

BIDDENDEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 28 April 2010 at 7.30 pm in the New Hall, Biddenden

Present: Cllr T Lupton (Chair) Cllr C Daly
Cllr A Barfoot Cllr C Friend
Cllr D Boulding Cllr H Richards
Cllr Mrs E Cansdale Cllr H Ruse
Cllr M Conway

Borough Councillor Neil Bell
County Councillor Michael Hill OBE

Mrs Alison Swannick (Clerk)

12 Parishioners attended

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained that it is requirement that all Parish and Town Councils hold an Annual Parish meeting at this time of year in order to explain what it has been doing over the last year and to allow electors to speak about whatever they feel is important.

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Bell and Cllr Hill to the meeting.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs J Ashcroft as she was unable to attend due to illness, and Cllr V Evason who is on holiday.

2. Approval of the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 28 April 2009

The Clerk read out the minutes of the meeting. There were 2 amendments made on the last page in the question asked by Parishioner 4, line 2. It was the Parish Council who had been approached and not KCC. The second amendment was in the same section, line 6: remove the £ sign in front of 10km.

It was agreed that subject to these amendments being made that the Chairman could then sign the minutes outside of the meeting.

3. Chairman's Report by Cllr T Lupton

The Chairman's report is attached.

4. **Report by Chairman of the Finance Committee – Cllr A Barfoot**

The Chairman of the Finance Committee's report is attached.

5. **Policing Report**

The Clerk reported that Sgt McNeil had sent her apologies as she was unable to attend, but a report had been received. The Clerk read out the report.

6. **Ashford Borough Council report by Cllr Neil Bell**

Cllr Bell addressed the meeting. Notes of his address are attached.

7. **KCC report by Cllr Michael Hill**

Cllr Hill addressed the meeting. Notes of his address are attached.

The Chairman again thanked both Cllr Bell and Cllr Hill for their hard work.

8. **Reports from other Councillors**

Councillors present gave reports on their groups and committees.

There was a break for refreshments.

9. **Parishioners' questions and discussion**

The Chairman thanked the ladies for organising the refreshments.

- a) Is there a possibility of getting CCTV given the vandalism in the toilets?
Answer: Advice the PC is getting is that the management of the guidelines for using the equipment would be problematic. The misuse of evidence and information would cause a problem. The PCSO has asked the PC to review the issue. Cost is also a concern. The operating costs for post office, toilets and car park are currently approximately £6,000 per year.

There was further comment on problems with impinging on people's privacy. It was stated that there were doubts that the Parish Council had the resources to manage it. The Council would have to have processes in place for local security.

- b) A parishioner noted that the centre of the village was looking tatty and was there anything that the Parish Council could do.
Answer: There are plans for refurbishment.

- c) A parishioner stated that they were pleased to hear in the Chairman's summing up that that we look forward to the doctors' surgery in the next year. It has been a long and slow road. It was disappointing about the pharmacy but from the statement read out about the pharmacy arrangements sound as good as anywhere else. As a village we should thank Dr Winch and look forward to a much appreciated facility opening. The parishioner went on to mention the funding of the PCSO.
Answer: The issue of the PCSO is more complex. Every ward of Kent County Council has a PCSO. Biddenden is a ward. Biddenden contributes towards a PCSO and yet no other ward does.
- d) In view of the funding, would Biddenden be left without a PCSO?
Answer: That is a policing issue.
- e) A parishioner stated that they failed to see the priority issues of the vehicles leaving Mill Court and leaving the squash club. Why does Mill Court have priority? There are at least 30 cars going in every school morning.
Answer: i) On a point of information and that is that the Headcorn Surgery have now had their planning application validated by ABC.
ii) No formal discussions have taken place with the surgery on how the location will work regarding the access and parking. The access issues regarding Mill Court and the Millennium Field were questioned at the time, but Highways made the decision. It was not deemed to be a Parish Council decision.
- f) Discussion took place regarding the drainage at the lych-gate. The drainage is very poor and if the Parish Council were able to look at drainage in that area it would be appreciated. The bottom of the footpath at adjacent to Glebelands is dreadful when it rains.
Answer: It needs to be established if it is a Parish Council responsibility.

There were no further questions from the floor.

The Chairman thanked everyone for coming.

The meeting closed at 2130

Alison Swannick
Parish Clerk

01580 890750

Notes of Cllr Bell's address

Cllr Bell thanked Mr Rymer-Jones for his support whilst he was Chairman of the Parish Council.

Cllr Bell explained the success of Ashford Borough Council in keeping the Council Tax low, approximately £1400 for a band D property. Of this amount, Ashford Borough Council keeps only 10%, approximately £141 to provide services. The rest is paid to Kent County Council, Kent Police Authority, Kent & Medway Fire and Rescue Authority and the Parishes. Shepway charges almost twice that of Ashford.

He went on to mention the LDF (Local Development Framework). This used to be called the Local Plan. The plan has been outlining where new building should take place. Several meetings had been held to discuss the LDF. There had been a lot of pressure to build around Biddenden, but it had been narrowed down to a development in Sandeman Way. Ashford Borough Council had agreed to use one site. The inspectors are due to visit. There are objections to the plan already, but officers at Ashford Borough Council will be trying to ensure one site. The matter has not yet been finalised.

Social housing is another area which Ashford Borough Council is responsible for and it is looking to build new homes. Biddenden has been identified and a site in Cheeselands has been selected. The homes will be subject to local letting policy. There are concerns about the development but the council surveyor has been down to the site to meet residents.

There is currently a consultation on Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Review taking place. Currently they have more planning rights than the rest of the population. Ashford Borough Council is required to find sites for a certain number of pitches, and these have been identified. He felt that these sites should be situated outside Ashford where development is taking place so that when people bought the houses, they would buy them already knowing about the sites.

Cllr Bell spoke about the High Street pavement. The conservation officers have been quite strict regarding the relaying of the Bethersden.

The Chairman asked if there were any questions for Cllr Bell. There were no questions and the Chairman thanked Cllr Bell.

Notes of Cllr Hill's address

Cllr Hill reported that since the last meeting there had been an election for KCC and thanked parishioners for voting for him. He had kept his position as a Cabinet Member for Communities and also Vice-Chairman of Kent Police Authority.

Kent County Council was one of only three local authorities in the country to have retained its Excellent status.

Roads have had a bad time due to the ice and snow. So far this year over 54,000 potholes have been filled. More people have been employed to help, but there are still lots of problems on rural roads.

Cllr Hill outlined financial concerns due to the recession. Implications are very serious and KCC will not be able to achieve a balanced budget without reduction in services. This year the budget balance and the council has one of the lowest council tax increases. This, however, is nothing compared with a government getting into Westminster and starting to make reductions. Nothing has been done to prepare for this.

Cllr Hill stated that he was very pleased with what had been achieved in Community Services particularly keeping the capital programme going in a time of recession. Work had also started on a new archive in Maidstone.

A new library had been completed in Ashford and a ceremony will take place in Ashford on Friday. The new building houses not just the library, but adult education and a number of other important services.

The high-speed train link has been very successful. It is hoped that there could be a high speed rail line to Ramsgate and Margate and this will open up the possibilities for Manson airport.

There are plans for a third Thames crossing. This would be a way of getting traffic off the motorway and onto the M11 and up North to get rid of the bottleneck. No money would be required as private business would pay.

Cllr Hill addressed the subject of the Southside pavement. He had asked for a report to be prepared for this evenings meeting which had not happened. He has asked the planners, conservation officers and highways to liaise and come back with an agreed solution. However, if English Heritage do not like the solution they can still stop it. A solution acceptable to the conservation officers needs to be found. An answer has been promised by the end of May and it will then be brought to the Parish Council. The worry is that something may come up that is unaffordable. Cllr Hill had met with the MD of Environmental Highways

Department and asked him to contact the other parties, and he will do what he can. A solution that works is required.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hill and asked parishioners if they had any questions.

A parishioner raised a question about the money spent on a perfectly good pavement in Tenterden which has ruined it. Cllr Hill replied that it had not yet been finished.

A parishioner asked what had happened with the development of Lydd airport. Cllr Hill replied the decision had been by Shepway District. He understood they were trying to extend the runway and terminal size, but that a planning inspector will decide what is going to happen.

A question was asked about the success of high speed trains, when South East trains state that they are running at 20% of capacity. Cllr Hill replied that the high speed trains had had a dramatically increased business and property prices.

A parishioner asked what had happened to the Icelandic Bank money. Cllr Hill said that KCC hoped to get 80% of the money back. The figure has gone up and the Audit Commission figures say that KCC will eventually get 93% back.

A question was asked about Gypsies and Travellers. The issue in Hareplain Road is not dead. Smarden is taking the Inspector to the High Court with the backing of ABC. The High Court turned it down, but until ABC finds proper homes there is still going to be a problem. Cllr Bell stated that he was aware of Hareplain Rd. ABC had turned it down and the Inspector then permitted it. This has been forced on ABC and the problem is where the pitches should be. There is a good deal of talk that they should be around Biddenden.