

Lingfield Parish Council

TENTH ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

Minutes of the tenth Annual Parish Assembly of Lingfield Parish held on Monday 20th April 2009 in the Lingfield and Dormansland Community Centre at 7.30pm

Present: In the chair – Mr R. Palmer, Chairman, Lingfield Parish Council

Members of the public

Crispin Moor, Rui Domingues, Richard Lowe, Julie Hearn, Alan Reynolds, Kate Reynolds, Kevan Hodges,, Ken Rimington, Chris D'Avray, Sally Cole, Claire Pratt, Colin Edwards, Pat Dobson, Mary Francis. J. Graham Taylor, Rosemary Harris, Rod Shorey, Gill Shorey, Faye Shorey, Frances Dean, Tony Dean, Chris Vasey, Margaret Vasey, Karen Haworth, Rita Snow, Paul Pirie, Judith Mendell, Ian Quaife, Paul Thilo

Members of the Parish Council

Graham Marks, Lisa Bangs, Valerie Millar, Fran Palmer, Sonia Perkins, Mary Edwards

Surrey County Councillor - Ken Rimington

Tandridge District Councillors - Brian Perkins, Lisa Bangs

In attendance: Fay Elwood, Parish Clerk

1. Welcome by Chairman of the Parish Council

The Chairman welcomed those present and introduced members of the Parish Council, District and County Councils and Kevan Hodges, Managing Director at Lingfield Park Racecourse. He explained that the purpose of the Annual Parish Assembly is to report on what the Parish Council has been doing and how it has been spending money during the past year and its plans for the coming year. In addition, the meeting is also an opportunity for parishioners to give their views on issues facing the village.

The Parish Council had budgeted to spend £60,415 in 2008/9. The actual expenditure was £40,038 (this figure to be confirmed in the forthcoming audit). The difference of around £20,000 is due to the inability to pursue improvements at Talbot Road Recreation Ground because of the uncertainty of the new GP Surgery and other parking and highways projects that have not materialised.

The Parish Council would like to improve the sports facility at Talbot Road and one suggestion has been to build a sports hall which would incorporate changing rooms. Parking would need to be provided, along with access from East Grinstead Road. This would only be possible if the Parish Council could acquire some additional land from Arena Leisure. The scale of improvements at Talbot Road have yet to be decided but at the very least, we need to make

improvements to the drainage of the football pitch which becomes very waterlogged in winter months. If a piece of land the size of a football pitch could be acquired, it may be possible to relocate the football pitch onto the new land and to build a sports hall on the existing pitch. However, the Chairman pointed out that these plans are in the very early stages and we are waiting for a response from Arena Leisure concerning terms and conditions that would be attached to purchase of any land. The first stage will be to employ someone to manage the facility and for them to become involved in its development.

When the Core Strategy was adopted by Tandridge District Council, Lingfield became eligible to apply for a Rural Exception Site to build a small development of affordable houses. A Rural Exception Site is a piece of land on which planning permission would not be granted under normal planning rules. The Chairman informed the assembly that the Parish Council had considered the issue and the majority of members had voted against such a scheme. Initially, it had been our impression that only Parish Council's could apply for such a scheme, but it has now become evident that this is not the case. A developer has commissioned WS Planning to carry out a Housing Needs Survey in Lingfield. A Housing Needs Survey is a necessary precursor to submitting a planning application.

2. District and County Council Issues

Brian Perkins reported that the Inspectors had found the Core Strategy to be sound but it is now necessary to undertake a Housing Land Availability Study. The Council must identify land in the district which is capable of being developed within the next ten years. TDC had tried to argue that 'windfall' sites more than provide our quota of additional housing but this study must still be undertaken. Identification of a site does not mean that planning permission would automatically be granted.

Weekly recycling collections have now been extended throughout the district and will continue despite the difficult financial circumstances.

Lisa Bangs reported that the issues facing Lingfield a year ago are still a problem now, namely Planning and Parking. Despite members' concerns about the overcrowded appearance and the lack of infrastructure, permission was still obtained for the three houses in Town Hill. Lisa expressed concern about people on a fixed income who are affected the most by the 6%-10% increase on services.

