

Wisborough Green Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting

Date: Thursday 20th April 2023

Present: Parish Councillors:
Mr P Drummond (Chairman), Mr A Jackson, Mrs S Winship,
Mr T Worrall

Mrs L Davies, Parish Council Clerk
32 Members of Public

Apologies: Councillors - Ms L Bartley, Mr H True, Mr M Watson

The Chairman opened the meeting at 8.00 pm and extended a warm welcome to all.

A full report, which detailed the Parish Council's activities and finances for the past year, was available to collect at the back of the Hall and would also be provided on the village website. A summary report had also been prepared which would be distributed to all households in next month's parish magazine. He would therefore just run through a few key moments, take questions, with a short intermission before continuing to the History Society presentation, which he was looking forward to.

Chairman's Report – a review of the past year

For the past 18 months, the Parish Council carried a vacancy. He was delighted to report that for the forthcoming election there had been 9 nominations for the 9 spaces and as such it was a non-contested election; existing members were elected and a new councillor would be joining the team, Mark Ogden-Meade. Councillors in attendance were asked to stand to identify themselves.

A major boost in the year was the acquisition of the Songhurst Meadow open space and the installation of the perimeter path. It was a wonderful new area for the village and different to the Green. Two circuits of the path were exactly one mile; it is fabulous to see so many people walking, especially those parking in the car park and walking their children to school and exercising their dogs. In time, the trees would establish to make it an even more pleasant area.

The 40-mph buffer zone was installed on the west side of the village, Petworth Road. It had the desired effect and was slowing the traffic into the village. The Parish Council had worked hard on this application to West Sussex County Council (WSCC).

The completion of the drainage on the village green had not been without angst. The exceptionally dry spring had affected the grass germination, and the clay soil shrank back causing trenches to sink, which had an impact on the use of the area. This was addressed and the results of this expensive project were evident; football was played all winter when it would previously have been prevented by the weather and ground conditions. The drainage was working well, a fantastic result.

The pond project was also completed. The walls had been re-pointed and would be good for a lifetime.

In December 2021, a survey was undertaken for the 11-17 year olds in the village. The young people used a QR code to access the survey, which received a good number of responses. As a result, the cricket net would shortly be extended to the west side with the provision of a 5-a-side football goal and basketball net. When the cricket nets were removed for the winter, two basketball ball nets would be in place creating a mini court. A wooden box containing balls would be provided, with a combination lock known to those in the village.

The Speed Indicator Device, with a smiley/grumpy face, had been at several sites around the village for up to 3 weeks. It was working well, educating drivers and capturing data... until it was stolen on 31st March. A replacement would be purchased and fitted with a tracking device. The Chairman invited Cllr Winship to give further details. She explained that the SID captured data which provided the evidence for obtaining and encouraging police support. As a result of excessive speeding on the B2133, over 80 mph, the police were planning to attend with an enforcement camera and capture their own evidence which would support further attendance or WSCC Highways intervention. Volunteers would be out again soon now that the summer months were returning. The Community Speed Watch team was very effective. The Chairman emphasised that Cllr Winship should be congratulated on coordinating the programme, liaising with both the police and encouraging volunteers.

It was frustrating that the Chichester District Council (CDC) planners had yet to determine the Pavilion planning application; it had been well over a year since the application was submitted.

In addition to the specific projects, the Parish Council had other responsibilities such as grass cutting, tree care, general maintenance, undertaking inspections and risk assessments.

Looking after the Parish Council's funds and spending wisely was an important role for the Parish Council. The Council received Section 106 funding from the developer; a large expenditure was the installation of the Songhurst Meadow path.

This coming year the Parish Council had considered the budget extremely carefully in view of cost-of-living concerns. The addition of Songhurst Meadow increased maintenance costs, but on a positive, 2023 would be the last year for repaying the Old Workhouse loan which was taken out for the refurbishment. With the Songhurst Meadow funding, reserves had increased so a decision was made to invest £30,000 every 3 months on a 1-year term basis, which would earn interest but retain access for future projects.

There had been frustrations with the Local Plan Review and progress of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) Review. Initially the Parish had been allocated a further 25 houses, on top of the 68 provided in the extant NP. In 2020 this was increased to 40 and only in January of this year, was increased to 75. Although the Parish Council recognised the importance of having a Local Plan in place to offer protection against speculative development, the village was now expected to find space for 75 houses which would be a challenge. The Parish Council had engaged a planning consultant to help respond to the recent Local Plan consultation, raising questions about the number and impact upon the village, which could change the village beyond recognition.

He extended thanks to the NP Working Group who were working hard in challenging circumstances. They would be looking to see how 75 new homes could be accommodated and would be re-consulting with residents.

Many residents who did try to respond to the Local Plan consultation found it extremely difficult, almost as though it was designed to limit public participation. The Parish Council was writing to CDC as well as the examiner to highlight that many had been disenfranchised by the nature of the consultation.

The Chairman extended his thanks to the Parish Councillors for their hard work, highlighting that they were all volunteers. He expressed sincere appreciation to the NP Working Group, of which two members no longer lived in the village, which perhaps highlighted how much they cared about Wisborough Green. Finally, he thanked the Clerk for her hard work over the year.

Public Questions

Songhurst Meadow Dog Waste Bins: The Clerk explained that CDC was currently unable to empty the dog bins quoting staff shortages and lack of capacity on the truck which was weight restricted. The cost prohibited using a commercial company. Further enquiries were being made with CDC as the Parish Council was aware that these bins were required.

Tree Felling: The Clerk confirmed that the tree stump in School Road would be ground out and a replacement tree planted in the autumn.

Speed Enforcement on the B2133: Cllr Winship advised that the Speed Indicator Device positioned outside Bellmans picked up vehicles travelling at 70/80 mph. As a result of providing this evidence and making the police aware, a mobile camera van would be deployed to the road. The Police would then collect their own data and on this basis, it could lead to traffic calming measures being discussed with WSCC Highways. Being both a residential and commercial area, with numerous entrances off the road, there was potentially good justification.

Voluntary One-Way System in School Road: It was asked if the Parish Council had considered this being a permanent arrangement. The Clerk advised that enquiries with WSCC had been made. For it to be a permanent one way, signage would be required, not just at either end of the road but also arrows along the road. The Parish Council made the decision that the additional signage would impact upon the appearance of the Conservation Area on a permanent basis, but the one way was only required for morning drop off/afternoon pick up in school term time only. The Chairman explained that it was a balancing act: the current system generally worked, although occasionally people did get caught out. Parking in the village would always be an issue, never fully resolved but always with incremental improvements. The member of public asked that the one-way system be publicised more.

Kirdford Road Double Yellow Lines: The Clerk confirmed that the double yellows had been repainted to a shorter length; this had been reported to WSCC Highways and she would follow up. The Chairman highlighted that the difficulty with the double yellow lines was that there was no enforcement. The delay potentially related to WSCC being under pressure with numerous potholes.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending. As there were no further questions, the Parish Council section of the meeting was closed at 8.35 pm and refreshments served. Following a short interval, there was a presentation by the Wisborough Green History Society Chairman, Mr Andrew Strudwick.

Chairman:

Date: