

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS THE BILLINGSHURST VILLAGE HALL ON WEDNESDAY 04 MAY 2011 AT 7.30PM

Those Present: Mrs H.M.Abbott, Mr B.L. Barnes, Mr P.M. Berry, Mr S.N.Buck, Mr G.R. Collins, Mr D. Duke, Mr C.P.H.Griffin, Mr R.Margetts, Mrs G.R. Yarham.

Also Present: Parish Clerk Mrs B.Bell, Deputy Clerk Mrs W.Wright, Assistant Clerk Mrs E.A.Berry, Mr Miles Davey, Principal Transport Planner, West Sussex County Council. 8 Members of the public.

Mr Collins welcomed those present and reminded Parish Councillors present that we are within the pre-election period and urged them to think carefully before they spoke.

Guest Speaker: Mr Miles Davy, Principal Transport Planner, West Sussex County Council to speak about parking issues in Billingshurst.

Mr Davy is a member of the West Sussex County Council Parking Team who are responsible for on street parking and setting on street parking charges. Off street parking, e.g. car parks are the responsibility of the District Council. Enforcement of all waiting and parking restrictions is carried out by Horsham District Council under an agency agreement with WSCC.

Mr Davy said there are six parking schemes across the county and he will be working on Billingshurst parking issues for the next one to two years. He stressed that no decisions have been made and he would be conducting an investigation into parking issues with all residents and businesses. Any decisions on Traffic Regulation Orders would be made by the County Local Committees who meet quarterly, but he added that only three TROs are made each year.

He said that the main parking issues that WSCC are currently aware of are:

Jengers Mead car park
Station area
Access issues in the industrial estate
Tesco Express
School parking
St Mary's Close
General parking congestion
Parking facilities in the High Street
West Street
Rosehill

Questions from the Members of the Public

- Mr Davy was asked if the change in the clamping laws would help, but he said he did not know what the effect would be, but detailed parking surveys will be undertaken.
- Mr Davy said he would look at free on street parking if possible. HDC set off street parking charges.
- Mr Davy was asked if he would look at off street parking provision too which he said that he would, but the WSCC Cabinet Member can only make a recommendation to HDC, they cannot force HDC to take action.

- Mr Davy said he would like to use the Parish Council newsletter to every household and he was also asked to knock on doors. He explained that his team is currently himself and one other and there would not be the resources, but he would try to attend village events.
- Mr Davy was asked to look at using the Weald School bus lanes for junior school drop off.
- Mr Davy was asked about the WSCC policy on dropped kerbs. He replied that he supports an 'H' bar painted on the road across the mouth of the dropped kerb to allow a second car of the household to be parked across the dropped kerb to maximise parking capacity.
- Mr Davy said WSCC are consulted on major planning applications and he would like to see a policy to tell developers that they cannot park vehicles in on street parking schemes in existence.
- A resident suggested that long term parking to the north of the village is needed.

Mr Collins thanked Mr Davy for his presentation and said the investigations would be a lot of work and would probably need a Committee of the Council.

Report from the Outgoing Chairman of the Parish Council.

Mr Collins gave a report on the work of the Council over the last year which included:

- Objecting to large scale development in the community. It has taken a lot of time and money. The Council engaged Keith Nicholson, planning consultant, to advise and support the Clerk and there were public meetings and exhibitions. There has been a lack of clarity in the process and HDC has changed goals throughout the year.
- There has been slow progress on the allotments and an objection to the planning application by Sport England.
- Mr Alan Grant contributed to the Rail Service Working Group examining the frequency of trains and increased journey time to London.
- Planning permission and s106 funding is now in place for the skate park at Jubilee Fields with thanks to Mr Barry Barnes for all the work he has put into this project.
- Last year the Village Hall Management Committee sub-contracted the management of the Village Hall back to the Parish Council and the Clerk and her team did an excellent job getting it all back together - health and safety checks, risks assessments, etc. The Management Committee have appointed a new manager, cancelled the services contract with the Parish Council and have now decided they no longer wish to proceed with separation.
- Mr Alan Grant and Mr Roy Margetts did a lot of work on emergency planning with the support of WSCC and HDC. Special thanks should go to Tobias Mothe, our Litter Warden, who got involved with snow clearing.
- The Station Road Gardens project has been running a long time and the Friends group is still in place. HDC are going to reinstate the football field. The Community Partnership is seeking to build the Eye project youth facility on this Parish Council land, which will be another challenge for the new Council.
- There are still actions outstanding in the Parish Plan.
- The Bus Shelter Working Group have worked hard to obtain funding for three new bus shelters in Five Oaks, Station Road and West Street, and the three bus shelters for Forge Way should be installed soon.
- Planning will probably have the highest burden of all as they have no break in August and deal with large and small plans. Recently they have commented on a Solar Farm in Five Oaks, flats at Scats, Station Mills and 55 houses at the end of Dauxwood Avenue. This is a key service to the community.

Mr Collins reported on the Council's operational services:

- The website is maintained and now includes budget reports. Accounts for payment are now listed in the F&GP minutes making the Council more transparent.
- The Parish Council are back to managing the Village Hall.
- The Clerk and Assistant Clerk have been on courses for Health and Safety and maintenance of play equipment. They both do the inspections of the Parish Council property in all weathers and there are fewer issues with maintenance now.
- Dog fouling, horses in Jubilee Fields, roaming pigs, break-ins at Jubilee Fields pavilion, general vandalism, Freedom of Information requests and the general drive to improve transparency all add to the Council's time and cost base on activities that drain the Council's unscheduled time.

Mr Collins gave an overview of the Council's budget:

- The annual surplus has been reduced by tighter budgetary control to increase transparency and make the creation of funds for future projects a positive action.
- The Council decided not to increase reserves and to reduce the precept. This has not impacted on services but will reduce the future Council's ability to undertake new projects.
- Significant expenditure in the last year has been the grants for the Village Hall structural repairs and the street lighting upgrade in Natts Lane and Lower Station Road.

Mr Collins reflected on the Council's achievements since he joined in 2003:

- Bypass, footpaths and bridges.
- Swimming pool and car park
- Jubilee Fields sports pavilion
- High Street enhancements
- Village Hall extension
- Wakoos and Children and Family Centre
- Replacement of play equipment
- Church clock maintenance
- Flashing speed lights at Adversane
- Roundabouts
- Civic amenity site
- Electronic sign at Budgens that is kept up to date by the Parish Office.

Mr Collins reported that as he leaves the Council, a number of challenges remain:

- Village Hall separation
- Completion of the allotments
- Future development
- High Street vibrancy
- Re-accreditation for Quality Status
- Localism Bill and its changes
- Power of Wellbeing
- Financial challenges due to reduced precept and lack of s106 funds

Mr Collins gave thanks to:

- West Sussex County Council and Horsham District Council.
- The Community Partnership.
- Mr Cliff Griffin and Mr Barry Barnes who have both been on the Parish Council for over 40 years.
- Mrs Gillian Yarham, Mrs Helen Abbott, Mr Jake Edsor and Mr Colin Milne who have put in a lot of work for the Parish Council and have decided not to stand this year.
- Wendy, Liz, Jo and Emma, who have had a stressful time in having changes to their contracts.
- The Litter Wardens.
- The Clerk. Beverley has been Clerk for 4 years. 4/5 years ago I did the Annual Report the Clerk now does this for me. She has transformed this Council and I thank her for that.

Question and Answer Session from the Public.

- Mr Barry Barnes thanked Mr Collins for all he has done, he has put a lot of time in for the Parish Council, at times it has been a stormy ride for him but he has done a wonderful job and we thank you.
- A resident was pleased Village Hall separation has not taken place and wanted to know if the loan was still £20,000 per year on precept or have the reserves been used to reduce the loan. Mr Collins said the Parish Council decided not to pay off some of the loan because of the penalties involved.
- A resident was concerned about the Jubilee Fields project. It was excellent but they had been to a meeting where they were promised the toilets would be open for the public to use and this has not happened. Burnt Row Wood is looking very shabby and needs work doing to it. The Children and Family Centre was supposed to have a coffee shop for the community and that has not materialised; the community have not got their deal but the centre was allowed a peppercorn rent. The Friends of Station Road Gardens are talking about the Eye project being on land there, this would be a West Sussex County Council project not a Parish Council one. Mr Collins advised that all Councillors get to see the leases for these projects and it is at this stage that these facilities should be written in to the lease, before the Council approves the lease. He added that the Council supports a youth facility, but there is a conflict of interest with building the Eye project on Council land and the Parish Council would need to look at what the community of Billingshurst wants.
- Questions were raised and answered by the Clerk about the Council's reserves.

There being no more questions Mr Collins thanked everyone for attending and wished those standing for election good luck.

Meeting finished at 9.10pm.