

**MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
9th SEPTEMBER 2013 AT 7.30 PM AT THE STEYNING CENTRE**

PRESENT: Cllr Bowell,(Chairman)
Cllrs Lloyd, Barling, Toms, Ness-Collins, Marshall, Trundle, Toomey,
Muncey & Staines.
Also in attendance:
Michael Pearce– Neighbourhood Warden
Tom Slaughter - PCSO
1 Press representative & 30 members of the public.

1. APOLOGIES

There were apologies for absence from Councillors Hoare, Rogers, Hopkinson, Alexander, & Devlin, Cllr Cockman.

2. DECLARATIONS

There were no declarations of interest from Councillors.

3. MINUTES

It was **proposed** by Cllr Bowell **seconded** by Cllr Lloyd that the minutes of the meeting held on 15th July be Agreed and signed by the Chairman. This was Agreed.

4. MATTERS ARISING AND ACTIONS from the last meeting

There were no matters arising from the July meeting.

5. POLICE/NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDENS/LAT REPORTS

Michael Pearce gave his report which is attached to the F & C minutes.

Michael Pearce also gave the report from PCSO Tom Slaughter's which is attached to these minutes. There followed questions from councillors:

- You mentioned giving out bags to youngsters for dog fouling - what about repetitive offences.
- If we can catch a specific person we can speak to them. Cllr Muncey is looking at a campaign on dog fouling and can work together with the Wardens.
- Operation Jessica and Internet scams are people in Steyning affected.
- This is nationwide. Can provide more detail to put on website.
- Car driver mentioned in Wardens report why were they not prosecuted.
- Reported several times but not witnessed to enable us to take action.

6. QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

The meeting was suspended to allow questions from members of the public.

The Chairman reported that we have received 3 written questions for this evening:

Question 1.

Both Councillor Barling and the Strikers have acknowledged that the Strikers were informed in advance regarding the timing of the Acoustic Dimensions engineer's visit on Saturday 20th October 2012.

1. Who imparted the information (Clerk/councillor, and if the latter which councillor(s) was/were responsible)?
 - The Clerk informed the Strikers manager, in liaison with the PC Chairman.
2. Was the imparting of the information authorised by the Council, and if not, under what authority was the communication made?
 - As above, in liaison with the Chairman with due consideration of child protection issues.
3. To which individual(s) representing the Strikers was the information given?
 - The Chairman of Strikers football.
4. On what date was the information given?
 - Late p.m. Thursday 18th October.
5. How was the information given (person to person/email/telephone call/letter/whatever)?
 - By telephone.
6. What words were used (the gist if there is no written record)?
 - The Strikers manager was advised there would be a man with camera like equipment on the field and this was to make them aware this was a sound survey on behalf of the Parish Council.

Question 2.

This question is regarding a statement made by Cllr Barling as Chairman of the Parish Council about the calling of the by-election and whether it was made on behalf of the Parish Council.

- We have passed this to our solicitors as there is a suggestion there may be legal action taken “*significant resource implications should any of the ten electors decide to sue for libel*”.

We would like to comment that it has been suggested in the local press that the Parish Council manipulated the election process. For information;

Cllr Carmen resigned on 7th March 2013,

Notices were put up on the 7th March 2013,

Horsham District Council advised us of the closing date of 27th March.

We would like the public to note that there is a process for co-option which these residents chose not to use as is their right. However, co-option would have cost nothing, whereas any by-election in the future will cost in excess of £5k if called.

Question 3

I am one of a group of people on limited income who are naturally concerned about levels of Council Tax. Could you tell me the total costs to date resulting from the legal proceedings and other actions taken by Mr. Campbell and his associates against the council.

- The legal costs so far are just short of £10k
- The recent by-election cost the council £3.5k with a further £1,800 paid by HDC
- The notional costs for the clerks and councillors time dealing with FOI request, other requests and the large volume of general correspondence and from January 2013 (when accurate recording commenced) stands at approx. £3,250. No detailed records were kept for the period May 2012-December 2012 but it is fair to assume a similar level of notional cost for this period. Whilst it is appreciated that the clerk is paid regardless of the work she is carrying out, dealing with this level of additional work has meant that a lot of other, important work has been affected and is not being done causing a backlog. Some additional administrative support has been necessary at a cost, to date of £485.

Cllr Barling asked to respond to these questions and stated:

The chairman has said he does not wish to reply to the question about me personally because of the further threat of court proceeding. I do, I am not going to be silenced. You will know that since May I have worked tirelessly as your County Councillor and yet I am dragged back into the issue of the skate-park consistently by Mr. Campbell.

To put it in context, since the public meeting the council has been bombarded by emails from Mr. Campbell and some of his associates, over 130 and there are a total of about 35 information requests and also approx. 137 hours spent by the council on dealing with this since January 2013. The clerk has kept a running total of the time she and councillors have spent with dealing with complaints to the ICO and HDC and two JR's which are now under appeal.

When I was Chairman there was an unwritten policy about putting out statements, and this was that if you were putting something in writing you cleared it with the clerk first, but on occasion when telephoned by the papers it is not possible to go back to committee, you have to respond.

On this occasion, there were 10 people, who suddenly out of the blue applied for a by-election. When the application was put into Horsham it was put in at the last minute. Even if it had been put in early the PC would still have had to pay a % of the cost of the extra election. What did this achieve, it achieved nothing because what this was really about was the skate-park.

(At this point there was disruption by a member of the public)

I believe there will be another election soon. It is not right, in my view, that Cllr Devlin moved away quickly and has not come back and we should ask him to stand down. There will be an election called again and this will cost money out of our reserves again. If I had known Cllr Muncey, who I have respect for, has wanted to be a parish councillor I may well have supported her if she stood for co-option. I have always been a true supporter of democracy in this Town and I will continue to do so.

I apologise for going on, but there were things that needed saying and facts that needed reporting.

The Chairman then invited questions from members of the public present:

- Can we have the names of those asking the written questions.
- It is not our policy to minute or publish the names of residents asking questions.
- A question about the progress for both applications for the skate-park at the Leisure Centre site and MPF. I speak as a supporter of the skate-park and I think we should have one. There is confusion about what is happening. A number of my friends at the by-election voted for Cllr Muncey thinking this is how we can get a skateboard facility and where it was going to happen but now it seems like that cannot happen because the landowner has said no, the school has said it can never happen and WSCC have said no. Anybody with any common sense will know that this cannot go forward. So for clarity, from someone who wants a skate-park and to go back to others I have been speaking to, would the parish council be able to confirm that at the present time, the MPF application is the only one which is viable at present.
- Parish Council looked at several sites. As a council we feel we should not embark on a project unless we feel comfortable we can see it through to conclusion. MPF is a project we can see through - we own the site. The FoMPF feel it should be at Leisure Centre, that is their right and they are progressing that application. We had a meeting and agreed to give them time to see how far they could get. We will put in our application within approximately a month. Should this go through we will go to the residents of Steyning to clarify what is wanted and getting their mandate to continue.

- Even if FoMPF continue with the application for the Leisure Centre site and even if they get approval for their application can it can never actually be built, because how can you build on land where the landowner says no.
- That is how the Parish Council feels about it. If another group feel they can achieve another site that is their right.
 - If people are to get behind and want a skate-park realistically it has to be MPF.
- We think so. We are in a difficult position in this country that anybody can put in a planning application on a piece of land but if you do not stand a reasonable chance of being able to build on the land should you embark on this? We don't think so. Currently we do only have half funding promised.
 - I am Chairman of the Strikers. One of the questions seems to be connected to information calling the sound report corrupted, as Chairman I would like to ask if there is any foundation to this, has PC been given any information as to why this report is alleged corrupted? I have concerns for my organisation.
- We understand an allegation has been made, we have asked for corroborative evidence, so that we can carry out an investigation, but have not received it.
 - Has the allegation been made that there is a witness to this corruption.
- We believe that is the case but we don't have that information at this time.
 - When it came to Nick trying to get on the council, Cllr Devlin said you can't come on because you contributed to the Focus leaflet. What is the difference, if someone like Sue Rogers can go around canvassing at doors for her election?
- Cllr Hopkinson is on the Council he came on with me. We need to focus on the future and going forward. Cllr Muncey is on the Council. If we have a vacancy, I would like to think that any member of the public who wants to come onto the council for all the right reasons, we will try and look at all applications to co-opt to try and save the money of an election. In 2015 you can vote us all out if you wish.
 - Camera in High Street did not pick up robbery. Why not? What is it there for. Time to evaluate this. Surely a load noise in the High Street should have been picked up.
- Police camera, this is a roving camera but we do not control this. It does not pick up sound. Will ask what can be done.
 - Cameras in meetings. Could be valuable for them in Parish Council meetings.
- Not a requirement at parish level. Not necessary and this could lead to verbatim records and recordings being asked for and we do not have these resources.
 - I would like to thank Mike and Paul (Wardens) for work on Sunday at picnic in park.
 - Item 8.2 resolution about dog fouling and fencing the play area. Has Council looked at other reasons for fencing i.e. stranger danger and all play areas should be closed off to show it is an area for children and parents that accompany them. In the MPF any stranger wandering past would be near where the children are playing and I would like you consider this very carefully. Would support resolution tonight.
 - I think you might have given the meeting the impression you have been trying hard to get witness statement that the Friends hold about the corrupted report, could you tell the meeting how long ago did you know FoMPF had this statement, and when you finally wrote to them?
- On two occasions I have been approached by Mr. Goldsmith telling me about the situation and on both occasions I said we would treat this seriously and to tell us who and for the information to be produced. I was told he would come back to us. Now we have had a written request and we have responded asking for evidence and we will look into it properly, but no response yet.

- Asked about camera four meetings ago. Told it moved every 4 seconds this is not so. If any individual receives a scam from Inland Revenue it is definitely a scam. The Chairman reconvened the meeting.

7. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Chairman updated the council that there had been a recent meeting with HDC and other parishes, Wiston, Ashurst and Upper Beeding. Need more information on process. It may be that Steyning will have to do its own plan. Community can have a big say about its future development. We do need to change and grow and make provision for older populations and younger families and accommodation needs. We will make a presentation in due course to the Council. A forum of representatives of the community needs setting up and the recommended number to be approximately 21 members to get ideas from community. The plan would be enshrined in law and District and County have to listen. We can do this on our own or in a cluster. We are talking to Bramber, Ashurst, Upper Beeding and Wiston. Presentation by HDC and there are grant available to help with process. There will be opportunity to join this forum, not individuals, but representatives of groups and organisations such as elderly, sports clubs, youth etc. The difficulty with clusters, and this one in particular, is the supply of land and how the CiL is proportioned this may make a case to do our own plan.

8. COMMITTEE REPORTS

8.1 Committee Confirmation – the chairman advised that Cllr Barling wishes to resign from the Planning committee. Cllr Bowell **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Lloyd that Cllr Ness-Collins be confirmed as a member of the Planning committee. This was **Agreed**.

8.1 Playing Fields – 20th August 2013.

Cllr Ness-Collins reported that committee had discussed whether or not to proceed to fence the Play Area in MPF but there were issues like Village Green status and finance to consider. Committee had therefore decided to write to DEFRA to seek guidance on fencing of play areas on Village Greens, and to look at possible Section 106 funding but also to run a campaign on dog fouling around the Town with notices and a week of monitoring. The issue would then be brought back to committee

8.2 A motion was then put by Cllr Toomey:

In view of these facts:

[1] the parish council has long standing policy of guarding against bodily contamination by dog faeces on playing areas within playing fields

[2] the latest audit of our children's playing areas commented on the absence of a fence around the children's play area on the memorial playing field. a fence would be the most sure way of protecting the area

[3] our playing fields committee is distracted in its consideration of its duty of care in this respect by arguments questioning the hazard from dog faeces; questioning the legality of erecting a fence and questioning the cost

I propose that this meeting of the parish council ends the discussion of the issue in the playing fields committee and authorises the erection of a fence around the children's play area on the memorial playing field without delay.

This was seconded by Cllr Marshall.

Cllr Ness-Collins proposed an amendment to this motion as follows:

I propose that this meeting of the parish council ends the discussion of the issue in the playing fields committee and authorises the erection of a fence around the children's play area on the memorial playing field without delay, subject to writing to DEFRA for guidance on fencing of the play area on Village Greens and obtaining the necessary funding and a public consultation.

This was seconded by Cllr Lloyd.

Cllr Lloyd said that there are issues because of the Village Green status and there is no point spending money putting up a fence that could possibly be taken down if challenged in court. We need to do this in the right format and this takes time. I support the amendment.

There followed questions from councillors:

How can we make a commitment without quotes and we don't know if we can afford it, where is money coming from?

- We have had quotes and Section 106 money could be available. There is still some understanding of Village Green needed.

In favour of fence but what is likelihood of challenge?

- We don't know but we need to go through processes so that we do not waste money. Surely, should focus on other things, monitoring and dogs on leads until putting fence up.
- Within Village Green law there is archaic legislation that you cannot fence a Village Green or part unless it is for the 'better enjoyment of the green'. The health and safety of children is paramount. We have had advice from the toxicologist at Worthing hospital. We should go ahead and go forward. We should try and put in the budget to do it.

It has been said to wait in case we have to take it down. Who in their right mind would tell us to take it down? If we are faced with court we should fight it but we must not be hamstrung by such contradictions as Village Green. If it takes a court decision to resolve, let us have it.

What public consultation would we have?

- Going to consult on the skateboard facility and could add fencing to that consultation. Cllr Ness-Collins amendment was taken and voted **4 for, 5 against, one abstention. Not carried.**

Cllr Toomeys motion was taken and voted **5 for, 4 against, one abstention. This was carried.**

Cllr Ness-Collins then reported that the committee are carrying out a review of the Allotment regulations.

Committee decided to proceed to put grass-crete under 10 benches on MPF.

Cllr Ness-Collins **proposed** agreement to and adoption of the minutes, subject to the motion above, and accounts, this was **seconded** by Cllr Toms. This was **Agreed** by majority, one abstention.

9.2 Planning 23rd July, 6th August and 3rd September 2013

Cllr Howell proposed agreement to and adoption of the minutes which were seconded by Cllr Muncey and **Agreed**.

9.3 Highways & Lighting – 30th July 2013

Cllr Lloyd reported that committee had agreed for some works to be done by the Community Payback team and we are expecting these to take place this month. The works included painting of the bus shelter, and clearing overgrowth on several twittens. Cllr Lloyd also reported that the committee had submitted their Winter Maintenance plan to WSCC.

Cllr Lloyd **proposed** agreement to and adoption of the minutes and accounts, **seconded** by Cllr Ness Collins. This was **Agreed**.

9.4 Finance & Community Committee – 6th August and 3rd September 2013

Cllr Lloyd reported that committee had awarded a grant to St. Barnabas for the Home Team Service of £150.

It was agreed that the next Showcase event will be held on 8th February 2014 and the cost of a stall will be £17.50 with any excess being put towards a Youth Showcase or future Showcase events.

Saxon Weald have informed us about their Community Grants details of which can be found on the council's website.

Committee would be discussing at a future meeting an initiative from Age UK re: Older People in Isolation and holding an event at Steyning Centre for leaders in the community – schools, doctors, church, parish council to discuss this and invite Janice Leeming to talk about this and how we can work towards addressing the problem. There is a lot of data on who the people are, held on various databases. A lot of research has been done and what the impact can be on people's health and we need to promote inclusivity.

Committee had agreed, under confidential session, salary increases for the caretaking staff and office staff.

Cllr Lloyd **proposed** adoption of the minutes and accounts, **seconded** Cllr Marshall.

This was **Agreed**.

10. REPORTS FROM DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Cllr Barling reported attended a CLC meeting on Wednesday at Partridge Green. Trying to strengthen meetings and get more people to come along. Priorities list to consider and a number on the list from Steyning, Clays Hill, Cannons Way junction and car parking in Fletcher's Croft.

Safer routes to school project. Meeting this week.

With regard to grants, the County has Big Society fund open to community groups to bid. There is a Community Infrastructure fund for CLC members to grant.

There are early stage of talks with Steyning Town Football Club and enhancements to their stadium.

Any community groups to contact Cllr Barling direct about these grants.

I have been active for individual residents regarding potholes. Can report these direct to me.

- Have Football club sorted out lease with Church?
- I believe so.

11. ITEMS FOR PRESS RELEASE

There have been a lot of comments about the Parish Council's current position with regard to the skateboard facility. We will put something into next edition of Your Steyning clarifying our position.

12. INFORMATION ITEMS – to receive information items from Councillors

An email has been received from WSCC stating that we have a vacancy for a Tree Warden and they would like us to recruit a replacement anyone interested to contact Clerk.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - Monday 14th October 2012 at 7.30 pm.

The Chairman closed the meeting 8.46 p.m.

ACTIONS