



Ashington Parish Council

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 4th March 2009 at 7.30 p.m. in the Methodist Church, London Road, Ashington

Present: Councillors K. Hayler (Chairman), J. Stillwell, M. Woolley, N. Carver, N. Clark, R. Brennan, T. Kearney, K. Wood, B. Norton
Parish Clerk - Karen Dare
District Councillor Roger Arthur
County Councillor F. Wilkinson
10 members of the public
1 member of the local press

APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Cllr D. Harbour (holiday) & Paul Conroy & Paul Buckman Neighbourhood Wardens

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual Assembly held on the 5th March 2009 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman. Proposed by Councillor Brennan and seconded by Councillor Kearney, and agreed.

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF ASHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL ON THE YEAR 2009/10

As I approach the end of my second year as Chairman of Ashington Parish Council I would like to take the opportunity to reflect on the last 12 months and share with you the activities the Parish Council has been supporting:

We have been working to ensure the empty retail/residential units in the village are filled – We were very pleased to see the new Ashington Pharmacy open in 2009 and wish Michelle and her team well. The Red Lion reopened in June and Arun Veterinary Practice is hoping to open later this summer at the “old Flowerpots” premises. The Parish Council continues to review Posthorses and Hoots House with Horsham District Council. After 10 years, the land transfer of Wimpey Home Land (balancing pond area, part of western tree boundary) was completed at the beginning of the 2009 and the “developers lump sum” was transferred to the Parish Council. I would like to formally recognise the enormous amount of time that Cllr Norton has spent chasing this issue and thank him for his perseverance. We have spent much of 2009 consulting with residents on their needs and aspirations for Ashington through the Village Survey, Older Peoples Housing needs survey and Low Cost Affordable Housing survey. All the feedback

we received has gone into the new Ashington Community Plan 2010. We funded the relocation of the Red Lion mini roundabout in October after many reports from residents of near miss accidents due to drivers not using the old roundabout correctly. We have worked closely with the Co-Operative to improve site access, parking and delivery lorry issues for local residents. Finally we have spent much time this year lobbying W.S.C.C. against the Laybrook Landfill planning application, which was submitted twice during the year and whilst it has now been withdrawn it will continue to remain a threat.

Our priorities for 2010-11 will focus on the pending residential development at Merios Farm for 34 units, the expected planning application for the Open Composting site at Broadbridge Farm, continuing to lobby for a reduced speed limit along Billingshurst Road and Hole Street to 30mph, maintaining our contact with Persimmon Homes regarding the unadopted areas that still exist in the village from previous development phases and supporting the delivery of the new Ashington Community Action Plan 2010. We have agreed just a 2% increase in Parish Precept for 2010-11, which is substantially lower than 2009-10.

Turning to people, unfortunately Joan Norris resigned from the Parish Council during the year for personal reasons. I would like to thank her for the commitment and support she gave the village during her time as Parish Councillor. Frances Wood who had been the village litter warden for 8 years “retired” from her duties in April 2009 – litter collection responsibility passed to the Wardens at this time. Also, Malcolm Woolley took over from Brian Norton as Vice Chairman on the Parish Council in 2009. Malcolm has provided me with much support this year for which I am very grateful.

Finally, the Parish Council could not operate without the valuable input from our Parish Clerk, Karen Dare. Karen has developed the Parish Council website into an information hub for the village, re-started the Ashington Parish Council quarterly newsletter and revised our Emergency Plan which was used extensively during the snow earlier this year – this is in addition to her normal duties in running the Parish Council. All Councillors provide their time on a voluntary basis and I am grateful to them all for the work they do in keeping Ashington such a lovely place to live and work.

REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR FRANK WILKINSON

The past year has been fraught mainly due to the Laybrook Landfill planning application. Withdrawal of the application was a direct result of the work of many people including the Clerk, Chairman, Parish Councillors, residents, TVA etc. It is my personal opinion that Cory will walk away from this site, however, the site remains within the MWDF and it could possibly be put forward for other waste uses. County Hall are pursuing a policy of a minimal amount of domestic waste ending up in landfill. We are also, albeit not our responsibility, turning our thoughts to commercial and industrial waste to see how we can influence the big commercial waste companies and other big producers of waste to recycle more and look to new technology as the means of end disposal. I will continue to do what I can within the rules of the County Governance Guidance to advise on this matter. With regard to the Minerals and Waste Development Framework and the inclusion of Broadbridge Farm for a composting facility I am consulting with the

planning officers and I am as you can imagine in close touch with your Clerk. Again due to the Governance rules I am not allowed to comment on any planning application that may be lodged with our planners so I have asked Amanda Jupp my colleague who represents the Billingshurst Division to represent me at any forthcoming meetings and the planning committee hearing when it happens. I have been consulting with Planning Officers and speaking to your Clerk and it is likely that the MWDF will not be finalized until September 2010 while a planning application for the site is anticipated very shortly. The Parish Council has lodged its objection to the MWDF and should now concentrate on the planning application.

Turning to other matters the mini roundabout at the Red Lion was eventually relocated, thanks to the PC finding the money to do it and from all reports it has achieved what we all hoped it would, the time taken and anguish that this small request brought about was quite out of proportion to the job, but we got it done in the end.

I am still battling to get a 30mph speed limit along the Billingshurst Rd. I am determined to get this in place as soon as possible and to this end I spoke in support of a motion at County Council a couple of weeks ago to make it policy that every village in the county that at present has a 40mph speed limit will automatically qualify for 30mph and the criteria of average speeds, house frontage and street lighting will not apply. The motion was passed unanimously and so as soon as the legal and the highways department ratify the new policy I will start to push for implementation of a new speed limit. It is in the top three of traffic regulation orders that the County Local Committee want to see done this coming year so fingers crossed!

I have been complaining about and supporting your call to sort out the flooding in the Billingshurst Rd. I have been told and quite rightly I suppose, that there should not be a short term quick fix here. The gullies have been cleaned and jetted and since then the flooding has decreased but the underlying cause needs to be found. Investigation work will be carried out wk. com 1st March. Subject to what is found a works order will be sought. I am trying to get extra cash out of the treasury to get any work needed done before the end of the financial year otherwise it could be well into the summer before we see a result here.

The A24 resurfacing work northbound from Malthouse Lane to the southern flyover is programmed to start 18th August for two days. This forms part of an overall programme for the A24 which includes three other schemes for the Ashington /Washington area planned to start 16th August. There is though the possibility that the work could be brought forward to deal with winter damage repairs at the same time.

The local primary school is at this point in time oversubscribed. Speaking to the schools admissions officer about the situation I know from previous discussions that the availability of a place at the school changes from year to year. This year there are four local children who cannot get into the school, last year all requests were met and forecasts show that next year there will be places available for all the forecasted local children. I know that there is great concern and often anger raised by parents but I can assure members that a very strict policy is followed and by the very nature of the concerns raised by parents the criteria and policy is

never compromised.

The adoption of The Foster Lane, Covert Mead and Willard Way roads were the subject of discussion at a meeting held last month with WSCC officers and the necessary procedures are now being followed to complete adoption.

Viney Close is more difficult and talks with the developer and Moat Housing are being sought and the ongoing talks brought to the PCs attention.

You are I'm sure all aware of the financial situation that the County Council is managing, we have received the lowest Government grant possible for the last eight years running and as a consequence of this and apart from the millions of pounds we have saved over the last two years we are aiming to cut forty million pounds from our budget in the next two years. We have made representation to the Government to be treated the same as the average authority but to date no response in our favour.

The County Local Committee met in Ashington last September when the main agenda item was naturally the Laybrook application. We have given donations to the Ashington Youth club and will be considering and looking for other local applications on an ongoing basis.

As always you have my attentions when ever needed and I am always alert to anything I hear or see that could affect Ashington.

REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR ROGER ARTHUR

1. Commenced the introduction of Acorn Plus, the final stages of which will be implemented by around mid 2010. This is likely to result in recycling rates rising to > 60%, by end 2010. Unlike other councils, HDC has continued with weekly waste collection and the collection cost per household is significantly less than the national average. We are looking into the possibility of households being able to purchase additional green bins.
2. Improvements in recycling have been achieved, in conjunction with initiatives being taken by WSCC, which will significantly reduce the need for Landfill for domestic waste. Indeed, by 2012, there should be no need for landfill to cater for domestic waste in West Sussex other than a very minimal amount. This has been a strong argument against the proposed Laybrook landfill planning application and we will continue to monitor any proposals for development of this site.
3. We have together with the Parish Council, met some difficult challenges, with respect to planning applications, not least in dealing with a second Landfill Site Application in a relatively short period, not to mention the proposed Oast House Farm development.
4. HDC has continued to seek improvements in its cost/income base and expects to improve its position by around 1.8 million in the medium term. In my portfolio (Operational Services) we have put in place measures, to reduce net expenditure by around £400,000 pa.

5. We have sought increasing value for money and a good return on investment, along with equity in expenditure between Horsham Town and the other towns and villages in the District. We have introduced a charge on the un-parished areas of the District.
6. Like a number of other councils, HDC did at one time have money invested with Icelandic Banks but were lucky enough to have someone at top management level, with the expertise needed to ensure that the investment was withdrawn at the appropriate time.
7. As a result of the above measures, the tax imposed by the district council will be held to 2%, against a promise of 1% plus inflation. We have had to take some tough measures in achieving this, including cost/income improvements totalling £1.8 million pa.
8. We are very much aware that council tax in the SE has more than doubled over the last 12 years (largely due to the progressive withdrawal of government grants) and we intend to do everything we can to minimise the impact of high government spending & borrowing.

PUBLIC ADJOURNEMENT

There were several questions from members of the public:

1. There are potholes and collapsed haunchings (side of the road) at Hole Street (near Triggles House). What is the County Council doing to look after our road network? County Councillor Wilkinson reported that WSCC had diverted a further £2.5million into pothole and road repairs this winter. The pothole gangs are repairing @350 potholes per day and trying to catch up with repairs after the recent winter damage. The Chairman reminded all present that potholes/road defects could be reported directly to WSCC or to the Parish Clerk, copy to Frank Wilkinson.
2. There is a large amount of litter at the side of country lanes in the County. This is a District Council responsibility and roads affected should be reported to the District Council. Ashington Neighbourhood Wardens were responsible for litter picking in the village but not beyond the village boundary. New posters are in the process of being put up that give people the telephone number for reporting individuals who throw litter out of their vehicles. County Councillor Wilkinson added that litter often becomes visible during the winter but when grass cutting and hedge trimming starts the litter will get cleared.
3. The Co-op have installed a household battery recycling collection box in the shop (next to the Post Office counter). The Chairman would advertise this in the weekly village email.
4. When will the Posthorses pond be dredged because ducks are starting to build nests? The Clerk responded that this work was due to start in February but the ground had been too wet for the heavy machinery to drive over. She would check back with the contractor about likely start dates as it is important to get the work done before wildlife starts breeding.
5. Would the 30mph speed limit on Billingshurst Road extend to the village boundary or down as far as the first farm on the left as you travel north out

of Ashington? County Councillor Wilkinson reported that he had asked Highways to extend the area to the first farm as this is where most people accept is the village boundary.

6. Litter is blowing from the shopping area into the front gardens of nearby properties. Can the Wardens be asked to clear from front gardens? Cllr Wood pointed out that litter collectors cannot enter private property as this could be seen to be trespass and theft of goods. Individual homeowners would have to clear the litter themselves or speak to the shop managers about having litter cleared for them.
7. I wanted to see more details about the proposed composting site – we don't know if it is going to be 5,000tpa or 60,000 tpa. It is a great pity that Olus did not attend the meeting. The Clerk confirmed that she has asked WSCC to allow an 8 week consultation period rather than the standard 21 days as there is such strength of feeling in the village.

The Chairman thanked the District, County Councillor and members of the public for their attendance.

Meeting Closed at 8.05 p.m.

Signed.....

Dated.....