

Wisborough Green Annual Parish Meeting

Draft Minutes of the Meeting to be agreed on 19th May 2009

Date: Thursday 23rd April 2009

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

In Attendance: Mrs L Davies, Clerk
24 Members of Public

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

Chairman's Report – a review of the past year

The Chairman explained that it was a statutory requirement for the Council to hold an Annual Parish Meeting, to explain further about the role of the Council, update parishioners on the Council's activities over the past year, and to keep the community updated on future plans. The meeting also gave parishioners the opportunity to question the Council or to make suggestions/observations.

In its quest to obtain 'Quality Status' eventually, the Parish Council was now issuing a quarterly newsletter. The quarterly newsletter was introduced several years ago and had helped the Council to update parishioners on events as they occurred. Unfortunately, the last newsletter, due out at the end of March and which advertised this meeting, had not been distributed by the printer. No explanation had been given but the Council could only speculate that the printer had not generated adequate advertising revenue to cover the costs; he was not responding to telephone calls. The newsletter should be delivered to every household throughout the Parish, at no cost to the Parish Council, but obviously the present arrangement might have to be reviewed. The Chairman explained that his update would cover the points mentioned in the last newsletter as well as the main points in the Annual Report. This report had been distributed at the meeting and would also be available on the website.

During the last year, the Parish Council had met on 10 occasions. Details of the meetings were published on the notice boards and website. Members of the public were most welcome to attend; there was a public questions item included on the agenda.

There had been some recent changes in membership of the Council. Grateful thanks were extended to Mrs Jane Scott and Mr Kevin Twelvetrees, who both resigned earlier in the year. Mrs Priscilla Pinkham would also be standing down after the meeting, although the Council was pleased to report that Mrs Pinkham would continue co-ordinating the Village Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) scheme. Far from being the peaceful, law-abiding and crime free community we once thought, the information circulated by NHW suggested the truth appeared to be quite different.

The Council was delighted to welcome Mr James Donovan who was co-opted last month. Two further members would be co-opted at the May meeting, and any applications should be made to the Clerk. The Chairman asked Parish Councillors to stand and make themselves known to the meeting.

The website was re-designed a year ago and was now regularly updated by the Clerk. It was full of useful information, details of events and contact details. It also contained information about the Parish Council and minutes of the Parish Council meetings.

At last year's Annual Parish Meeting, the village Community Speed Watch campaign was launched. The Council was very grateful to Mr Mike Akers who was co-ordinating the programme and to all those who had volunteered to be involved. The scheme was designed to be an educational tool, highlighting speed to drivers and should be operating in the village shortly.

The Council had hoped to re-establish a Youth Group in the village. Considerable work was undertaken by Councillor Yvonne Boyd, not only to consult with the youth of the village, but to establish a venue and potential helpers. Unfortunately it had not been possible to find a leader to take charge of the project and so sadly no further progress was possible.

The Chairman expressed thanks to Mrs Joan Miles who continued to keep the Green litter free. Sadly people still allowed their dogs to foul the ground, which was not only illegal but highly undesirable. The new trees were growing well, flowering for their second year. A maintenance programme had been scheduled for this Spring but had unfortunately been delayed due to the permission process required by Chichester District Council (CDC). A further tree in Durbans Road appeared to be dying and would need to be felled. The work had now been re-scheduled for late Autumn.

Looking ahead, further drainage work was planned for the Green in September. Over the years, work had been undertaken on the football pitch, but many areas suffered with water logging. The new drains would be laid along the west and east sides of the Green, picking up the wet areas and taking the water to the drain in Kirdford Road. The Chairman thanked Councillor Keith Charman, who had undertaken considerable work investigating and discussing the different options available. The work would be undertaken after the Fair's visit; last year damage occurred during the Fair's visit which had to be rectified.

The boundary for the South Downs National Park was confirmed by the Secretary of State on 31st March 2009 and was the same as the boundary included in the consultation. Wisborough Green village was not included but land to the west of Bedham Road was. Plans were on display to view after the meeting.

The Local Development Framework (LDF) had been delayed due to infrastructure shortcomings along the coast. The first stage of the Strategy dealing with the period to 2016 was unlikely to be completed before late 2012. Delays to the long awaited improvements to the A27 Chichester Bypass meant that there was no guarantee that work would be carried out within the plan period. Without the improvements, it was unlikely that the development around the Bypass would be supported by the Highways Authority. The Environment Agency had also advised that there was a limit to the amount of treated sewage that could be discharged into Chichester Harbour and with this limit close to being reached it placed development that would discharge treated water into the Harbour potentially at risk. The dates for the Strategy study had been severely delayed, although the Parish might well be consulted in the future. The CDC website had all the details.

The Council had received details of a grant scheme to encourage and support rural businesses. Details would be included in the next newsletter, but were available from the Clerk. The Council had also just been advised that the cycle for the monthly amenity skip at the back of the Pavilion had been changed – details included at the end of the Annual Report.

The condition of the pond was also raised at last year's meeting. Although water testing showed no irregularity, the Parish Council had agreed to the clearance of the water lilies. Undertaken by the community 5 years ago, it proved more physically demanding than anticipated and so a contractor would be undertaking the work within the next month or so and would continue to manage the lilies on an annual basis. The duck house was currently being repaired and would be reinstated shortly. There was an abundance of ducks which did not help the water quality but the fish thrived.

Included on the agenda for later discussion was the idea for an all-weather sports playing surface. The Parish Council had been made aware that a number of people involved with different sports groups in the village would ideally like to have use of a village all-weather area. With the number of sports groups operating in the vicinity, it was often difficult during the winter months to find a hard surfaced pitch available. Subsequent discussion with the Primary School had shown enthusiastic support for the use of the school grounds. The scheme would involve a considerable sum of money as well as hard work. At this stage, the Parish Council felt that the Green was busy enough and would like to pursue the school option in the first instance. Further discussion later in the meeting.

Details of the Annual Accounts had also been included in the Annual Report. There would be an opportunity to discuss later in the meeting, but the Chairman highlighted that the Precept for this coming year had been kept at £31,000, the same as in 2008 and 2007. The accounts also showed that in recent years reserve funds had been accumulated to cover future significant expenditure on the Village Hall.

The Chairman highlighted that a Litter Picking session would be held on Saturday, 25th April, meeting at 2.00 pm at the Sundial. Also, the Fete Society would welcome any further volunteers to man an activity on the August Bank Holiday Monday Fete. Please refer to the Clerk for more details.

The Chairman thanked Councillors for their contributions and support throughout the year. He extended a very big thank you to the Clerk, whose drive and enthusiasm had created an efficient Council. She had been of immense help to the Chairman and her experience and guidance would ensure smooth running of the Council in the future.

And finally, the Chairman announced that he would be resigning as Chairman and from the Council. Having been on the Council for 14 years, 12 years as Chairman, he had decided that it was now time for a change. He felt confident that the Council was in good hands and would continue to be well run. There was therefore another vacancy which would be advertised.

Income and Expenditure for 2008/2009

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. Councillor Jackson stated that some years ago, a review of anticipated works for the Village Hall was undertaken and having reviewed the work involved, it had been agreed to accumulate funds on a yearly basis to ensure that large sums would not need to be borrowed. The Clerk confirmed the actual expenditure on the Village Hall for the past year. There were no further questions.

Provision of an All Weather Sports Play Area

Having earlier given details of the suggestion, the Chairman invited comments from the floor.

Mr Vickery was keen to add further sporting options to the village, but was slightly concerned about the security of the school if included on that site. Mr Newman, Chairman of the Sports Association, was keen to support and particularly to encourage female sport such as netball and tennis. It was generally agreed that the size should allow for multi-sport use to ensure that its use was not restricted.

The management and usage of the area would need to be confirmed. Although the school site was an attractive option, Mrs Holmes, the Headteacher of the Primary School, had confirmed that access would not be allowed when the school was open.

Although the problems of using the Green – access, enclosure, lighting – could be understood, Mr Vickery felt that having the surface near to the current facilities at the Pavilion had advantages. It was noted that Park Cottage was currently on the market and that it included an adjacent paddock. The Parish Council might therefore investigate the availability of this land.

Mrs Penfold confirmed that Southwater had recently undergone a similar study and had now installed an all weather pitch. They were willing to offer advice and contact details.

The Chairman reiterated that the investigations were at a very early stage and use, security, surface, size, fencing, lighting, management and charging would all be explored as part of the study. It would be a major capital expense and having established a detailed plan, it would be necessary to consult further with the village. Details would be included in a future newsletter.

Public Questions

Mr Vickery questioned the ownership of the Village Hall and Workhouse. The Chairman confirmed that it was owned by the Parish Council.

Mr Vickery also highlighted that several trees appeared to be suffering. The Chairman confirmed that they were being monitored.

It appeared that burglaries were on the increase around the village. Although the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme circulated information and encouraged the community to be vigilant, it was asked if groups of people could be encouraged to walk around the village and advise the police of any suspicious behaviour. The Chairman was aware that some communities did have such groups which worked with the police, but it would be difficult to organise and to find suitable and willing people to become involved. The recent higher police presence in the village was noted; police walking around was more reassuring.

Mr Chris Duncton, County Councillor, was introduced to the meeting. Mr Duncton stated that the Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators met regularly with representatives from the Neighbourhood Police Team for the area. Local issues affecting the different parishes were addressed. He confirmed that there were now 3 Police Constable Support Officers for north of the Downs. One was resident in Petworth, so the other 2 had the rest of the district to cover. He concurred that it was important to have police presence. It was noted that on Thursday a Speed Camera had been positioned in the lay-by to the east of the village.

There being no further comments or questions, the Chairman invited all those present to remain for refreshments.

On behalf of the Parish Council and the Parish, Councillor Keith Charman thanked the Chairman for all his help and support. He had contributed a considerable amount to the village, particularly 12 years as Chairman, and as a token of appreciation and gratitude, presented Mr Armistead with a gift.

The meeting was closed at 9.10 pm.

Chairman :

Date: