was focused on LRA Activity in 2017. Work had continued since 2013 on improving the maintenance and appearance of the field. In March 2017 a successful Quiz Night was held, raising £918. Later in September a fun dog show “Canine Capers” raised £387, and the profit would have been higher but for inclement weather. Following views expressed at the 2017 AGM the directors retained the services of Trevor May Associates, who was to prepare a detailed plan and submission for a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA).
 - 2.3 In 2017 there had been a small loss only, and since the charity was formed and the field purchased there had been a loss of about £6,000.
 - 2.4 Attention was drawn to related party transactions in that none of the LRA directors should in any way represent any other body or organisation to which they are a member on the board of LRA. Stephen Meyer asked whether the Parish Council being allowed to elect 1 director contravened this point. Malcolm Caird advised that this should not be the case, but directors would be expected to absent themselves on decisions in the case of any conflict of interest.
 - 2.5. Malcolm Caird advised the directors approved the accounts at a meeting on April 10th 2018, and put forward a resolution for the accounts to be adopted by the members with a show of hands.
 - 2.6 The members unanimously adopted the accounts.

4. Directors :
 - 4.1 Malcolm Caird advised in 2017 there were 10 directors.
 - 4.2 4 directors were retiring at this AGM : Malcolm Caird, John Clark, Jeremy Bonnett and Jacquie Lawson.

4.3 6 directors were remaining : James Nugent (Parochial Church Council), Andy Tate (Parish Council), Joanne Vaughan, Cathy Nicholes, Chris Ohlson, Miles Fairston.

4.4. Malcolm Caird explained his decision to retire. During his previous involvement with Lurgashall Football Club, Malcolm had contact in 2010 with Les Brown, who was acting for the Diocese. The football club were renting the field from the Diocese for £114 per annum. The subject of what could be better done with the field for the village was discussed against the backdrop of 3 other private offers. With the possibility of maybe 6 houses on the field or another similarly detrimental development, Malcolm Caird discussed a large offer of £100,000 for the purchase of the field for a trust holding the field in perpetuity for the village. Eventually this led to the formation of Lurgashall Recreation Association and ownership of the field in 2013, backed by fundraising including about £60,000 from the local community and £50,000 in public grants.

Malcolm Caird paid tribute to the “Magnificent Seven”, who had helped to make this happen: Laurence Reed, John Clark, Jeremy Bonnett, Ray Cooper, Geoff Hayhurst, Steve Vaughan and Malcolm Caird.

5. Planning Application for a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) :

5.1 Joe Harden asked to speak first. He advised that LRA should consider certain key points and obstacles. The field was approved for sale by the Parochial Church Council on the condition the land was kept as an open space for the benefit of all Lurgashall residents. Also that it is a registered football field, overseen by English Playing Fields, which prevents developments on the field. Joe Harden then advised that in the survey of 2015, out of 152 replies only 34 asked to see 5-a-side football (already on the field) and 32 said they wanted tennis, so there was no established need for a MUGA. Also that the field is in a National Park, where conservation is important, and there was a recent lecture covering this in the village hall by the CEO of the National Park.

5.2 Malcolm Caird rejected the points raised by Joe Harden. English Playing Fields no longer existed and had been replaced by Sport England. Football had died on the field. National Parks specifically encouraged sporting and recreational projects. The diocese had not defined or restricted the use of the field in terms of open space. A book of the SDNP’s policies and procedures had been considered, and a reminder was given that Lurgashall lay within a deprived area in terms of recreational facilities. LRA was trying to meet its objectives in terms of providing recreational facilities. It was sad that the village lacked vision and leadership to back this up.

5.3 Gary Sharp advised that this AGM was not the place to discuss any matters concerning the Parish Council, and that a discussion at the next Parish Council meeting was appropriate.

5.4 Joanne Vaughan thanked Malcolm Caird and John Clark and Jeremy Bonnett and Jacquie Lawson for purchasing the field for the village, and for all their hard work.

5.5 Jeremy Bonnett echoed this and thanked Jacquie Lawson in particular for underwriting all the negotiations for the purchase of the field from the Diocese.

5.6 Malcolm Caird advised he was bitterly disappointed with the planning decision to refuse the MUGA. The new board would be faced with various options, including appeal or a new application. A dialogue could be sought with John Richards, the SDNP officer in charge. Other directors could be co-opted including younger directors.

5.7 Malcolm Caird advised that he felt he was no longer the man to lead LRA and it was time to move on.

5.8 Malcolm Caird advised it was inappropriate that Peter Wilding was both Chairman of the Parish Council and a District Councillor, and he was unhappy with the role of the Parish Council during the MUGA application.

5.9 Sue Lambot requested that the new board move forward in full consultation with the members, and that members should be kept fully up to date on all developments.

5.10 Joanne Vaughan advised that fully costed ideas were available, and that maybe the next best step would be to have a process of consultation on these ideas and the initial cost and maintenance. LRA should be careful of appealing straight away as a further refusal would limit the range of options open to LRA.

5.11 Stephen Meyer advised that there had been far too much time spent already on consultation, and that consultation was just a means by which projects ended up stuck in the long grass. Nothing had happened, and his fear was that the 4 directors who had driven this the hardest were now retiring. The young in the village could be OAPs before action finally happened.

5.12 Andrew Lambot advised that the consultation had already happened, and referred to the October 2016 meeting at which there was much support for a MUGA. A new submission should be considered, working closely together with the Parish Council.

5.13 John Clark referred to his vision for lots of recreational activities to be set up on the field, and his 4 plans that had been shown at the first LRA AGM. It was very disappointing that action had not followed, and hopefully this could be blasted through in the future.

5.14 Joe Harden advised a good location for the MUGA would be the Woodcraft Centre. No other members thought this an appropriate location.

5.15 Miles Fairston took up the point that members wished LRA directors to be much more open with them about projects and decisions, and asked if the members wished to have an open discussion regarding the MUGA and costs, as John Clark and Jeremy Bonnett in particular had done a lot of work on this. A discussion was started, and Malcolm Caird advised that Sport England had insisted upon a Rolls Royce of a MUGA and following a detailed specification Trevor May Associates had quoted £65,000.

5.16 Malcolm Caird advised the position had been carefully chosen in relation to the football field. Also the site was not near to trees, which would significantly increase maintenance costs. The access to the MUGA was good as it was sited reasonably near the front gate and thus likely to be used more.

5.17 Malcolm Caird rejected the idea that the MUGA would appear a suburban development.

5.18 Neil Jowett advised that the best way forward would be for LRA to engage with the District Council with a full debrief on the application, and to consider the viability of an appeal. The application itself could be viewed as not a very good application in terms of quality, and therefore it could also be advantageous and helpful for the LRA to come to the Parish Council and have an open forum discussion to move the process forward with Parish Council backing. LRA was encouraged to take up these offers of assistance.

5.19 Francis Tate advised that while Parish Council support would be good, Parish Council support did not necessarily mean that applications would be accepted, and cited various examples of recent local refusals including swimming baths in Petworth.

5.20 Jacquie Lawson advised it was unacceptable that there was no recreation set up in Lurgashall apart from the playground, and that there should not have been any problem to use a small area for a MUGA on a 3 ½ acre field.

5.21 Gary Sharp advised that not all the Parish Council opposed the MUGA, and that some councillors did not even know of the letter sent by the Parish Council regarding the application.

5.22 Cathy Nicholes urged swift decisions to be made, between the options of appealing, re-applying or doing nothing in relation to the MUGA. Cathy was keen for others to join the directors, especially including younger members.

5.23 Jeremy Bonnett advised that the football field was no longer designated as a football field by Sussex Football Association, though Sport England wanted to retain it. In all the applications that had been made, LRA had made sure that the football pitch could be retained. He had personally measured the site and made sure that football could continue. This was important as while football was not currently being played, any future generation that wished to play football again on the field would be able to do so.

5.24 Jeremy Bonnett emphasised that it was a huge achievement to buy the field for the village. However it was a matter of sadness that LRA had not made the further step of setting up the MUGA, which would have been a great facility for a good 50 years.

In terms of need, there are at any one time usually about 5 to 8 youngsters in the village, who would benefit from such a facility. If deprived city areas get this type of facility, why should Lurgashall not benefit from a MUGA ? It was an indictment of the lack of vision in Lurgashall that this had not proceeded, as future generations of the village would have benefited. It was sad that a tiny self-interested minority had opposed the application, and annoying and depressing as the interest of the village had been at the heart of the application and there has been great support.

5.25 Chris Ohlson advised that the new board would be meeting soon, and that there was considerable interest to join the new board. A clear plan was needed and further decisions would be made as soon as possible.

6. Vote of thanks for retiring directors

6.1 Chris Ohlson led a round of applause and three cheers for the retiring directors : Malcolm Caird, Jeremy Bonnett, John Clark and Jacquie Lawson.

All members present joined with Chris Ohlson in his vote of thanks for all their hard work, and for the great success of obtaining the field in perpetuity for the village.