

Lingfield Parish Council

ELEVENTH ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

Minutes of the eleventh Annual Parish Assembly of Lingfield Parish held on Monday 19th April 2010 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

Julie Hearn, Win Penny, John Ball, Ann Ball, Chris D’Avray, Frances Dean, Tony Dean, F.S. Nind, P.E. Nind, Chris Vasey, Margaret Vasey, Paul Shrimpton, Ian QuaiFFE

Members of the Parish Council

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

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 thanked Paul Shrimpton, Chief Executive at Lingfield Park Racecourse, for taking the time to attend. Michael Sydney, Surrey County Councillor had hoped to attend but in the event could not be present. The Chairman introduced the members of the Parish Council and explained their areas of responsibility. The purpose of the meeting was to report the main activities of the past year and explain how taxpayers’ money has been spent.

Actions arising from the last Parish Assembly were explained:-

Residents of Lingfield, Dormansland, Felcourt and Crowhurst will be offered a discount on membership of the new health club situated at Lingfield Park Hotel on a first come first served basis. Memberships will be limited to 250 in the first instance due to the size of the facility and the need to accommodate hotel guests. Members of Lingfield Leisure will be offered membership at the previous rates. The survey of residents on the provision of a car park in Station Road was not undertaken. We had been advised that planning permission would be problematic and due to the cost of a survey it was felt that we should only proceed if we could get a written undertaking from Arena Leisure that they would make the land available. Arena Leisure was not prepared to make an unconditional offer in writing because of advice they received from their planning advisors.

The clerk contacted Tandridge District Council on the issue of a Section 106 agreement to help towards funding for improved sports facilities but we were advised that this was considered at the time the planning consent was given and there was no scope to ask for anything else.

The Parish Council explored the cost of providing parking within the perimeter of Talbot Road Recreation Ground and decided that the cost of £28,000 was prohibitive.

The Chairman explained the Finance Report and explained that actual expenditure for 2009/10 amounted to £49,000 against a budgeted expenditure of £59,000. The money set aside for Talbot Road has not been used yet; the Vehicle Activated Sign has not been installed (due to SCC lack of funding); no expenditure required on 'vandalism' or 'contingency'. Unexpected expenditure arose from the clerk's pension arrangements and urgent repairs to Gun Pond wall and the war memorial. Income was roughly what we expected. Although bank interest was lower than expected, we received a grant from Tandridge District Council for £1545 towards the cost of repairing the war memorial. The Chairman thanked Graham Marks for bringing the Environmental Initiatives scheme to our attention. The precept for 2010/11 remains at £31,000 which has been achieved by reducing our budgets for:- contingency, vandalism, discretionary grants and Talbot Road recreation ground.

It has been an interesting year but a frustrating one because of the slow moving nature of Surrey County Council and Tandridge District Council. Recent newspaper headlines referring to a 'Parish Council takeover bid' were exaggerated but inspired by the suggestion that parishes could take over responsibility for hedges, verges and ditches. Surrey County Council is proposing that a cluster of parishes could form a social enterprise group which could then bid for the work using a local contractor. No decision has yet been taken but members feel that the parishes are too diverse for this to work. It may be possible for Lingfield Parish Council to take on this work solely for its own area.

The granting of permission for a Rural Exception Scheme was disappointing for the Parish Council. We had initially been led to believe that such a development could only be initiated by the Parish Council. This proved not to be the case when a developer, in conjunction with a housing association, submitted an application for 18 affordable homes on Green Belt land in Godstone Road. Planning permission has been granted subject to a satisfactory traffic calming scheme to slow down traffic before it reaches the access road. The Parish Council is hoping to be part of the consultation process.

2. District Council Issues

Brian Perkins referred to the disruption caused by the laying of a new gas main in the centre of the village. The contractor, Morrisons, appears to have failed to communicate effectively with residents and traders and businesses have suffered as a result. Brian arranged a meeting through the Chamber of Commerce and temporary rate reductions were applied for. A loss of income package is available through Morrisons but the application process is arduous. The Chief Executive of Tandridge District Council attended the meeting and although Peter Ainsworth could not attend in person, his office lent support to the cause. As a result, Surrey County Council have modified their approach to such projects and agreed to involve Chambers of Commerce at an early stage in future.

Brian referred to an anomaly whereby Lingfield is classified as 'rural' for affordable housing but 'urban' for business rates relief and stated that local views should be given more weight in the planning process. A rural exception scheme should only be granted if it called for by residents.

Finally, Brian pointed out that the need for a new surgery is a pressing problem and a priority issue to local residents and the Parish Council.

