

LURGASHALL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held in the Village Hall on Thursday, 9 September 2010

Present: Mr R E J Cooper (Chairman), Mr J S Bonnett, 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 Duncton, Mrs P Hardwick, Mr J Andrews and 7 members of the public.

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7.30 pm.

60/10 - APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr G D J R Sharp and Mr N P Jowett.

61/10 – CODE OF CONDUCT

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

62/10 – MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

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

63/10 - MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman had spoken to the Cricket Club's Chairman about the injury to a member of the public by a cricket ball during the Six-a-Side event in July. Mr Caird had told him that unfortunately the Club did not appreciate at the time that the injury was as serious as it was.

64/10 – OPEN FORUM

A member of the public informed the meeting that two or three slats on the wooden bridge on the footpath running from the churchyard down towards The Chimes had rotted through. The Clerk was requested to notify the South Downs Joint Committee (SDJC).

65/10 – COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

- Among the points noted by Mr Duncton in his report were: (a) his battle within WSCC to ensure that the Grange day care centre was retained in Midhurst; there would be a further opportunity to discuss this controversial matter at the next County Local Committee meeting on 28 September at Capron House, Midhurst; and (b) the County's promotion of Local Winter Management Plans (LWMP) aimed at reducing the difficulties that faced parishes during the harsh weather last winter; officers from the Highways Department were, he said, happy to meet parish councillors to explain LWMPs (see agenda item 73/10, below).

- Among the matters addressed by Mrs Hardwick in her report were: (a) glass recycling (from next April residents could place glass of all colours in their red recycling bins); (b) the comprehensive spending review (outcome delayed till the autumn); (c) annual grants from CDC (the system for allocating grants had been re-jigged (highest scores, and hence prospects of success, would go to proposals that addressed economic development, sport, culture, the old and/or youth); and (d) the Grange day care centre (consultation on the centre's future was currently underway. The more people who filled in the questionnaire the better.)

66/10 – FINANCE

1. Current financial statement. The Clerk distributed Annex A, 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 up to date against its budget for the current financial year.

The Council approved payment of the eight cheques listed in that Annex as needing payment.

2. Annual return. The Clerk reported that Mazars, the external auditors, had certified the Council's accounts for the year to 31 March 2010 and that, as required, the statutory notices regarding the audited accounts had been displayed on the Village Green notice board.

3. Excessive precept increases. The Clerk informed Members of the Government's plan to introduce legislation requiring referendums to be held when local authorities, including Parish Councils, proposed to make excessive increases in their precepts, "excessive" in this context being a level to be set annually by the Secretary of State.

67/10 – HIGHWAYS

1. Bollards by Glebe Park. Despite the owner's agreement with the County Council in May to remove the wooden bollards by the entrance to Glebe Park, they were still in place. The Clerk reported that he was awaiting a reply from the Council as to when action could be expected.

2. Broken branch on Jobson's Lane. Mrs Martin-Jenkins reported that a large branch had snapped and was in danger of falling onto the road near the Rounhurst turn. The Clerk was asked to inform the Highways Department.

68/10 – PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

1. Future care of rights of way. The Chairman reported on the meeting in Washington on 21 July at which the WSCC's plans for looking after the county's rights of way were discussed with parishes. He reported that he came away from the meeting with a clearer understanding of why the SDJC's body of volunteers was annoyed about their treatment by the County. Unlike WSCC, the new National Park Authority had been in contact with them about the work they might do for the NPA in future. Late in the day, WSCC recognized it was in danger of overlooking an important source of unpaid help and said it would be contacting the volunteers.

2. Footpath 2031. The Clerk had written to SDJC again about progress regarding the line of this footpath near the stile leading onto the Village Green but no feedback had yet been received.

3. Byway off The Quell. The Clerk reported that SDJC had done some repairs to this byway but had not thereby solved the problem of safety for horses and riders. He had written to the Committee again but had received no reply yet. Mr Bonnett stated that he had again seen tyre marks on the byway indicating that large motor vehicles were continuing to use it and added that such misuse would no doubt continue till the byway was blocked off in some way.

69/10 – PLANNING

1. Applications. Dr Wilding reported that four planning applications had been notified to the Council since the last meeting. The applications concerning Southwater and St Laurence's Church had yet to be considered by the Planning Committee. The Council had no comments or objections with regard to the other application.

LG/10/03141/FUL: Barfold Farm, Tennyson's Lane

Repair of estate track and extension of existing estate track

LG/10/03444/LBC: Southwater, Lickfold

Proposed demolitions and two storey extension, with a new entrance porch and chimney to garden room and internal alterations

LG/10/03448/DOM: Southwater, Lickfold

Proposed demolitions and two storey extension, with a new entrance porch and chimney to garden room and internal alterations

LG/10/03749/TPA: St Laurence's Church, Lurgashall

Remove 4 branches (to raise crown) away/off from roof of church on 1 no. Yew tree (T1) subject to LG/10/00004/TPO

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

LG/10/00278/FUL: Jays Farm, Jays Lane

Change of use and alterations to existing two storey barn and associated single storey building to residential unit with annexe. Replacement of existing dilapidated milking shed with 3 bay garage and rural workers dwelling. New bat loft with storage at ground floor level. Covered way linking garage to main house (revised proposal previously approved under LG/06/04361/FUL)

REFUSE

LG/10/02891/DOM: Blackdown House, Fernden Lane

Application for the retention of dressed stone retaining wall and coping stone, with associated stone steps to south of Blackdown Park; stone retaining wall and stone steps, swimming pool and paved surround and rill, water cascades and associated hornbeam hedge to north of Blackdown Park

PERMIT

LG/10/02849/DOM: Moses Farm House, Hillgrove Lane

Single storey and first storey rear extension

PERMIT

LG/10/03456/PNO: Old Hearne Farm, Jays Lane

3 bay tractor and farm improvement store

PRIOR APPROVAL NOT REQUIRED

3. Other planning matters

Land west of Dickhurst House. The Parish Council had been notified that the applicant in this case (application no. LG/10/00280/FUL) had appealed to the Secretary of State against the District Council's refusal. The Planning Committee would be considering if there was a need for the Council to make further representations.

70/10 - PLAYGROUND

RoSPA's report. RoSPA's 2010 inspection had given the playground good overall ratings and had again concluded it was a "well maintained site in good condition". The Council decided that, whilst various matters identified by the inspector should continue to be monitored, no specific remedial action was required in the coming year. This said, Members agreed that it would be sensible to take the following minor steps: (i) tighten the spring on the access gate, (ii) treat any significant rust that those repainting the slide might find, (iii) fill the gaps that were appearing around the safety surfaces under the swings and cradle swing with soil and grass seed and (iv) replace the missing bolt covers on some of the wooden equipment.

71/10 - ALLOTMENTS

Real Hedge Fund. WSCC's Trees Officer had written to the Council drawing attention to the untidy state of the hedge planted last winter along two sides of the allotments with financial assistance from the WSCC's Real Hedge Fund. She said that the area around the hedge needed serious weeding, that some rabbit guards were missing and that some plants had died and so needed replacement. The Chairman had discussed these criticisms with the person who planted the hedge. They did not agree that the hedge's survival/growth rate were at risk. Despite the fact that it had been an unusually dry summer, the hedge had got off to a good start. The Chairman concluded that the officer's letter may have been motivated more by disappointment at the appearance of the new hedge than by concern that the County's contribution had been wasted.

72/10 - VILLAGE GREEN

1. Damage from parking.

(a) The Chairman reported that unfortunately progress in the past two months both with WSCC's Highways Department and the Greene King Brewery had been slow but he remained optimistic that the repair work planned for the east of the Green would be done before winter.

(b) The Highways Department had experienced delays in getting written estimates from their contractor for (a) the whole job and (b) just the stretch between the pond and Jubilee Cottage, but the Department had told him informally that the whole job was likely to cost between £6,000 and £8,000, and probably nearer the lower figure. The Chairman said he would not know until he

saw the estimates how much the Highways Department would be prepared to contribute but he was hoping to have this information within two weeks.

(c) The Brewery had been slow to react to his letter requesting a financial contribution. Despite numerous phone calls and promises to send a reply, nothing had yet arrived.

(d) He had also been in touch with the Fete Committee Chairman about funding and, subject to receiving the Council's agreement, he planned to submit a formal request to the Committee for a grant of £2,000 to £3,000, depending on the size of the Highways Department written estimates.

(e) The tenants of the Noah's Ark had told him that, as with last year's phase of the repair project, they were willing to make a serious contribution to the cost.

(f) All in all, if the estimates were in line with the Highways Department's informal prediction and the contributions mentioned above were all forthcoming, the Parish Council would need to contribute no more than £2,000 from its reserves to enable the work to be done in the current year. On the other hand, if the work was left till next year or later still, it would probably cost more, mainly because Highways would very likely not be able to help financially.

(g) If progress on the second phase of the repair work proved impossible, there remained other possibilities for tackling the problem of damage from parking around the Green, such as seeking byelaws to ban parking on what is common land. But the Chairman saw this as a last resort as, to his knowledge, did many residents of the village.

(h) He had hoped to be in a position to put a clearcut, costed proposal to the meeting for consideration and approval but, for the reasons given above, he was still waiting for key information. His concern was that if the work was to happen within the current financial year, it really needed to be completed before winter – ie by the end of October. This would leave the Council with two options:

(i) to hold an additional meeting after all the information was received to consider the estimates, the offers of financial assistance and how much the Council should itself contribute; or

(ii) to decide to delegate these questions to the Village Green Committee subject to placing a limit of, say, £2000 on the size of the Parish Council's contribution. The membership of the Committee was flexible so, if this option were chosen, it would always be possible for any Member who wished to participate in just that one meeting.

(i) In discussion of the Chairman's report one member argued that, in the absence of a response from the Brewery's Estates Manager, the Parish Council should write directly to the company's Chairman. Another suggested the Council might make quicker headway if it used a private contractor rather than the Highways Department's contractor. The Council decided to follow option (h)(i), above, (ie hold an additional meeting to consider the estimates, etc) and that the Chairman should write as soon as possible to the Fete Committee as indicated in (d) above.

2. Litter bin. The Clerk reported that a new metal bin liner had been ordered on 13 July but due to a mix-up within CDC delivery had been delayed. He had recently received an assurance that the liner would be delivered shortly.

3. Cricket Club mower. The Cricket had recently taken delivery of a refurbished mower with a 7 feet wide cutter. Its impact on the appearance of the Green was quickly apparent. The cost had been met in part by financial contributions from the Parish Council over the years.

4. Real Hedge Fund. Criticisms akin to those described under agenda item 71/10 above, had been levelled at the new hedge by the pond. The Chairman's reactions to them were the same.

73/10 – LOCAL WINTER MANAGEMENT PLAN

(a) Dr Tate introduced the discussion on WSCC's recommendation that parishes, particularly those in remote areas, should adopt Local Winter Management Plans. The Plans would specify:

- (i) locations where bags of bulk salt/grit provided by WSCC would be placed;
- (ii) local volunteers to "manage" the bulk bags, help spread their content and clear snow;
- (iii) local farmers willing to assist locally with winter maintenance operations.

(b) The proposals placed few responsibilities on WSCC; the functions envisaged for it were ones it already performed. What was new were the tasks parishes would be asked to undertake; they would be expected to (i) appoint an individual to coordinate local resources; (ii) identify suitable locations to which bulk bags might be delivered as a self-help measure for local residents; and (iii) set down how the parish would manage the salt/grit provided to it.

(c) WSCC's recommendation warranted careful consideration and time was short. The process of drawing up a Plan could be controversial and the end product difficult to operate in practice.

(d) In discussion, Members decided (a) to establish a small Committee to analyse WSCC's recommendation and make proposals to the Council's November meeting. The Committee would be composed of three people with one representative from Hillgrove, one from Roundhurst/Jobsons Lane and one from the village. Dr Tate would be its Chairman; and (b) to invite the Chairman to contact WSCC and neighbouring parishes with a view to arranging a meeting at which a senior Highways Department officer would explain the County's proposal.

74/10 – COOPTION OF NEW MEMBER

Two residents had forwarded written statements indicating their willingness to be co-opted to the Council to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Mr Malcolm Caird in May. The Council moved into closed session to consider the applications. After a full discussion, the Council decided by consensus to co-opt Mr Geoff Hayhurst to fill the vacant seat. In announcing the Council's decision to the resumed open session, the Chairman reminded all present that the Council's four-year term of office would end next Spring and there would, therefore, shortly be a further opportunity for residents of the parish to seek election to the Council.

75/10 – CORRESPONDENCE

Among the correspondence received during the past two months were the following:

1. Grange day care centre. Midhurst Town Council had written to the chairmen of local parishes seeking their support for a letter of criticism concerning the alleged failure of a member of the committee responsible for the future of the Grange Centre to declare an interest under the Code of Conduct. After careful consideration, the Chairman – in line with a number of other Parish Council chairman – declined to sign.
2. Affordable housing. The Chichester Rural Partnership (CRP) had announced on 27 July 2010 that it hoped to submit a planning application to CDC by the end of the summer for a scheme at a site in Lurgashall, presumably the garage area at the south-east end of Greengates. The Chairman commented that, since his site meeting with Mr Austin Wade last November, CRP had not sent him any modified proposals aimed at meeting his concerns about access and parking if the scheme retained its original form.
3. North West Frontier Forum. The Forum's next meeting would be at Fernhurst Village Hall on 19 October 2010 at 7.00 pm.
4. National Park Authority. The new Authority had arranged a meeting at Leconfield Hall, Petworth on 27 September 2010, at 7.00 pm at which its approach to planning matters would be considered.

76/10 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No matters were raised.

77/10 - DATES OF NEXT MEETING

The Council's next meeting would be held on Thursday, 11 November 2010 starting at 7.30 pm.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.25 pm.