

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 9th May 2016 in the Amenity Hall, Stone Cross

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Perrin, Lovell and Comerford, and District Councillor Clark.

2. Welcome

The Chairman, Keith Stevens, welcomed the twelve people in attendance and read from the following report;

'Firstly I would like to thank you all for attending this evening. It is good to see residents at all our meetings and to hear updates and concerns. I know that Councillors speak to residents in the Parish but they cannot be everywhere so it's good to learn about issues at an early stage before they get expensive or just out of hand. That's not to say we can resolve everything as often we have to rely upon Wealden District Council or East Sussex County Council. Funding at District and County has reduced as you all know so they are having to reduce what they do to their statutory duties. I think it will become more difficult over the coming years as funding for social care reduces and the new housing bill comes into effect. It is pleasing to report that this Council is in a sound financial position and will be able to help where possible.

2015/16 started with the elections and again thanks for everyone who turned out to vote and indeed stood as candidates. Personally I think the high turnout was due to the Parishes and Towns. Others think it was because of the District voting. Some new Councillors were elected and I would like to thank them for their input over the past twelve months.

The biggest issue facing the Parish is, of course, Planning. We have the new Wealden Plan and I hope you all agree that the contents of our response took account of all the views of the component parts of the Parish. We have our existing new building going ahead despite our objections because of the infrastructure issues. At the end of the day we are not wholly against new housing provided the roads, schools, hospitals, doctors and dentists etc are able to cope and they are not at the present time.

Where there is new build we are working with developers to secure the maximum monies from them. In future this will be in the form of CIL levied on all new housing although there are lots of exemptions....self-build and affordable housing for example. In this part of Wealden the rate of CIL is £150 per square metre of which 15% will come to the Parish. Well that's what the Government say although the District Councils seem to be assuming we will use some of our share towards infrastructure as they have to with their share.

The start of the year was saddened when we lost Bev Garner. My thanks go out to Gerry for carrying on and for taking up the mantle as Deputy Chair. A tree is planned to be planted on Canon Green in Bev's memory.

Finally a thank you to our District and County Councillors for all that they do to help and support the Parish.....a big thank you to all the Parish Councillors for their work and for giving up so much time.....and a thank you to Alison for keeping us on the straight and narrow....making us do the things the right way and securing monies towards items like

finger post signs and indeed the 106 monies’.

3. Report from County and District Councillors

District Councillor Clark was unable to attend but sent the following report which was read out by the Chairman;

‘Since the election in May 2015, WDC has been a paperless Council. This has meant a big change in the way Councillors have had to work. Getting used to only having iPads for meetings has been challenging for many Councillors. But this has made a huge saving for WDC as the amount of paperwork had been ridiculous. Having all the meetings filmed for public viewing was pretty scary at first.

Training on Code of Conduct and Social Media

Due to requests from many councils Wealden are setting up training sessions. Uckfield, Crowborough and Hailsham will host the training and there will be morning, afternoon and evening sessions to cover all times of day. The training will be advertised following the upcoming elections.

Wealden are proud to announce that the beaches in Pevensey and Birling Gap have been given an “Excellent” rating by the environment agency. The latest EU monitoring programme sees weekly measurements of water quality being carried out from May to September.

Recycling

Wealden still has a first class record for re-cycling.

Parking – Decriminalisation

Wealden understand the problems faced by many of the small villages. However, WDC feels unable to move towards decriminalisation due to the high cost which would have to be borne by Wealden. The cost plus the detrimental effect on Wealden’s towns were the reasons that Wealden refused to decriminalise when asked by ESCC.

If a scheme was to be implemented the cost would have to be offset by making charges for Wealden’s free car parks and probably imposing on street parking charges too. The revenue from this would still not cover the cost of policing parking across the towns and villages. Revenue from fines would not cover the cost long term as people would not park illegally if they knew they would get a fine. If the costs could not be covered by income, every resident would end up having to pay for decriminalisation as Council Tax would have to be raised to cover the shortfall. If Parishes wanted to have traffic wardens then the Parish Councils would ultimately have to fund this themselves. This would be the only fair way as some would feel they needed policing while others would not. Wealden believe it is the job of the Police to enforce parking restrictions, and are continuing to make their view known to the Police.

The decision to increase Council Tax April 2016 was made, but the increase was kept as low as possible. WDC always get the blame for the rise as it is their name on the envelopes, but it should be remembered that ESCC, the Police and yourselves as a Parish Council all contribute to any rise.

The number of planning applications is still high, though with more being delegated meetings are much more manageable.

The tourism and re-generation team have been working hard all over the district, but have been especially supportive to Pevensey. As you already know they have been planning the Wealden Food and Wine Festival which is returning to Pevensey Castle for 2016.'

The Chairman then invited representatives of clubs and associations to make reports and the following came forward.

4. Reports from Clubs and Associations

Mrs Molog reported on the works carried out at Stone Cross Mill. She added that maintenance is on-going and often involves hiring a cherry picker which makes it expensive. Costs are significantly reduced thanks to a team of volunteers though.

Funding is mainly from members and visitors and grants have been received from Wealden District Council and Westham Parish Council. The sale of cream teas and flour, and events such as the Summer Fair also add to their funds.

Mrs Molog invited those present to check out the Mill's website and accounts, and to visit the Mill. The website has views of the Mill from a drone.

Mr Briggs spoke about the work of the Community First Responders. Community First Responders are volunteers who support the community they live in. They are despatched by the Ambulance Service and provide first aid care until the ambulance can get there.

They are a registered charity, are self-funding and are trained by the Ambulance Service. There are now 17 First Responders locally and each one costs about £2000 to kit out but more are needed. In 2015 the local First Responders donated a total of 6611 hours in response to over 1000 calls.

Community First Responders also provide free life-saving training and also training on how to use defibrillators although it was noted that defibrillators are very easy to use.

Mr Briggs thanked the Parish Council for its support over the years and Councillors thanked Mr Briggs and his colleagues for all they do.

6. Open Forum

Those present briefly discussed ways to improve attendance at future Parish Assemblies.

There were no questions from the public and the meeting closed at 7.25pm.