LURGASHALL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held in the Village Hall on Thursday, 13 September 2007

Present: Mr R E J Cooper (Chairman), Mrs J Boxall, Mr N P Jowett, Mrs A Martin-Jenkins, Mr M H Oakland, Dr A H J Tate and Mr P J Széll (Clerk).

Also present were Mr C Duncton and Dr P Mackey.

72/07 - APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Apologies for absence had been received from Dr Wilding, Mr Sharp and Mr Caird.

73/07 – CODE OF CONDUCT
The Chairman reminded members of their responsibilities under the Code of Conduct.

74/07 - MINUTES OF LAST MEETING
The minutes of the last meeting were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

75/07 – MATTERS ARISING
There was nothing to report.

76/07 – OPEN FORUM
No matters were raised.

77/07 – COUNCILLORS' REPORTS
Mr Duncton reported that, following up concerns voiced at the July Parish Council meeting and in a letter received from a local resident, he and a senior County Council highways official, had driven along Jobson's Lane to assess the potholes and the problem of damage to verges by heavy lorries. On the former, he accepted that there were a couple of bad potholes near the Quell but overall the lane was in good condition. About the latter, there was not much that could be done. Supply lorries had to reach destinations in the area and for businesses it made economic sense to use large lorries to visit a series of sites rather than small vehicles. The so-called Petworth lorry ban could not the reason for more heavy vehicles using the lane as the plan had been shelved, but satellite navigation might be a contributory factor. Mr Duncton and the official had also looked at the Village Green in light of the recent concerns about flooding after heavy rainfall.

Dr Mackey reported that he had decided to "red card" the Greenfields planning application because of its proximity to, and likely impact on, the conservation area. It would, therefore, be decided by the Development Committee rather than just by officials. The track recently created in the woods through which the footpath from the Village Green to Windfallwood Common runs had caused some concern because it significantly broadened a stretch of the footpath. Mr Oakland informed the meeting, however, that an owner was entitled to widen footpaths that ran across his land provided they remained walkable.

78/07 – FINANCE
Current financial statement. The Clerk distributed and explained:

(a) a statement on 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 the budget for the current financial year.

The Council approved payment of all the cheques listed in the Annex below. Speaking as Treasurer of the Village Hall Management Committee, Mrs Martin-Jenkins expressed thanks to the Council for its generous grant of £1000.

79/07 – PLANNING AND HIGHWAYS

(a) **Planning**

1. Applications. In Dr Wilding's absence, the Clerk reported that four planning applications had been considered since the Council's last meeting – ie the applications concerning Ramsfold Cottage and Stable Cottage which are referred to in paragraph 2, below, and the two listed in this paragraph. The Planning Committee had major comments and concerns on one of these applications, namely Greenfields. Copies of its letter to the District Council, dated 29 August 2007, setting out those comments and concerns were circulated to those present at the meeting:

LG/07/02091/DOM: Parkhurst House, Jobson's Lane
Proposed alterations and improvements to existing garage to provide ancillary accommodation

LG/07/04239/FUL: Greenfields, Lurgashall
Demolition and removal of existing dwelling and ancillary buildings and construction of replacement dwelling and associated landscaping

2. Decisions. Eight decisions had been received from Chichester DC since the last meeting:

LG/07/02213/FUL: High Hampstead, High Hampstead Lane
Change of use and alteration of barn to form holiday lets including use for vocational residential courses and owner's accommodation PERMIT

LG/07/02816/FUL: King's Copse, Hillgrove Lane
Replacement of residential mobile home with new dwelling and garage/garden store (revision to planning permission LG/04/03950/FUL) REFUSE

LGFH/07/03048/DOM: Upperfold Farm, Lickfold Road
Alterations to existing ancillary accommodation. (Amendment to permitted proposal FHLG/02/01471/DOM) PERMIT

LG/07/02858/DOM: Leverton, Fernden Lane
Creation of a tennis court to be cut into the hill to the south of the property PERMIT

LG/07/03196/FUL: High Hampstead Farm, High Hampstead Lane
Agricultural barns PERMIT

LG/07/03245/DOM: Ramsfold Cottage, Roundhurst Lane
Erect single storey side extension to existing house; erect carport (with workroom over) as extension to existing garage/workroom and storage area PERMIT

LG/07/03079/DOM: Stable Cottage, Dickhurst House, Petworth Road
1 no. dormer window REFUSE

LG/07/04293/PNO: Land north-west of Blackdown House, Fernden Lane

Erection of prefabricated agricultural machinery store with workshop
PRIOR APPROVAL NOT REQUIRED

3. Other planning related matters. In response to an enquiry from DEFRA, the Council had written informing the Department that it wished to maintain its objection to the issuing of a Public Health Act 1936 exemption certificate to the Woodcraft Folk.

(b) **Highways**

4. Potholes. The potholes at the entrance to Greengates had been filled but the Clerk had been informed that those on Jobson's Lane were not yet far enough up the Highways Department's list to receive attention. As a result, however, of Mr Duncton's recent site visit (see item 77/07, above), it was hoped that at least some of the remaining potholes would now move up the list.

5. Track to Greenland Farm. The Highways Department had written to the Clerk saying that clearance of the blocked culvert where the track to Greenland Farm meets Jobson's Lane was the responsibility of the adjacent landowner, not WSCC.

6. Lickfold Bridge. The Clerk reported that the Highways Department had contacted him regarding the Parish's concern about the absence of steps at the northern end of the raised footbridge and had proposed a site meeting to assess the problem

80/07 – RECREATION

1. Recreation Committee report. In Mr Caird's absence, the Clerk presented the report of the Recreation Committee's meeting held on 9 August. The Council took note of the report and reached various conclusions and decisions with regard to it, as follows:

(a) Footpaths and bridleways. There were no major issues to consider.

(b) Playground: Mrs Boxall had reported that the ground maintenance contractors continued to do a good job. She, Mr Caird and the Clerk had met on site on 30 July to consider the detail of RoSPA's annual safety inspection and five-yearly risk assessment evaluation. The "improved maintenance and condition [of the playground] since the last inspection" had been noted by the inspector. His two reports gave the play area good ratings overall (thus reflecting the repairs carried out on the site after last year's report). In light of this, the Committee had recommended, and the Council agreed, that no remedial actions would be needed in 2007-08, but that a budget allocation should be made for 2008-09 to provide for some maintenance (eg repainting) and, if required, to upgrade some of the equipment.

(c) Allotments: There were no major issues to consider.

(d) The Green: After considering a report by the Clerk on his discussion with WSCC's Highways Department about the causes of flooding at the east end of the Green after heavy rain, the Committee had recommended to the Council that the old ditch in front of The Malt House should be opened up so that it could once again take water flowing down from Northhurst Lane; at the same time the ditch along the wall adjacent to the Old Rectory should be cleared. The total estimated cost was £350. The Council decided, however, not to approve money for this work unless and until it was clear who was responsible for the ditches in question, that digging them out would solve the flooding problem on a long-term basis and that the spoil would not create an eyesore around the Green.

The Council expressed its gratitude to members of the Cricket Club who had cleared up the damage done to the Green by a Greene King delivery lorry on 25 July. Also, it took note that the Cricket Club was considering trading in its existing mower (now five years old) and

supplementing its replacement by also buying a small tractor with chains so that the Green could be mowed in winter after heavy rainfall. This latter cost could not, however, be justified unless the tractor was also used for maintaining the football field.

(e) Risk assessment. There was nothing to report on this occasion. The Recreation Committee was requested to carry out a risk assessment of the Parish Council's sites and equipment and report back to the Council's November meeting..

(f) Football field. There had been no developments regarding the lease of the football field.

(h) Replacement seat around new chestnut tree. At the Committee's request, the Clerk had contacted the Leconfield Estate and W L West and Sons further about replacing the circular seat around the chestnut tree on the small triangle, notwithstanding the tree's possibly fatal disease. Leconfield would carry out a further check on the tree but, subject to that, felt a removable seat was a sensible approach. West's costs for making and installing a sectional seat, capable of being dismantled in the event of the tree having to be felled, would be met by a private donor. The Council agreed that, subject to the donor's agreement, the project should go ahead.

81/07 – STRENGTHENING COMMUNICATION WITH PARISHIONERS

Mr Oakland introduced his paper setting out a strategy for strengthening communication between Councillors and members of the Parish. At a time when voting at both national and local level was low and there was widespread reluctance to stand for election to local councils, it was important for the Council to do what it could to ensure that it was as aware as reasonably possible of the views and concerns of parishioners. With a view to building closer ties with them, Mr Oakland suggested a process whereby individual Councillors would be responsible for a number of households within the parish and for making it known to them that he or she could be contacted about any issue they wished to raise. With 220 households in the Parish and, say, seven Councillors being allocated a group of households, Members would have around 30 households each. Such a strategy would, of course, require an extra commitment from members but, if successful, it would have the benefits of demonstrating the Council's desire to be aware of parishioners' views, give a higher profile to the Council and individual Members, make the Council more approachable and, most importantly, increase the Council's chances of learning about the concerns of those it represents.

Members welcomed the proposal in principle but were concerned about the additional demands it would make on their time. At present, when parishioners had concerns they made contact directly with the Chairman or the Clerk. Was that not sufficient? What added benefit would parishioners get from acting via their "local" or assigned councillor? Besides the *Parish Newsletter*, which was delivered to every household in the Parish, provided parishioners with regular and up-to-date summaries of what the Council was doing. In reply, Mr Oakland, stressed that the *Newsletter* reports were concerned with spreading news outwards from the Council to the Parish whereas his proposal concerned incoming views and concerns from parishioners to the Councillors. It would, he added, be for each Councillor to decide for himself how best to establish a relationship with the households assigned to him – eg, by letter, telephone call or a note through the letter box.

The Council decided that the Chairman should promote the concept behind Mr Oakland's proposal by including in a forthcoming *Newsletter* a message reminding parishioners of the work done by the Parish Council and of the readiness of Councillors to hear and bring to the full Council any views and concerns they may have on matters falling within the Council's functions.

To assist the process, the note should set out the name, address and telephone number of each Councillor.

82/07 – SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

The members of the Council had met informally on Monday, 30 July to hear from Mr Martin Beaton, SDJC's Chief Officer, about the implications of the DEFRA inspector's proposal that a large area of the western Weald lying to the north of the Rother Valley and east of the A3 (including the whole of Lurgashall Parish) should be excluded from the planned South Downs National Park. After detailed discussion, they had decided that the Chairman should write to the Secretary of State objecting to exclusion of Blackdown, Bexley Hill and the land around them from the new National Park and also expressing concern that, if excluded, the Parish could find itself temporarily, or even permanently, without Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty protection.

83/07 - NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

Residents of Sussex had been invited to express their views on the West Sussex NHS Primary Care Trust's proposals for reshaping health services in West Sussex. The issue had been discussed at a North Chichester County Local Committee meeting at Midhurst GS on Monday, 10 September, which the Chairman had attended on the Parish Council's behalf. The PCT was requesting feedback in writing or through a series of open meetings (including one scheduled for Wednesday 26 September at East Pallant House, Chichester and another for Wednesday 10 October in Midhurst) on three options for reorganising healthcare provision in the county. The Council considered the three options and concluded that Option B (St Richard's Chichester to be the major general hospital for West Sussex, with Worthing and Haywards Heath becoming local general hospitals) would be the best for Lurgashall and the least bad for the county as a whole because of (a) the considerable area of land suitable for expansion into a major general hospital in the immediate vicinity of St Richards and (b) the proximity of Worthing to Brighton (a mere 10 miles) which, it seemed, was going to have a major general hospital in any event. Option C (the same, but with Haywards Heath becoming a community hospital) was, it felt, the next best option. The Clerk was asked to write to the PCT accordingly.

84/07 – CORRESPONDENCE

The following were among the communications received since the last Council meeting:

1. South Downs Joint Committee. SDJC had reported to the Council on the work carried out by its staff, contractors and volunteers on Lurgashall's rights of way in the year 2005-06.
2. Local Development Framework. CDC had formally notified the Parish Council that it had withdrawn its Core Strategy (which amongst other matters specified the number and location of new houses in the District in coming years) after being directed to do so by the Secretary of State.
3. Rural Post Offices. Postwatch had informed the Council that an announcement will be made in November on post office closures in Sussex. There will then be a 6 week consultation period.
4. NW Frontier Community Forum. On the agenda for the Forum's joint meeting with the Rother Valley Forum on 19 September at the Grange, Midhurst, will be the threatened Post Office closures. (Mr Oakland and Mr Cooper would attend on behalf of the Parish Council.)
5. Fuel poverty. Lurgashall is one of five parishes selected for WSCC's fuel poverty pilot project. (The Chairman would seek to identify a Member to be the Council's representative on the panel conducting the exercise.)
6. Annual Parishes Meeting. This yearly CDC meeting for its 32 parishes will take place on Monday 29 October at East Pallant House, Chichester, starting at 4.00pm.
7. Crime and disorder. Sussex Police Authority will host a meeting on crime and disorder at Leconfield Hall, Petworth, on Saturday 13 October from 10 am till 2 pm. (Mr Oakland, in his capacity as the Council's Police Liaison Focal Point, would attend.)

85/07 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. Police liaison. Mr Oakland informed the meeting that PC Mark Hillman of the Neighbourhood Specialist Team (NST) planned to attend the November meeting of the Council to describe his work and the aims of the NST. Also, he had spoken to Mr Paul Read about his role as the Parish's Police Liaison Focal Point vis-à-vis Lurgashall's Neighbourhood Watch.

2. Waste skip. Members were reminded that the Parish Council was providing a skip at the Village Hall car park on Saturday, 28 September from 10am till noon.

3. CPRE. Mr Jowett had had to withdraw from the CPRE planning seminar on 2 October. It was agreed his place would be taken by Mrs Martin-Jenkins.

86/07 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Parish Council would take place on 8 November 2007 at 7.30 pm.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.35 pm.

PJS: 17/09/07