

Wisborough Green Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting

Date: Wednesday 24th April 2024

Present: Parish Councillors:
Mr A Burbridge, Mr P Drummond (Chairman), Mr A Jackson, Mrs S Winship,
Mr T Worrall, Mr H True, Mr M Watson

30 Members of Public

Apologies: Mrs Louise Davies (Parish Council Clerk)
Mr M Ogden-Meade (Parish Councillor)
Mr & Mrs M Rankin
Revd & Mrs C Jenkins

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.00 pm and extended a warm welcome to all. Unfortunately, Louise was unable to attend the meeting due to a family member's ill health.

He would run through a few key moments, take questions, with a short intermission before continuing to the presentation by County Archivist, Wendy Walker, from the West Sussex County Council (WSCC) Record Office in Chichester.

Chairman's Report – a review of the past year

Last year was a quiet year without any major projects, which was an attempt to keep the Parish Council (PC) element of the Council Tax down. Chichester District Council (CDC) and WSCC were under huge budgetary pressure, with most of WSCC's budget taken up by child services and adult social care. Both councils were increasingly stretched and were cutting back to more or less their statutory requirements, so were withdrawing services that helped to keep Wisborough Green ship-shape. The PC had therefore taken the decision to take on some maintenance items and, although the Precept had an above inflation increase for this year, the expenditure was hyper-localised. Additional maintenance would include gully cleaning, road sweeping, sign cleaning and extra verge cuts.

One of the largest expenditure items for the village were the public loos on the Green. The PC's agreement with CDC expired at the end of March and the choice was between closure and the PC assuming full responsibility. From 1st April, the PC now owned and operated the public loos – a not inconsiderable expense. Prior to the previous agreement, the village was consulted, and the retention was supported.

Wisborough Green was a genuinely lovely place, the jewel in the crown of the north-east parishes with fabulous community spirit, kept afloat by numerous volunteers. Cllr Drummond had often said that the pond of volunteers was heavily over fished.

Last May an uncontested council election was held; 9 residents volunteers to fill the 9 spaces. The PC was pleased to welcome Mark Ogden-Meade and later in the year sad to lose Lucy Bartley. The PC hoped to co-opt a new member at next month's meeting.

There were a wide variety of volunteers to thank:

Wisborough Green Sports for organising a wonderful Coronation event on the Green which brought all ages together. Those who helped to organise RunWisborough, the School Fair, the Annual August Fete, the Neighbourhood Plan Review Team, the litter pickers – Mike and Helen

Rankin, Sarah Jackson and those who attended the bi-annual turnout. Neil Bowes who had been inspecting the playground every week for several years, and the Community Speed Watch team, run by the indefatigable Sophie Winship. Sophie's hard work recruiting and running this team was having an effect, not least that she had developed a great working relationship with the Police.

The Speed Indicator Device (SID) had now been operating for some time. It had helped in reducing speed and had been fantastic in capturing data which was passed onto the Police.

In summary, there were so many people that made Wisborough Green special. None more so than Priscilla Pinkham who was standing down as leader of Neighbourhood Watch after over 20 years in the role. Fair to say the nature of Neighbourhood Watch had changed with the advent of WhatsApp groups and modern means of communication, but Priscilla had been on the case. Priscilla was thanked and presented with some flowers by the Vice Chairman.

The Chairman referred to the many issues that kept reoccurring in the village, year after year, month after month, as Groundhog Day issues. These included village parking but especially along the west road, school drop off and collection, speeding, maintenance of the hardest working turf in West Sussex (the Green), litter, and now a new concern, dog fouling. This was a major issue on Songhurst Meadow and the PC struggled to understand why. The PC had been discussing what it could and should do at length. The Chairman highly recommended that residents read the PC meeting minutes and it would become apparent that the PC faced the same issues as had been happening for years. Much of what the PC did went unnoticed, but it was instrumental in keeping Wisborough Green as good as it was.

Over the course of the year the PC had highs and lows. One particular low, the village's Sword of Damocles, was the threat of development that hung over the village. The Neighbourhood Plan Review Team had a plan ready to go but the constant delays to CDC's Local Plan, followed by significant changes, had rendered this work all but worthless. The PC was having to put in an inordinate amount of work to prepare a representation to the Planning Inspector in an attempt to challenge Wisborough Green's allocation.

The PC picked up on Facebook controversy around the Stable Field planning application being permitted. Cllr Andrew Jackson would answer any specific questions, however, yes, it was on a green gap, but the site was put to the village in the last NP consultation, and it was the village that chose it. A condition of the development was that the balance of the site, which maintained part of the green gap, be transferred to the PC. Consequently, it would never be developed and would provide additional sports practice ground. The PC could not prevent development but could influence where development occurred, in consultation with the village.

There was still no news on the new pavilion which was on hold in planning due to the water neutrality concerns in the area.

So to finish, the Chairman briefly mentioned a successful achievement last year, the extension of the cricket net hard surface. Following a youth consultation in 2021, plans were made to create an area that could be used all year for informal ball games, avoiding the mud. Extending the area and including a five-a-side goal with a second basketball net had, judging by its use, proven to be a big success.

The Chairman explained that there had been a slight mix-up as Andrew Griffith MP had asked to attend the meeting. He asked for a show of hands if people would be interested in attending a special evening to discuss what he did and a no holds barred Question and Answer session; this was supported.

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. It was worth noting that the loan the PC took out to fund the renovation of the Old Workhouse flat, from the Public Works Loan Board, was repaid in November, and the PC was now investing any surplus funds in a rolling programme of one-year fixed bonds to produce a modicum of extra income.

Public Questions

Carters Way Resident: raised the poor state of the A272 through the village. He said he had contacted WSCC in this regard. He expressed his displeasure at the "disgraceful state of the road". PD encouraged him to keep "badgering". AJ said the PC shared his frustration and pointed out the area of the road near Meadowbank had underground springs which complicates the repair process and he was aware that despite the resurfacing of the road was "out for tender" there is no finite plan.

School Road Resident: raised the issue of the recent car fire that took place in School Road and asked if any information was available. SW responded that, to her knowledge in light of conversations with LD, the police believed the car was involved in criminal activity. LD had made highways aware of the damage to the road surface.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending. As there were no further questions, the Parish Council section of the meeting was closed at 7.35 pm and refreshments served. Following a short interval, there was a presentation by the County Archivist, Wendy Walker.

Chairman:

Date: