

Biddenden Parish Council
Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in the Old Village Hall
on April 22nd 2008

Present

Cllr A Barfoot

Cllr Mrs E Cansdale

Cllr M Conway

Cllr C Daly

Cllr C Friend

Cllr T Lupton

Cllr H Richards

Cllr J Rymer Jones - **Chairman**

Cllr P Whapham – **Vice Chairman**

Also present – Cllr N Bell, Ashford BC and Cllr M Hill, KCC

Apology for absence from Cllr Mrs J Ashcroft

22 parishioners signed the attendance book and 6 others attended.

- 1 The Chairman gave his annual report of parish activities. (A copy is attached to these minutes)
- 2 PC Annie Williams gave a summary of local policing issues and particularly referred to the PACT meeting on April 9th. This indicated that the prime issue of concern to residents was speeding traffic – this is the most common complaint in all villages. Other points of concern were anti social behaviour, dog fouling, vandalism and fly tipping. She was certain that our PCSO would make a real difference when in post later in the year.
As PC Williams was retiring from the Force the Chairman presented her with a gift on behalf of the Council and the parishioners. PC Williams expressed surprise and gratitude for this generous gesture.
- 3 Cllr Lupton gave an overview of the Council's finances with particular reference to the Post Office/toilets project. He made the point that the net cost of the project to villagers was about £40,000 after allowing for the various grants received. He acknowledged that there were some other associated costs, for example the resurfacing of the car park. (A copy of his statement is attached.)
- 4 The Chairman asked Councillors to give a report of their particular responsibilities.
Cllr Daly – a member of the Car Park, Youth and (the recently formed) Doctor's Surgery Groups
He mentioned the CCTV scheme for the village car park, the initial meeting of the Doctor's Surgery Group and as far as Youth activities are concerned mentioned the coming summer's sports activities organised by Tom Swain. He also felt the various sports clubs should be congratulated on their high standards both in the village and in away competitions.
Cllr Whapham – member of the Car Park Group. Assists Cllr Daly.
Has planted new saplings in the car park hedge.
Would like to record thanks to the PC Chairman for perseverance in obtaining a refund from BT for the wrongly positioned telecomms cable to the Post Office.

Cllr Friend – member Traffic & Pedestrians & Footpaths Group.

He reported that the “big issue” was the relaying of the south side pavement which is now in KCC’s 2008/9 budget. English Heritage is involved in deciding what work is appropriate bearing in mind the pavement’s listed status.

Two further tasks awaiting KCC Highways attention are a response to our “signs audit” (ie removing unnecessary ones) and moving the 40mph limit near Cot Lane further to the north.

Cllr Conway – member for KALC and ABC Parish forum.

Also attends Police Liaison meetings and is Secretary and Treasurer of the Millennium Field and Jubilee Meadow Group.

Leads on obtaining grant funding from various bodies for village schemes.

Cllr Mrs Cansdale – Leads the Council Planning Group. Advises on local housing schemes and also leads the Gordon Jones Field Group. She reported that essential repairs to the play equipment are in hand and further improvements are being considered.

Cllr Richards – Leads the Millennium Field and Jubilee Meadow Group. He reported the MF is in very good order with the new trees growing well.

He is also a member of the newly formed Doctors Surgery Group.

5 Report by Cllr N Bell, Ashford BC

He advised that there are 43 councillors on ABC, 28 Conservative, 8 Liberal Democrat, 5 Independent and 2 Labour. He said the basic Council policies would continue as in the past few years.

The Borough Council Tax is amongst the lowest in Kent.

Of particular interest, he said ABC would continue with weekly refuse collections but recycling is being reviewed although over the past year the % recycled has risen from 21 to 27%.

The Local Development Framework envisages some 1500 new homes in the Borough (excluding Ashford itself) between 2001 and 2021. Whilst some will come to Biddenden, plans are for Charing, Tenterden and Wye to take most. He felt the Parish should act quickly on the proposed Doctors surgery as it is an offer that will not be available for too long.

6 Report by Cllr M Hill, Kent CC

Cllr Hill advised that he is the Director of Community Services and Vice Chairman of the Police Authority.

He said the KCC portion of the Council Tax rise for 2008/9 is 3.95% and that it is a constant battle with central government to keep the rise down.

The main complaints he receives are about the state of the roads (which are slowly improving) and speed limits. Not a lot can be done about the latter until the governments speed limit review is complete.

Good points have been the national OAP bus pass, the Freedom Bus Pass for young people and the emerging solution to “Operation Stack” on the M20.

Within the County three new Youth Clubs have recently opened, the Margate Art Gallery is going ahead and new or refurbished libraries are planned for Ashford, Margate, Sevenoaks and Tenterden.

As regards administration Cllr Hill said KCC was in favour of two tier authorities ie, the County and Boroughs rather than Unitary Authorities like Medway. He thought the recently formed “Neighbourhood Forums” of County, Borough and Parish councils was a good idea.

The meeting broke for refreshments at this point for which the Chairman thanked those ladies who were organising them.

6 Parishioners questions.

Mr Linnett asked for clarification of the possible improvement proposals for the south side pavement. *(Not clear at present as it depends on the view of English Heritage)* He also asked what had happened to the “Speedwatch” scheme. *(The Chairman said an update would be provided at the May PC meeting.)*

Mrs Rickwood welcomed the new national bus pass but was unhappy about the 09.30 restriction on services from Biddenden. *(This is a national restriction)*

Mr Wingham queried budget provision for south side pavement improvements. *(There is KCC provision and the Parish Council is also prepared to contribute)*

Mr Phillips asked why road works are not properly coordinated. *(New KCC “rules” should improve this)*

Mr Nicholls said the manholes on the Tenterden Road needed attention as they were “dipping”

Mr Whitestone asked for a County Wide number for reporting road matters. *(There is 08458 247 800)*

Mr Barfoot queried the provision of infrastructure to match housing development. *(This is usually done via Section 106 agreements in the planning approval.)*

Mr Churton felt the only way to slow traffic down was to have a roundabout in the village at the green.

Mrs Daly queried the need for “newt surveys” for new developments. *(This is Ashford BC enforcing existing regulations)*

Mr Watts asked whether the football pitches could be drained. *(Cllr Richards explained the current position and said he would be “slitting” the surfaces soon.)*

Mr & Mrs Watts, Mrs Daly, Mrs Ashton and Mr Phillips urged the Council to press on with the proposed doctors surgery as it was vitally needed by the parishioners.

The meeting closed at 9.35pm

Graham Smith, Parish Clerk 01622 890596