

LURGASHALL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held in the Village Hall on Thursday, 14 January 2010

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

No members of the public were present.

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7.35pm.

1/10 - APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Mrs R D Wood, Mr C Duncton and Mr J Andrews.

2/10 – CODE OF CONDUCT

The Chairman reminded members of their responsibilities under the Code of Conduct. The following personal interests were declared with respect to agenda item 7/10, paras. 2 and 3: Mr Bonnett - Village Hall Management Committee (VHMC); Mr Caird - VHMC and Lurgashall Cricket Club; Mrs Martin-Jenkins – VHMC and PCC; and Mr Sharp – Lurgashall Cricket Club.

3/10 – MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

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

4/10 – MATTERS ARISING

1. Affordable housing. On 18 December, the Chairman had met representatives of HydeMartlet on site to discuss the former's proposal to erect four housing units at the south-eastern end of Greengates. He had pointed out to them the serious parking and access problems such a development would create. HydeMartlet took note, agreed to think its plan through further and come back to the Council in due course.
2. Village Green telephone box. Regarding BT's letter to the District Council last autumn proposing to remove the telephone equipment from the red call box on the Village Green, the District Council had replied in robust terms on 12 November 2009 saying why this box (and some others) should be retained and proposing a moratorium on the future of all such boxes till the South Downs National Park Authority was able to consider the matter.

5/10 – OPEN FORUM

No matters were raised.

6/10 – COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

Mr Andrews's report appears at Annex A.

7/10 – FINANCE

1. Current financial statement. The Clerk distributed Annex B, below, ie:
 - (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 the cheques listed in that Annex.

2. Budget for 2010-11. Mrs Martin-Jenkins introduced the draft budget prepared by the Finance Committee at its meeting on 25 November 2009 (see Annex C, below).

Members considered its elements and, on a proposal by Dr Tate which was seconded by Mr Jowett, the Council agreed by consensus to adopt it as its budget for the coming financial year.

3. Precept for 2010-11. Mrs Martin-Jenkins introduced the recommendation of the Finance Committee that the Parish's precept for the coming financial year should be £11,000. In considering this recommendation, a number of Members voiced some hesitation about making such a sizeable increase (about 20%) at a time of national financial stringency but, in the end, all were satisfied that it was important to replenish the Council's reserves to a reasonable level after the current year's unanticipated contributions totalling £4000 towards the Village Hall roof repairs and kerbing the eastern end of the Village Green. On a proposal by Dr Tate which was seconded by Mr Jowett, the Council decided by consensus that its precept for 2010-11 should be £11,000.

4. Parochial Church Council. Mr Michael Pavia, had written expressing the PCC's thanks for the Council's grant of £375 towards the annual cost of mowing the churchyard.

8/10 - PLANNING

1. Applications. Dr Wilding's reported that five planning applications had been notified to the Council since the last meeting (see below). It had comments on, and objected to, certain aspects of one of them, namely the application relating to St Laurence's Church; copies of the letter to the District Council, dated 9 January 2010, setting out its arguments were circulated to those present at the meeting for information.

LG/09/03602/LBC: Blackdown Park, Fernden Lane

Removal of stone balls and pediments to existing stone retaining wall.
Replacement of reconstituted pierced stone balustrade with traditional metal estate fence and hornbeam hedge.
Erection of a pair of pool houses adjacent to existing swimming pool and terrace.
(Plain clay tiled roof and random coursed stonework to walls)

LG/09/04782/DOM: Old Barn, Mill Lane

Erect summer house

LG/09/07492/FUL: Upper Barn House

New pig housing

LG/09/04760/TCA: St Laurence's Church, Lurgashall

Notification of intention to crown clean and removal of any rubbing and crossing branches on 4 no. oak trees (1, 2, 7 and 9), crown lift up to 3m and reduce off path (back to old wound points) on 1 no. yew tree (4), reduce height down to 3m on 1 no. mixed hedge (hazel/hawthorn/ash)(5). Fell 1 no. yew tree (3) and 1 no. ash tree (6) (see also paragraph 3 below)

LG/09/05024: School House, Village Green

Notification of intention to fell 1 no. willow tree

2. Decisions. Four decisions had been received from the District Council since the Council's last meeting:

LG/09/04034/PLD: Hearn House, Petworth Road

Erection of three front dormers, one rear dormer and an addition to the roof over stairs to facilitate a loft conversion REFUSE

LG/09/04303/LBC: Blackdown Park, Fernden Lane

Replace modern reconstituted stone balustrade on north side garden wall with painted metal park railing and box hedge. Remove modern stone ball finials on south side garden wall

WITHDRAWN

LG/09/03499/DOM: Abesters, Quell Lane

Single storey extension at first floor level to west/south west corner of existing house, containing house, containing new ensuite bathroom facility to existing corner bedroom

PERMIT

LG/09/03626/TCA: School House, Village Green

Notification of intention to fell 1 no. ash tree

DECIDED NOT TO PREPARE A TREE PRESERVATION ORDER

3. Other planning matters

- Leigh Barton. The Chairman reported that he had attended the meeting of Development Committee (North) (DC(N)) at which this application was considered and had made a statement explaining the Parish Council's concerns. Subsequently the applicant had submitted substitute plans which modified his proposal in a number of respects and the Planning Committee had sent a follow-up letter to Chichester on 21 December commenting on the revised situation - (a) opposing the size and position of the proposed replacement dwelling and the net loss of agricultural land to residential purposes implicit in the proposals; and (b) requesting that strict conditions be placed on the size and route of contractors' vehicles during any construction. DC(N) had agreed to make a site visit before reaching a decision but its visit had been postponed for a month due to the severe weather.

- Old Mill Farm. The Clerk reported that he had written in November and January to the District Council seeking information about progress on this case. In reply to the first e-mail, the Council's Planning Enforcement Team had given "reduced staffing resources" as a reason for the lack of progress. A reply to the second was awaited. Members noted that, in spite of a number of promptings by the Parish Council over the past 12 months, virtually no progress had been made by the Enforcement Team. They decided, therefore, that Mr Andrews should be asked to raise the matter on its behalf at the appropriate level in Chichester.

- Greenfield Bungalow. The Clerk reported that on 6 January he had written once again to the owner requesting tidying up of the site but, as with the e-mail he has sent him on 29 October 2009, there had been no acknowledgement. The Clerk had discussed the Council's concerns with the Planning Enforcement Team in Chichester but had been advised there was nothing that could be done under planning law to bring pressure to bear on the owner.

- St Laurence's Church. Dr Wilding announced that he had just heard from the District Council's Trees Officer that a Tree Preservation Order was going to be placed on Yew tree (3) – ie the yew located a little over 3 metres to the south-west corner of the Church.

9/10 - HIGHWAYS

1. Gritting of parish lanes. Many Members expressed serious concern about the County Council's complete failure to grit the Parish's lanes during the long spell of severe weather in early January. Everyone understood the need to give the county's A and B roads priority treatment, but by totally ignoring the situation of these living in rural areas like Lurgashall, many residents were left snowbound for days. It was noted that neighbouring parishes - Lodsworth and Tillington - had managed to receive at least one visit from the gritting lorries. Why not Lurgashall? The Chairman said that Mr Duncton had been pressing hard at County Hall for fairer treatment of the rural parishes north of the Downs. He had called on the Highways Department to investigate the possibility of (a) arranging for a farmer in each rural parish to be allocated a basic snow plough to shift the worst of any snow that falls and (b) leaving a lorry load of grit and salt at a convenient central location in each rural parish for use by residents if ice and snow arrived. The Clerk was to pass Members' concerns on to Mr Duncton.

2. Signposts and road markings. The County Highways Department had written to the Clerk on 7 January saying it were unaware that reinstatement of the fingerpost at Gospel Green had still not been completed and undertaking to chase up both the contractors, May Gurney, and their

sub-contractors, JK Engineering of Midhurst. As for the central white line along Jobsons Lane, the general thrust of its reply was that the Highways Department is not inclined to delete the white line now that it was there. The reasons given were tight finances and the unsightly appearance of roads where lines are burnt off. The Council was advised to raise its concern again nearer the time when relining of the lane was in prospect.

3. A283 signpost. The Clerk reported that Northchapel Parish Council's Clerk had written expressing her Council's thanks for the excellent repairs recently carried out free of charge by Mr Sharp on the black and white road sign at the A283/Blind Lane junction.

4. Blocked culverts. In response to a report by the Clerk about the blocked culvert (and consequent tendency to flooding) at the dangerous bend on Jobsons Lane, just south of Whitewell House, the County Highways Department had written that it was aware of a number blocked gullies along this stretch, probably due to leaves: they would be cleared when possible.

10/10 – RECREATION

Mr Caird presented the report of the Recreation Committee meeting held on 10 December 2009. Members added information and 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. On 4 January the South Downs Joint Committee had written to the Clerk that, in light of the representations made to them by riders, they had found some extra funds to enable repairs to the worst bits of the recently repaired byway leading off The Quell.

2. Playground. The Chairman had spoken to the owners of Bishops Holt about the loose fencing panel between their property and the play area which was a potential hazard. The owners had carried out a temporary repair and assured the Chairman that the panel would be made fully safe as soon as possible.

3. Allotments.

(a) Plot fees for 2010. The Council agreed that the cost of a full plot in 2010 should remain at £15 and for a smaller plot should stay at £7.50.

(b) New plot holder. The new owner of Green Cottage had informed the Clerk that she wished to rent one plot. (Her predecessor had paid for two.)

(c) New hedge. No progress had been possible with laying the new hedge because of the recent severe weather.

4. Village Green.

(a) Damage from parking – between Church and Noah's Ark. Work on the kerbstones adjacent to the Church and the pub had been satisfactorily completed in early November as planned and to general approval. The County Council's invoice for the work had now been received. The Council authorised payment to be made to the County Council once the Fete Committee and the Noah's Ark (two of the four parties that had undertaken to part finance the project) had forwarded their contributions to the Clerk.

(b) Damage from parking – east side of Green. Concern continued to be expressed at the damage being done by visitors to the Noah's Ark parking on the Green and the triangle. While some immediate repair work could be carried out to eliminate the ruts that had been caused, it was likely that detailed work would be needed in the spring.

(c) Damage from parking – west side of Green. Mrs Martin-Jenkins mentioned that an increasing number of Lurgashall residents – and even visitors to the village – were complaining about the damage being caused to the Green by one resident who regularly parked his car on the grass opposite his house. Other members echoed this concern. The Chairman said he was well aware of the problem and would speak to the individual concerned about it as soon as possible.

(d) Pond. Mr Caird and two other Council Members had met Garden Escapes (GE) to discuss the possibility of planting a low hedge in front of the pond once the present unsightly fence was removed. Options were discussed and GE undertook to submit an estimate. During discussion,

GE mentioned the desirability of removing the silt from the bottom of the pond once the fence had gone; it was some years since thorough dredging had been possible.

(e) Bus shelter and notice board. It was noted that some low level maintenance was needed on the bus shelter and parish notice board. Mr Sharp agreed to deal with both matters.

5. Risk assessment. Members considered and approved the Recreation Committee's conclusions as set out in Annex D, below. They noted that the various assessments in the report were in line with those it had adopted in last year.

11/10 – FILMING ON THE GREEN

The Public Meeting planned for 7 January 2010 at which the film producer, Mr Nicholas Sercombe, was going to explain and answer questions about his project had to be postponed because of the severe weather. It would now be held on Thursday, 21 January. Because of the postponement, the Parish Council could not, as originally planned, decide the Parish's response to Mr Sercombe's proposal at the present meeting. It was, therefore, agreed to hold an additional Meeting of the Council for this purpose on Wednesday 10 February 2010 at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall.

12/09 – CORRESPONDENCE

Among the communications received by the Council since its last meeting were:

1. Revised Local Development Framework. The District Council had invited comments on its consultation document setting out options for major housing development in the District between 2011 and 2026. None of the options envisaged related to land in the Parish. (The nearest were the King Edward VII Hospital and Syngenta sites.) After assessing the document, the Chairman had concluded there was nothing in it warranting a formal response by the Council.
2. Annual Parishes Meeting. The District Council's yearly meeting for its 32 parishes would take place in East Pallant House on 19 January 2010 starting at 6.00 pm. It was agreed that the Parish would be represented at the meeting by the Chairman and Mrs Martin-Jenkins.
3. Joint Community Forum. The first meeting of the newly amalgamated Forum (formerly the North West Frontier Forum and the Rother Valley Forum) would be held at the Grange in Midhurst on 23 February 2010 at 7.00 pm.

13/09 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mrs Jean Seager. The Clerk reported that, on Members' behalf, he had presented Mrs Seager with a bouquet of flowers and a congratulatory card on 30 December 2009 to mark her 100th birthday. Mrs Seager had lived in the village for 30 years and was the first Lurgashall resident in living memory to reach that important milestone. The occasion had been marked by a photograph and article in the *Midhurst and Petworth Observer*.

14/09 – DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

There would be an additional meeting of the Parish Council on Thursday 10 February 2010 at 7.30 pm (see agenda item 11/10, above). The next regular meeting of the Council would be on Thursday, 11 March 2010 also commencing at 7.30 pm.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.15pm.

PJS:19/1/10