Lisa Bangs reported that some positive things have come out of the last year. Morrisons and Surrey County Council have tended to blame each other for the lack of communication. Persistence is the only way to achieve results. Our roads have suffered permanent damage from the ongoing works and Surrey County Council needs to make sure that Morrisons carry out the necessary repairs.

The winter disruption to Refuse and Recycling caused unnecessary hardship for people in certain areas and, as a result, the Community Services Committee has agreed that collections following a period of bad weather can be sequential.

The current road works has highlighted a need for a disabled parking bay in the High Street. Those present were invited to let Lisa have suggestions for a suitable location.

Lisa shares concern about building on the Green Belt and had hoped that the affordable housing scheme at The Bays would be refused on road safety issues. However, the impact on infrastructure should be minimised by the fact that new tenants will come from within the village. She agreed that it would be nice if the Planning Committee could take residents' emotive issues into account but pointed out that decisions have to be taken within the legal planning framework which does not allow this flexibility. The Chairman pointed out that allocation of affordable housing to local residents was not guaranteed if there was insufficient take up by locals.

3. Planning

Mary Edwards explained the Parish Council's role in the planning process. The Parish Council has received 88 planning applications this year, 70 last year and 100 during the previous year. Some plans are granted, despite Parish Council objections, for example, the flats on Town Hill, five houses in Green Lane and the affordable housing scheme at the Bays in Godstone Road. The hotel at Lingfield Park Racecourse will be receiving its first paying guests in May 2010. The site of Lingfield Leisure has now been sold and will be developed in the near future. The Parish Council is concerned about empty premises in the High Street. We were disappointed that the new surgery was put on hold. Protection of the Green Belt and the Conservation Area continue to be important to the Parish Council. The lack of infrastructure is a major problem.

4. Environment (Graham Marks and Valerie Millar)

It has been a busy year which has included major repairs to the wall around the pond and lifting and relaying of slabs around the war memorial. This work has carried out by Alex Nash who has contacted the Parish Council to say he will be

carrying out some further minor repairs free of charge. Three benches have been replaced and the flag pole has been refurbished.

We have four planters, which are maintained by Lingfield Horticultural Society and we thank the members for looking after them on our behalf. Thanks also to Vernon Deller for keeping the pond and surrounding areas maintained throughout the year.

We would also like to acknowledge the extra bench which has been installed on the corner of Newchapel Road and Godstone Road. This was donated by the Ellis family in memory of Teresa Ellis.

Lastly, our gratitude goes to Richard Ford, our road sweeper, who keeps the centre of the village and surrounding roads clean.

5. Grants (Fran Palmer)

During 2009/10 grants have been considered as and when they were received. Grant applications were down during this year so the budget for 2010/11 has been reduced accordingly. £3000 was paid towards the upkeep of the churchyard, £300 towards the cost of the Citizens Advice Outreach; £3850 was made available for discretionary grants. Discretionary grants were awarded as follows:- £1000 to Lingfield and Dormansland Community Centre for remedial electrical work; £500 to Lingfield Scouts for equipment and their Centenary Camp; £250 to Lingfield Youth Football; £600 to Community Care; £1000 to the Chamber of Commerce towards the cost of providing Christmas Lights.

Fran explained that the grant to the Chamber of Commerce had been given as match funding to encourage local businesses to make a contribution. She also explained that although the Community Centre management team has a fully repairing lease, the Parish Council had helped out on a one-off basis due to the urgent nature of the work.

6. Parish Facilities (Mary Edwards)

Mary explained that this responsibility includes the Lingfield Wildlife Area, the allotments and Lingfield and Dormansland Community Centre. The Wildlife Area is managed by a separate committee and costs the Parish Council up to £4000 per year. This figure includes grants, the mowing contract and Parish Council responsibilities. No budget is allocated to the Community Centre because it is managed by a separate committee.

There are twenty full size allotment plots at Centenary Fields but as they become vacant they are split to allow smaller plots to be offered to more people. There continues to be a long waiting list for allotments and the Parish Council is vigorously pursuing land to provide more. Allotments are regularly inspected to make sure they are worked to a satisfactory standard.

7. Highways, Traffic and Parking (Ron Palmer)

Parking in Lingfield has been a frustrating issue to try to resolve. We have been trying to get cheaper parking for traders in Gunpit Road Car Park but to no avail. A by product of the gas works being carried out in Lingfield, is that parking charges have been suspended, meaning that people can park all day. The Parish Council has made an approach to Tandridge District Council to revert to the old arrangements whereby free all day parking is available in Gunpit Road Car Park in return for a payment to cover the lost revenue. We await their decision.

Following the petition which was submitted to the Local Area Committee, we are still waiting for the introduction of time-limited parking in the High Street. We have been informed that a questionnaire is to be distributed to 200 households in the centre of the village as part of the consultation process.

We await confirmation that double yellow lines will be installed in Gunpit Road, from the entrance in Plaistow Street.

Ian Quaiffe asked who will enforce parking restrictions as no enforcement has been carried out for weeks. It was noted that all parking enforcement in Lingfield is suspended whilst the gas works are in progress. Ann Ball reported a strong smell of gas in Newchapel Road, which we presume she has reported.

8. Talbot Road Improvements

The Chairman reported that a committee has been formed to decide on an improvement programme for Talbot Road Recreation Ground. The committee comprises four Parish Council members and representatives from various user groups and residents. Two things have happened so far:- The Parish Council has made a request to Tandridge District Council for transfer of the freehold. This will give the Parish Council the freedom to access grant funding. Secondly, some improvements have been made to the current facility.

John Ball stated that any transfer should be on the same terms as when it was transferred to the Parish Council. The Chairman explained the different histories of the two parcels of land.

Chris D'Avray asked if it would be cost effective to take it over and the Chairman explained that we are requesting some financial help from Tandridge District Council to fulfil their obligation to provide facilities across the district.

Open Forum

The chairman introduced Paul Shrimpton, the Managing Director of Lingfield Park Racecourse, and invited him to speak to the meeting. Paul said that he had attended the Parish Assembly to make himself aware of local concerns. He reported that the building of the hotel is proceeding well and he hoped the village had not suffered too much disruption as a result of its construction. He explained that the hotel is a fantastic new facility for the racecourse. The leisure facilities are not large and therefore they will only create 250 memberships initially to ensure that hotel guests can always be accommodated. The restaurant and bar will be open to non-residents. Julie Hearn raised the issue of jobs for local people and Paul explained that they had offered jobs to as many local people as they could, given the need to employ people with experience. He

referred to the issue of creating a car park in Station Road and said that Lingfield Park Racecourse would have been happy to make some land available but that planning officers did not agree that provision of a car park constituted the 'very special' circumstances need to gain planning permission in the Green Belt.

Ann Ball said that she would like to see more synergy between the village and the racecourse. Paul agreed and explained the arrangements for a residents race day on 22nd May. It was also suggested that visitors to the hotel should be encouraged to take a trip into the village.

Traffic Calming Scheme for Godstone Road

The chairman introduced this issue to the assembly, explaining that Surrey County Council had initially objected to the affordable housing scheme at The Bays on the basis of road safety issues. The developer has proposed a scheme which would effectively reduce Godstone Road to one lane at the approach to the village. If the amended scheme is similar, it will create a log jam, especially on race days.

Ian Quaiffe stated that buses driving round and round the village are causing degradation of the road surfaces. He asked the Parish Council to prevail on the bus companies to explain why it is necessary to drive round the same roads more than once.

Action: Clerk

Graham Marks explained the current bus routes.

John Ball asked what the proposed traffic calming scheme will include. Mary Edwards explained the plans and Ann Ball suggested that the developer should be asked to put forward several alternatives.

The Chairman expressed the view that whatever scheme is put forward, residents should be consulted. Everyone present agreed. The clerk will write to SCC to ask them to make sure we are involved in the consultation process. He further explained that he has questioned Lingfield's inclusion in the Rural Exception Scheme.

Action: Clerk

Chris D'Avray suggested that the Parish Council should have carried out the Housing Needs survey when it had the chance. The Chairman disagreed.

Talbot Road Recreation Ground

The issue of dog fouling in an area where people play football was raised. The Chairman is in favour of banning dogs from Talbot Road. He asked those present for their views on the issue and explained that we have asked residents to let us know what they think.

Chris D'Avray suggested looking at the terms attached to the land and Julie Hearn suggested we should consult the relative of the person who bequeathed the land. The chairman reiterated that this is not something the Parish Council is seeking to impose if the majority of residents are not in favour.

Any Other Issues

Margaret Vasey raised the issue of the ditch alongside The Star public house. Graham Marks explained that this is the responsibility of Surrey County Council. The clerk will report a fallen tree near to The Star.

Action: Clerk

Win Penny asked whether the Village Action Plan is being adhered to. The Chairman explained that we are doing what we can within the restraints imposed by other agencies.

Julie Hearn thanked Paul Clifton and Julie Watson for their help in reducing vandalism at the Nature Reserves.

John Ball questioned the amount of publicity given to the Parish Assembly, although it had been on the notice boards, web site and in the East Grinstead Courier/Observer.

The state of the roads and the number of potholes was raised in relation to the difference in the performance of contractors between the east and west of Surrey. The clerk will contact Michael Sydney to find out if west Surrey receives a better service. Brian Perkins pointed out that the poor condition of the roads is a nationwide problem and the needs do not match the funding available.

Action: Clerk

Meeting closed at 10.20pm