

COLLINGBOURNE DUCIS PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD AT COLLINGBOURNE DUCIS VILLAGE HALL ON THURSDAY 1 MAY 2008 AT 7.00 PM

Present: Cllr M Cox (Chairman) Cllrs G Chandler, J Dowsett, S Gilford, A Jones, K Pickis, P Risborough, K Rossiter, N Whinton, N Williams, County Cllr R Hall, Mr R Munro) Mr J Mason, Mr J Robinson, Mrs L Rogers, Mrs Anna Cox five members of the public and Mr P Gill (Clerk)

Apologies for absence: Cllr B Bale, Dist Cllr C Howard, and Sgt M Freeman.

1. Annual Report of the Parish Council.

Cllr Mike Cox, Chair, presented the following report:

“The current Council was elected during May 2007 with many new members. For me personally, it had an interesting start in hospital and I would like to thank the others (and particularly Paul Risborough who found himself in the chair on only his second meeting) for covering for me while I recovered.

There have been a number of major developments in the village over the past year – work is now nearing completion at the Old School and on the development of 25 houses at Saxon Rise/Riverbourne Fields. Work has yet to start on the proposed housing development at Bourne Works, which has been a proposal for nearly three years now. The Council has been active in planning matters generally for everything from tree pruning and small extensions to proposed housing development and large scale fireworks storage proposals.

The engagement of the local Police in the village community is welcome and already showing positive signs – vandalism in the village as a whole does seem to be down (though there are still hot-spots). Their input and quiet work in the background often goes unrecognised.

The Parish Council has been pleased to be able to co-operate with the Church and the Old School developer to help bring mains water and drainage up to St. Andrews for the first time in over 800 years. They were also please to be able to help a number of local organisations, including St. Andrews Church and the Village Hall Trust, with grant aid towards improvement projects.

Subsequent to the decision by the last Council to remove the A338 north-bound bus shelter to prevent its use by teenagers as a place to hangout, this Council received complaints from members of the public attending Council meetings about lack of protection in inclement weather. A project to replace it was set up as a result, and both bus shelters at the Chicks lane/A338 junction have now been replaced with modern, purpose designed, shelters.

Following the initiative reported this time last year to provide useful social and casual play facilities for the 120 or so young people in the village, funding has now been made available and work is just starting on this project, which is being run with major input from the Wiltshire Police, Kennet District Council and with the co-operation of the school. The project is a major one and includes not only provision for the older teenagers but also significant improvements at the recreation ground for general keep fit and exercise, cricket and football match spectators, village events, and young people in the 10

to 14 year old age group. This project is not without its critics, but the policy of deprivation adopted in the past has clearly not succeeded in eliminating anti-social behaviour and has led instead to teenagers having no social contact, being “taxi-ed” to other villages by parents or simply roaming the village with nothing to do. Groups of teenagers can be intimidating and their language often foul, but, then, this can be true of any group of adults too, even in our own village.

The Parish Council set aside a large part of the agenda in April to discuss a perceived problem with underage drinking and anti-social behaviour. Roger Kimber closed his shop for the evening to come and take part and the Community Safety Officer from Kennet attended. However, in spite of specific advertising of the event in the Courier and on the notice board, only two people from the Parish attended. The conclusion was that the community as a whole does not consider there is more of an issue in Collingbourne Ducis than elsewhere in the country, that the police team is fully aware of the alcohol issues and doing its best to tackle them and that the major issue is litter and rubbish, much thrown from passing cars. It was agreed to start a Rubbish Awareness Project similar to and in co-operation with the successful one already running in Tidworth.

At long last, some progress is being made with the play area in Saunders Meadow. This too is not without its critics - on both sides of the fence! However, it looks likely that in the foreseeable future the area should pass into Parish Council control with a basic but brand new set of equipment which can, as necessary, be augmented. Currently, the intention is to minimise the attractiveness of the area to teenagers and provide something for the pre-school age group in view of the very limited size of the area. Additional facilities are to be provided at Riverbourne Fields and this, larger, (but still unfinished) area is within a 250 metre distance from Saunders Meadow as recommended in the Kennet Supplementary Planning guidelines for play areas for the pre-school and primary age group.

Dog fouling on the recreation ground continues to be a problem and there is clearly not an easy answer to this. The Parish Council keep the situation under review and do ask dog owners to clear up after their pet and take the droppings home, rather than leave them to become a health hazard in the bins on the recreation ground. The village litter picking contract keeps the litter and general rubbish left on the recreation ground under control and this year is being extended slightly in an attempt to reduce the amount of litter in parts of the village not previously included.

During the next few weeks, the Burial Ground is due for a tidy-up – the mound of old flowers, oasis and cuttings will be removed and the opportunity taken to level and re-seed those part of the ground suffering from subsidence and heave. Any questions or suggestions on how this is to be carried out should be addressed to the Parish Clerk.

Highways have been in the annual meeting reports for the last five years or so, usually with no progress reported. This year there is some progress to report – there has been a consultation scheme submitted by Wiltshire County Council for improved lighting at Church Bend, to which the Parish Council has responded. There has been progress of a sort on the on the A338/Cadley Road junction, though this has been left unfinished: Wiltshire CC had promised action by the end of April and revised this on 29th to “within a couple of weeks” – we are grateful for the help of the County Councillor for keeping this issue on their agenda. However, in general there has been no progress on pavements along the A338 and little on pot-holes anywhere in the village, though there has been some activity in the last day or two. We still have only one half of the pair of school warning lights installed but no progress on the other half.”

There were no questions from those present.

2. Summary of the Council's financial performance for the year ended 31 March 2008.

Cllr Dowsett reported that the Parish Council's finances were managed very much on budget. The budget was for a net deficit of £2375; the end result was an operating deficit of £1,807 after taking out one exceptional item.

He explained that although deficit sounds like a bad thing, it is justifiable if planned and can be funded, which it was from ample reserves. Two individual items under expenditure should be mentioned, these being the purchase of a bespoke notice board at substantial cost, and a grant of £1000 to St Andrews Church for special works.

Total expenditure was £22,550 against budget of £22,156; normal income was £20,743 against budget of £19,781.

There was one additional item of extraordinary income that distorts the figures if not explained separately. That was the receipt of £19,679 from Kennet District Council in respect of Section 106 funds for use on facilities for young people at the recreation ground. This would be expended in the current financial year.

At the end of the year total cash at the Bank stood at £34,049; after allowing for the Section 106 money this amounted to £14,370. There was also an outstanding liability at the end of the year for half of the cost of the two new bus shelters, amounting to just under £3,000. Thus genuinely free cash reserves stood at around £11,500, which the Parish Council considered appropriate.

As a final point, Cllr. Dowsett mentioned that the Parish Council had decided to depart from its previous practice of effectively allocating grants to local organisations in its budget. This year it would be making a statement on its grant making policy and inviting applications from eligible local groups.

As a final, final point, Cllr. Dowsett thanked the Clerk for serving the Council so well on the financial administration front.

There were no questions from those present.

3. Headteacher's Report from Collingbourne C E Primary School.

Mr Jeff Mason, Headteacher, presented the following report:

“Collingbourne School continues to go from strength to strength. Last year the school achieved its highest SATs results in its history, placing it within the top 15% of similar schools nationally. Within the same year we gained two special awards. The first is the Healthy School's Award. This celebrates the hard work that has gone into educating children to make and lead healthy lifestyles through such initiatives as providing daily fruit and vegetable snacks. The second is the Active Schools Mark. This has been awarded on the basis of the high quality sport and PE that is provided during and after school.

We are continually striving to make Collingbourne a special place to be for children with several on-going initiatives such as the ICT Mark, providing excellent ICT learning opportunities and Echo School's Project focuses on developing responsible attitudes to safeguarding the environment and using school resources in a way that can be sustained. In addition we have had a World Culture awareness and Creative Arts weeks to bring the curriculum alive involving several members from both Villages.

Outside the school there have several improvements, notably to the Reception play area. This has been completely transformed with new play ground markings, a new play house, sand pit and many new pieces of play equipment- the latter generously provided by Friends fundraising group.

Lastly the numbers on roll remain at 102, with this rising to 114 in September 2008. I would like to thank the community for their support in the school and the Parish Council for erecting the Youth Shelter on the Village Recreation Field. This will hopefully give them their own place and avoid using the many hidey holes of the school.”

Mr Mason then answered questions from those present.

4. Report from Wiltshire County Councillor.

Cllr Robert Hall said that it important to remember that the numbers on the roll have a significant bearing on the viability of a school. However, he regarded the present number on roll as presenting no issues or cause for concern.

With regard to the remedial works at the crossing on the A338 he and Cllr Cox had spoken to the relevant head officer at WCC highways and who had confirmed that funds were available and that work would start shortly.

Cllr. Hall turned to the major issue of the year, the creation of a Unitary, Wiltshire Council in just under a year's time. Both he and our District Councillor have opposed this throughout but they, supported by many others, did not prevail. Parliament has decided that Wiltshire Council will come into force on 1 April 2009 and elections for the new Council will take place on 9th May 2009. The Transitional Cabinet's starting point was that the 20 Community Areas, ours is Tidworth, would be the key to the reorganisation and their boundaries have been drafted to reflect a voter level of 3,700 per member. This leads to 98 councillors, all in single member seats. These will grouped in 4, 5 or 6 with a separate Cabinet Member in a Community Member Board which will be given powers to shape, a dreadful word, the Community Area. The Board will have staff support, funding and Parishes can be represented. A draft proposal for boundaries within the WC Unitary Authority has been submitted to the Boundaries Committee for consideration.

Meanwhile the 5 councils really were working together to produce a plan for us that works. There will be paper put through letter boxes, radio and even TV briefings and Parish Councillors would be called to the local towns for further briefing several times before 1 April 2009.

WCC Cllr Hall then answered questions from those present

5. Presentation regarding the Wiltshire Unitary Authority.

Mr Richard Munro introduced himself as the manager of the Delegation to Town and Parish Councils project – part of the Towards One Council implementation programme. He then said that part of the unitary council plan was the development of Community Boards (CB) in which town and parish councils would play a crucial part. In addition, however, they wanted to strengthen their direct relationship with each council, building on initiatives such as the Parish Steward scheme by offering councils the opportunity to work with them in providing local services, through delegation of responsibility and funding. He emphasised that there was no question of forcing councils to take on services against their will. He then explained phases of the project, the draft schedule and suggested possible criteria to be met with regard to the delegation of services. He followed on by outlining the next steps and drew attention to the following website [Wiltshire County Council/Towards One Council](#).

Mr Munro then answered questions

6. Report from Kennet District Cllr C Howard.

Cllr Howard was unable to attend. However, he asked for the following report to be read out:

“This is my first report since my election in May 2007 as the member of Kennet District Council for the Collingbourne Ward. It has been a busy year, and I have the following matters to report:

A major reorganisation of local government will occur in Wiltshire in April 2009 when the four District Councils and Wiltshire County Council will be abolished and replaced with a single new unitary local authority, which will be called Wiltshire Council. The Boundary Committee is already working on details of the electoral wards for the new Council, but it is likely that there will be about 98 members of the new Council with an election to be held in May 2009. Details of the composition of the Collingbourne Ward should be available by October, and further information about how the new Council will work, with Area Boards for local decision-making, will be announced later this year. The year 2009 is likely to be difficult and challenging for all concerned as the new authority takes over the tasks at present carried out by the District Council, and the Council and its staff are now doing all they can to make the new arrangements work as well as possible.

I have been involved in two matters about traffic on the A338 road through the Collingbournes:

a. A planning application has been made to Test Valley Borough Council by agents acting on behalf of Tesco plc for a very large distribution depot to be located just West of Andover with access onto the A303. There has been much concern that HGV traffic travelling to and from the depot from the M4 at Swindon and will attempt to pass along the main road through the Collingbournes.

I am pleased to be able to report that a Routing Agreement has now been included in the planning application under which HGV traffic going to and from the depot, if the planning application is granted, will be directed along the M4, A34 and A303 and not through the Collingbournes. The Routing Agreement does not yet include monitoring traffic using the junction of the A 303/A338 south of Shipton Bellinger, but this is in hand.

It is appreciated that in practice if the planning application is granted it is likely that there are going to be issues about enforcing the routing agreement, but the action taken so far is all that can be achieved at this stage. The planning application is likely to be determined within the next few months.

b. I remain very interested in ways of reducing HGV traffic through the Collingbournes. I believe that the prospects for a bypass are very low, mainly due to higher funding priorities elsewhere, but that there are two steps which can be taken to reduce the very serious environmental damage which is caused by heavy vehicles on the main road. The first is to have the strategic signing improved on the M4 near Swindon and on the M27 and M3 in the south so that heavy vehicle traffic is directed onto the motorways and away from the villages. The second step is to have the mapping overlays of satellite navigation systems amended so that lorry drivers, and in particular the drivers of foreign registered vehicles, are directed away from the villages.

I continue to lobby on both these matters which remain as work in progress. It is not easy due to the inertia and lack of interest which I have encountered with some of the bodies with whom I have been in contact, but I hope to achieve something on this during the coming year.

During the past year, I have become involved in numerous matters concerning Collingbourne Ducis, including the play areas at Saunders Meadow and Saxon Rise, various planning application issues and a wide range of minor problems in the village where I have usually been able to bring pressure to bear at Kennet District Council and elsewhere to have the problems resolved.

I look forward to the coming year with interest.”

There were no questions from those present.

7. Report from Wiltshire Constabulary.

PC Randle introduced himself and offered apologies on behalf of Sgt Freeman who was visiting a seriously ill colleague. He then explained his areas of responsibility and outlined the issues surrounding the Neighbourhood Policing Teams staffing levels. He briefed the meeting on the results of a survey carried out last year and the actions taken to deal with the three main concerns of Speeding, Anti Social Behaviour and Mini Mottos. He reported that Anti Social Behaviour incidents were down from 12 to 3 and that there was now enough evidence to support the deployment of a mobile safety camera. Although the Mini Moto issue had been quiet for sometime there has been a recent incident. He encouraged everyone to report incidents as logged reports are one of the factors that drive the allocation of resources.

He urged the village to give the Teenage Shelter initiative a chance to get going as the evidence from other villages is that these types of initiatives encourage the youth to take ownership which leads to a reduction in youth related incidents. The NPT will support or take robust action as required.

Although staffing levels are low, progress is being made with good support from the Parish Council and other partners.

PC Randle then answered questions from those present.

8. Report from the Collingbournes & Everleigh Link Scheme.

Mr James Robinson said that the Collingbournes and Everleigh Link Good Neighbour Scheme is exactly what it says on the box, a good neighbour scheme with a group of volunteers helping people in our villages with tasks that for a variety of reasons they are not able to do without a level of assistance that they cannot get elsewhere.

The scheme had just started its fourth year of operation. In its first three years the scheme had proved to be successful and popular with the residents of our villages. The bulk of the tasks that are driving residents to hospitals, doctors, pharmacies and shopping; in addition the also carried out some domestic tasks.

The scheme has 26 volunteers and about 21 clients in Collingbourne Ducis. In 2007 it undertook a total of about 212 journeys logging up 5,082 miles and some 400 hours. It had never had to refuse a request for help due to not having an available volunteer.

The Link scheme has been funded by donations from our clients, donations from our Parish Councils and grants from Community First and other grant giving bodies. This year the statutory start-up grants cease so the scheme would be actively fund raising. The scheme would like to thank Collingbourne Ducis Parish Council for their continued support and their recent donation towards our running costs.

Mr Robinson then answered questions.

9. Statement of Accounts from Collingbourne Ducis Village Hall Trust.

Mrs Lindie Rogers, Chair, thanked the Parish Council for their kind donation of £200 and said that as at 29 February 2008 the Trust had circa £15,000 in the bank of which £6,000 was unallocated other than as the reserve. As the Trust's accounting year still had three months to run its financial results for the full year would be not be available until later in the year.

Phase three of the replacement of the windows, which was already funded thanks to a 40% grant from KDC was due to go ahead later in the year along with improvements to lighting and sound..

A major concern was the escalation of the acts of mindless vandalism on the hall and its surrounding areas and two recent examples of the damaged caused were displayed. There has been £2000 worth of damage caused this year and an inestimable loss of income when hirers will not use the building because of anti-social behaviour. She hoped that the Teen Shelter will help reduce Anti Social Behaviour in the area.

Bookings were good and generating a steady income, however, the cost of fuel is a big issue for the trust.

Recently there has been a lack of communication with the Parish Council and the Trust e.g the decision by the Parish Council to move the goalposts which could lead to windows in the hall being broken by wayward footballs.

The tennis courts, which the use of comes at no cost, have been strewn with litter on a number of occasions and the perimeter fence has been damaged more than once. A group of four Youths has been asked to look after the courts.

Mrs Rogers then answered questions from those present.

10. Report from the Great Mere Community Conservation Group.

Mrs Anna Cox said that this last year has been a mixed one for the Group. Two key members of the Group underwent major surgery and were out of action for at least nine months. However, despite this working parties during the summer months continued with general tidying and maintenance such as the strimming of the culvert, grass cutting and keeping the pathways clear. Sadly the cupboard where the group store its equipment was broken into and one strimmer was taken – the equipment was currently housed in Mrs. Cox's stable for safety meantime. The ash tree in the northwest corner of the Mere had to be cut down because it had become unsafe and a bid was made for the remaining wood and it would be removed shortly.

On a more positive note the land was now registered with HM Land Registry, the bushes and trees which the SSEB agreed to give us arrived in November 2007 and, all but a few hawthorn which have been heeled in, were now planted and flourishing. The group is most grateful to the Gardening Club who helped with the planting. Dave and Ann Bernard had refurbished the seat which now looked magnificent.

Ann, who led the Group for two years, and Dave have now moved away from Ducis and everyone involved thanks them for all their help in the past and wishes them well in the future.

Nicky Warden who helped a great deal with advice particularly when the group began has informed us that her Sustain the Plain project is closing down and so the group would sadly be losing her expertise.

The Mere Group again thanked the Parish Council for funding the Public Liability Insurance as in previous years.

Mrs Cox then answered questions.

11. Written Resolutions.

There being no resolutions to consider the Chairman thanked all the speakers.

The meeting closed at 20.23pm.

Signed.....

M Cox Chairman

Date.....