

Wisborough Green Annual Parish Meeting

Draft Minutes of the Meeting to be agreed on 19th May 2015

Date: Thursday 23rd April 2015

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

Apologies: Mr A Burbridge

In Attendance: Mrs L Davies, Clerk
16 Members of Public
Mr J Ransley, District Councillor
Mr D Oakley, Dark Skies Leader & Ranger, South Downs National Park Authority

The Chairman opened the meeting at 8.00 pm and extended a warm welcome. He explained that he would highlight a few items for the comprehensive Annual Report which had been distributed and that Cllr Mike King would then give an update on the Neighbourhood Plan before any further questions. He was also pleased to welcome Mr Dan Oakley from the South Downs National Park Authority who would be making a presentation on Dark Skies.

Chairman's Report – a review of the past year

It had been yet another busy and demanding year for the Council. Cllr Charman extended his thanks to all the councillors and to the Clerk, who had had a considerable workload this year, particularly in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr Charman also extended thanks to Cllr Josef Ransley and to West Sussex Councillor, Janet Duncton, who regularly attend the Parish Council meeting to give valuable updates.

In addition to the normal monthly meetings of the Council, Councillors also attended a number of external meetings, particularly in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan, Oil and Gas site application and the planning applications in advance of the Neighbourhood Plan; all had consumed a considerable amount of time. Gatwick Airport was another issue that was becoming more involving and the Council was extremely grateful to Cllr Peter Drummond who was now liaising closely with a number of campaign groups.

The Council had continued with the regular newsletters and to put information on the village website. It was hoped that the website would be given a new look this year when time permitted.

Last April, CDC announced that it would be changing to a paperless planning system, thereby paper copies of plans would not be provided to the Council. This had now been fully embraced, with plans reviewed on the CDC website in advance of meetings, and thanks to the new connection to Broadband at the Village Hall, viewed on screen at Parish Council meetings, which was proving to be far more efficient. In terms of planning applications this year, the major issues related to Land South of Meadowbank and Greenways Nursery. Although Land South of Meadowbank would have featured in the Neighbourhood Plan, it was not to the extent of the approved application. Unfortunately, despite the Parish Council and residents raising objections, the application was approved by CDC. A Public Inquiry was held in November for the Greenways Nursery site. Again, despite the Parish Council and CDC raising objections, the application for 10 residential caravans was approved. The total number of dwellings, 35, contributed to the housing number required for the village (minimum of 60) and as such, the sites had been included in the Neighbourhood Plan.

The outcome of the Oil and Gas planning application was a hugely satisfying end for all. Cllr Charman extended thanks to Keep Kirdford and Wisborough Green and the residents who all objected to the application. He explained that the Parish Council did have a specific consultee role and at the start of the consultation, it was important that the Council adhered to rules which did create some difficulties. On a positive note, the application involved considerable discussion with Kirdford Parish Council, resulting now in a far closer working relationship.

The next concern was obviously that of Gatwick Airport, which the Parish Council was watching closely in terms of flight paths and further expansion. Cllr Drummond was now working closely with the different protest groups and the Parish Council was a member of the Campaign Against Gatwick Noise Emissions (CAGNE). It was obvious to those in Wisborough Green that there had been clear and radical changes in the last couple of years and it was important that those involved understood the effects on rural communities such as ours. It did appear that some positive engagement was now taking place with those involved.

The issue of Boxal Bridge had featured in recent months as the structure was considered unsound by WSCC. Both Parish Councils had objected to the removal and as such, meetings held with WSCC. Further structural surveys would be undertaken but assurances had been received from WSCC that no further decision would be made without the Parish Councils' involvement.

Road safety and speeding were key concerns raised through the Neighbourhood Plan consultation process, which was not a surprise, and in common with many other rural villages. Although permission had been received to use the school car park out of hours, it had been decided not to pursue at the present time due to the cost of the licence and potential management difficulties. However, the school had now produced a School Travel Plan and would be looking into improved parking provision at the front of the school. A small but important improvement had been the recent marking of parking bays in the village hall car park to encourage efficient use of the space.

The method by which much of the small highways maintenance work was undertaken had now changed. The Clerk had been able to source funding to have this work undertaken locally, which has potentially made savings for the County. Again, with Watershed funding, the flooding issue on the corner in Newpound Lane had been resolved and a new drain would be installed behind the Pavilion shortly to, at long last, resolve the flooding issues around The Green and in Kirdford Road. Unfortunately, the issue at Moonsbrook was ongoing although interagency meetings had been held.

With regard to The Green, discussions had now been held to discuss a replacement Pavilion. It was obviously an emotive and prominent site and the Chairman gave reassurance that any future plans would be the subject of a public consultation. The Chairman thanked Beverley Twelvetrees who was the village litter warden and all those who attended the twice yearly community litter picking sessions.

Income and Expenditure for 2014/15

The Chairman gave explanation to the Income and Expenditure report which had been circulated, which also included the end of year summaries for the reserve accounts and bank balances. The income was increased due to the grant applications in relation to highways maintenance and Watershed funding which amounted to just under £18,000 which was due to the Clerk's diligence in seeking out additional funding.

The Clerk's salary was higher than budgeted due to additional hours in advance of her contracted hours paid for work over the summer in preparation of Neighbourhood Plan; members of public applauded in support.

