

LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE** held on **THURSDAY 6 OCTOBER, 2016** at the King Edward Hall, Lindfield.

Present:

Parish Councillors: Mr. W. Blunden (Chairman)
Mr. M. Allen
Mr. S. Henton
Mr. S. Hodgson
Mr. R. Pickett (Vice Chairman)
Mr. C. Snowling
Mrs. V. Upton

Also present: 1 member of the public

In attendance: Mrs. C. Irwin (Clerk)

Not present: Parish Councillors Mrs. J. Durrant and Mrs. M. Hersey

The Chairman welcomed those present to the meeting.

156. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

156.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hersey and the reasons were accepted.

157. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

157.1 Denmans Lane Allotments. Councillor Allen declared a personal interest in this item as his wife was a plot holder. Councillor Blunden also declared a personal interest in this item as he was a plot holder.

158. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

158.1 Item 9: Report on meeting with MSDC Officers on 28 September (proposed public toilets on the Common). Mr. N. Kerslake commented that there was little evidence of need for reinstating the public toilets on the Common: the action listed in the Village Plan had been based on a simple yes/no question with no information about location or cost; there was evidence that the previous facilities were not well used even before their condition deteriorated. The Parish Council should push this project into the long grass and park it.

158.2 Item 8: Village Maintenance. Mr. Kerslake stated that the Parish Council really needed an action plan for maintenance of the village to bring it back to the standard maintained when Lindfield used to enter the Best Kept Village competition.

158.3 Item 15: the Wilderness Field. Mr. Kerslake referred to the report from the Conservative Party Conference at which £5 billion was pledged for housebuilding and public authorities may be forced to sell land in their ownership for housing. He urged the Parish Council to move as reasonably practical on taking over the Wilderness Field.

159. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE HELD ON 4 AUGUST 2016.

159.1 The Chairman called for approval of the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Amenities Committee held on 4 August 2016. These were **AGREED** and the Chairman **SIGNED** the Minutes as being a true record of that meeting.

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160. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

- 160.1 MSDC Community Service Award. The Chairman had attended the Garden Party hosted by the Chairman of Mid Sussex District Council in the company of Mrs. Betty Billins whom the Parish Council had nominated for a Community Service Award for her work in the Village, in particular as Standard Bearer for the former Lindfield Branch of the Women's Royal British Legion and as poppy seller. Mrs. Billins had greatly appreciated the award.
- 160.2 Lindfield Arts Festival. The Arts Festival had once again been very successful and demonstrated what could be achieved when the community pulled together.

161. ACTION LIST.

- 161.1 The Action List was **NOTED**.

162. ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE BUDGET PROGRESS 2016 / 17.

- 162.1 Budget progress 2016/17: payments made to 31.08.16. The reports to 30.09.16 were not yet available.

NOTED: as at 31.08.16, £13,112 had been spent from the Environment Committee's in-year budget of £51,600 and there had been no expenditure from the reserves. Expenditure in September was estimated to be in the order of £8,850, including payments for the High Street bollards (£1,523) and the replacement lanterns on four of the Parish Council's streetlights (£6,725).

163. REPORT ON CURRENT MAINTENANCE TO INCLUDE:

- 163.1 Highways works agreement. It was **NOTED** that, further to the reports that WSCC would be withdrawing the funding for Haywards Heath Town Council to carry out highways work for the cluster of neighbouring parishes, the Town Clerk had recently confirmed that the agreement, with funding, had been extended for a further fourteen months.
- 163.2 Roadside posts by the Pond. This matter had arisen after the publication of the Agenda. Haywards Heath Town Council had been asked by the Parish Council to repaint the road side posts and rails by the Pond but on inspection they had found some of them to be rotting and not worth repainting. The Town Clerk had taken this up with the WSCC Highways Manager, Richard Speller, who had indicated that if they were in such bad condition, he would arrange for them to be removed and not replaced. However he was prepared to issue a licence for Haywards Heath Town Council to replace them if that is what the Parish Council wanted. The Town Clerk had argued that this work should not need a licence as it should be covered under the Highways Agreement and he has arranged a site meeting with Mr. Speller on 17 October to include the Parish Council's Chairman and Clerk. It was **NOTED** that the cost to the Parish Council was likely to be higher than anticipated to cover the cost of replacement posts and it was **AGREED** that this should be taken into account when considering the budget for 2017/18. It was **AGREED** to convey to the Highways Manager that the railings were needed for safety reasons: to concentrate crossing movements to particular places where there were gaps in the railings and to prevent people stepping back into the road when congregating by the Pond.

164. REPORT ON MEETING WITH MSDC OFFICERS (DAVID HARPER AND DAVID TERRY) ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2016.

- 164.1 The meeting had been attended by the Parish Council's Chairman and Clerk and from MSDC by David Harper (Business Unit Leader, Waste and Outdoor Services) and David Terry (Landscape Contracts Manager). The draft report (which was subject to confirmation by Mr. Harper and Mr. Terry) had been circulated. The main points were **NOTED**:
- Plans for the footpath to Lindfield Primary Academy had been reported as progressing but not yet finalised. Mr. Harper was seeking to incorporate a better disabled access to the bowling green. The Chairman clarified that the intention was to provide a path to the bowling green with a smoother

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surface, for wheelchair users, from the disabled parking bay at the northern corner of the bowling green car park.

- It was hopeful that certain long standing matters could move forward – particularly the improvements to the Hickmans Lane Playground and the posts round the Black Hill section of the Common. There had been a period of rapid staff turnover which had overstretched the remaining officers who would deal with these projects, but this appeared to have stabilised.
- Mr. Harper and Mr. Terry had appeared to be of the understanding that the transfer of the Wilderness Field to the Parish Council was in progress, which at present it was not (Minute 170).
- The Chairman stated that the discussion held about the public toilets on the Common had been reported to the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 29 September. It had been suggested by Mr. Harper that the Council could look into locating them on the car park at the corner of Backwoods Lane as that was close to the greatest footfall in terms of informal use of the Common.
- Mr. Terry had agreed to go through all the items on the Action List from the Liaison Meeting held on 13 April and send an update on these by email.

165. STREET LIGHTS.

165.1 West Sussex street lights upgrade. Work had recommenced on this but had then stopped again. Attempts to obtain an update had so far been unsuccessful.

165.2 Parish Council street lights – West View / Lewes Road. It was **NOTED** that the work to reinstate heritage lanterns had been completed.

166. DENMANS LANE ALLOTMENTS.

166.1 Tree survey report. The report by Mr. P. Thurman, Arboricultural Consultant, had been circulated. His recommendations for minor work and also the felling of a Beech (leaving a five metre “monolith”), which had severely and irreversibly declined since his last inspection, were **NOTED**. A quotation for £1,320 for all the recommended work had been considered at the Full Council meeting on 15 September and it had been agreed that this should be carried out as soon as possible, subject to confirmation about the price for the felling of the beech, which had seemed to be rather high. This had now been received and an order had been placed. Full Council had noted that the Allotments Budget would be overspent by the end of the year because of this work and had agreed that the balance should be met from the General Reserve.

166.2 Meeting with allotment tenants. It was **NOTED** that the last meeting with Allotment tenants had been in March 2010. There had been a number of issues in recent years and a high turnover of tenants. It was therefore **AGREED** to arrange a meeting in January / February and the notes of the meeting would be distributed with the renewal documents.

166.3 Plot 23b. It was **NOTED** that a letter had been sent to the tenant of allotment 23b on 28 June as his plot had not been worked this year and other plot holders had expressed their concerns about the weed growth. He had responded by telephone on 25 August to explain that the reasons were due to difficult personal circumstances and he had given assurance that he would tidy the plot for the winter. However to date no work had yet been done. It was **AGREED** that the Clerk should send a letter expressing sympathy but giving the plot holder until 1 December to tidy the plot, at least by cutting down and removing the weeds. If this deadline was not met, he should be served with a notice of termination. Non-Councillor members of the Allotment Working Group were to be informed of this decision.

166.4 Replacement mower. The Chairman reported that the Mounfield mower needed replacing as the metal body had rusted away and was not repairable. It was **AGREED** that a replacement should be budgeted for in the next Financial Year.

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166.5 Chestnut fencing. The Chairman explained that approximately twelve replacement fence posts were needed to repair chestnut fencing on the perimeter of the allotment site. These were inexpensive (£2 / £2.50 each). It was **AGREED** to authorise the Chairman to make this purchase from this year's allotments budget.

167. WINTER MANAGEMENT PLAN.

167.1 Salt bin at the entrance to the Scrase Valley LNR in Backwoods Lane. The resident of the house next to the path into the Scrase nature reserve had reported that the salt bin had been overturned on several occasions. Haywards Heath Town Council's CIC Team had suggested installing a post bedded in concrete to which the bin would be bolted. This suggestion was endorsed.

The resident had also reported that rubbish and dog waste was occasionally deposited in this bin, which had no hasp and staple for a padlock. It was **AGREED** to monitor this and consider further action if necessary.

168. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS.

168.1 High Street lights. **NOTED:** the licence had been renewed and now appeared to be issued on a yearly basis (previously 5 years).

As reported at Full Council, Blachere had accepted that the cost of dressing the tree outside the Manor House should have been included in last year's payment and the installation charge for the extra work has been reduced from £805 to £437, plus VAT. The order had been placed.

168.2 Pond lights. The overgrown vegetation on the Pond islands was preventing the inspection and service of the lighting installation. This had been raised at the MSDC Liaison Meeting on 28 September as repeated requests had been made over several years for the vegetation to be managed. The trees on the back island were very overgrown, upsetting the balance of the island and branches were hanging down into the water.

169. CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL NIGHT.

169.1 Arrangements for Christmas Festival Night on 6 December 2016. Arrangements were in progress: the outside agencies had all confirmed that they would attend. Wilbar Associates were considering reviewing the diversion route along Denmans Lane; in which case the road closure application would need to be revised.

169.2 Cooked food stall. A resident who was starting up a business selling cooked food from a catering truck had requested a pitch. It was **NOTED** that there had been fewer hot food stalls run by charities in recent years and a precedent had been set for letting pitches for commercial catering vans (fish and chip van in 2015). It was therefore **AGREED** to offer a stall space at the commercial rate.

170. WILDERNESS FIELD.

170.1 Establishment of a small working group to look into a scheme for transferring the Wilderness Field from MSDC's ownership that would ensure its protection for the future - proposed by Councillor Snowling. Councillor Snowling had requested this agenda item as it was high time the question of the transfer of the Wilderness Field was resolved and as part of that transfer it would be good to have a scheme drawn up for the greater protection of the land. He stated that the transfer to the Parish Council should be done as soon as possible and then a safety mechanism should be put in place because the present Parish Council could not bind its successors to its decisions. The land could be protected in the terms of a trust regardless of ownership. MSDC Officers had seemed to imply that setting up a trust could be costly and Councillor Snowling was therefore proposing that a Working Group should be set up to look into how the land could be protected for the future and what would be involved in establishing a trust for

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this purpose. He suggested membership of three or four Members of the Council to work with the Deputy Clerk and with the power to co-opt from outside the Council as appropriate.

It was **NOTED** that MSDC Officers Mr. Harper and Mr. Terry had been of the understanding that the transfer to the Parish Council was already in progress, but the Legal team had stated that they were waiting for the registration of the land in MSDC's name at the Land Registry to be completed first.

Councillor Snowling stated that the transfer would be a two stage process: an agreement to transfer the land and then a formal transfer document. He stated that he could see no reason why the outstanding land registration should stop the process of getting the terms of the transfer agreed.

It was **AGREED**:

- that the Clerk should write to the Chief Executive of MSDC requesting that the terms of a contract for the transfer of the land be drawn up without further delay.
- that a small Working Group be set up comprising three members of the Environment and Amenities Committee (Councillors Blunden, Snowling and Henton) to look into how the Wilderness Field could be protected for the future.

The Clerk advised Members that the Council would need to formally agree to proceed with the transfer of ownership when the terms of the transfer and the maintenance liabilities were known. It was therefore **AGREED**

- (i) to recommend the Full Council to confirm that it remained the Council's policy that subject to the conditions of the transfer being acceptable the land known as the Wilderness Field should be transferred to the Parish Council as soon as possible and
- (ii) to confirm that a small Working Group had been set up to report on how to secure the use of the land for the future.

171. CAMPAIGN AGAINST GATWICK NOISE AND EMISSIONS (CAGNE): PARISH COUNCIL FORUM.

- 171.1 An invitation had been received to join the Parish Council Forum which was understood to have been set up for member councils to share issues and concerns and to provide an unbiased and regular flow of information in a more digestible format. It was **NOTED** that the organisers appreciated the need to work in a manner that did not compromise the Parish Councils' Code of Conduct. It was also **NOTED** that correspondence had been received from several residents regarding increased air traffic and the consequent increase in noise. During discussion Members recognised that more movements were allowed in the summer months. There was no support among Members for joining the Parish Council Forum and it was **AGREED** to note the correspondence but take no action at this time.

172. SUSSEX BUS TAKE-OVER BY COMPASS BUS.

- 172.1 It was **NOTED** that Compass Bus had taken over the Sussex Bus routes in this area on 1 October, at very short notice. They had invested in a fleet of newer buses and although they were not changing the timetables or routes immediately, they would be making some changes in January. The Clerk had asked for the Backwoods Lane / Appledore Gardens route to be reconsidered. Councillor Pickett stated that he had witnessed a Compass Bus passing a waiting passenger without stopping at the Welkin stop.

173. SOUTH AND SOUTH EAST IN BLOOM.

- 173.1 It was **AGREED** to defer this item as Councillor Durrant was not present to provide an update on behalf of the Working Group.

174. BUDGET 2017/18.

- 174.1 It was **NOTED** that the Committee would have to agree its budget for the Financial Year 2017/18 at the meeting on 1 December for consideration by the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The Chairman asked Members to consider any new projects or changes to existing budget headings and

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referred to Mr. Kerslake's comments about investing more in the appearance of the Village. A budget paper would be prepared for the next meeting.

The Chairman made some initial suggestions:

- Increasing the funds held for the Hickmans Lane playground project, to include inclusive equipment.
- Budgeting for the replacement of the roadside posts near the Pond as the repairs with resin and filler were no longer holding.

175. RISK MANAGEMENT.

175.1 It was **NOTED** that the Insurance and Risk Management Working Group was due to meet to consider the risk assessment process.

176. ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

176.1 No other items of business were raised.

The meeting concluded at 8.55 p.m.