



**Minutes of the Eighteenth Annual Parish Assembly
held at Lingfield and Dormansland Community Centre
starting at 7pm on Monday 10th April 2017**

Present:

W. Roach, David Bright, Brian and Brenda Waddingham, Chris and Margaret Vasey, David and Kim Parish, Sally Cole, Ian Phillips, Mr & Mrs White, J. Jardin, G. Parker, L. Siggery, Bill Stevenson, Tim and Felicity Pool, Brian and Lynn Swift, Claire Thomas, Sue Quelch, Heather and Peter Francis, Jane Vogt, R. King, Sonia Perkins, Lynn Hunter-Rowe, Rita and Bob Russell, Bernard and Joan Wickenden, Graham Tebbutt, Rod and Gill Shorey, Deanne Parry Jones, + two others.

Speaker: Cllr Martin Fisher (Leader of Tandridge District Council)

County Councillor: Michael Sydney

District Councillors: Lesley Steeds, Maureen Young, Brian Perkins, Liz Lockwood

Parish Councillors: John Cole (in the chair), Liz Lockwood, Andrea Watson, Vivien Hepworth, Graham Marks, Rody Kaiser-Davies

Parish Clerk: Fay Elwood

1. Chairman's Report and Welcome

The chairman welcomed everyone and explained that he would be changing the order of the agenda to facilitate Cllr Fisher needing to be away by 8pm.

The Chairman's report is available to view in the Report to the Annual Parish Assembly – attached.

2. Community Awards

The chairman presented the following awards, along with a small token of appreciation in the form of a cheque for £30:-

Brian Waddingham - for his volunteer work with the Walking for Health group, along with other activities around the village.

Lingfield Horticultural Society - for their work looking after the planters for the last 13 years.

Rita Russell - for her help in replanting around Gun Pond and taking on the replanting of the village planters.

3. Address by Martin Fisher, Leader of Tandridge District Council (TDC)

Martin was booked to speak at the Parish Assembly back in October last year as part of his programme of visiting the villages when he became Leader of the Council. The booking was made before his controversial announcement that Tandridge District Council will be pursuing

the idea of a 'garden village' as its preferred strategy to meet housing needs. It did provide a timely opportunity to ask questions about the emerging Local Plan but as a result this meeting attracted residents from neighbouring parishes.

The following is a summary of Martin's speech:-

The Local Plan (which will replace the Core Strategy) will address existing and future needs. It is very challenging and the unpalatable truth is that the Government states it should favour development. The Government aim is for 1 million houses to be built over the next five years to try to address the 'broken' housing market. Nationally, house prices are eight times average earnings but in Tandridge prices are fourteen times average earnings which puts us in the highest category. If nothing is done to improve the situation, middle aged people will move into the district and young people will move out.

It is important to have a robust Local Plan. There is a decline in home ownership. Neighbourhood Plans cannot be used to block development if it is needed. It is a complex and diverse process and Tandridge needs growth of 1.3% per annum. The Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) figure for Tandridge is 9400 extra homes.

The problems facing TDC are the same as those across the country. Few (if any) Local Plans have been adopted unchanged. The Local Plan has to pass inspection and the Inspector will be looking for the report to favour development.

The vision for the TDC Local Plan received cross party support. A garden village (around 4000 properties) to be built on one of five sites which have been put forward by developers. It will generate significant investment and will help relieve pressure on existing infrastructure (eg. Doctors and schools). It would be wrong to concentrate development on existing urban centres which only cover 6% of the district. We do not favour this 'scattergun' approach because the Green Belt would disappear 'cut by cut'.

A garden village would have a better mix of types of homes and not be just rows of boxes. It requires a release of 1% from the Green Belt and would help us protect the remaining 93%. We would still have the highest proportion of Green Belt in the country.

Martin realises that releasing any Green Belt land is not popular with residents but he feels it would be dishonest to promise to protect every bit of Green Belt because this would be overturned by the Inspector and would result in unplanned development without any additional infrastructure.

Government policy on house building is clearly laid out in the White Paper, along with the possible penalties for not producing a Local Plan. The most severe penalty would be that the district would be put into special measures, whereby Government would take over the responsibility for planning (Martin thinks this is unlikely to happen in reality).

The second (more likely) measure is that the Government would set the level of OAN and whilst the plan was being formulated, developers would find it easier to get permission and

TDC would lose control of the process. The only way to keep control is to prepare a Local Plan which would satisfy the Inspector.

The land which came forward following the call for sites is only 30% of what the Inspector would like to see.

Questions:-

David Parish

Apart from the fact that you have already given developers open season, is it the job of TDC to insist on infrastructure? Caterham has seen much development in recent years and there has been no addition to their infrastructure.

Martin Fisher:

All District Councils are undergoing this process. Developers are consulted, along with residents. He acknowledged that flooding is a problem in Caterham and said that they had suffered from piecemeal development which is a mistake we don't want to repeat across the district. The only way to get infrastructure gains is to put the development in one place. If the five developers are to have their sites considered, they have to show they can provide the infrastructure. Some houses would be built before the infrastructure. Not all of the sites will be judged to be suitable, but once the short list is decided Martin would like the developers to arrange public meetings so that residents can see what is on offer from each one. There is also a £2.3 billion infrastructure fund provided by the Government.

David asked why have Tandridge District Council had unminuted meetings with developers about the Blue Anchor site? Is there any truth that a local councillor is not allowed to express their view?

Martin said that all councillors are free to express their views.

The sites which have been put forward are:-

Blindley Heath

South Godstone

Chaldon

Edenbridge

Reigate and Banstead

Some of the sites came in after the Sites Consultation and if any of these are short listed another consultation will be arranged.

Martin is keen to stick to the timetable but also wishes to be transparent.

Lynn Hunter-Rowe

Lynn is worried about the loss of Green Belt and asked why we can't have the infrastructure before the houses.

Martin replied that Government regulation is complex and it has to be done in the right way. He realises that residents do not want development but Government is determined to increase house building.

Lynn accepts that the Government is forcing the issue but is worried about developers reneging on their responsibility to provide the infrastructure. Martin said the Local Plan

process commits the developer to deliver what is set out in the Section 106 agreement as part of the planning permission.

Lisa Siggers

Asked how many houses will there be per hectare?

Martin Does not know the proposed density and it will take officers six months or so to sort out the detail. He repeated that he doesn't want rows of boxes and wants to include open spaces and ponds etc . He hopes to work out the short list within 3-4 months.

Name not supplied:-

Lingfield Surgery cannot cope with existing demand, so what will happen if development takes place in lots of different areas?

Martin recognises that we do not have enough doctors but we also don't have enough consulting room space. He is hoping to have a conversation with GPs in the near future but the reality is that surgeries are struggling to recruit GPs due to a national shortage.

Why do council members vote for something their residents do not want?

Martin replied it is not a sustainable position to reject development.

Camilla Downing

If the garden village goes ahead, will there still be development on the other sites put forward?

Martin said if a site meets the purposes of the Green Belt then he will defend it but there are a few areas that do not meet the purposes and they will be offered for development. He intends to protect the areas scored red. However, developers may challenge some of these decisions.

Andrea Watson

Are the 9400 houses proposed for local people? Will there be any control to stop investors buying the houses and renting them to local people?

Martin said the number of the OAN is not likely to reduce. The Government wants to link housing need with affordability. We have to convince the Inspector that development is sustainable but there is no legislation to control who buys the properties. We can ask for affordable housing and council houses as part of the plan. Doing nothing would mean that house prices continue to rise and we would become an ageing population. We want to ensure there are local homes for local workers.

Grace Porter

Acknowledges that more houses are needed (especially affordable homes) but not convinced by what Cllr Fisher is saying. The Edenbridge site was pushed through after the consultation period and it is totally unsuitable for large scale development.

Martin said that of the five sites he has no idea which ones will be favoured. He is challenged with balancing the needs of the 1300 people on the housing waiting list with those who want to protect the Green Belt.

Brian Waddingham

Why is the cost of building houses disproportionately expensive in Tandridge?

Martin stated that the value of houses does not relate to the cost of building them.

Sue Quelch

Why do developers get permission for large houses ?

Martin replied if a site is suitable for development, the district council cannot stipulate the types of homes the developer should build.

The Chairman thanked Martin Fisher for his time and acknowledged that the production of a Local Plan is a very complex process. If residents would find it useful to have a public meeting about the Local Plan, they should contact the Parish Clerk with details of the questions they would like answered.

Cllr Fisher left to attend another meeting.

4. District and County Councillors' reports

Michael Sydney

Although Michael is not standing as a candidate in the County Council elections, he will still be around and will remain as Chairman of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England in Tandridge. Please feel free to continue to contact him on CPRE business. People will be aware of Surrey County Council's proposal to increase their portion of the Council Tax by 15% ,thereby triggering referendum. This decision was abandoned after the budget had been prepared which left officers with the task of reformulating the budget to accommodate a 5% increase instead. The effects of this are serious and will have an impact on the Highways budget.

Michael welcomed the decision by Martin Fisher and Nick Skellet to reintroduce members of TDC onto the Local Area Committee.

Michael praised staff at County Hall for the way they have dealt with the challenges at a time of uncertainty over their own jobs.

Rod Shorey

Several months ago, yellow lines were painted, leaving a gap where a car was parked. SCC has promised that this will be addressed but still nothing has happened. Michael suggested that Rod sends an email to Michael so that he can make sure it is on the list of jobs for the road painting team.

Maureen Young

The speed of traffic continues to be a problem for Felcourt residents. The speed limit has been reduced but further measures have not been forthcoming, despite repeated requests to the County Council. Fairfax Homes is planning a development of 101 houses on the site of Frith Manor but no planning application has yet been submitted. A public meeting is being held on Wednesday 12th April at the Jubilee Hall in Charlwood Road, starting at 7pm.

Name not supplied:-

Is it true that a 20mph zone is planned for the centre of the village.

The Chairman explained that some residents have approached the Parish Council with this request. Surrey County Council has agreed to carry out a speed survey to determine whether a 20mph limit is feasible but if we want this to happen soon, the Parish Council will have to pay for the survey. Members have agreed to spend up to £500 to carry out this survey but we are waiting for Surrey County Council to let us know when this can happen. The process is slow but we are pursuing it.

Bernard Wickenden

The pinch points are a pain and pointless!

Liz Lockwood

Explained that she is at odds with the group she is a member of (Conservatives) because she thinks there is a different way we could do things with the Local Plan. It is up to Tandridge to set its own housing needs target. She believes that what is planned IS a scattergun approach because we will get both the garden village and development on the other sites which have been put forward.

She believes that the content of Cllr Fisher's speech does not relate to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Liz believes she has a full grasp of the Local Plan process now and mistakes need to be rectified. The population was reducing 10 years ago but if you build more houses then people will move in from outside the district. She believes that the proposed plan is unsustainable and undeliverable. Sustainability needs to be Economic, Social and Environmental. She pointed out that the Core Strategy is still valid and would protect against developers getting permission on appeal. She believes the Green Belt would continue to be at risk after a garden village is created.

Brian Perkins

Would like to see the details of Liz's alternative approach to the Local Plan and believes that some of the issues could be addressed through the Neighbourhood Plan. Brian was part of the committee which approved the Core Strategy but realises that things have changed and target figures in the Core Strategy should now be regarded as a 'minimum'. The Local Plan is full of hope and risk but any alternative approach would need to be looked at carefully. He

expressed concern about the legacy for the next generation. It is not an easy choice but the future must be sustainable.

David Parish

Asked if the Council has a conflict of interest in relation to the New Homes Bonus?

Brian replied that whilst the bonus is useful, it is inferior to what we are looking for in the future.

Maureen Young

Maureen expressed the view that Liz Lockwood should have expressed her views whilst Martin Fisher was still in the room to give him the right to reply. Liz said she has made her views known to Cllr Fisher.

Rita Russell thanked the Chairman for his hard work.

Meeting closed at 8.55pm