Ken Rimington reported that this will be his final address to a meeting of the Parish Council as he is not standing for re-election to the County Council in May. He reported on his role in securing installation of double yellow lines in Station Road/Bakers Lane and East Grinstead Road. He also reported on grants he has been able to secure for local sports and play provision. The Surrey County Council portion of the Council Tax has only risen 2.9% in 2009/10 and the Highways Budget has been increased by 4.9%.

The Chairman wished Ken good luck in his retirement and thanked him for his efforts concerning the new roundabout being installed at Judges Corner.

3. Members Reports

Planning Committee

Mary Edwards explained the organisation of the Planning Committee and the frequency of meetings. The role of the Parish Council is to provide a local view and to ensure that new development respects the character of the village.

70 applications were considered in 2008/09 compared with 100 applications the previous year, which is thought to be a result of the current economic downturn.

The Parish Council is unhappy about the dilapidated state of the buildings in Town Hill and concerned about the empty shops in the High Street, although we are pleased to see a greengrocer back in business.

The appeal for houses at the rear of Green Lane Cottages was refused by the Appeal Inspector, despite Tandridge District Council withdrawing its objections. The Parish Council had objected to this development and is pleased with this result.

The Core Strategy sets out the planning framework for the next 10 to 15 years and there is to be no change to Green Belt boundaries unless housing targets cannot be met within the built up areas.

Fay Shorey asked why Lingfield Parish Council did not make representations on the specific sites and Mary replied that the Parish Council did not think it was necessary.

Ian Quaife asked how long a developer could leave properties in a dilapidated condition before action can be taken. Mary informed the assembly that the Parish Council will be keeping a close eye on the situation and we have already written to the Director of Planning at Tandridge District Council.

Environment and Parish Property (Graham Marks and Valerie Millar)

Graham Marks reported that work has been commissioned to repoint the wall around Gun Pond and to lift and re-lay slabs around the war memorial. The flag pole has been cleaned and repaired and three benches have been replaced around the pond. There are a further two benches which require replacement in the coming year. There may be some small repairs needed to the village cage. Graham thanked the Horticultural Society for their work maintaining the village planters. He also thanked Mr Chappell (recently deceased) for his help looking after the pond and the village flagpole.

In the coming year he hopes that the Parish Council will agree to some replanting work in the twitten between Drivers Mead and Newchapel Road.

Heather Francis asked if the Parish Council could put up a notice to discourage people from feeding bread to the ducks. Graham was reluctant to take a draconian approach but suggested that educating people may be the best approach.

Grants/Funding (Fran Palmer and Sonia Perkins)

Sonia Perkins explained that the Parish Council pays annual grants for churchyard maintenance, Lingfield Nature Reserves and Citizens Advice Bureau.

The budget for discretionary grants for 2008/09 was £3300 whilst applications totalled £6945. A broad spectrum of local organisations benefited from Parish Council grants during 2008/09. The budget for 2009/10 is £3850 and applications will be dealt with as and when they are received.

Tony Dean questioned the grant of £3000 to the Burial Grants and the Chairman explained the Parish Council would have an obligation to manage the Burial Grounds if the Church decided to forego the responsibility.

Parish Facilities (Mary Edwards and Lisa Bangs)

Mary Edwards explained that this area of responsibility covers Lingfield Wildlife Area, Lingfield and Dormansland Community Centre, Talbot Road Recreation Ground and the Allotments. Lingfield Wildlife Area and Lingfield and Dormansland Community Centre are managed entirely by separate committees.

There are twenty allotments at Centenary Fields and a further twenty people on the waiting list. The budget for 2009/10 is £510 which includes £400 rental income. The rent will be increased in January 2010 from £18 to £20. The Parish Council is responsible for the fencing and boundary at the allotment gardens and any expenditure is taken from reserves. The Allotment Forum meets every two months and is made up of two councillors and four allotment holders. They have arranged two very successful working parties to deal with communal areas.

The Parish Council is actively looking for land to provide extra allotments and any suggestions would be welcome.

Crispin Moor thanked the Parish Council for good and supportive work concerning the allotments and stated he is pleased that we are trying to identify land to provide more allotments.

An annual budget of £4000 has been set for Lingfield Wildlife Area for the remaining term of this Parish Council. This figure includes the mowing contract, the LWA maintenance grant and £500 for Parish Council responsibilities.

Mary Francis raised the issue of parking in Talbot Road, especially by users of the sports facility on a Saturday morning. She made a request that the gates are opened every Saturday to allow people to park within the recreation ground. The clerk replied that the ground is too soft for much of the season.

Paul Pirie suggested setting up a Garden Share scheme, whereby those with large gardens they can no longer manage, make them available to people who would be prepared to look after them. The produce could be shared.

Stop Press:- The Parish Council is aware of such schemes in other parishes but although there are several people wishing to take on the gardening, there are few (if any) prepared to let a stranger have access to their gardens.

Rod Shorey suggested that land adjacent to the existing allotments could be used. Mary Edwards advised that this has already been considered but the land is not suitable.

Highways, Traffic and Parking (Ron Palmer and Fay Elwood)

During the past year we have managed to get an increase in parking warden attendance in Lingfield from two sessions a week to three. We have also organised a petition for time-limited parking in the High Street and reduced price parking permits for traders in Gunpit Road car park. More than 200 people have signed the petition and this will be presented to the Community Services Committee on 2nd July and the Tandridge Local Committee on 3rd July.

Speedwatch continues despite losing four volunteers. Six new volunteers are about to undergo training. The Police have informed us that it has had a noticeable impact on the speed of traffic through the village.

We have budgeted £2000 towards a Vehicle Activated Sign for Godstone Road but have been informed by SCC that we would need to cover the total cost of £5000 to get the work done any time soon. This will be discussed at the next Parish Council meeting in May.

The Chairman introduced Kevan Hodges, Managing Director at Lingfield Park Racecourse and invited parishioners to put their questions to him. Kevan stated that since taking on the role of Managing Director he has been proactive in communicating with the Parish Council and residents. However, the land issues referred to at the assembly would need to be decided at board level and responses from him are merely his view.

Julie Hearn asked whether discounts will be offered to residents on memberships for the new leisure facility at Lingfield Park. Kevan agreed to pass on this request to Arena Leisure.

Action: Kevan Hodges to request discount for residents

Faye Shorey asked about the forthcoming race and music nights at the Racecourse. Kevan reported that there will be 6 race and music nights

between June and August (a reduction from 10 last year). The concerts will be held on the paddock lawns which will reduce disturbance to those who live in the vicinity of Station Road. He assured us there are no plans to move the concerts to the corner of Station Road.

Rod Shorey stated that he is vehemently opposed to a car park in Station Road and asked Kevan what Arena Leisure's view on a car park in the Green Belt.

Kevan replied that whether the conditions are special enough is for someone else to decide, but that if permission is granted LPR would be entering into the agreement with the purpose of solving a parish problem.

Rod Shorey stated that he was concerned about Arena Leisure's intention to develop further racecourse land and that permission for a car park in the Green Belt would set a precedent.

Kevan thought that permission for change of use for a small area capable of taking 50 cars, is a long way removed from any suggestion of housing development.

Jim Steiner asked if Arena Leisure would continue to own the land so that the idea could be abandoned if it became a 'white elephant'. Kevan confirmed this would be the case.

Kevan concluded by informing people about the residents' race night on 30th May and the Chairman thanked him for taking the time to attend the assembly.

4. Open Forum

Parking in Station Road

The Chairman explained the reasons behind the idea of using a field in Station Road to provide extra commuter parking and acknowledged that there are serious planning issues to overcome. Permission for change of use would only be granted if we can demonstrate exceptional circumstances and we would plan to provide 50 spaces on a plastic surface which would allow grass to grow through it. The car park would only be open Monday to Friday. This would have to be done in conjunction with daytime parking restrictions in Station Road. The Parish Council decided to pursue a planning application at its meeting on 31st March but the Chairman explained that he would like to get parishioners' views before proceeding.

Tony Dean said that in his view there are two separate issues:- sufficiency of parking and parking in Station Road. He would be concerned about restrictions that would stop residents in Station Road parking outside their own properties. The Chairman explained that the restrictions would not apply to residents.

Alan Reynolds pointed out that Bakers Lane is also affected by the issue of commuter parking.

Paul Pirie commented that the installation of yellow lines at the entrance to Bakers Lane has merely pushed the problem further up Station Road.

Paul Thilo pointed out that it is not only commuters who cause a problem in Station Road so that if residents were allowed to park, the problem would remain. He also expressed concern about the effect on trade to 'Harry's Shop'.

Paul Thilo suggested asking the Rail Franchisees to provide extra parking. 'Why should the parish pay for it?'. He also asked what Tandridge District Council had advised in relation to the land. The Chairman replied that the advice from TDC is that we would be unlikely to get permission unless we could demonstrate very special circumstances including highway requirements.

Rod Shorey read out the contents of an e-mail from the Director of Planning to clarify TDC's advice.

Lisa Bangs read out a memo to further clarify TDC's position on the planning issues, including the County Council's position on the issue. The Chairman pointed out that this e-mail was based on two mis-assumptions. i.e. that it would include a hard standing and there would be no parking restrictions in Station Road.

Ken Rimington explained that Change of Use in the Green Belt requires very special circumstances and that if we cannot provide them we should not proceed.

Mary Edwards informed the assembly that Bob Evans has given her details of contacts within SCC and TDC who will be able to give advice on what constitutes 'very special circumstances'.

Chris D'Avray suggested that the Parish Council should carry out a survey of all residents before proceeding and pointed out that commuters also park in the High Street taking away valuable spaces from shoppers.

The Chairman asked those present if a survey of residents should be undertaken and most people were in agreement with this course of action.

Action: The clerk will add to agenda for May PC meeting

Rod Shorey made the point that parking restrictions would need to be introduced throughout the village for this to work.

Tony Dean suggested the Members' and Jockeys' car park could be used to take some commuter parking but it was pointed out that permission to use this has already been given to Notre Dame School.

Graham Marks suggested asking Police to carry out a survey to find out who is actually parking in Station Road.

Talbot Road Recreation Ground

There are a number of improvements which could be considered but some rest on the possibility of acquiring some extra land adjacent to the existing recreation ground.

Julie Hearn told us about the Youth Project which was considered in the 1990s and pointed out that Lingfield Park Racecourse were unlikely to offer the land unless they are offered something in return.

The Chairman assured those present that he would not entertain the idea of housing development as a quid pro quo but pointed out that in any case this is not the Parish Council's power to give such permission.

Ian Quaife suggested Astroturf to improve the football pitch but this is not acceptable to most of the football leagues and is extremely expensive to install.

The Chairman explained that TDC would be unlikely to offer any financial help to acquire extra land and that it would need to be paid for by the Parish Council.

Chris D'Avray asked about the field next to the Football Club to provide extra facilities but the price for the land is prohibitive.

Mary Francis asked that any future development is carried out in a neighbourly way and that if a sports hall is considered then it could be put on the newly acquired land rather than the existing pitch. This would not be possible because the new land would be Green Belt.

Mr Domingues thanked the Parish Council for helping to make Lingfield a great place to live and offered his help on any project to improve sports facilities. He urged the Council to address the issue of parking in Talbot Road in the short term, possibly by installing grasscrete within the Talbot Road recreation ground. We will investigate the cost.

Action: Clerk to get quotes

Mrs Shorey asked if we can get any money from the Section 106 agreement attached to the development of the hotel at Lingfield Park Racecourse. The Chairman agreed to investigate.

Action: Chairman

Finally, Tony Dean thanked the Parish Council for all its hard work and for giving residents the ability to air their views. The Chairman encouraged residents to read the monthly Notice Board features in Lingfield Living and to let the Parish Council have their views.

Meeting Closed at 10.20pm