

Wisborough Green Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting

Date: Thursday 28th April 2016

Present: Mr K Charman, (Chairman), Mr A Burbridge, Mr P Drummond, Mr A Jackson, Mr M King, Mrs S Overington, Mr H True

Apologies: Ms A Stone
Mrs J Duncton, WS County Councillor

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

The Chairman opened the meeting at 8.00 pm and extended a warm welcome. He explained that he would highlight a few items from the detailed Annual Report that had been made available, copies of which could be taken away and read at leisure. He also highlighted that following the recent resignation of Mr Craig Vit, there was now one vacancy on the Council; any interest should be directed to either him or the Clerk.

Chairman's Report – a review of the past year

It had been yet another busy and demanding year for the Council. The length and detail provided in the Annual Report highlighted that the nature and scale of tasks for the Parish Council had increased. The Parish Council started the year with two major issues. Firstly the Neighbourhood Plan process which Cllr Mike King had continued to lead, and the increased issue of Gatwick Airport, which Cllr Drummond had become involved. The Chairman extended his grateful thanks to all the councillors for their help and support, and to the Clerk, who had had a considerable workload this year. A presentation of flowers was made to the Clerk.

In terms of external meetings, the Chairman highlighted that the 'Cluster Group', made up of Parish Council representatives from Kirdford, Loxwood, Plaistow & Ifold and Wisborough Green, had now been established for about 4 years. It provided a useful forum to discuss local issues, such as Gatwick and Crouchlands, in the belief that strength was gained in joint working.

In terms of Planning, there had been two major applications considered by the Parish Council this year. Stable Field, in Kirdford Road, was a proposal for 26 retirement homes. There were a number of reasons why the Parish Council did not support the application and why it had not been included in the Neighbourhood Plan. CDC also determined that the site was unsuitable and refused the application.

The other application related to the Winterfold site which had been included in the Neighbourhood Plan. The initial application was very different to the details in the Neighbourhood Plan and did not include the land gifted to the village in perpetuity. The Parish Council, therefore, objected to the application. The revised application included the gifted land as identified in the Neighbourhood Plan. The application for Outline permission had now been permitted subject to a Section 106 agreement. There were some elements to now resolve with the landowner before the full application was submitted, to ensure that the development was in keeping with the village and addressed local concerns.

Growth and increased activity by Gatwick Airport was a major concern for the village. For some time, there had been a very effective group in the east of the airport, and now the Association of Parish Councils Aviation Group (APCAG) had been established in the west. The Arrival Review Report had recently been published and whilst it was broadly sympathetic to the issues faced by the village, there was still a lot of work to be done.

Boxal Bridge was another local concern that featured in last year's activities for both Wisborough Green and Kirdford Parish Councils. As a result of a petition by Keep Kirdford and Wisborough Green, the matter was debated by WSCC to ensure that the Parish Councils would be involved in any future decision.

The Parish Council had a Major Emergency Plan in place, however, the Chairman emphasised that it was for substantial and serious issues affecting the whole village rather than the inconvenience of short-term power failure or bad weather. The Plan was reviewed on an annual basis and the circumstances for enactment would be highlighted again to residents in the autumn.

It was highlighted through the Neighbourhood Plan consultations that road safety was the second most significant issue in Wisborough Green behind future development. Having now prepared the Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council had established a Traffic Management Group to look at the various issues that affected the village. A traffic consultant

had been engaged to assess the feasibility of some ideas, which were being considered further by WSCC. The community would be consulted further at the appropriate time. In terms of the school, traffic movements associated with the drop-off and pick-up times did cause some difficulties, as it did for most schools in the area. The Chairman was pleased to report that the new Headteacher was keen to resolve some of the issues and had also established a School Traffic Management Group, on which there was Parish Council representation.

Parking in the west road to the Pavilion, mainly associated with sports fixtures, caused access difficulties for residents last year. The Chairman expressed thanks to the Sports Association for helping to address and manage the situation.

The Parish Council had been successful in receiving Watershed Funding to address some local concerns. The Chairman explained that this was a process to obtain funding from WSCC which not only helped to save WSCC funds but was an extremely effective way to have flooding issues resolved locally.

The Village Green was the community's most valuable and scenic asset. It was maintained for the benefit of all, full details of which had been included in the report.

The value of the public toilets was perhaps demonstrated by the comment given in the report. By having the facilities, it encouraged people to stop in the village, which then potentially used and supported the other local businesses.

The Village Hall was another valuable and well-used village asset. The Chairman expressed the Parish Council's thanks to the Village Hall Management Committee for managing such a successful facility. He explained that a Working Group had now been established, which included Parish Council representatives, to look at the modernisation of the hall to meet future needs, highlighting that this would be a project of some significance.

The Workhouse refurbishment was another big and unexpected project this year. Having lived in the property for over 30 years, the tenant moved out at the end of October. This was the obvious opportunity to undertake repairs which, as would be expected with a building of this age, were more than just remedial. The whole Village Hall building was held in perpetuity for the benefit of the community.

The Chairman expressed thanks to Mr Preston-Jones who had managed the allotments on the Parish Council's behalf for a number of years. Unfortunately, Mr Preston-Jones was no longer able to continue, so this role had been taken on by Cllr Mike King.

Income and Expenditure for 2015/16

The Chairman gave an explanation to the income and expenditure which also included the end of year summaries for the reserve accounts and bank balances; full details had been included in the Annual Report. In terms of the reserves, the Parish Council had made the decision to undertake the refurbishment of The Old Workhouse to ensure that that the property could be re-let quickly. This has been done using the reserve funds. Unfortunately, having started the work, unexpected work was identified, so the Parish Council agreed to take out a low-interest loan of £50,000 to be paid back over 7.5 years. This meant that the level of reserves would be maintained.

The Chairman gave an explanation to the income figures and the amounts transferred in from the reserves. In terms of expenditure, he highlighted that the Clerk's salary had been increased to recognise the number of hours now being worked, and to meet legal requirements, the Parish Council was now making a pension contribution.

In terms of the 2016/17 Precept, the Chairman explained that for a number of years, the Parish Council had either made a minimal or no increase. Unfortunately, this practice could no longer continue as the Parish Council was now expected to take on more responsibilities and this trend would only continue. In terms of the maintenance items around the village, costs had increased and the size of work had now increased – tree maintenance for example had increased considerably as the trees had grown. Having some more funding available will help the Parish Council to address a number of issues within the Conservation Area. The pressure on the budget in recent years has meant that the Parish Council had not always been able to make provision to reserves and as such, reserves have been impacted. It was a regrettable but totally necessary decision to increase the Precept and would put the Parish Council in a more comfortable position for the coming years.

Public Questions

The Chairman was asked to give clarification of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The Chairman explained that as a result of the development in the village, the Parish Council would be entitled to receive a percentage of the CIL obtained from the developers. A higher rate of CIL was available if a Neighbourhood Plan was in place, which would

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obviously be determined by the referendum next week. The funding would be provided by CDC for identified projects as the sites came to fruition.

It was asked if the Winterfold community land was being given to the community or was it to be purchased. The Chairman confirmed that it would be gifted.

Thanks and appreciation of all the Parish Council's hard work was expressed and applauded.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 8.25 pm and refreshments were served. The Chairman invited all to visit The Old Workhouse.

Chairman :

Date: