

MINUTES OF THE STEYNING ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
held on Monday 14th April 2014 in
Coombe Court at the Steyning Centre, Fletcher's Croft at 7.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Cllr Howell – Chairman
Cllrs Lloyd, Rogers, Barling, Marshall, Alexander, Toms, Toomey, Trundle, Muncey
Paul Conroy – Neighbourhood Warden
30 members of the public
The Clerk and Deputy Clerk

1. Introduction, welcome and annual report by the Chairman of the Parish Council
Phil Howell, M.B.E.

Chairman's Report

My first year as Chairman has certainly been eventful – with the legal and community issues we have faced this perhaps partly explains why we are having trouble finding new councillors to take on the responsibilities of the role.

The development of a skatepark for the community is a simple case of the council doing what they feel is right to look after the youth of Steyning and ensure we have as many “ticks in the box” for those people with young families deciding whether to stay and raise their families here. Likewise for those who want to move to Steyning and reside here full-time and raise a family.

Sadly not everyone feels the same way and our processes have been challenged with 2 judicial reviews taken against us - neither of which was successful. We have also been reported to the Information Commissioner which was not upheld but was taken to appeal. The appeal Tribunal found in favour of the Parish Council. This process is costing the residents of Steyning valuable financial resources. We believe that the Parish Council has done the right thing and this was supported by the majority of the electorate in a well-attended town poll. We truly hope all the community will now get behind us so that we can see this project through to completion and give the youth of the town the skate-park that they have wanted for so long.

The current position is that the Horsham District Council was due to hear the planning application for the Skate Park in April. This has been delayed till the May meeting but we are still confident of success at this meeting.

In February we held our bi-annual Showcase to highlight the reasons we all love to live in Steyning. It was once again a resounding success. It was so successful; we are considering holding a Youth Showcase as many of the groups present would like to see a greater youth membership in their groups. I was party to a discussion between the Bowls Club and the Grammar School, and hopefully this will lead to more youngsters joining these sorts of activities. I certainly never realised that a current world champion is an 18 year old young British lady. Good for her.

We have decided to participate in developing a Neighbourhood Plan. We are going to do this in conjunction with Bramber. I hope all will agree we have similar ideals and certainly common facilities and infrastructure so it makes sense to go this route. It will need substantial public support and I hope those with a positive approach will step forward from both communities and offer their time and knowledge to assist the focus groups in creating a long term development plan which will balance the needs for new housing in the community – particularly for starter homes – against the need to preserve the cultural heritage of the town .

Sue Rogers and a group of both councillors and residents are working hard at developing a plan to support “Isolation and Loneliness”. This is very much work in progress, and we all have concerns that as our older residents approach their senior years, that the services and support structure are there to help them, especially those who are not fortunate enough to have family support in the immediate vicinity. Isolation and loneliness does not, of course, just target older people and can include young single people or single mum’s with young children.

The Steyning Area Youth Service (SAYS) goes from strength and our full time youth worker, Emma Edwards is doing sterling work throughout the area. As always she needs more volunteers so if you feel you have some spare time, please contact Emma at the Cuthman Centre or Sue Booth, our parish clerk.

Our wardens, Paul and Michael, continue to work tirelessly with our PCSO’s to make Steyning a safer place to live in. It is comforting to know they are at the end of a phone and they respond well to our needs. A great vote of thanks to Paul & Michael.

I would like to thank our councillors, and especially those who have worked hard this past year to help me settle in and also cope with the substantially increased workload we have had to bare.

Also thanks must go to our District Councillors, Sue Rogers and George Cockman, and County Councillor David Barling who all work hard to get the best for Steyning residents.

All our Steyning centre staff are due a substantial vote of thanks. Our caretakers and Deputy Clerk, Hazel, work hard for the residents of Steyning – sometimes with little thanks. Please think about that next time you see them and they do something for you.

This goes doubly so for our clerk Sue Booth, who has sadly decided to retire. Sue will leave us later in the year and work is already underway to find a replacement. We will get the best person we can but Sue will be a very hard act to follow. Many thanks Sue for all you and your team have done for the community and for me personally. I could not have got through the last year without you.

Best wishes to you all
Phil Howell MBE
Steyning Parish Council Chairman.

2. Cllr Bowel introduced Louise Goldsmith who has been Leader of West Sussex County Council since May 2010. She has lived in West Sussex for more than 27 years, and was first elected to the County Council in 2001.

Louise is Chairman of the West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board as well as Lead member on the Community Wellbeing board at the Local Government Association, a Board Member of the Coast to Capital Local enterprise Partnership, and a Board Member of Chichester Harbour Conservancy.

Presentation by Louise Goldsmith, Leader West Sussex County Council “Supporting Strong and Vibrant Communities”.

At the beginning I set objectives and one was to get out and talk to all communities' across the county. Big changes happening at County Hall. On 4th April County was 125 years old. Even in those days some of the things that were flagged as important were roads, or tracks, and Schools and education. At that stage there was no NHS and first thing County Council had to do was commission a building. During the last 125 years there has been a huge evolution in all we do. In 2010 we had new coalition government and they wanted to reduce public debt and this meant you will get less money. First thing as leader had to find £10m and then 12 months later had to find £79m over 4 years. We knew we had to live within our means, we had to make difficult choices, put residents first and try and keep council tax down. Where there were cuts to have minimum impact. In first year £38m of savings. Big demand on staff but achieved this. Then another ask for further savings. This was quite a challenge.

We came up with a simple plan, we will be there in an emergency, when there is flood, or fire, we will try and give maximum value for the pound, we will focus on the start of life, giving children the best opportunities in West Sussex.

How we do this is with partners, schools etc. We also have between 500-700 children needing special care. Have to ensure they have the best opportunity and start in life. Need a strong economy to achieve this. We need to work at this and need to start to build relationships with the various business groups, Local Enterprise partnership. A new business will bring in jobs and additional revenue for County Council or HDC in business rates. Area has to be business friendly and we have to make this work.

Made decision not to agree second runway at Gatwick, make sure the voice for the residents is heard to ensure we get best for the county.

Third key area is later life, this is a beautiful place to live.

1 in 5 is over 65 as the national average, in West Sussex this is 1 in 4. We have role to play in this. Now responsible for public health in West Sussex which we took on 18 months ago.

One other particular area is isolation in villages and all communities, working with partners and parishes we can do a lot to target these people.

In June 2012 due to the rain the Fire and rescue had 2,000 in one hour. Highways were out closing roads and helping with rescue work. Then we had a very wet summer, I wrote to all parishes to ask them to identify areas of flooding, had a lot of replies, good feedback. We started to compile a report, took all the information, logged and recorded it, recorded comment. We then had a good idea of what the issues were. We assessed work we needed to do. Over Christmas again we had flooding, this caused huge problems but we had put money away for that rainy day and invested £8.25m to look at doing the necessary works – this was called Operation Watershed. £1.25m went out to communities. Communities were able to

bid for the work that they knew needed doing. This year we had floods again, but where work was done we did not get the flooding. So we have put another £1m into Operation Watershed, totally for the communities to bid.

This is an example of what we can do with communities. We can't do this for you but can by working with you.

We will invest in communities and will work with them as the most positive way forward.

Part of back office and clerical staff have been transferred to CAPITA and this made substantial savings.

We have a contract with you to deliver the best value for money. Aware money is tight and we have worked hard to keep council tax down. We will continue to find the savings.

New Childrens project called Troubled Families – we do the best for these children but often the system is a plaster on the problem but does not sort it out. Troubled Families is different, here we work with families and the child and try and stabilise the whole unit. There will be an investment of £11m over next 3 years.

There will be investment in roads. We can all identify with this. We have put £30m in better roads programme. We also had some luck and received £3.5m from government for this as well. Over next 2 years £33m investment in roads in West Sussex. Potholes have been a problem and a big issue for us and we are investing in doing our very best.

Thank you.

3. Questions for Louise Goldsmith:

- Jackie Campbell – concerned about older people with dementia problems, so many centres being closed and moved which does not work for these people. Saving money, when do County councillors have reduction in their allowances.

Our expenses have not gone up, for the first time in 4 years, by 1% some younger councillors may take 1%. I personally did not take the increase. This increase not enough to have an impact on services.

Dementia care very important, a big issue. The good news is we are talking about it. We started commissioning early diagnosis 2 years ago. Need to find out who these people are. Better to help with early diagnosis. Some centres have closed to be able to give more specialised help where needed. Not enough research at present. Need to support carers and need more understanding of how to support people with dementia. Often people do not want to go to a centre for a whole day but would rather 2/3 hours. There are 85,000 carers in the county that we know of.

- I went to presentation about Local Enterprise partnership, seemed to say that these partnerships were big affairs and are responsible for local economy. Who are these Local Enterprise partnerships and to whom are they accountable.

We used to have regional development agencies (SEEDA). In 2010 these were disbanded and the government said they wanted us to look at and set up Local

Enterprise partnerships. You need to look at what you want to achieve in county and community and to put these proposals to us. We looked at area and for West Sussex, we have a coastal economy, and the rural run. Connecting the coastal economy to the strength of northern Gatwick diamond was important. Put in bid, Coast to Capital, West Sussex, Brighton and Hove, and Croydon. Over the time of the launch, it has evolved and now you need to start a Local Transport board which we have. If you want investment need to make an economic plan. Need to work together to maintain a vibrant community and economy.

- On subject of dementia, I have been involved in care homes over a number of years. I am seeing situations that concern me. West Sussex are now privatising the care homes of elderly and vulnerable people most of which care for those with dementia. In private sector, number one objective is to make a profit. If care was carried out by council this care would be no.1. I have seen conditions in care homes that appal me. I have made complaints to West Sussex and have got no response when I have contacted them. If you are in private care home a lot of people are suffering with this service. Does the County Council still have a policy of privatising care homes.

I would like to know the evidence on what you base what you have said. [Yes we have had some poor places across the county which is unacceptable. But we have also some very good examples. Very clear as Leader of County Council you have to set standards for safeguarding vulnerable and elderly and children and this is a priority. It is up to us to provide good quality care. I will pick up some of the particular points this with you later.

If you see something is not right you should say so and report it. No reason for people to be treated badly because they are elderly or vulnerable.

- How can you accurately assess a care home on a one day inspection. I have evidence and the system is sadly flawed as they don't see what happens at 10.00 p.m at night or 2.00 am in the morning and these homes are not being inspected properly.

There are huge issues with training, holding someone's hand does not cost money, taking 5 minutes to talk, does not cost money.

There are good examples across the county. We have to look at areas where this is not right.

- It is one thing not to put council tax up. But you withdrew support for youth organisations and we as a parish have had to cover this. Is this not a back way of us having to put council tax up instead.

We have invested to give support to children where needed. But on more universal youth services we have withdrawn service. We have £350,000 in the Big Society fund, can bid to set up a youth club in community for the community. So although not directly providing the service we are helping community to do this.

- Does West Sussex have a policy about keeping people in hospital when nowhere else to go. In Steyning we have lost Britons Croft which had some care.

We are working with NHS, the government has given us £16.5m grant to help with this. People need support when they come out of hospital. Need to get them home. Work is underway. I can answer specific question after.

- Given figures of where you are required to reduce expenditure. Trying to shrink services, Does this huge amount of cutting, cause you to provide services in a different way or are they being lost. Is there a line beyond which you will not be able to go.

What we have said is that we are turning into a commissioning council. It has made us think about what we are doing. There are statutory obligations which we have to meet. Very different approach to what we have done before. Many councils' are going through this process.

- This area is blighted by travellers they have recently broken into the county's gravel pit. It takes 3/4 weeks to remove them. They leave area in terrible state. Is it justifiable when we have to cut services and they cost us thousands of pounds. Can we not change the law so that they can be moved immediately?

This issue is very hot. Last year there were 70 illegal incursions. We have 10 fixed sites across county. Each is a good example of a site. The issue is we have not had any transit sites in West Sussex so police have to use section 61. Difficult to get communities to find and accept a transit site. Chichester have identified a site and have grant of £650k towards adapting this site. If planning is granted will be able to start work. This will help police. This is in hand. This will not be quick but a workable solution.

4. The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 8th April 2013 were signed by the Chairman.

Cllr Howell said he wanted to congratulate Steyning FC as they have become league champions.

He also congratulated Steyning Grammar School for the excellent job they have done in painting the school buildings. They look really good.

5. Response to written questions received on Parish related issues.

No written questions had been received on parish related issues.

The Chairman thanked everyone for coming.

6. The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.40 p.m.