



**Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council
Wednesday 10 January 2018
at Billingshurst Centre at 6pm**

Present

Cllrs P Berry (Chairman) (from Minute 07/18), A Grant, D Homer, Miss S Kingston, P Leaney, A Pearson (until Minute 13/18), J Perks (from Minute 06/18), B Spicer, Mrs L Wilding and Mrs S Wilson.

In attendance

G Burt, Clerk to the Council
District Cllr Mrs K Rowbottom
County Cllr Mrs A Jupp
District Cllr N Jupp
Stephanie Dickinson and Richard Hennessey, NatWest Bank
Approximately 52 Members of the Press and Public

Pending the arrival of the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, Cllr A Grant took the Chair.

01/18 Chairman's Announcements

The Vice Chairman wished everyone a Happy New Year.

02/18 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs G Commins, A Du-Lieu, R Margetts, K Peters (prior engagements.) Cllrs P Berry and J Perks would be arriving late due to work commitments. On the proposal of Cllr L Wilding seconded by Cllr D Homer **RESOLVED** that the reasons given be approved.

03/18 Declarations of Interest, Notification of Changes to Members' Interests, to receive annual update forms and consider any requests for a dispensation. The following declarations were made in respect of Minute 06/18:

Cllr Mrs L Wilding: Personal Interest as a customer of NatWest
Cllr A Grant: Personal & Pecuniary Interest as a former employee, and now pensioner and shareholder of, Barclays.
Cllr Miss S Kingston: Personal Interest as a customer of NatWest.

04/18 Minutes

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2017, previously circulated were taken as read. On the proposal of Cllr D Homer, seconded Cllr P Leaney **RESOLVED** the minutes be accepted and signed as a correct record accordingly.

05/18 Matters Arising

None

The meeting adjourned.

06/18 Discussion with representatives from NatWest Bank, concerning the closure of their Billingshurst branch.

The Chairman welcomed Stephanie Dickinson, Local CEO SouthDowns and Richard Hennessey, suggesting that he hoped the discussion could be broadly in two parts: reasons for closure and then moving forward.

Stephanie said she had genuinely worked hard to keep the local branch open, including Saturday opening, but with little success. Being a former resident, she empathised with the views of residents. It was in the end a business decision. The planned replacement Mobile Bank (van) was very successful. They also intended to deploy a local *Community Banker*.

A resident said there was a protocol in place to guide possible branch closures, which laid down that advance discussions should be held with the community. Richard X said he was unaware of any such protocol.

Ricard Hennessey said they were here to discuss moving forward, not the closure.

A resident said that the Saturday opening was poorly advertised; the mobile van that visited Pulborough was not user-friendly and was poorly advertised.

Stephanie said that the Saturday opening had been well-publicized.

A resident said that they had moved to the village 15 months ago because it boasted 3 banks.

Cllr A Pearson said it was disgraceful that the banks which were bailed out by the taxpayer were now showing their appreciation in this way.

Many residents commented that the banks should cooperate and retain one shared branch. Stephanie said that she worked hard to keep the Petworth branch open, the last in the town, by encouraging customers of other departed banks to transfer, but alas to little effect.

Residents commented that a one hour visit by a van was inadequate.

The NatWest representatives said hours could be varied to suit demand.

A Macmillan Cancer volunteer commented on the difficulty, physical and security, of having to park in Horsham and carry significant amounts of cash through streets.

Residents commented that the Post Office placed limits on the amount of coinage that could be deposited.

The NatWest representatives said this could be looked at with the Post Office.

A resident commented that the business dealt with by two tellers per bank (3x2=6) was supposed to all now be done by two tellers at the Post Office.

The NatWest representatives said they were planning *Tech Events* in the branch to *signpost* customers to alternative ways of banking.

A resident suggested that a Metrobank branch would serve customers from all banks.

A resident said the queues in the Post Office were already too long.

A resident said the disabled would be unable to use a Mobile Bank in a van.

Cllr Miss S Kingston said that when she used to coordinate the local *Poppy Appeal* it would take her about 45minutes to bank it. This would take up most of the one hour planned visit by a Mobile Bank. If there was a queue still when the van was due to depart, would it drive off?

NatWest said that it envisaged the visits to commence at 2.15pm on Tuesdays.

A W.I. member reported that many groups such as hers did not have Debit Cards and most of their income was cash.

The Vice Chairman asked for a straw poll of those present: 40 people said they were not online. A poll later suggested a similar number did not do mobile banking.

A resident suggested that NatWest could be innovative and redesign their branch with many more multi-purpose banking machines (including those from other banks), sofas and serve coffee.

The local Postmaster said he was frustrated as none of the banks ever contacted him prior to their closures to let him know how many displaced bank customers might divert their visits to the Post Office. Such advance information would enable him to consider necessary changes, physical and procedural. They could handle more banking if they knew what the banks' requirements were e.g. specific envelopes, paying-in books etc. Barclays had never contacted the Post Office. There was little they could not do if geared-up.

NatWest said they were keen to help individual customers.

Ian Gammie suggested that Post Offices would be more vulnerable to crime if they held more cash, but the Postmaster denied this, without disclosing his security arrangements.

The desirability of the Post Office hosting an ATM was stressed.

Cllr J Perks suggested that the banks pilot a shared branch in Billingshurst.

Residents said the reduction from 4 ATMs in the centre of the village to just 1 at Sainsburys would be disastrous.

A resident asked about the Night Safe which they used daily; NatWest said no facilities would be retained.

The Vice Chairman asked if NatWest might come back in say a year's time to discuss how the post-closure arrangements were going?

Cllr Mrs L Wilding reported that the DWP had told claimants to open bank accounts for the purpose of receiving payments. This had caused concern amongst some given the shrinking of the bank branch network, when in actual fact, a current account at the Post Office would suffice.

Barclays had not even offered a Mobile Bank visit when they left.

The Vice Chairman said that HDC had originally made all new car parking machines cash-less, but then had to relent and install a coin facility, for many similar reasons to that aired on the banking issue.

NatWest said their new *Community Banker*, a permanent role, would not only offer advice on banking, but also on education about finance, SCAM awareness etc.

The Clerk reported that a letter had been received from a local resident and also a local shopkeeper about the gross inconvenience the closure would cause.

The NatWest representatives were thanked for attending and it was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk write to NatWest, along the same lines as to when we wrote to Barclays, lamenting the closure and pointing out the gross inconvenience their decision and inadequate mitigation plans will have on the whole community.

The Chairman took the Chair, also wishing everyone A Happy New Year!

07/18 Police Report

No report.

08/18 Report from County Councillor

Cllr Mrs A Jupp wished everyone A Happy New Year. WSCC was currently looking at tenders for its term maintenance contract for highways, from Balfour Beaty, Aimee and Ringway.

09/18 Report from District Councillors

Cllr Mrs K Rowbottom mentioned the Neighborhood Warden scheme currently on offer from HDC, highlighting the benefits of existing Wardens in other parishes. Cllr P Berry said that the Council would be considering the matter on the 24th January following a well-publicized consultation with residents. He and the Clerk had attended a meeting at Horsham to learn more, Carol Boniface, a Pulborough Warden had also been in attendance. In the absence of visible Policing, the Wardens had clear benefits.

Cllr N Jupp asked how many responses had been received to the Neighborhood Warden consultation? The Clerk replied approximately 30. Cllr Jupp said that although not all projects suggested for the Horsham Year of Culture had been shortlisted for support, the year sounded full of promise.

10/18 Reports from Council Representatives on Outside Bodies

The Clerk reported that he had attended a meeting the previous day where 5 artists had been short-listed to be considered to work-up a scheme for public art on the new housing scheme to the east of the village. Interviews would take place next month.

11/18 Public Session (Members of the Public may speak for up to 3 minutes at the discretion of the Chairman)

A resident asked how residents were supposed to know about all the various consultations? The Chairman advised that the Council had a page each month in the TWEET magazine delivered to all households, in addition to social media, website and noticeboards.

Meeting resumed

12/18 To consider a response to ‘The Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Draft Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) – Preferred Strategy’ and accompanying ‘Sustainability Appraisal’

Local resident, Brigitte Jaquillard spoke on behalf of several concerned local residents in the Marringdean Road area. She lives next to a site suggested in the above document to host such a facility. Inclusion of this site was contrary to numerous HDC planning policies. The site met none of the requirements of potential residents. Both the location and scale were wrong. It went against the Community-lead Plan and Vision. There was rapidly becoming an unfair concentration of Gypsy & Traveller sites around Billingshurst. This would be bigger than any other existing sites. It would not be conducive to community cohesion. This end of the village was getting more than its

share of development in the form of several large housing schemes, a breakers yard and oil-drilling site. A site of 45 caravans could generate 70-150 residents. The only adjacent neighbour was *at the opposite end of the social scale*. The site was contaminated and close to several Grade II Listed buildings. A better use for the site could surely be found. It was at odds with all planning principals. It was not even in the interests of the would-be Traveller residents to be located there. Other sites should be looked at instead.

Another resident commented that she lived nearby and wasn't even allowed to erect a shelter for her horses! The ground was contaminated and contained two glasshouses in good condition. The 9 acre site would have 15 pitches, each of which could accommodate up to 3 homes. Given that new large scale housing developments have to include a mix of types of dwelling, why don't they accommodate space for Travellers also?

A resident commented that a (permissive?) footpath in the vicinity of the Adversane Traveller site was blocked. Why does Billingshurst have to host all *these* sites? Marringdean Road was narrow, twisting, full of blind exits and in the main, without a footway. This new proposed site was so large it would solve all HDC's Traveller allocations dilemma in one go and worryingly, it could be extended further.

A resident said it would be a poor location for the site's residents and would be to the detriment of social cohesion.

The farmer from Marringdean Farm, said the proposed development would be visually horrid. He already suffered greatly from fly-tipping.

A resident said a similar proposal for a not dissimilar site (Denver Storage) in Okehurst Lane was turned down. It would be complete waste of tax-payers money! The parking attendant at Jengers Mead was continually intimidated by Travellers.

District Cllr N Jupp said he had been contacted by lots of residents about this issue. He encouraged residents to contact HDC with their views. He himself had been surprised to see the Marringdean Road site in the document. He felt that Billingshurst had more than its fair share of Traveller sites and took on board the suggestion that such provision should be considered as part of new large scale housing development. He has his own concerns about the suitability of the site.

A resident asked who set the numbers of pitches that HDC had to find a home for? Cllr Jupp advised it was the Government.

Cllr Jupp believed that the site was to be entirely privately-funded.

Cllr Mrs L Wilding said that the site was outside the Settlement Policy Boundary (SPB) in open countryside; it was the furthest point south on a road without a pedestrian footway or buses. It was only accessible with a vehicle. The site was contaminated. The road regularly flooded and unmaintained (private) ditches by the road often over-topped. The A29 only had a footway in part.

The site at Rowfold Nursery was removed from the plan, although it appears to be nearing completion as a *Park Homes* site.

Natts Lane already carried excessive traffic, including large lorries; it was a totally unsuitable access to Marringdean Road and the A29. It would add further to the already dangerous Adversane crossroads. It fails on every point!

HDC had issued planning enforcement notices on the Rowfold site.

Where would the sewage go?

Cllr D Homer said the Parish already had two sites: Rowfold and Adversane. The site in Marringdean Road had been a thriving nursery and if no longer required, should be returned to agriculture.

Why are Traveller sites never proposed for Southwater?

Cllr A Pearson commented on why one ethnic minority seemed to be getting preferential treatment over all others?

Cllr J Perks commented on the traffic impact and that the site's owner wanted to do something positive with the site. It was not a *brownfield site* in planning terms but had been recently put forward under the *Call for Site's* as part of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Cllr Mrs L Wilding reiterated that Traveller sites should be included within new large housing schemes,

Cllr A Grant said the proposed new site would be *too close* to the existing site at Adversane and apparently it was *good practice* that they be a significant distance apart.

Cty Cllr Mrs A Jupp said the Adversane site had been taken back *in house* by WSCC from the previous operator.

Cllr B Spicer said the site at Adversane was now much tidier than it had been. He was concerned that the litter problem in Marringdean Road would be worsened by the proposal.

On the proposal of Cllr D Homer seconded by Cllr Miss S Kingston **RESOLVED** that the Council **OBJECT** to the proposed inclusion of the site in Marringdean Road in the above document, for the reasons outlined above, whilst welcoming the exclusion of the (Denver Storage) site at Okehurst Lane.

13/18 To Receive the Approved Minutes of Committees

- a. On the proposal of Cllr D Homer seconded by Cllr B Barnes **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Planning & Environment Committee of 12 October, 2 & 16 November and 7 December 2017 be received.
- b. On the proposal of Cllr P Berry seconded by Cllr Miss S Kingston **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the F&GP Committee of 25 October and 29 November 2017 be received.
- c. On the proposal of Cllr Miss S Kingston seconded by Cllr Mrs Wilding **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Working Practices Committee 20 September 2017 be received.
- d. On the proposal of Cllr J Perks seconded by Cllr Mrs L Wilding **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee 11 October 2017 be received.

14/18 To consider RECOMMENDATION from the Planning and Environment Committee of 16 November 2017 that the Parish Council writes a letter to Horsham District Council expressing its dissatisfaction in the way that recent planning matters have been dealt with and the lack of communication that exists between our two organisations. (Minute 182/17i refers).

The Assistant Clerk had kindly prepared a list, circulated to all Cllrs, of extracts from minutes detailing recent instances where the Council had not been satisfied with the responses to enquiries by the Parish or handling of applications.

Cllr A Grant said we should include the issue of the Brinsbury Fields application, which was approved purely because the economic benefits trumped every HDC planning policy.

Cllr Miss S Kingston said on several occasions plans had been validated which clearly should not have been, citing a recent example when a Travel Plan showed details of Henfield!

Cllr J Perks said quite often poor English / use of grammar, did not help when Councils were trying to consult with the public, also leading to poor perceptions of councils.

On the proposal of Cllr P Berry seconded by Cllr S Kingston **RESOLVED** that a letter be written to HDC accordingly, copying in ward District Councillors and the Council Leader.

15/18 To consider suggestion from the Clerk that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee become a Working Party.

The Clerk explained that the NP Steering Committee is a full Committee of the Council, meaning bar the odd exception, none of its decisions require subsequent approval from either another Committee or Main Council. Such Committees require a minimum of 3 Cllrs to be in attendance. If there aren't, any decisions have to be affirmed at the next (quorate) meeting. There are currently 4 Cllrs on this Committee; at the last meeting, only

two were present, meaning they were inquorate. On two occasions since May, Councillors have had the opportunity at Main Council to appoint further Members, but none have been forthcoming.

He suggested that Members might like to consider changing it from a Committee to a Working Party. Nothing would change, except that there would be no pressure on at least three Cllrs always having to be in attendance, and that all decisions, if any, would need ratifying by another (parent) Committee, say Planning or F&GP which already meet monthly.

Another option he outlined, could be that it remains a full Committee, but has say 2 *Reserve Members*, in that they wouldn't be expected to regularly attend, (and so would have standing apologies tendered!), but could be asked to attend, if available, to turn up on the odd occasion to ensure a quorum.

It was agreed to **DEFER** the matter until the next meeting; in the meantime the Clerk would issue a memo to all Councillors explaining the position, in the hope that additional Councillors may consider putting themselves forward for the Committee.

16/18 Any Other Matters for Information

The Clerk reminded Members that a representative of Lloyds Bank was attending the following Thursday 18th January at 6pm.

17/18 Date of Next (Extraordinary) Meeting: Wednesday 24th January 2017 (Budget & Precept-setting)

The meeting closed at 8.23pm.

Chairman

Date