

## BIDDENDEN PARISH COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 9 February 2010 at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall

Present: Cllr T Lupton (Chair)  
Cllr Mrs J Ashcroft  
Cllr A Barfoot  
Cllr D Boulding  
Cllr Mrs E Cansdale  
Cllr M Conway

Cllr C Daly  
Cllr V Evason  
Cllr C Friend  
Cllr H Richards  
Cllr H Ruse

Seven Parishioners were present.

1. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Borough Councillor Neil Bell.

2. **Parishioners' Questions**

There were no questions.

3. **Any Declarations of Interest in items on the agenda**

Cllr Mrs Cansdale	Prejudicial Interest, Drs Surgery
Cllr Conway	Doctors Surgery
Cllr H Richards	Allotments
Cllr H Ruse	Biddenden FC

4. **Any changes to the Register of Members Interests**

There were no changes to the Register of Members' Interests.

5. **Minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2010**

The Clerk read out amendments received to the draft minutes. There being no further amendments minutes. **It was agreed** that the minutes be accepted as a true and proper record. Proposed by: Cllr Ruse      Seconded by: Cllr Daly

6. **Matters of information not on the agenda**

The Chairman stated that there was one item on the Correspondence List which would be dealt with in closed session at the end of the meeting.

7. **Report by Cllr Bell Ashford Borough Council**

The Clerk read out Cllr Bell's report in his absence. In summary:

**Fish & Chip shop High St. planning application**

Cllr Bell attended the planning committee meeting which decided this application and spoke against it. Cllr Bell was pleased to be able to confirm that despite the planning officer recommendation to permit, the planning committee rejected the application, primarily on concerns over parking and traffic. Although it is still possible for the applicant to appeal against this decision, Cllr Bell hopes that they would instead take heed of the tremendous opposition it generated and the emphatic rejection.

Cllr Bell would like to thank the local residents who attended to support the opposition to this application and indeed spoke so well at the meeting.

**Council Tax**

About a tenth of the council tax is charged by Ashford Borough Council. (Kent County Council, Kent Police and Kent Fire services and Biddenden Parish Council charge the other nine tenths.)

ABC currently charges less than every other equivalent council in Kent (and beyond) as shown in the table below:

<b><u>Council</u></b>	<b><u>Council Tax</u></b>
Other Councils	£273 - £168
<b>Ashford Borough Council</b>	<b>£151</b>

Cllr Bell is very happy to report that the Council continue to tell the ABC officers that they want the ABC council tax to be amongst the lowest in Kent and, as a result, the planned increase this year of about 4% should continue to make that the case. Although, you may hear that other councils have increased their charge by a lower percentage than Ashford – but, please keep in mind this does not mean the residents are paying less tax overall. Ashford Borough Council charges the lowest council tax in Kent and beyond.

8. **Proposed Allotments**

Cllr Richards left the room at the request of the Chairman.

A paper had been circulated. Cllr Lupton reported that a site visit had taken place at the proposed site on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2010 with Tom French of BTF who is representing the landowner's interests. At this meeting the potential

allotment site was staked out, and it was confirmed that the landowner would be happy to rent the land out to Biddenden Parish Council for use as allotments under a licence arrangement. This would be subject to satisfactory access arrangements being put in place for the remainder of the field, and agreement from the present tenant to change his tenancy agreement to accommodate the change. In order to give this access it was established that a second double gate needed to be made available for the current farmer to use to avoid using the main allotment access. The costs associated with this would be for the Council.

In order to progress the Council now needs to establish whether planning permission is needed for the second gate. A cost would be incurred in this process. It also needed to be established whether planning permission was required for the proposed site as it was a change of use to allotments.

Cllr Lupton reported that a site meeting had been held on 23<sup>rd</sup> January with the Messrs Harris, Hatherly and Hills, representing the potential allotment holders. This meeting had confirmed the suitability of the site, which would be able to accommodate between 15- 18 plots. At this meeting the Council requested the allotment holders to seek grant support, and also undertook to see if grants were available to the Council. This process is now underway.

Subsequent to this meeting the prospective allotment holders have got together to form a committee which is now in the process of drafting a constitution for an allotment association together with rules.

The Chairman summarised that authority was, therefore needed to get permission from ABC for use of the land as allotments, and for the new access point. **It was agreed** to bear these costs.

The Chairman asked if a councillor would be willing to join the Chairman on the Allotment group. Cllr Richards would remain a member, but in his personal capacity. Cllr Boulding volunteered to join the group.

The meeting was closed and Mr Harris was asked how many potential allotment holders he had on his list. Mr Harris stated that he had 25 people on the waiting list for plots. He estimated that there would be 16 100m sq plots. It might be that some people would wish to share a plot.

#### 9. **Long Term Parish Finance Issue and Review of PCSO Funding**

The Cllr Barfoot, Chairman of the Finance Committee, gave an overview of the Council's financial position.

It was explained that for the 2008/9 and 2009/10, and again in 2010/11 the Council has budgeted to reduce its reserves. This has been done to avoid

