

## HUNSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of Hunston Parish Council held on Wednesday 16 January 2013 in the Main Hall of Hunston Village Hall.

Present: Mr S Baker, Mrs S Gregory, Ms L Kenney (Chairman), Mr R Pagram

In Attendance: Mrs C Smith (Clerk), Mrs M Whitehead (WSSC – until 7.34pm)

The meeting commenced at 7.25 pm

### **1/13C Questions/Comments from members of the public.**

Attention was drawn to the fact that the staging purchased by the Parish Council had recently been damaged. After a short discussion it was agreed that the Chairman of the Village Hall Management Committee would write to the group using the staging about the damage.

### **2/13C District and County Councillor reports.**

#### **2.1 Mrs T Tull (District Councillor)**

Mrs Tull was unable to attend the meeting because of a clash in dates.

#### **2.2 Mrs M Whitehead (County Councillor)**

Mrs Whitehead highlighted a development application for 114 houses in Donnington and suggested that the Parish Council added its objections.

Stagecoach has announced improvements to local bus services.

The County Council is using £8.5 million of reserves to assist with flood issues and pot holes. Mrs Whitehead encouraged the reporting of pot holes via the 'Love West Sussex' application as this would help the repair schedule.

Mrs Whitehead was asked to chase up action on the pavement outside the Post Office.

### **3/13C Code of Conduct**

#### **3.1 Declarations of interest.**

The Chairman and Cllr Baker declared an interest in Agenda Item 13 as members of the Village Hall Management Committee.

Cllr Pagram declared an interest in Agenda Item 15 as the recipient of a payment.

#### **3.2 Requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests.**

The Chairman duly completed a request form to participate in the budget discussions.

#### **3.3 Decisions on requests for dispensation**

All dispensation requests were approved on the basis that refusal would mean that the Council would be inquorate and business could not be transacted.

### **4/13C Apologies for absence.**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Bonthron. The Chairman also explained that sadly Cllr M Allen had tendered her resignation from the Parish Council. It was noted that Mrs Allen would be greatly missed. A notice of the vacancy has now been advertised.

### **5/13C Minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 5 December 2012.**

The Chairman called for the approval of the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 5 December 2012. These were **AGREED** and the Chairman duly signed the Minutes as being a true record of the meeting.

## 6/13C Matters Arising from the Minutes of 8 December 2012.

There were no matters arising.

## 7/13C Chairman's report.

The Chairman reported on a recent WSALC Executive Committee meeting where one of the major items for discussion was the position regarding Parish Council precepts. There is no capping for Parish Councils this year, but that could be subject to review. The general consensus was that some parts of Sussex are OK but others are not. There are also issues regarding precepts for this year. Some West Sussex districts have handled the whole process badly, with the exception of Mid-Sussex. The unknowns remain the level of grants that may be available next year and whether or not parishes will be capped. The advice being given is that Parish Councils should give serious consideration to putting up their precept this year because of uncertainties surrounding next year. NALC will be seeking a definitive statement from the Government that there will now be a period of stability.

Parishes have also been advised that they need to consider including monies to cover costs of their Neighbourhood Plan. Parishes must ensure that the Localism initiative does not become stifled because of the lack of adequate finance. Parish Councils are going to have to work differently in the future to be more effective – this will include not sticking rigidly to their boundaries but co-operating more freely with neighbouring parishes. In addition, Parish Councils will need to approach their respective District Councils to ask for the funding that is available, rather than the District Councils hanging on to it, in order to be able to pay for a consultant to guide them through the Neighbourhood Plan process.

Another issue raised was future provision for gypsies and travellers. The new Police & Crime Commissioner is working to devise a strategy to deal with this. There are no transient sites available at the moment and the onus is on District Councils to deal with this annual recurring problem. Incentives may be offered to Parish Councils to put a provision in their Neighbourhood Plan to identify a potential transient site. There is also a need for Parish Councils to flag up problem sites as District Councils now have the power to grant injunctions against gypsies and travellers for specific vulnerable sites.

The Chairman finished by advising that the Parish Council needed to start looking at pension provisions for the Parish Clerk. Under the terms of her present contract, she would only be in receipt of a gratuity payment on retirement. The Chairman has spoken to both the Clerk and Michael Chater, the Chairman of West Itchenor. It would make sense for the Parishes to combine as the Clerk is likely to retire from both Councils at the same time, so that the best pension provision possible is made. **RESOLVED** that the Chairman be authorised to discuss the matter with the Clerk and the Chairman of West Itchenor in order to bring a proposal to the Parish Council for approval.

## 8/13C Reports from external meetings

### 8.1 Peninsula Flooding Workshop

Cllr Pagram reported that the latest meeting focused on the findings and analysis. The Contractors admitted getting some issues wrong and the timing of responding to the flooding was inadequate. The causes of flooding were identified to include blocked culverts and ditches. Attendees were advised these should be checked on a regular basis. The Contractor appointed by the Environment Agency is not only looking at areas studied but will look at the Peninsula as a whole. The Medmerry scheme is due to be completed in the Spring. A further meeting will be scheduled for later in the year.

### **9/13C Planning Application Pilot.**

The Clerk explained that the District Council were looking at streamlining their planning functions. It was hoped that at a future point the District Council would stop sending out paper copies of planning applications and that parishes would be able to use a projector and with broadband access would be able to view applications at the meetings. Although the usefulness of paper plans had been widely acknowledged there were some advantages to having the ability to view plans on screen. Five parishes are involved in the Pilot including Hunston. Paper plans will cease to be issued from the end of January and the Pilot will run until the end of March 2013. The Clerk added that Councillors involved in the Planning Committee would be encouraged to give feedback at the end of the trial.

Cllr Gregory highlighted the fact that the Chichester Free School was looking at sites within Hunston for the school buildings.

### **10/13C Annual Parish Assembly.**

The Clerk advised that the date for the Annual Parish Assembly had been scheduled for Wednesday 17 April 2013 and that consideration should now be given to the content of the meeting.

It was agreed that the format of inviting community Groups to have a table at the meeting had worked well. It was agreed that the Village Hall and Community Club should be included in the invitation. A detailed discussion on the merits of getting local traders involved alongside community groups followed. Cllr Gregory suggested the event should happen on a more informal basis so as to maximise attendance.

**RESOLVED** that a brief outline of the purpose of a Neighbourhood plan should form the basis of the presentation. In addition the issue of sports facilities would also be addressed.

Cllr Gregory highlighted the benefits of getting residents to come along through their local interests whether that be the Church, Canoe Club, Golf Club, or Community Club, as examples.

Cllr Gregory agreed to approach the Church. The Chairman agreed to approach the Community Club and Gerry Mann with regard to getting local traders in. The Chairman and Cllr Pagram agreed to put together the presentation on the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

### **11/13C Parish Council priorities for 2013/14**

The Clerk suggested that the Parish Council needed to give some thought to where its priorities should be focused over the next couple of years.

The Chairman suggested that the Neighbourhood Plan should be a priority. The possibility of a sports pavilion was raised but there were issues with flooding in the field which would make this difficult. Cllr Pagram suggested it was important to keep residents informed. The Chairman added that the Parish Council did not have an extensive knowledge of the small businesses in the village. She added that if derelict and unused building could be identified it is possible that they can be renovated for use by small local businesses and this can be put in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Cllr Gregory suggested that for a number of reasons many small local businesses may be reluctant to come forward.

The Clerk explained the process involved in developing a Neighbourhood Plan. The Chairman highlighted the efforts of Ringmer Parish Council and suggested that Councillors take a look at their draft which was available on their website.

It was understood that the issues involved were very complex and that residents would have to be involved in the process of developing a Neighbourhood Plan.

Other priorities identified included the renovation of the hardcourt area. Discussion evolved on the lack of its use and potential other uses. Cllr Gregory commented that there were a number of other leisure facilities within reasonable travelling distance. Cllr Baker commented that other facilities in North Mundham were similarly underused.

The issue of providing a safe crossing opposite the village hall was also discussed. This included the provision of a Zebra crossing or a Pelican crossing.

It was also agreed to revisit provision of a safe footpath/cycle path from the new Foxbridge development to the playing field.

### **12/13C Budget and Precept setting for 2013/14.**

A revised draft budget had previously been circulated to Councillors. As predicted the changes to the Council Tax Benefit system will have a significant impact on the Parish Council. The District Council will this year pass on grants to affected parishes to help but this is not guaranteed for future years. The good news is that there will be no capping of Town and Parish Councils this coming year, although there is again no guarantee that this will not change in future years.

The Clerk added that Hunston had been significantly affected by these changes, in that the grant awarded was the highest in terms of percentage against this year's precept at 17.5%. In addition the reduction in the Tax Base figure was also the highest in percentage terms throughout the District.

Cllr Baker questioned what the basis was for assuming the grant would not be forthcoming in future years. The Clerk explained that the District Council had not given any guarantees that a grant would be given in future years and in addition the Government had not given any assurances that the settlements given to compensate for the changes in Council Tax Benefits would continue.

Cllr Gregory suggested that the Parish Council should assume future grants would not be forthcoming and that costs were rising. If future grants were given and costs were contained then money would be available for other issues in the village such as issues to do with road safety and building a foundation for a better future for the village. It was agreed it was important to protect the parish from government funding cuts. Both the District and County Council had reduced costs and funding was already affected. It was felt it was essential to protect the village and the Parish Council should not put itself in a position where it cannot support the Community's needs.

**RESOLVED** that the Budget for 2013/14 as presented be approved.

**RESOLVED** that the Precept for 2013/14 be set at £30636

### **13/13C Village Hall.**

Cllr Baker reported that the Village Hall was moving ahead with the replacement of the wiring at the rear of hall which had been adversely affected by the leaking roof. It was noted that the costs would be met by the Village Hall management Committee.

**14/13C Clerk's Report.**

Planning Conference

Tangmere Parish Council has written an open letter to the local sitting MPs inviting them to a conference in Tangmere on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2013 to hear the views of local people on the rush of planning applications in the area.

SALC

The recent newsletters from the Sussex Association of Local Councils were circulated to Councillors.

Bus Service 51

Stagecoach are making some improvements to the following bus routes from 24 February 2013:

**Service 51: Chichester - Selsey**

Revised timetable to improve reliability, late evening service restored to run every day on Mondays to Saturdays (currently late evening buses to Selsey only run on Fridays & Saturdays). Sunday service increased from hourly to every 30 minutes.

These improvements are being made by Stagecoach on an entirely commercial basis without any additional funding from the County Council.

Practitioners Conference

A request is made for the Clerk's attendance at this year's Practitioners Conference 28 Feb/1 Mar 2013. An application for a bursary from NALC was made via West Itchenor Parish Council and this has been received. Cost of the conference is £210 – less the bursary £100 leaves £110 which would be split equally between Hunston & West Itchenor Parish Councils (£55 each).

**RESOLVED** that the Parish Council pays for the Clerk to attend the Practitioners Conference.

**15/13C Finance.**

15.1 Schedule of Payments and Receipts

**RESOLVED** that the payments listed in the schedule of payments and receipts totalling £2503.50 be made. See appendix 1 (January 2013)

15.2 Financial Statement for January 2013

The Statement of Accounts up to 31 December 2012 was **APPROVED**. See appendix 2 (January 2013).

**16/13C Items for noting or referral to a future meeting.**

Foxbridge Drive car park, Police drop in Clinic

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.40pm

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman