



Ashington Parish Council

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 3rd March 2011 at 7.45 p.m. in the Main Hall, Ashington School, Ashington

Present: Councillors M. Woolley (Chairman), J. Stillwell, N. Carver, N. Clark, R. Brennan, T. Kearney, K. Wood, R. Lancaster, R. Strudwick, B. Norton

Parish Clerk - Karen Dare

County Councillor F. Wilkinson

Neighbourhood Warden Peter Newell

11 members of the public

0 member of the local press

APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Cllr D. Harbour & District Councillor Roger Arthur (both holiday).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual Assembly held on the 4th March 2010 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman. Proposed by Councillor Norton and seconded by Councillor Kearney, and agreed.

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF ASHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL ON THE YEAR 2010/11

The Financial Year of the Parish Council runs from April 1st each year, through to the following March 31st, and it is the duty of the Chairman at this meeting to report to you on the activities and finances of your Parish Council for the year that will end shortly.

Despite the current economic climate, and especially low interest rates, your Council remains financially strong; we expect to end this year with a small surplus, which will be used to support next year's expenditure.

In terms of the structure of your Council, Richard Lancaster joined in April, and Richard Strudwick joined in August, both filling vacancies that had arisen. In May I took over as Chairman, with Neville Clark becoming Vice Chairman. A full list of councillors and their contact details are on the village website.

Communications

To ensure that everyone in the village knows what the Council is up to, we have the village website, the quarterly Newsletters that go to all homes, the notice boards around the village, the weekly Ashington Events email, and of course make everyone welcome at the monthly meetings. Both the village website and Ashington Events have improved considerably over the year, and for this our thanks go to Karen Dare and Chris Clarke respectively.

Community Action Plan

In the spring, every home received a copy of the Ashington Community Action Plan, which completed some 18 months of consultation with all village groups and individuals.

With Localism very much in the news these days, our Plan is a key document that will guide your Parish Council in its activities over the next four or five years. The ongoing monitoring of the Plan is undertaken by a Steering Group, which is independent of the Council, and which everyone in the village is entitled to join.

Wardens

Given the very clear feedback in the Community Action Plan, last year we committed to Horsham District Council for a further 3 year contract for the provision of two wardens.

Two Councillors, Judith Stillwell and Neville Clark, now meet on a regular basis with the wardens to ensure that their work always reflects the needs of the village. During the year we said hello and welcome to Paul Sweeney and Peter Newell who have replaced Paul Conroy and Paul Buckman.

Planning Applications

Although for the time being the landfill sites proposed for Laybook and Rock Common have gone quiet, during the year there were still three new applications of note.

Meiros Farm Development

Last October HDC gave their final approval to the development at Meiros Farm, Rectory Lane, which will include 13 “affordable” homes, which will meet the needs of the village identified in the housing survey conducted in 2007.

Broadbridge Farm Compost Site

Olus Environmental submitted a planning application to WSCC for what would be one of the County’s biggest compost sites; the impact of which on the village would be enormous.

Many objections were raised to the application, and as a result Olus Environmental, decided to review their application. We now await a revised application, at which point everyone will need to review it and comment on it in exactly the same way as we all did when the application first appeared.

Penn Retreat Application

For some years now land at Penn Retreat (at the junction of Rectory Lane and Penn Gardens) has had temporary planning approval for 3 mobile homes for use by Gypsy\Traveller families.

Last September, a planning application was submitted to use the site on a permanent basis for 10 mobile homes. Now the application has been revised to 6 units, and the Parish Council is now required to comment on this revised application, as should residents.

Flooding in Mill Lane

Last November the Honey Bridge stream that passes under Mill Lane flooded, causing damage to two homes and two cars. Whilst the Parish Council has no powers or budget for major public works, we are working with those agencies that do have powers, notably the Environment Agency, WSCC and HDC, to try to improve things.

Emergency Plan

During the year the Council completed and filed its Emergency Plan, which provides details of contacts and locations that can be used in the event of an emergency.

Winter Weather

Snow came early this winter, but we seemed to manage well. In addition, now that we are up to full strength with our wardens, we hope that we will be able to ensure that the elderly and vulnerable are supported as best we can, as future needs arise.

30mph Limits

The long awaited 30mph speed limit along Billingshurst Road was introduced at the beginning of this year, and we hope this will improve safety along this stretch of road.

The next stretch of road that we would like to see restricted to 30mph is Hole Street out towards Wiston, which currently has a mix of 40mph and 60mph limits.

A24 Quieter Running Surface

One of the top priorities that residents expressed in the Community Plan was to work towards reducing the noise from the A24. Last September a quieter running surface was laid along part of the road, but given the current budget restrictions at County Hall, the remaining stretch will only be completed as and when the current surface needs replacing.

Internet Access For All

For some time the Parish Council has felt that it would be good if we could provide internet access for all, and last year we were fortunate to receive a grant that allowed us to buy two laptops and set up an internet hub at the Parish Office in Church Lane.

Young People at the Parish Council

At the Parish Council's monthly meeting there is now a slot for young people to tell us what's on their minds; we can't promise to do what everyone wants, but it's good to hear from the young people in the village.

Hanging Baskets

Last Summer, once again hanging baskets of flowers brightened up London Road throughout the summer; this year we intend to do this again, but we are currently exploring the possibility of sponsorship to help share the costs.

Parish Council Budget

In December the Parish Council set its budget for the coming year starting April 1st.

The good news was that we believe that, provided we continue to watch our spending carefully over the coming year, we can continue to deliver the same level of services as currently without having to make any increase in our element of the Council Tax.

Finances

In 2006 you may recall that your Council, along with many others, was a casualty of the collapse of the Icelandic banks. Fortunately, on an ongoing basis we are slowly recovering much of this money, and funds received this year took our recovery to 53% of our deposit, and it is hoped that we will eventually recover a total of 70-80%. Your Councillors have again this year declined to draw any allowances, and claim only modest expenses for costs they incur.

Conclusion

In concluding, I would like to thank all Councillors for their hard work during the year, and for representing Ashington on numerous clubs, bodies and agencies both within the village and outside, and for their support for me as Chairman. And a special thanks to Neville, who as Vice Chairman has covered for my absences.

Finally, the Parish Council in general, and me in particular, could not operate without the valuable input from our Parish Clerk, Karen Dare.

Many of this issues that the Council has faced this year, have required extensive research and liaising with external agencies, and Karen has done this extremely well, ensuring that we your Councillors are well prepared for the decisions we take on your behalf.

Karen officially only works part-time, but you will find she is always there when needed.

REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR FRANK WILKINSON

I said at the start of my report last year that the past year had been fraught due to the Laybrook application, that battle appears to have been won thanks to the campaign by the PC, the residents, the Residents Association, our MP and the TVA, (I did a bit in the background). It may come back who knows. The Minerals and Waste Development Framework(MWDF) that was the guidance and the counties plan to deal with all waste arising within the county has been put on hold due to government advice and we are now looking at how an amended or new plan should be prepared. As the lead member on the preparation of this document it is difficult/impossible for me to say how it will pan out, what I can say is that the Cabinet Member does not like landfill and is encouraging all alternatives to make landfill redundant in the coming years. We are about to

formally adopt our Commercial and Industrial (C&I) waste Policy that we have been working on for the past year or two. This document outlines the problem of C&I waste and how we will work with the commercial waste companies and businesses to reduce and recycle their waste and assist them in any way we can to avert the necessity for landfill. C&I waste accounts for 70% of waste arisings in the County.

Broadbridge Farm Composting application as we know has been withdrawn and may come back in amended form, we can do nothing at this point in time except be vigilant and be prepared for another campaign if need be.

I'm pleased the new Billingshurst Rd. speed limit is now in, I spoke to a resident at the weekend and she said it had made a difference, others may disagree. There will be monitoring once the scheme has settled in, I personally think it will work ,we'll see.

The problem with flooding in the above road has and is receiving a lot of attention. It would appear that the area around Spear Hill is now OK and once the second attempt to repair the drains by Meadow House are completed "that should be that".

The A24 resurfacing has made a tremendous difference to the noise factor. I only wish I could say when the surface continuing north will be done but I can't. The financial situation the CC finds itself in means that only essential safety work can be carried out on the surface and at present the surface is safe and sound. I will obviously make representation to try and ensure that when resurfacing is done it will be with silent running tarmac. The cost of 'chip & tar' surfacing is £2.50/m² whereas silent running tarmac is £35/m².

I am, along with your Clerk, asking questions of the Education Dept. about first and second year admissions at the Primary School and the affect and use of developer 106 monies. This is ongoing and I will report any progress at PC meetings.

Flooding issues at Mill Lane are being looked at with the Parish Council, District Council and Environment Agency. Short-term measures are being investigated. A long-term solution would cost WSCC £300-500k.

I have previously moaned about the CC government grant settlement so I will not do so again. Many hundreds of employees are being made redundant and so it is not a happy time at County Hall. We will keep essential front line services intact and I as your local member will do all I can to protect services directly affecting our residents

REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR ROGER ARTHUR

1. Waste Collection. Acorn plus implemented according to programme, raising recycling to around 57%, with reduced vehicle mileage and staffing levels. Also obviating the need for residents to carry waste to car parks and amenity sites. Expected to achieve 8yr payback, despite project cost over-run.

2. Horsham Car parking - Income increased by over 200k pa, thereby increasing the return on assets, whilst reducing the need for a Council tax increase.
3. Planning Applications. Made strong representations regarding planning proposals, including Laybrook landfill and composting plant, taking full account of potential impact on Ashington residents.
4. Cost/income. - Continued to press for productivity improvements and for new income opportunities to be exploited.

PUBLIC ADJOURNEMENT

There was one question from a member of the public:

1. Some streetlights in the older parts of Ashington were due to be replaced in 2010 but have not been done yet – why not?

The Clerk responded that she had looked at the WSCC streetlight replacement programme and the lights were due to be replaced in October 2010. She would ask WSCC what the new timetable would be.

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

Meeting Closed at 8.05 p.m.

Signed.....

Dated.....