

Lingfield Parish Council

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

**Minutes of the fourteenth Annual Parish Assembly of Lingfield Parish held on
Monday 15th April 2013
at the Lingfield and Dormansland Community Centre at 7pm**

Present:

In the chair – Mr C. D’Avray, Chairman, Lingfield Parish Council

Speaker:

Louise Round, Chief Executive, Tandridge District Council

Members of the public:

Anne Harwick, Rosemary Coates, Colin Coates, Michael Beavis, Rita Russell, David Netherclift, Adam Halpin, Beryl and Peter Ashby, Ian and Pat Smith, Stewart Robertshaw, Judy Mendell, Margaret Vasey, Chris Vasey, Sue Quelch, Rita Snow, Peter and Heather Francis, Peter Bullock, Paul Kaye, Liz Lockwood, Lynn Hunter-Rowe, Mary Ayres, Tim and Felicity Pool, Sally Cole, Robert Gee, Jacqui Smith, Julie Hearn

Members of the Parish Council:

Graham Marks, Lisa Bangs, Valerie Millar, John Cole, Mary Edwards

Surrey County Councillor – Michael Sydney

Tandridge District Councillors - Lisa Bangs and Lesley Steeds

Gatcom Representative – Ken Harwood

Press – Gemma Angell, Surrey Mirror

In attendance: Fay Elwood, Parish Clerk

1. Chairman’s Report

The purpose of this annual assembly is to look back over the past year and compare what we said we wanted to do with what we have actually accomplished and to identify what the parish intends doing over the coming twelve months.

2012/13 has been a very busy period for your parish council. The year began with the biggest party in the village's history for her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in June, with some 1200 locals joining us for a picnic tea party in Church Road, and the lighting of our own beacon in Beacon Field along with many hundreds of beacons across the land. Considering the organising committee thought back in September 2011 that a maximum of 350 would attend, I think this was an exceptional success.

Your parish council has not seen eye to eye with Surrey County Council over several issues, starting with concerns over the traffic calming scheme in Godstone Road and the possible risk to life that could result from an accident, especially when vehicles jump the build-out kerb opposite The Thatched Cottage. These fears are shared by local police. Some impatient drivers have been seen speeding-up through the pinch points rather than

waiting for on-coming traffic - a factor identified by police in their objection to the scheme. I have submitted two complaints to Highways officers, and am awaiting the County's detailed response. It would be unfair on this audience to go through all the protracted arguments since most of you are well aware of the issues. Your parish council has agreed to join County officers in monitoring the pinch points, the findings of which will be announced a year from the start of the monitoring. However, this cannot begin until antiskid tarmac has been applied and the project classified as officially complete.

The next issue facing your parish council was the County Council's management of the Library and Guest House Trust. With grateful thanks to John Cole and Lisa Bangs for their tireless work on this issue, the parish council eventually engaged the services of a barrister to look into the way the Hayward Trust had been handled by SCC and a report was then submitted to the Charity Commission. We are now waiting for the Charity Commission's reply, but in the meantime SCC has passed a sum of £50,000 for the refurbishment of the flat under the watchful eye of the Guest House Committee. The income from letting this flat will help to underwrite the costs of running the Library for many years to come.

An issue high on residents' agendas when we went knocking on doors in 2011 was concern over the surgery in East Grinstead Road. Again, most of you will know the history of the surgery and their applications to expand the facility so there would be sufficient consulting space to be able to attract consultants to offer services within the village rather than at a hospital. Sadly I have to report that the situation is no further forward and we await the results of the change over from PCT to the CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group). I heard the analogy that what was happening was rather like flying an aircraft whilst it was still being designed and built. I understand that opening a dialogue with the CCG is a high priority for the new chief executive at Tandridge Council and have asked that Lingfield be included in her discussions.

I had immense privilege to be a Games-Maker volunteer for both the Olympics and Paralympics last year and could see the need to be proactive in promoting the sports legacy that comes from the London Games. As a result your parish council agreed to finance 50% of the resurfacing of the Talbot Road tennis and basketball court in conjunction with Tandridge District Council thereby bringing forward the work by several years. We are indebted to the District Council for completing the re-surfacing. This parish council inherited a loose agreement with Tandridge District Council to manage bookings on Talbot Road recreation ground. When we approached Tandridge officers to ratify this agreement we were suddenly faced with bearing the annual cost of £6,700, a sum that we are unable to raise from bookings. Your parish council has reluctantly agreed to pass the day to day management back to Tandridge. Far from reducing the use of the facility for local teams and residents, we are told that Tandridge will consider improvements costing around £3000 which will upgrade the pitch to bring it in line with other sports facilities across Tandridge. Consequently your parish council have put the feasibility study to provide a modern pavilion at Talbot Road on the back burner - at least until we can assess how the revitalised management from the District will fare.

Your parish council has achieved the following: we have upgraded the web site, and set

about establishing a database of community organisations. We have re-established speed-watch, but would welcome more residents coming forward to increase coverage. We have started a programme of re-furbishing parish benches and notice boards, but we wait for better weather before finishing this programme of works. We have attained the 'General Power of Competence' which means we can apply for government loans to support community projects, subject to holding a referendum of residents. We have purchased additional grit-bins, which I am told have been highly appreciated in the cold and icy conditions this year. We ran a 'litter-pick' and have worked to achieve funding for new village signs and are at the consultancy stage with Surrey County over improvements to Station Road parking in an effort to ensure a free flow of traffic. We have completed the first year as lead parish for the Lingfield Hub grass cutting contract. We have lobbied to improve public transport links and to reduce heavy vehicle movements through our village. And finally, we have identified work required to improve Gun Pond and the surrounding area. I hope you will agree that this is not a bad list of work achieved over the past year. Our priorities for the next twelve months include seeing the new village signs installed and working with residents to see improvements to parking in Station Road. Your parish council will continue to pursue transfer of the Guest House Trust to local people in a democratic and open election. We will join SCC officers to monitor and record incidents occurring as a result of the traffic calming scheme on the Godstone Road. We will also continue refurbishing parish property and establish funding to improve Gun Pond. We envisage establishing a Communication Hub as a modern day version of Neighbourhood Watch. We will arrange more litter-picks to ensure our community meets the high standards we aspire to before entering into Village of the Year in 2014. Your parish council is considering the most appropriate way of surveying residents for their views on making Vicarage Road a one way system. We will have to invite comment from Lingfield School and parents, as well as services such as Police, Fire Brigade, Ambulance and refuse and postal services. Your comments would be most appreciated. Another issue that is waiting in the wings at Surrey County Council is the potential to charge families for children's transport to Oxted School which your parish council will challenge at every opportunity. It seems unfair that as a result of geography, residents in Lingfield and Dormansland should be so disenfranchised.

Since residents have been recently blitzed with leaflets from aggressive developers seeking to build (or in some cases self-build) social housing, your parish council has unanimously agreed to be pro-active in looking to provide housing for the needs of Lingfield. This does not mean we will automatically carry out a housing needs survey since the private survey completed by Asprey Homes identified some 96 families in social need. It will mean that your parish council will actively identify suitable sites for development in conjunction with Tandridge Planning department and housing associations. It must be borne in mind that "Exception schemes within the green belt" are unlikely to increase the population in Lingfield since such housing is intended for local families, so it is unlikely there will be increased pressure on our fragile infrastructure. It also won't deter developers from making bids to provide more housing. But your parish council believes we have to be seen to be attending to local needs.

Graham Marks often complains that Lingfield rarely attracts training within our own community, but since I joined the board of Surrey Association of Local Councils, a body that represents issues for councils across Surrey, we are arranging to run training courses

on the Localism Bill locally. Hopefully we will build on this and establish cluster training on further subjects.

Your parish council has agreed to instigate an annual local award in recognition of community work undertaken by a Lingfield resident. It would be appropriate if we could make the first community award at the parish assembly next year, and we will advertise how nominees can be put forward. In conclusion I would like to thank all my parish colleagues for their support throughout the year, especially Mary Edwards for chairing the planning committee and to Sonia Perkins for keeping her eye on the financial management of the council. You will note there are separate reports on planning and finance on your chairs. It cannot go without saying that Lingfield Parish Council would not function without the dedication of Fay Elwood, our parish clerk, and I extend a huge 'thank you' on behalf of my parish colleagues. She patiently guides me through the morass of parish council law and regulation and we are all extremely indebted to her.

The following grants were awarded during the year:-

£3000 Churchyard Maintenance
£800 Meals on Wheels
£250 Scouts
£1000 Skatepark
£100 Lingfield & Dormans Comm Centre
£1000 Christmas lights
£225 The Haven Group
£2611 Jubilee Celebrations (net cost to Parish Council - £1575)

The Chairman suggested to the assembly that traffic lights would provide an acceptable alternative to the pinch points in Godstone Road. A show of hands supported this suggestion and it was agreed that this suggestion will be put forward to Surrey County Council.
Action: CD

Lynn Hunter Rowe thanked Chris D'Avray, Michael Sydney and Lesley Steeds for getting involved in the F.A.S.T campaign (Felcourt Against Speeding Traffic).

2. Speaker – Louise Round, Chief Executive, Tandridge District Council

Louise has previously worked in the London Borough of Islington, which is an urban authority with 3500 staff and a budget of £600 million. Although it is a completely different authority, some of the challenges are similar, particularly the financial restraints being imposed on local authorities. Her first three months have been spent familiarizing herself with the district before deciding if any changes need to be made. She has got the message that 'planning' is a sensitive issue which requires a delicate balancing act. She has been impressed by the community spirit and volunteer energy demonstrating the Big Society in action during winter weather difficulties.

Tandridge District Council is working towards making the Day Centre and Lingfield and Dormansland Community Centre into a village hub, extending services for older and vulnerable people. The plans are loosely modeled on the Douglas Brunton Centre and there is a meeting with key stakeholders during the next week.

TDC is committed to ensuring that recipients of Council Tax Support are not affected by the changes to funding from Government. Council tax has been frozen for the third year running which is a testament to the work of officers. There is no spare cash and every penny must be made to work as hard as possible. The key aim is to keep Tandridge as a place people want to live, work and visit.

Q. Lynn Hunter-Rowe asked if Louise intends to move to the area to get a better understanding of why we don't want building on the Green Belt.

A. Louise is not planning to move but has made a point of going out to meet people to understand the issues.

Q. Peter Bullock asked about the proposals to shut Lingfield Fire Station during the day.

A. Louise explained that TDC has no control over fire services.

Q. Michael Beavis expressed concern about traffic issues arising from increased development and said that it is difficult to cross the road anywhere in the High Street. He suggested pedestrian crossings but these have been considered and rejected in the past due to technical difficulties.

Q. Graham Marks asked if TDC could consider funding adaptations to elderly and disabled peoples' homes. The present situation is that they are charged £17 per hour by the Care and Repair service, even if they are in receipt of benefits.

A. It may be that a way could be found not to charge for this but the money would need to be found from somewhere.

3. District and County Matters

Michael Sydney agreed with comments that the roads are a disgrace and explained that the 'Horizon' project has been set up to tackle resurfacing of some roads in the county. £7 million will be spent in Tandridge. The road from Town Hill to the Kent boundary was done a few years ago but it was done with the wrong material and the detail of the contract did not require the contractor to repair it free of charge. This section of road will be resurfaced during the summer. Other sections include the A22 up to the A25 roundabout which will be done over the next two years. A full plan will be published next month. The recent weather has delayed the pot hole repair programme.

Q. Robert Gee said it is not only how many pot holes there are but how they are being repaired which needs addressing. Operatives need to be trained.

A. Michael reminded people that pot holes should be reported using 'Fix my street' on the web site.

Lisa Bangs questioned why SCC entered into such a contract with Carillion.

Surrey County Council is introducing High Speed Broadband into 96% of the county. There will be a presentation on the subject in Lingfield some time in June.

Michael explained that he is following legal advice not to report on the Godstone Road Traffic Calming scheme as it is the subject of a complaint from Chris D'Avray.

Referring to the F.A.S.T. campaign, Michael said there are a number of things that can be done but a speed camera would require funding.

Michael refuted the fact that he has done nothing about a footpath from Felcourt to Lingfield. He explained that a footpath along the road is not viable due to the cost but he had looked at the possibility of a designated footpath across farm land. Delays were caused by the change of ownership at Lingfield Park Racecourse but when Chris became Chairman he was in discussion with LPR concerning Talbot Road and it seemed sensible to leave footpath discussions in the hands of the parish.

Discussion on the future of the Lingfield Guest House Trust has been taking place since the suggestion of community partnership libraries in January 2011. Michael pointed out to the deputy leader at the time that Lingfield Library could not be closed because of the conditions in the trust. The Charity Commission has approved the new arrangements for a board of trustees comprising local people. Dormansland PC has nominated a trustee, and a response is awaited from Lingfield PC. Tandridge District Council has decided not to nominate a trustee whilst the dispute between Lingfield PC and SCC is ongoing.

Michael initiated community involvement to devise a parking scheme acceptable to residents in Station Road to reduce the problem of commuter parking

Report from District Councillor, Lisa Bangs

In May 2011 Michael Sydney wrote a report to David Hodge raising issues surrounding the library and the Guest House Trust. The flat had fallen into disrepair and because it had not been rented out, income had been lost. There was further concern because Surrey County Council (as trustee) was using its own procurement procedures to get work done, rather than putting the work out to tender. It is estimated that £100,000 was overspent from the trust. Surrey County Council ignored the report and it was not followed up. Lingfield Parish Council became concerned about the situation and sought legal advice. The problem being that Surrey County Council is wearing two hats – Local Authority and Trustee - and by using the corporate procurement policy it hadn't been acting as prudently as it should in the interests of the trust. Lingfield Parish Council has asked the Charity Commission to look into the situation but in the meantime fully supports the transfer of the trust to local people.

Q. Ann Harwick asked who paid for the barrister.

A. Lingfield Parish Council

Michael Sydney pointed out that the figure of £100,000 possible overspend was over a period of 55 years.

Moving on to District Council issues, Lisa said that it had been a quiet year and that the Refuse and Recycling project has been successful, with Tandridge coming in the top 5 or 10 in Surrey.

The informal management of Talbot Road Recreation Ground by the Parish Council has come to an end due to an officer decision at the district Council. Lisa has spoken to the Chairman about the situation and it is being reviewed.

Lisa gave a report on her involvement with the Godstone Road traffic calming scheme. Following an FOI request, she received confirmation that SCC officer time has not been recharged to the developer. The response from SCC is that it is not appropriate to charge for officer time. How does this compare with the officer time charged to the Guest House trust? A resident's CCTV camera has recorded vehicles mounting the pavement which will be a real cause for concern when people are walking from the new housing development. It is disappointing that the plans for a kerb build out were not annotated on the plans. Lisa believes that traffic lights would be a better option.

4. Ken Harwood, GATCOM

Ken took over as the GATCOM representative this year and he is aware that both Lingfield and Dormansland are being 'buzzed' on a daily basis. His role is to listen and to try to alleviate some of the problems. He urged people to respond to the many consultations. The deadline for the Night Flights consultation is some time in June. Ken has monitoring equipment which can be used where residents perceive aircraft flying lower than they should be.

Lynn Hunter-Rowe asked if a complaint is upheld does the fine go into the Community Fund.

A. It is not that straightforward. You will receive a radar track which may show planes are not actually where you thought they were.

Q. Michael Sydney asked when the flightpath changed to go over Felcourt.

A. Paths do not change, but adjustments are made.

Q. Chris D'Avray suggested that a bus link should be considered between Lingfield and Gatwick.

A. In Felbridge there is an arrangement whereby APH will take staff to Gatwick (not free of charge)

Q. Graham Marks asked if we can borrow the monitoring equipment.

A. No, but there is already a monitoring site in Lingfield.

5. Issues raised by members of the public

Q. Ann Harwick asked if a 20mph speed limit could be considered throughout the village as she is concerned about speeding, particularly in Church Road. She is also concerned about commuter parking causing a problem for buses.

A. The Chairman said that we could ask Surrey County Council to consider it and Moira Cocks could be asked to monitor speed in Church Road.

Action: Parish Council

Q. Rita Russell questioned why the parish council feels that Vicarage Road should be made one-way. She explained that some years ago, there was an agreement with residents to use the ends of their gardens to widen the road. Sensible parking would improve the situation.

A. Mary Edwards feels that residents of Vicarage Road should be consulted.

Meeting closed at 8.50pm