

LURGASHALL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held in the Village Hall on Thursday, 9 July 2009

Present: Mr R E J Cooper (Chairman), Mr J S Bonnett, Mr K M Caird, 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 J Andrews

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7.35 pm.

48/09 - APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr N P Jowett and Mr C Dunton.

49/09 – CODE OF CONDUCT

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

50/09 – MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

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

51/09 – MATTERS ARISING

Waste skip. The Clerk reported that a skip had been ordered for Saturday 26 September 2009.

52/09 – OPEN FORUM

No matters were raised.

53/09 – COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

Mr Andrews's report appears at annex A.

54/09 – FINANCE

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 B, below.

55/09 - PLANNING

1. Applications. Dr Wilding reported that four planning applications had been considered by the Planning Committee since the Council's last meeting. The Committee had no objections with regard to any of them but in the case of Plash Barn Farm it had forwarded suggestions to the District Council on some detailed aspects of the applicants' design.

LG/09/01822/PLD: Upper Barn House, Park Farm

Installing a window in the main bedroom of the cottage

LG/09/02097/FUL: Valewood House, Bell Vale Lane

Erection of double garage

LG/09/02422/LBC: Plash Barn Farm, off Jobson's Lane

Single storey extension

LG/09/02430/DOM: Plash Barn Farm, off Jobson's Lane
Single storey extension

2. Decisions. One decision had been received from the District Council since the last meeting:

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

Erection of a porch, wc and boot room
PERMIT

3. Other planning matters

(a) Site visits. Dr Wilding reported that the Planning Committee aimed in future to carry out more site visits than in the past, especially in cases where Members were not familiar with the property in question because of its concealed location or the nature of the development proposed.

(b) Impacts on views from Blackdown. Mr Bonnett reminded Members of the Committee of the importance of checking for any adverse impact of proposed developments when viewed from the Temple of the Winds and, where appropriate, of notifying the National Trust in the hope that it would join the Parish Council in objecting to the District Council. Mr Bonnett's immediate concern was the "eyesore" created by the ongoing building works at the King's Copse site (a development that had been approved despite strong objections of the both the Parish and District Councils).

56/09 HIGHWAYS

1. Signposts. The Clerk reported that at the end of June he had asked the Highways Department about progress on returning the black and white road sign at Gospel Green but they had not yet got back to him.

2. Resurfacing. After representations from Mr Dunton and the Council, the Highways Department had instructed its contractors not to re-place the centre white line painted along Jobson's Lane. The Clerk reported that, despite this, the contractors had started to reinstate the line and were stopped only after half the job had been done. The Highways Department had assured the Council that the contractors would be deleting the line at their own expense during August.

3. Fly tipping. Fly tipping was on the increase again in the Parish. Three instances were reported to the District Council in June – near White's Green, on Tennyson's Lane near Aldworth and on Jay's Lane. Each had been cleared away promptly.

4. Greenfield Bungalow. After a number of telephone calls to Southern Water from the Chairman and Clerk, the water supply to the Greenfield Bungalow site was eventually cut off in late June, thus ending months of leakage onto Northhurst Lane from a damaged communication pipe.

5. A283 junction. The Chairman had spoken to Mr Dunton about the traffic hazard created by the long grass and spreading hedge at the point where the road from the village meets the A283 and, as a result, some remedial action had been taken by the Highways Department.

5709 - RECREATION

Mr Caird presented the report of the Recreation Committee meeting held on 11 June 2009. It was expanded on by the Chairman's report on his meeting with allotment holders on 6 July. Members added various comments. The Council took note of the Recreation Committee's report as updated and endorsed various decisions arising from it, as indicated in the following summary:

1. Footpaths and bridleways.

(a) Byway on The Quell. Mr Bonnett reported that he had spoken to Mr David Elliott (National Trust) and Mr Mike Oakland about the condition of the byway at the top of The Quell and that Mr Oakland had contacted Mr Bruce Middleton (South Downs Joint Committee - SDJC) with the result that they were all going to meet on site, together with anyone else from the Council who wished to attend, to assess what needed to be done to bring the track back to an acceptable state.

(b) Footpath clearance. It was reported that SDJC's annual footpath clearance had just started in the Hillgrove area. This was welcome as a number of the Parish's public tracks were becoming overgrown.

2. Playground. Someone had been scratching the recently repainted uprights on the swings; the Chairman said he would keep a look-out for such vandalism. The play area continued to be well

maintained. Just once, at the end of May, the grass had become very overgrown but it was accepted this was probably a one-off oversight. RoSPA's annual report on the play area was awaited. If it arrived by 12 August, it should be considered by the Recreation Committee.

3. Allotments. On the Recreation Committee's recommendation, the Chairman had invited allotment holders to the Village Hall to discuss ways in which they might be encouraged and supported as a group. He had told them of the Council's idea about instituting a prize in 2010 for the "Best Kept Allotment" or, maybe, "Most Improved Allotment" and the willingness of the Village Shop to sell surplus produce grown at the allotments on the basis that only what was sold would be paid for and that the rate would be the amount the shop would otherwise pay to a wholesaler. The plot holders present at the meeting were not, the Chairman said, keen on the idea of a Best Kept/Most Improved allotment prize. They felt such a competition would detract from what for them was essentially an individual, but cooperative, activity. On the other hand, no-one had voiced strong views for or against the proposal about the sale of surplus produce via the Village Shop. Most viewed the present system of informal self-regulation by the plot holders themselves as far preferable to the bureaucracy that would be entailed in running an allotment holders group and the drawing up of byelaws to govern plot holders' behaviour. Varying degrees of interest were expressed in (a) laying a hedge along the west and south sides of the allotments to act as a wind-break, (b) bonfires to dispose of waste arising from working the plots and (c) providing the allotments with a picnic table and/or bench – subject always to cost and to such actions being acceptable to Leconfield. The Clerk was checking these matters with Leconfield and would report on the answers to the Recreation Committee meeting on 12 August 2009.

4. Village Green.

(a) Parking. Mrs Martin-Jenkins commented that it was sad so little progress had been made on stopping damage by parked cars to the grass verges near the pond. Everywhere else around the Green looked so attractive and well cared for. Greater pressure should be put on the Highways Department to act. Mr Bonnett suggested that perhaps the Council should prepare its own plan of what needed to be done, obtain quotations for the work and then ask the County Council for an appropriate financial contribution. Mr Caird replied that pressure had been applied to the County Council but there were issues about precisely how much the County Council, in its capacity as Highways Authority, was responsible for and about the amount of funding available for such work in the current financial situation. The problem caused by parking near the Noah's Ark was one of the most difficult issues facing the Council and, for that reason, it would continue to be a key item on the Recreation Committee's agenda.

(b) Telephone kiosk. The Clerk had notified BT in May about recent damage to the call box on the Green (ie to the door stay, door handle and internal light). After almost two months and a number of reminders, BT had just carried out all the repairs.

(c) Bus shelter. The bus shelter needed some minor repairs. Quotations would be sought.

58/09 – PARISH ACTION PLANS

Mr Bonnett said he had studied a number of Parish Action Plans and spoken to a cross section of people who had been closely involved in drawing them up and, subsequently, in operating them. Their reactions had been mixed. Some viewed their Parish Plan as a very beneficial document, both as a means of codifying the work the Council was, and should, be doing and as a framework for monitoring its performance. Action Plans, some said, added weight to a Council's opinions and actions and provided legitimacy for the size of its precept and when it applied for grants or made representations to other Councils. Others saw downsides. Preparation of an Action Plan entailed a considerable amount of work and many meetings and required detailed input from a good number of parishioners and parish organisations. The project needed to have at its head one or two people with the time and energy to see it through to a successful conclusion. The starting point was usually the preparation, distribution and collation of replies to a detailed questionnaire but if, as in the case of certain West Sussex parishes, the response level to the questionnaire was only 5 to 14%, the value and legitimacy of the Plan might be in doubt. Some parishes that had decided not to draw up an Action Plan had taken the view that they already achieved all that their parishioners wanted and expected of them and that the extra layer of a Parish Action Plan would provide no added value. After a general discussion of Mr Bonnett's survey, Members concluded that it could be useful to hold a meeting in

the Autumn, to which all parishioners should be invited, so as to learn more about what was entailed in drawing up Parish Plans, to find out what other parishes felt about them and to identify, in a preliminary way, the likely degree of interest in Lurgashall going down the same path.

59/09 - CORRESPONDENCE

There were no communications that needed to be drawn to the Council's notice.

60/09 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. Lurgashall's history. In reply to a question from Dr Tate, the Chairman said the new Parish history group had met for the first time in June. Seven or eight villagers had attended. One outcome was that one or two people would visit the West Sussex Record Office to find out what material on Lurgashall was available in the archives.
2. Northchapel Primary School. Mrs Martin-Jenkins reported that, after four terms, the School's Acting Head had been appointed permanent Head Teacher. This was, she said, excellent news for the School, as was the understanding that the recent OFSTED inspection was likely to result in a good report on the School. The Chairman asked Mrs Martin-Jenkins to convey the Council's congratulations to the new Head Teacher.

61/09 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Parish Council would take place on Thursday, 10 September 2009 commencing at 7.30 pm.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.00 pm.

PJS:13/07/09