

LURGASHALL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held in the Village Hall on Thursday, 14 May 2009

Present: Mr R E J Cooper (Chairman), Mr J S Bonnett, Mr N P Jowett, Mrs A Martin-Jenkins, Dr A H J Tate, Dr P J H Wilding, Mrs R D Wood and Mr P J Széll (Clerk)

Also present: Mr C Dunton, Mr J Andrews and four members of the public

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 8.05 pm.

31/09 - APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr K M Caird and Mr G D J R Sharp.

32/09 – ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Mr R E J Cooper was proposed by Mr Jowett and seconded by Dr Tate. There being no other nominations, Mr Cooper was elected by consensus and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office (see Annex A).

33/09 – ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN: APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND REPRESENTATIVES; SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- Vice-Chairman. Dr A H J Tate was proposed by Mr Bonnett and seconded by Dr Wilding. There being no other nominations, Dr Tate was elected by consensus.
- Planning Committee. It was agreed that this Committee (a) would be responsible for considering, and commenting on, all Lurgashall planning applications on behalf of the Council and (b) would be composed of Mr N P Jowett, Mrs A Martin-Jenkins, Dr A H J Tate, Dr P H J Wilding and Mrs R D Wood, with Dr Wilding as Chairman. It was further decided that the Chairman of the Planning Committee would invite all members of the Council to participate in meetings at which the Committee was due to consider particularly contentious or sensitive applications.
- Finance Committee. It was agreed that this Committee (a) would, in addition to making budget proposals to the Council, be responsible for making recommendations to it on donations and grants and (b) would be composed of Mr J S Bonnett, Mr K M Caird, Mrs Martin-Jenkins and Dr P J H Wilding, with Mrs Martin-Jenkins as Chairman.
- Recreation Committee. It was agreed that this Committee (a) would be responsible for supervising, and for making recommendations to the Council on, the Parish's footpaths, bridleways, village green (including the pond and bus shelter), playground and allotments, as well as for making recommendations to the Council on risk assessment and (b) would be composed of Mr J S Bonnett, Mr K M Caird, Mr G D A R Sharp and Dr A H J Tate, with Mr Caird as Chairman.
- General Purposes Committee. It was agreed that this Committee (a) would be responsible for acting on the Council's behalf with regard to matters requiring action between Council meetings and (b) would be composed of the Chairman of the Council, plus the Chairmen of the Finance, Planning and Recreation Committees.

- Special responsibilities. Special responsibilities were agreed as follows:
 - *Systems audit* Dr A H J Tate
 - *Bottle bank* Mr R E J Cooper
- Representatives. It was agreed that Mrs R D Wood would be the Council's representative on the Village Hall Management Committee and that Mr R E J Cooper would be its representative on the North-West Frontier Community Forum.
- It was further agreed that any highways questions that required action between meetings of the Council would be handled by the Clerk, guided as necessary by the Chairman.

34/09 – CODE OF CONDUCT

The Chairman reminded members of their responsibilities under the Code of Conduct.

35/09 – MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

36/09 – MATTERS ARISING

1. Waste skip. The skip hired for 25 April had been well used and left the village pretty full. The Council asked the Clerk to arrange another skip for the end of September.
2. Donations. Letters of thanks had been received from all five organisations to which the Council had sent donations in March.

37/09 – OPEN FORUM

No matters were raised.

38/09 - COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

- Among the matters covered in Mr Duncton's report were (a) the Fundamental Service Review (it was tough and would entail severe staff and property cutbacks by the County Council over the coming three years), (b) the opening of the new waste treatment plant at Ford, (c) the efforts being made, within limited resources, to keep the County's roads in reasonable condition (he would continue to press for necessary repairs and to advance constituents' concerns about speeding on rural lanes), (d) the state of Hillgrove Lane (little point in doing too many repairs till the building works at Kings Copse were over; hopefully the developer would fund most, if not all, such remedial work when the time came), and (e) grit boxes for icy roads (he would take this up with the Highways Department as soon as possible).
- Mr Andrews too reported on the severe financial cutbacks facing his Council in the coming three years. As with the County Council, a radical Services review was currently in progress. On a more encouraging note, he was able to record significant District Council achievements over the past year on concessionary bus fares, processing benefits claims and development of rural and affordable homes.

39/09 - FINANCE

1. Draft accounts for the year ended 31 March 2009. Members considered the accounts for 2008-09 (see Annex B) and they were duly approved.
2. Annual return
Section 1 – Statement of Accounts. Members considered the figures set out in this section of the Council's annual return. The Clerk provided explanations of significant variations from the previous year. Members were satisfied with the figures and explanations and duly approved the signing of the section by the Chairman and Clerk.

Section 2 – Annual Governance Statement. Members considered the items in this section of the annual return, agreed that each could be responded to positively and duly approved the signing of the section by the Chairman and Clerk. In this context, the Council decided that, in light of the actions listed in Annex C below, its 2008-09 audit procedures had been adequate and effective.

3. Internal Audit and Auditor. Members noted that Mr James Tree, the Internal Auditor, had given the Council a clean report for the year ended 31 March 2009. The Council requested the Clerk to convey its gratitude to Mr Tree for auditing its accounts and for the speed with which he had carried out the work.

4. Insurance cover and valuation of assets. Members were provided with details of the current valuations of the individual fixed assets owned by the Council and the insurance cover proposed by Allianz for the coming twelve months. The Clerk explained that, whilst checking what additional premium would be required to cover the replacement access fence to the allotments, he had learned that in the case of fences Allianz policies indemnified Councils only “against damage of, or to the property by, impact of any vehicle or animal.” Since only one of the Council’s fences was vulnerable to damage by vehicles and any damage by animals to them would be the responsibility of the owners or tenants of the adjacent field, Members decided that its insurance cover should be reduced to exclude all the allotment and playground fences, save for the metal fence along the Greengates frontage of the playground. For the rest, Members agreed that the insurance cover proposed for by Allianz 2009-10 was satisfactory and should be accepted. They also decided that the Finance Committee should (a) review the replacement valuation of the Council’s fixed assets and (b) decide if there was need to insure the Parish’s black and white signposts.

5. Current financial statement. The Clerk distributed:

- (a) a statement of the position of the Council’s bank accounts, incorporating details of cheques that needed to be issued and for which approval was sought; and
- (b) figures setting out the Council’s income and expenditure against its budget for the current financial year.

The Council approved payment of all the cheques listed in Annex D, below. It also decided to transfer £600 from the Capital Deposit Account to its Reserve Account (ie the Council’s contingencies fund).

40/09 – PLANNING

1. Applications. Dr Wilding reported that three planning applications had been notified to the Council since the last meeting – ie those concerning Springfield and the barns at High Hampstead Farm referred to in paragraph 2, below, and the one listed in this paragraph. The Committee had no comments, concerns or objections with regard to any of these applications.

LG/09/01198/DOM: Becketts Farm, Roundhurst Lane

Erection of a porch, wc and boot room

2. Decisions. Five decisions had been received from CDC since the last meeting:

LG/09/00178/LBC: 163 Bishops Holt

Amendment to planning permission LG/08/03021/LBC for a single storey rear conservatory
PERMIT

LG/09/00179/DOM: 163 Bishops Holt

Amendment to planning permission LG/08/01626/LBC for a single storey rear conservatory
PERMIT

LG/09/00358/FUL: Pavilion, Jays Lane

Construction of new dwelling following demolition of existing

PERMIT

LG/09/00296/DOM: Springfield, Hillgrove

Loft conversion. Replace conservatory and change flat roof for pitch roof on garage

WITHDRAWN

LG/09/00601/FUL: Barns at High Hampstead Farm

Proposed agricultural building to store implements and animal feed

PERMIT

3. Other planning matters.

Woodcraft Park Farm. The Chairman reported that the District Council had responded to the Wimbledon Woodcraft Folk's enquiry about who could lawfully camp at the Park Farm site. Whilst noting that the Woodcraft Folk's National organisation currently held a (time-limited) camping exemption certificate and hence could organise camps at the site, it would still have to satisfy the overall conditions regarding total number of campers and days for which the site may be used in any one year. The Chairman added that a careful count was being made under both these heads and the District Council would be kept informed as necessary.

41/09 – HIGHWAYS

1. Signposts. The Gospel Green road sign had been removed by the County Council's contractors for repair. They had informed the Clerk that the repair was more complicated than at first seen but all being well the post (which would also be repainted) should be back in place by June. Members thanked Mr Dunton for pressing the Highways Department to deal with this comparatively minor matter as quickly as possible.

2. Resurfacing. Members took note that Jobsons Lane, the Quell and Fernden Lane (as far as Meadow Cottage) had been resurfaced in early May. Members were reminded that at the Safe Lanes meetings in 2004, parishioners had argued that if Jobsons Lane had not had a broken white line painted along the middle of it drivers would proceed more carefully and at less speed. By 5 votes to 1, the Council decided that the Clerk should write to the Highways Department requesting that the line not be replaced (save at road junctions). Mr Dunton agreed to make similar representations.

3. Site of Greenfield Bungalow. Since the District Council's land drainage officer had made no progress on stopping the constant stream of water from the bungalow site, the Chairman had reported the matter to Southern Water; it had acted promptly to stem the flow.

42/09 - RECREATION

In Mr Caird's absence, the Clerk presented the report of the Recreation Committee meeting held on 9 April 2009, updating it as necessary. Members added various comments. The Council took note of the report as updated and endorsed various decisions arising from it, as indicated in the following summary:

1. Footpaths and bridleways.

Mr Bonnett had reported that two tracks adjacent to the Quell remained a problem. The byway from the Quell to Leverton continued to be used by motor vehicles which made the track worse and in some places dangerous. He remained of the view that "No motorised vehicles" signs were needed. Regarding the bridlepath from the Quell to Roundhurst, the bypass created at one place was to be welcomed, but there were still muddy areas. The Recreation Committee had agreed that Mr Bonnett should continue to monitor the situation and, if necessary, liaise with Mr Mike Oakland to see what SDJC could do to improve the two tracks.

