

Wisborough Green Annual Parish Meeting

Draft Minutes of the Meeting to be agreed on 20th May 2008

Date: Thursday 24th April 2008

Present: Mr R Armistead (Chairman), Mrs Y Boyd, Mr A Jackson, Mrs P Pinkham, Mr M Robinson
Mrs J Scott, Mr C Stride, Mr K Twelvetrees (Councillors)

In Attendance: Mrs L Davies, Clerk
PC P Hanlon, Neighbourhood Specialist Team
35 Members of Public

Apologies: Mr K Charman

The Chairman opened the meeting at 8.00 pm and welcomed all those present.

Chairman's Report – a review of the last year

During the last year, the Parish Council had met on 10 occasions. Meetings were not held in August or December. In addition, the Planning Committee had met as required. Details of all the meetings were posted on the notice boards and website.

The newsletter was now being published on a quarterly basis, the last one having been distributed at the end of March. The Chairman hoped that it was of interest and kept parishioners updated on current matters. Although the Parish Council provided the text, it was produced and distributed by a printer at no cost to the Parish – the advertising paid for the production costs. As most matters had been covered in the newsletter over the year, he would keep his Chairman's report as brief as possible.

In May of last year the election for the new Council was held, but unfortunately the full compliment of 9 members was not achieved. As a result, Mr Kevin Twelvetrees and Mr Keith Charman were both co-opted onto the Council at the May meeting, with Mr Chris Stride being co-opted in July. The Council currently had the 9 members. Photographs were available on the website.

Mr Stride and other members of the Council had recently been involved in preparing a Village Emergency Plan should a storm, such as the one experienced in October 1987 when the village was cut off, be repeated. As previously advised in the newsletter, this document was available on the website or from the Clerk.

There was obviously concern at the beginning of this year regarding the continuation of the August Bank Holiday Fete, following the resignation of the Sideshows Society as organisers. Not only a popular event for the village, it also attracted a great deal of outside interest. The Chairman was delighted to report that the Wisborough Green Fete Society had now been established, with Mr Andrew Jackson as the Chairman. Plans for this August were well underway.

The situation regarding the Hospitals had been a concern to all. The Chairman gave details of the 3 options that were currently being considered. The announcement would be made in June.

Community Speed Watch was a new initiative being promoted by the Neighbourhood Specialist Teams in the Chichester District. PC Phil Hanlon would be speaking further about the scheme later in the meeting, but it was hoped that parishioners would participate.

The trees on the Green had been a concern during the year, and 6 had recently been removed due to disease. Unfortunately, one other young tree was vandalised and needed replacing. Seven new trees of a different flowering chestnut variety had recently been planted and it was hoped that they would be less susceptible to the disease. Other trees would need to be monitored.

As recently publicised in the press, the National Park was still under discussion and a further enquiry was currently being held. The Inspector had to decide whether to include the Western Weald or to restrict to the chalk Downs only. The status of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) outside the boundary was also being considered. Although the lobby group was keen to keep the Western Weald within the Park, there was some suggestion that ANOBs outside the boundary could lose this status. West Sussex County Council (WSCC) and Chichester District Council (CDC) were therefore pressing to have the boundary kept to the chalk, with ANOB status outside the park being retained.

In 2006 a meeting was held in the village, along with a subsequent Housing Needs Survey, to identify possible sites for development as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) consultation. Unfortunately, the Inspector did not accept CDC's Core Strategy and so the consultation process would begin again. CDC has confirmed that they were aware of the sites previously identified by the village, along with 3 new sites that were put forward by landowners.

The Parish Council did not consider any further consultation on potential sites necessary. The consultation for the Core Strategy would start in November, but other dates were not known. It would be a lengthy process.

The condition of the Green, and in particular the football pitch, had been affected by the recent heavy rain. Thanks to Mr Kevin Twelvetrees who rolled and harrowed the pitch, it allowed 3 further games to be played to complete the football season. During the short window of opportunity before the cricket season commenced, the Green would again be verti-drained, with the pitch being sanded, seeded and fertilised. Experience had shown that if the Green was looked after and a certain amount of work undertaken each year, it was able to withstand the many pressures that were placed upon it.

Finally, the Chairman thanked Councillors and Clerk for their contributions and support throughout the year.

The Chairman asked Mr Phil Donoghue, Chair of the Board of Governors of Wisborough Green Primary School, to address the meeting regarding the school building extension.

Mr Donoghue stated that an Open Evening to give further explanation to the plans would be held next Wednesday 30th April 2008, between 7.30 to 9.00 pm at the School. Work was due to start in early May and hopefully completed by the start of the new term in September. He explained that for a number of years the school had suffered due to lack of space. Unfortunately, WSCC did not perceive there to be a lack of classroom space as space was available within other primary schools! The extension was therefore being built to provide more room for the staff, a larger ICT suite and multi-purpose rooms to ease pressure on the teaching space. The meeting next week would give further explanation; plans would be on display and there would be an opportunity to ask questions.

Income and Expenditure for 2006/2007

The Chairman referred to the Income and Expenditure Report, which had been distributed. He highlighted that funds were being maintained for capital works on the Village Hall and Workhouse, although could be used if another large project necessitated. For this year, the Precept had been retained at £31,000. There were no further questions.

Neighbourhood Specialist Teams & Community Speed Watch

Neighbourhood Specialist Teams: The Chairman introduced PC Phil Hanlon and thanked him for attending the meeting. PC Hanlon explained that 6 months ago, the new Neighbourhood Specialist Team was established, comprising of 15 PCs and 15 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) for the District. PC Hanlon and one PCSO were working out of Petworth Police Station and were responsible for Wisborough Green, along with 14 other rural parishes, from Graffam to Lurgashall and up to Loxwood. It was a large area, but fortunately with few problems. He was contactable by email through the Sussex Police website (www.sussex.police.uk) or on 0845 60 70 999. PC Hanlon would be responsible for dealing with anti-social behaviour, repeat victims, repeat offenders and liaising closely with the Parish Council and community. The patrol officers would continue to attend 999 calls with other non-urgent matters being passed to PC Hanlon. PC Hanlon explained that he would be trying to visit all villages on a regular basis, and hoped to start walking around the Parishes during the summer to make his presence known. If problems existed, he would spend more time in the Parish, as required. He confirmed that he was able to issue parking tickets and that the parking around the Cricketers junction had been highlighted to him by the Parish Council.

Questions were invited.

Concern was expressed about speeding traffic. PC Hanlon explained that historically traffic police had been involved in traffic control and had undergone specialist training. The District Inspector had recently authorised the purchase of 2 speed indicator devices and a speed gun. The Neighbourhood Specialist Teams had now undergone training, and could operate the devices as required.

When questioned about crime rates, PC Hanlon reported that in the past year, 38 crimes had been reported, which was 9 less than the previous year. There had been an increase in criminal damage, although theft was down. Most burglaries occurred outside the village in the rural area. As these statistics were obtained from reported crime, PC Hanlon stressed the importance of reporting all incidents, small or large, so that details could be logged to highlight any trends in particular areas. The issues could then be addressed.

Community Speed Watch: PC Hanlon explained that this was a new initiative to involve communities in speed reduction. It was originally trailed in mid Sussex and although successful, it did highlight some problems. Recording speed and vehicle details could potentially lead to confrontational situations for the volunteers manning the device and created overwhelming paperwork for police officers when following up offenders. The police were very aware that speeding was a concern for many villages and had therefore launched this new initiative to act as an educational tool only. It would be necessary for the Parish to purchase the Speed Indicator Device (SID) at a cost of £2000 and to man using local volunteers. It would be possible for a number of Parishes to club together to purchase one device and funding was possibly available from local authorities. A minimum of 6 volunteers would be required, with one person acting as the co-ordinator and liaising with the police. The SID would be positioned in the 30-40 mph speed limit, in consultation with the police. Although it did not record vehicle speed and registration details, regular offenders could be reported.

Questions were invited:

Concern was expressed at the early morning traffic that travelled through the village, often at 50-60 mph. Near accidents had been witnessed, particularly by the shop. PC Hanlon stated that drivers often did not appreciate how fast they were travelling and by using the SID it would be highlighted to them. The message could be reinforced by the police using a speed camera.

Sunday morning was a particular concern on the A272 with motorcycles. PC Hanlon confirmed that the Traffic Police were aware of this concern.

The speed of traffic leaving the village was also noted. Although the SID was only single sided, it could still be used to remind drivers to continue with a lower speed until outside of the village. Double sided devices were not available.

Mr Andrew Jackson stated that, unlike the permanent indicator on the A272, this device was portable and could be moved to varying locations around the village. By not being a fixed device, it would not become familiar and be ignored. It was a relatively low cost item, particularly if shared with other parishes, and local volunteers could determine when and where it should be used.

PC Hanlon confirmed that the device did not have the technology to record speed over the operating time, although the accompanying volunteer could do this if statistical information was required. As a pedestrian, it was difficult to assess traffic speed and it often appeared that vehicles, particularly lorries, were travelling faster than their actual speed. This device would confirm the speed.

Various methods of speed calming were suggested:

- Speed Watch Area as experienced in Loxwood a number of years ago. Known to have regular police attendance.
- Light sensitive traffic lights.
- Write to companies of speeding lorry drivers.

The Chairman thanked PC Hanlon for attending the meeting. He explained that the Parish Council would consider the scheme and have further discussion with other Parish Councils. It would be necessary to determine if there was sufficient interest and volunteers willing to participate. Potential volunteers were asked to give details after the meeting.

Website

Andrew Jackson demonstrated the village website (www.wisboroughgreen.org). He explained that although it had been created a number of years ago and managed by him, Mrs Sarah Jackson and Mr Brett Adshead, it had recently been totally re-designed by the Clerk. It was a simple design to help with navigation. Over the years, contact via the site had shown that it was not only used by local residents but had international interest too.

The website showed a photograph of the Spring Clean Day on the 12th April. The Chairman expressed his thanks to all those who helped.

Public Questions

The Chairman was asked if protective fencing would be erected around the new trees. He explained that the tree experts who planted the trees had recommended an underground staking method. By not having posts and rails around the tree, it did not highlight the new planting and removed the invitation to interfere with the posts. Time would tell.

Concern was expressed at the condition of the duck house. The Chairman stated that this had been presented to the village a number of years ago and agreed that it did require some attention. Mrs Edwards made an offer of help with the repair.

Dead fish had been reported in the pond last summer and the condition of the water was questioned. The Chairman agreed that the pond had suffered in recent years and that the water quality should be assessed. The pond received run off from the road and other areas, which could have pollutants.

As it was cold and draughty in the bus shelter, a Perspex window was requested. Mr Clark stated that the original window had been removed to deter the shelter from being used by youths and the associated problems this caused. The Chairman confirmed that this had been previously discussed.

One resident was often asked directions to Bellmans Auction House. The Chairman stated that signage to Bellmans had been erected on the main roads to discourage motorists using Newpound Lane. However, a sign for Newpound Lane could be considered.

Concern was expressed at the parking and safety in School Road during school drop-off/pick-up time and the potential for increased problems due to the school extension and planned closure at the front of the school. It was questioned whether a permanent one-way system would be progressed. The Chairman appreciated the difficulties experienced by residents. He confirmed that the school had circulated details to all parents and was encouraging them to park around the Green. The Parish Council was not planning to introduce a permanent one-way system but would speak with the school again to reinforce the voluntary one-way system. Mr Phil Donoghue, as Chair to the Governors, explained that the school was very aware of the parking concerns and the impetus was to encourage walking to school. It was hoped

Minutes of the Wisborough Green Annual Parish Meeting held on 24th April 2008 - continued
that more people would use the 'Walking to School Bus', particularly during the building work. The staff were keen to encourage

children to walk and offered rewards to those for doing so. The children were encouraged to apply pressure to parents. The Climbing Bear pickup at lunchtime was also a concern.

It was also felt that the yellow-lines around the Cricketers junction had encouraged parking around the Newpound/School road junction and restricted visibility. The Chairman stated that the purpose of the yellow lines was to ensure the safety of the Cricketers junction. Parking in general was a concern in the village, particularly when other events were being held. To be discussed later in the evening.

Concern was expressed at the condition of the Pavilion. Being in the centre of the conservation area, the general condition of the building and litterbins at the rear was becoming unsightly. Restrictions were placed on residents in a conservation area and it was felt that the same should apply to the Sports Association. The Chairman noted the comments and would advise the Trustees.

It was important to keep the youngsters in the village occupied, and the basketball net had been a great success. As the basketball net would shortly be removed to make room for the cricket practice nets, was suggested that the Parish Council consider an all-weather area should be installed behind the Pavilion.

The bird scarring to the south of the village had been causing irritation. The noise ran from dawn to dusk. The Chairman confirmed that he had looked into this a couple of years ago; there were some environmental regulations but the practice was not prohibited. The idea was to protect the crop until sufficient fullness of the plant had been achieved and that this was monitored by the farmer. He would hope that they would be turned off very shortly.

Concern was expressed at the newly erected telegraph pole on the edge of the village green. The Chairman confirmed that it had been placed there to replace some faulty existing connections; the location was apparently elected by British Telecom to comply with some new EEC regulations. An objection had been submitted to BT. It would be removed.

Village Parking

Mr Chris Stride explained that he and Yvonne Boyd had been asked to look into possibilities to alleviate some of the parking concerns in the village. Unfortunately, cars would not be going away so they had looked for an area in the village that would make a suitable car park. There was no obvious solution so they had looked at smaller areas that could provide off road parking without causing too much disruption. Mr Stride gave details of the 4 possible options available:

Option 1: Kirdford Road – natural strip between the path and the pavement which could be made into a lay-by. Removes the congestion in Kirdford Road, often experienced with Saturday morning football. Unfortunately, major telecommunication cables are underground on this side.

Option 2: Extend the existing lay-by in Durbans road to meet the double yellow lines. This would give space for a further 4-5 cars and ensure clearer visibility at the crossroads.

Option 3: A small lay-by could be created on the Little Green and could be used for school parking.

Option 4: A parking area on the grass on the area in Butts Meadow opposite the top of the playground could be created, perhaps with grasscrete. This could be used for those visiting the playground as well as overflow parking for Butts Meadow. It would ensure clear visibility at the junction.

He and Mrs Boyd would continue to investigate sites for a village car park but in the meantime, comments were invited on these possible solutions. A map showing the sites had been displayed along with stickers on which to write comments. Any other suggestions would be welcomed

Emergency Plan

Mr Stride referred back to the storm of 1987 when the village suffered severe damage and disruption and was cut off. Many people were without electricity for 8 – 17 days. Fortunately, the storm had occurred at night but it could have been a different outcome if it had happened during the day. The Emergency Plan had therefore been prepared to cope with a worst-case scenario. The Village Hall would be used as a central meeting point, providing warmth and a means to offer hot drinks. To help with the organisation, the Parish Council was compiling a confidential list of volunteers who could be called upon in the event of an emergency. Offers of help, whether it was for access clearance, first aid or welfare would be appreciated and forms had been prepared for completion after the meeting.

The Chairman thanked Mr Stride for his presentations. There being no further comments or questions, the Chairman invited all those present to remain for refreshments. The meeting was closed at 9.25 pm.

Chairman :

Date: