

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING  
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
BILLINGSHURST CENTRE  
ON WEDNESDAY 14 MAY 2014 AT 7.30PM**

**Those Present:** Cllr. Mr P.M. Berry, Chairman of Billingshurst Parish Council, Parish Clerk B. Bell, Deputy Clerk E. Berry, Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex Mrs Katy Bourne, Sgt Bob Trevis, PCSO Dunning.

**Also Present:** 14 Members of the public.

**Guest Speaker: Mrs Katy Bourne, Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex**

Katy Bourne said that previously Police priorities had been set by the government but delivered locally by the Chief Constable. This was overseen by the Police Authority which consisted of 17 members from East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, Brighton & Hove Council and two independent members. The Police Authority agreed the Policing budget with the Chief Constable but there was no input from members of the public. That changed in 2012 with the dissolution of Police Authorities and the replacement with one directly elected Police and Crime Commissioner until 2016. Katy Bourne said this represented the biggest reform in Policing and priorities are now set locally by members of the public through the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Police and Crime Plan. The Police and Crime Plan was created in her first 100 days in office and will be reviewed annually. The role of the Police and Crime Commissioner is to engage with members of the public and local businesses. She gave an example of the inclusion of road safety in the Sussex Police and Crime Plan, which is not included in any other Police and Crime Plan in the country. She said if the public do not like the direction that she is taking the Police, and then they can vote her out in 2016. She said the turnout for the Police and Crime Commissioner elections had been very low, around 15% compared to 30% for local elections and 60-70% nationally, although the turnout in Sussex was higher than the national average for the Police and Crime Commissioner elections.

She is responsible for the Policing budget of £250million which is raised one third from taxes and the rest from government grants. She said Sussex has the fourth lowest Policing budget in the country yet Surrey had the highest budget. She said the Police and Crime Commissioner is responsible for the funding of the Community Safety Partnerships, for Victim Services and Restorative Justice. She said that the Victim Services work in collaboration with six other authorities to provide their service. The aim of Restorative Justice is to provide a better solution for all affected by crime: it satisfies the victim and keeps the offender out of the criminal justice system.

The Police and Crime Commissioner has 12 Full Time Equivalent Staff and is also a Director on the Board of the New College of Policing. Whilst she is salaried, she claims no expenses for her role.

Katy Bourne said she often hears that members of the public do not see enough visible Police. She says that she attends the Police early turn once a fortnight at 7am around the county and has done this since she started the role. She has looked at the establishment level. Sussex Police stopped recruiting three and a half years ago, but started recruitment again last year and have just recruited to above the optimum number. There are 41 new officers in training and another 60 due to start in August/September.

The Police and Crime Commissioner will choose the new Chief Constable in two weeks' time from three candidates shortlisted for interview on 04/05 June; the appointment will be subject to the approval of the Police and Crime Panel who hold the Police and Crime Commissioner to account.

### **Questions from the public**

Mr Paul Leaney said that last summer travellers turned up and he had contacted Chichester who said they would be asked to leave within 24 hours but they had stayed all week and left mess behind. He said Horsham District Council have now planted trees to prevent access to this piece of land. Katy Bourne said letters about travellers fill her post bag. She said there has been a real problem in the west of the county of unauthorised encampment with 52 last year in Chichester district alone compared to only six for the whole of East Sussex. She said unauthorised encampments are not criminal and are covered by civil law. East Sussex County Council has a transit site by the A27 called Bridey's Tan. It has eight pitches. Police can direct unauthorised encampments to transit sites and use more powers. She said District and Borough Councils have dodged this issue as no-one wants a transit site in their area. She has highlighted this problem with West Sussex MPs and the leader of the West Sussex County Council. She reminded everyone that travellers have a right under European Law to travel as they are a recognised ethnic minority. She said Mid Sussex and Chichester District Councils have analysed unauthorised encampments and acknowledge the need for a transit site and have agreed to find a site for the County Council to run. Chichester District Council have found a site which is going through planning and should be ready for next summer, so she cannot guarantee that there will not be problems again this summer. She said both the Police and County Council have a Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer.

A member of the public asked if there is funding for the purchase of speed guns for volunteers to use. Katy Bourne said under the Police and Crime Plan funding has been made available to the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership and applications can be made to them for funding. Sgt Trevis said Community Speedwatch has been running very successfully for two years in Storrington. Storrington bought a Home Office approved speed gun for £2,000 and have handed ownership to Sussex Police. There are two other guns in the Horsham District. Sites have been checked in Billingshurst and it is hoped that Community Speedwatch can be setup in Billingshurst early in the summer. However he said it can only be used in 30 and 40 mph speed limit areas, the bypass will continue to be monitored by Op Ride. Data collected the speed gun can be entered into Operation Crackdown which has a three stage system of alerting offenders from an initial letter through to direct action.

David Hart asked why the Police and Crime Commissioner is elected under a political banner. Katy Bourne replied that she is a local politician and crime targets are set nationally by elected politicians, but the Police and Crime Commissioners from different parties work well together.

Kenneth Longhurst said he has been trying to get the Speed Indicating Device (SID) for 10 years in the village. Sgt Trevis said that SID is unpopular in the parishes as it weighs a lot, must be located away from junctions and restricts pavement width. He said SID is available if we would like to use it in Billingshurst.

Alan Grant said the Police and Crime Commissioner had the responsibility to cut the Policing budget by £50 million in the last four years and the same again for the next four years. Katy Bourne said 20% of the budget had been saved by stopping recruitment and they are on target to make the savings next year, as they have already saved £39million. However the Comprehensive Spending Review has cut their budget by 4.6% so they need to find another £11million savings. She said that Sussex and Surrey Police Forces are working together and there is now better collaboration. There is a vision Policing Together 2020 and beyond.

The Chairman thanked Katy Bourne for her attendance, presentation and questions from members of the public.

### **Chairman's Report**

The Parish Council has had a long relationship with the Billingshurst Community and Conference Centre (the Centre), formerly the Billingshurst Village Hall. When I first joined the Council in 2003, it was clear that the relationship often created challenges. The rules governing local authorities are complex enough at times, as are the rules governing charities so adding the two together further increases any difficulties. There has, at times, for example been confusion as to if individual Councillors were Trustees of the charity, or the Council as a corporate body. Advice received over the years has at times been contradictory and difficult to obtain. In 2011, the Council agreed a route for the Centre that made things much clearer in my view, confirming that it was Billingshurst Parish Council that is the Trustee as a corporate body. Talking to the Clerk Beverley Bell, advice seems to have been clearer in recent years and more guidance has been forthcoming.

The past year has been a seminal year for the Centre. In January of 2013, in the midst of a recession that was causing difficulties for so many, the financial situation was causing concern and the Centre was possibly heading for a considerable loss. At this time, the Parish Council agreed to set aside a revenue grant to the Centre of £10,000 to be called upon in increments of £2,500 if needed. During the past year some difficult decisions have needed making and lots of hard work has been put in to turning the Centre around; certainly I know that I have had some sleepless nights as a result and I am sure the same applies to many of my Councillor colleagues and Parish Council and Centre staff alike! The result of all this is that in March 2014, the Centre was in profit by £25,441 and only £2,500 was used of the £10,000 made available by the Parish Council.

We must not of course rest on our laurels and I am sure that the Parish Council being the Trustee of the Centre will still throw up challenges to overcome in the future.

Personally, my hope is that this turn around continues through the next year and that money can be invested back in to the Centre and maybe some of the jobs that have been put off due to lack of funds can be commenced at last.

Although Councillors have had some demanding debates and had to make some difficult decisions, they are not at the 'coal face' so to speak on a daily basis so special thanks must go to the Council and Centre staff who have helped improve things so dramatically in the past year, particularly perhaps the Centre Supervisor, Norma Sullivan and Parish Clerk, Beverley Bell. I would also like to thank Hilary Morris who left the Centre in February after over 10 years of dedicated service, who also helped hugely to improve matters at the Centre in the past year or so prior to her retirement. Final thanks must go of course to the users of the Centre for their continued support and at times in the past year, their patience.

No one can have failed to notice the impact the weather has had on our parish this winter. The wet and windy conditions have brought new challenges for this Council and trees seem to be uppermost in everyone's minds. Despite our best planning, nature always wins. The weather impacted on the progress of the new allotments in Manor Fields with the ground being too water logged to bring in the machinery to create the basic allotments. Now spring is here work is progressing quickly and we will soon see the fruits of this labour.

It is lovely to see the new Gardens taking shape at Station Road and see all generations of our community enjoying the facilities there.

This area of our parish is changing and we were very sorry to see the signal box removed to make way for widening of the railway crossing, but are grateful that the signal box has been re-

homed at Amberley Museum. We thank our County Councillor Amanda Jupp for her efforts to ensure this piece of the village's history is preserved in perpetuity for generations to come.

The Council successfully nominated the Mill Way Public Conveniences, Library Car Park, Billingshurst Library and Women's Hall as assets of community value. Should any of these assets become available for sale in the future, the Council will receive early notification should it wish to make a bid for their purchase.

This year we welcomed Dan Jenkins, our Community Youth Worker shared with Pulborough Parish Council, and we are delighted to confirm that Dan will be with us for a further year. He is making links with community organisations in the parish and hopes to start a new Youth Club soon.

Colin Milne resigned from the Council recently and he is thanked for all his hard work. I have been very ably supported by the Council's Vice Chairman Mrs Lesley Wilding who puts an enormous amount of energy and research into the role. We were very pleased this year to undertake Chairmanship training which confirmed that as a Council we have the right procedures in place and exhibit examples of good practice.

I was delighted this year that bouquets were presented to two members of staff to commemorate 10 years of service and sorry to say farewell to Shaun Marshall and Hilary Morris. Norma Sullivan joined us in October as Centre Supervisor and Katie Hodgson has joined us to replace Hilary and has quickly got to grips with bookings at the Centre, and Haydn Beaumont replaces Shaun Marshall and is doing an excellent job keeping our play areas clean and tidy.

Your Parish Councillors, Parish Office and Billingshurst Centre staff continue to provide an excellent standard of service for this parish and for this I thank them all.

The Council has also submitted responses on behalf of its residents to the following consultations:

- Horsham District Council Preferred Strategy
- NALC Consultation A New Future Developing the Strategy
- WSCC Safer Routes to School consultation.
- WSCC Drainage Improvements to Marringdean Road consultation.
- HDC Consultation 'Should more people pay towards their Council Tax bill?
- Highways and Transport Draft Works Programme
- WSCC Strategic Transport Investment Programme

And finally, I would like to record my thanks to all the other volunteers in our community who work with the Parish Council for the benefit of others, and in particular, our District and County Councillors. It has been a pleasure to serve the parish of Billingshurst as Chairman of the Council for a third year.

**Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting on 15 May 2013**

The draft minutes having been circulated previously were taken as read and **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED** that they be accepted and signed as a true record. The minutes were duly signed as a true record by the Chairman.

**Questions from the Members of the Public**

Paul Leaney said the Parish Council has a very good team, excellent staff and a very good Chairman.

Kenneth Longhurst asked for an A272 bypass to be included in the Village Appraisal. He said a bypass is essential as Billingshurst is taking all these houses and it is not fair on the village to have large lorries going through the centre. The Chairman said the Council had lobbied for this. The Clerk said that an HGV traffic route is included in the Community Plan. The Chairman added that the Community Plan will be considered for approval at the next meeting of the Council.

Hazel Barnes said that members of the public have no idea of the amount of time and effort the Parish Councillors and staff put into the village and she thanked them all sincerely for this.

Meeting finished at 8.50pm.