2. Playground. There was nothing to report.

3. Allotments.

(a) Plot fees for 2009. 20 out of the 25 plots had been let and the rental for each had been paid.

(b) Best kept allotment. Members agreed that the Council, possibly working in conjunction with the

Horticultural Club, should offer a prize annually for the Best Kept Allotment or, maybe, the Most Improved Allotment. The Chairman of the Horticultural Club had expressed support for the idea in principle but had been clear that the Club could not undertake to organise the event. Members felt that (i) the most appropriate prize could be a small cup or shield (to a value of, say, £30) and free rental of the winning plot for the following year and (ii) the judging (by Mr Gary Prentice or the allotment holders themselves) and presentation might take place at an afternoon or early evening event at the allotments during July (ie independently of the Horticultural Club's annual show). The Recreation Committee was requested to consider the proposal further on the basis of these broad conclusions with a view to the first award being made in 2010.

4. Village Green.

(a) Parking. Parking around the edges of the Green remained a problem but there had been no progress since the last meeting. With Lurgashall being included in the new South Downs National Park, vehicle numbers could grow yet more in future so the impact of cars and parking were likely to become a priority issue for the parish in due course.

(b) Replacement tree. Leconfield had planted a hornbeam sapling (to replace the diseased horse chestnut) adjacent to the bench north of the Old School and had told the Council there would be no charge for the sapling or for planting it.

43/09 – PARISH ACTION PLANS

Mr Bonnett said he was still analysing how other Sussex parishes had gone about preparing their Plans and what their Plans contained. He would report back when his review was complete.

44/09 – MEETING DATES FOR 2009-10

Meeting dates for the coming year were agreed as follows:

Parish Council

2009	-	9 July	10 September	12 November
2010	-	14 January	11 March	13 May (Annual Meeting of the Parish Council)

The Annual Parish Meeting would take place on 13 May 2010.

Recreation Committee

2009	-	11 June	12 August (Wednesday)	8 October	10 December
2010	-	11 February	8 April		

Finance Committee

2009	-	25 November (Wednesday)			
------	---	-------------------------	--	--	--

45/09 – CORRESPONDENCE

1. Parking around the Green. Mrs Jenny Stephenson had written to the Chairman expressing concern about the deterioration in the state of the Green. At weekends, and sometimes weekday lunchtimes as well, the east side of the Green looked like a public car park, with cars parking on the grass and eroding verges and creating potholes. If the Noah's Ark had a parking problem it was for the brewery to solve it, for instance by turning the pub's unused rear garden into a car park. Grants might be obtained to lay special matting through which grass grows along the east of the Green. Moreover, she understood that the Council, together with Leconfield, had the right to prevent all parking on the Green. The Chairman said he had spoken to Mrs Stephenson and described the continuing efforts the Council was making to tackle the very problems she had highlighted. It was easier to describe the problems than to find workable solutions to them. One point was clear, however; the Parish Council was not in a position to make an order banning or restricting parking around the Green.

2. Lurgashall's history. The Chairman had received a letter from Miss Julia Doggart proposing the creation of a group to gather Parish history. As long-time residents aged, important details about Lurgashall past would be lost for ever unless there was a community project to gather as much information as possible. Her letter offered some ideas on getting such an exercise moving. Members' initial reaction was supportive.

3. BT callbox at Gospel Green. The Clerk had been informed by the District Council that BT had written to say this kiosk was to be converted into a cashless payphone. The inference was that BT's plan, announced in 2008, to remove the box had been dropped or at least shelved.

4. Equality Bill. With the Government's publication of this new Bill, the Council – along with all other public bodies in the country – had been reminded of its duty to be clear about what the significant race, disability and gender issues were for it and its obligation to take appropriate and proportionate action to deliver better equality outcomes.

46/09 - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Health and Welfare Fair. Mr Bonnett described an event the Village Hall Management Committee was planning for later in the year at which a number of agencies operating in the area of health and welfare would have representatives and/or stalls available to offer assistance and advice to parishioners, and especially to those who were elderly, isolated or infirm, on a wide range of practical issues such as social security benefits, grants, home security, housing, health care and energy efficiency. Mr Bonnett had recently attended such an event in North Mundham and been impressed. Whilst the Village Hall Management Committee was ready to run the event, he felt the Parish Council ought to be involved in some way. Members welcomed Mr Bonnett's initiative and agreed his request that the Council meet the cost of providing tea and biscuits for the Fair (to a sum of up to £50).

47/09 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Parish Council would take place on Thursday, 9 July 2009 commencing at 7.30 pm.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.50 pm.

PJS:18/05/09