A donation was made to Plaistow and Ifold Parish Council in support of their fight against the Biogas Plant at Crouchlands Farm. Again, this had supported the feeling of co-operation within the northern cluster of Parishes.

And finally, it had just been announced that the forthcoming Parish Council election was uncontested, with 5 councillors elected, leaving 4 vacancies. Cllr Drummond was pleased to be co-opted and a further expression of interest had been received, but it was vital that the Parish Council co-opted to fill the vacancies at either the May or June meetings. Legislation dictated that the vacancies be filled within seven weeks of 11th May 2015 otherwise an election would be called, the cost of which would be borne by the Parish Council. Cllr Charman encouraged support as there were far more important ways of spending the election fee in the village !

The Chairman extended thanks to Cllr Mike King for his help in leading the Neighbourhood Planning process and handed over the Cllr King for an update.

Neighbourhood Plan

This time last year, Cllr King had said that with 3 year's work, the Plan was nearly there. He gave reassurance that this year, 4 years in, it really was! Unfortunately, events relating to the Oil application had affected the process as well as an under estimation of the amount of work involved. He was, however, confident that the Plan would be submitted to CDC in the next few weeks.

He explained that the Submission Plan would be accompanied by supporting documents. A consultation report demonstrated how the community had been consulted, what was said and how this was responded to. The Basic Conditions Statement showed how the Plan was consistent with National and District Planning Policy. CDC would be undertaking the next consultation which would involve both the community and statutory bodies. The Parish Council would appoint an Examiner who would then scrutinise the Plan to ensure that it was consistent with planning policy. Hopefully in about 6 months a local referendum on the approved Plan would be undertaken and if approved by a basic majority, the Plan would become an important local planning document.

Once adopted, the Plan would provide a framework to help the community develop over the next 15 years. It accommodated the required minimum of 60 houses and included policies which would help the Parish Council in part to determine other aspects. A lot of consultation had been undertaken which had given the Parish Council a better

understanding of the community and future needs. It put the Parish Council in a far stronger position and was potentially an interesting time to be a Parish Councillor. He extended his thanks to all those who supported the Neighbourhood Plan process, particularly members of the working group.

Public Questions

The Chairman was asked to give clarification of the numbers required in the Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr Charman explained that both Land South of Meadowbank and the Greenways Nursery site had been approved by CDC. As such, these sites had been included in the Plan to ensure that the dwelling numbers counted towards the overall target of a minimum of 60; the Plan had just over this number. In view of the Greenways decision, and due to concern relating to the Glebe Field proposal, the Glebe Field site had now been removed from the Submission Plan.

He advised that the housing number was based upon current information. Although a resident highlighted that CDC's own plan was being reviewed and the District Council was being pushed for more housing, the Chairman advised that at the present time, there had been no indication that the Parish would be expected to take more housing. The Plan would be reviewed in 5 years' time and it would obviously be highlighted to CDC that the village had already accommodated over the allocated number.

A resident highlighted the legal challenge by a developer of the Loxwood Neighbourhood Plan. The Chairman gave reassurance that this had been taken into consideration. Cllr King gave explanation to the need for a screening opinion for a Strategic Environmental Assessment from the statutory consultees and to ensure due diligence, why this process was repeated after the removal of the site; unfortunately, it appeared that Loxwood may have received incorrect advice.

As a member of Keep Kirdford and Wisborough Green, Dr Jill Sutcliffe wished to highlight the following to the meeting:

- KKWG had been nominated for "Friends of the Earth Community Campaign Group of the Year". The result would be known in June.
- It had been suggested to both Kirdford and Wisborough Green Parish Councils that 11th March, the date that Celtique withdrew the appeal, should be nominated as 'Village Day' when the communities undertook a joint event.
- To raise funds for the appeal, KKWG had produced posters – wildlife in the Parishes and Boxal Bridge. Both were available after the meeting.
- A petition had been organised to 'Save Boxal Bridge'. This had been created to put pressure on WSCC to discuss the future of the bridge in public to ensure that any decisions were properly made. There was concern that the original report commissioned by WSCC was flawed; KKWG was now commissioning its own independent assessment and report.

As there were no further questions, the formal meeting was closed at 8.35 pm and Cllr Charman introduced Mr Dan Oakley, Dark Skies Leader & Ranger from the South Downs National Park Authority.

Mr Oakley gave explanation to the process of registering the South Downs National Park (SDNP) as a Dark Skies Reserve with the International Dark Skies Authority (IDA); there were 7 areas worldwide, which included an area in Exmoor. Over the last 3 years, a considerable amount of work had been undertaken to record light levels over the whole SDNP, which clearly identified the dark areas. The importance of having a buffer zone around the Park was also highlighted. He showed photographs of the impact of light pollution and gave details of what all communities could do to reduce the impact; use of low level light bulbs and downward positioning of lights. He was pleased that the SDNPA was also engaging with District and County Councils across the Park area, which were offering the project support. He encouraged all residents to check external lighting and sign up to the Dark Skies pledge on the SDNPA website.

Cllr Charman thanked Mr Oakley for an extremely interesting presentation and again reminded parishioners of the important of filling Council vacancies. There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9.15 pm and refreshments were served.

Chairman :

Date: