

LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Environment & Amenities Committee held on 6 AUGUST 2009 at the King Edward Hall, Lindfield.

Present: Mr. W. Blunden (Chairman)  
Mr. M. Allen  
Mr. A. Gomme  
Mr. S. Henton  
Mrs. M. Nicolle  
Mr. R. Pickett  
Mrs. V. Upton

Also Present: Mr. P. Hemsley (Deputy Parish Clerk)  
2 members of the public

In Attendance: Mrs. C. Irwin (Parish Clerk)

258. WELCOME AND EMERGENCY ANNOUNCEMENTS.

258.1 The Chairman welcomed those present and announced the emergency procedure for the King Edward Hall.

258.2 The Chairman reported the recent death of Major Jimmy Barnes who had been the first Chairman of Lindfield Parish Council, from 1987 until 1996. He had continued to serve as a Councillor until 2006 when his health had started to fail. His death would be a sad loss to the community. A minute's silence was observed in memory of Major Barnes.

259. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

259.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Hersey and the reasons accepted.

260. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

260.1 Item 14 – Allotments. Cllr. Blunden declared a personal interest in this item as he was an allotment tenant. Cllrs. Allen and Pickett also declared personal interests as their wives were plot holders.

261. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

261.1 Maintenance of Village infrastructure. Mr. Kerslake commented on the condition of the street furniture (seats, signs, Pond posts and railings and the railings leading from the High Street to the Medical Centre). He stated that Parish Walks (Item 6) could come when the Council had got the Village looking right. The litter in the High Street was still poor and it appeared that people had emptied out litter bins in Denmans Lane. Mr. Kerslake would like to see the return of the days when the village won the Best Kept Village Competition. Mr. Macmillan stated that there had been a proposal to install a litter bin by the seat in Denmans Lane and the Chairman confirmed that this was in hand.

262. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 4 JUNE 2009

262.1 The Chairman called for approval of the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Amenities Committee held on 4 June 2009. The Minutes were AGREED and SIGNED by the Chairman as a true record of that meeting.

263. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

263.1 Parish Walk. The Chairman reported on the successful Parish Walk he had led on 25 July. The route had taken into view the three sites on the edge of the Village that were under threat of development. A number of people had taken part in the walk who were afraid to go out walking alone and the Chairman stated that there did seem to be a need for such events which got people out into the open. He was pleased to declare that the walk was a success and would be repeated on a regular basis.

264. REPORT ON ACTION / PROJECT PROGRESS LIST

264.1 The Action/Project Progress list had been circulated with the Agenda and was noted.

264.2 Litter bins. The Committee confirmed the Glasdon "Topsy Jubilee" bin as the replacement for the one in the verge on Hickmans Lane by Little Compton.

264.3 Street light on corner of Spring Lane. WSCC had confirmed that the light was to be replaced by a decorative column to match the existing ones.

265. ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE BUDGET

265.1 To review payments made to date in 2009/10. Figures were available as at 30 June 2009. Noted that from a budget total of £44,200.00, a total of £6,391.80 had been spent as at 30 June 2009. At that point nothing had been spent from outstanding projects or designated reserves. However it was noted that during July cheques had been paid out for the new website, the new street light on the Common and the annual contract with Premier for maintenance of the public toilet installation – a total of £9,535.

265.2 Projects for the financial year 2010/11 for which budget provision would be required. The Chairman stated that Councils were being encouraged to carry out participatory budgeting: to identify what the Council would like to achieve in the next financial year, well ahead of setting the budget and to publish a report inviting members of the public for feedback and further input. The Chairman invited Members to make suggestions:

- contribution towards making good and painting white posts and metal railings
- litter bins
- refurbishment of signs (High Street and Sunte Avenue finger posts)
- trees – to build a fund for repollarding in 3 years plus epicormic growth
- allotment tree survey due in 2010
- toilet maintenance contracts (It was noted that MSDC had written to the Parish Council to give 10 days notice of termination of their contract with ISS for cleaning public facilities, which included the public toilets. MSDC had appointed new contractors and Parishes were invited to confirm direct with the new contractor if they wished to join in with MSDC in this contract, which would cost the Parish Council an additional £800 a year. )
- Litter – it was suggested that there may be some merit in looking at additional street cleaning, although it was pointed out that this would be seen by some as double taxation.

An article would be published in the next Parish Council newsletter outlining these proposals and inviting residents for feedback.

266. CURRENT MAINTENANCE.

266.1 Footpaths. An order was due to be placed with KPS for trimming back vegetation along footpaths. It was AGREED that KPS should be asked to clear the footpath behind the Welkin leading to the High Street, coming out opposite the Tiger and the path from Hickmans Lane to the High Street by the Vicarage.

266.2 Footpath opposite The Witch in Hickmans Lane through to Pickers Green It was noted that this footpath was clear of vegetation but that there was a dead tree and an old gate lying in the brambles in the area to the right of the path at the Hickmans Lane entrance. It was agreed that the ownership of this area should be checked before considering any action and it was noted that in its present state it did prevent the parking of vehicles; if the area were to be cleared, it might be necessary to put in some wooden posts to prevent parking there.

266.3 Tollgate Car Park. It was noted that the grit bin had been moved and would prevent the pruning of the berberis. There was also a gap between shrubs which was encouraging people to cut through and walk over the grass. The bin would need to be moved to allow for the planting of a non-prickly shrub to fill the gap.

It was noted that the bench by the Tollgate flats, which had been reported to MSDC as having loose slats had still not been repaired and was very wobbly. This would be taken up with MSDC.

267. AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE FORTHCOMING LIAISON MEETINGS WITH WSCC AND MSDC OFFICERS.

267.1 Liaison meeting with MSDC (16 September). It was AGREED that the following items should be raised with Rupert Browning:

- the border to the rear of the Medical Centre: this was looked after by a volunteer but during the building work it had not been possible to do work on it and the weeds had taken over. A contractor was needed to dig it out so that it could be replanted
- emptying of litter bins on the Common and Hickmans Lane and emptying of dog bins – there appeared to be a lack of co-ordination between contractors and timing of emptying did not take into account the amount of left over food and wrappers from the Friday evening sale of fish and chips. MSDC should be asked when the bins were supposed to be emptied so that the Parish Council could monitor this.
- cycle racks for Denmans Lane car park
- Pond Aeration pump
- Hickmans Lane playground – upgrade: there was less equipment than previously and the remaining pieces were quite basic. There was room for additions in the former hop scotch area.
- Posts and rails around the Common and the Pond – more regular checks needed to be made and action taken to replace rotten posts.

267.2 Liaison meeting with WSCC. (To be arranged with new Local Area Manager). It was AGREED that the following items should be raised with Officers from WSCC Highways Department:

- Regular maintenance of footpaths
- Policy for new street furniture – poles to be black
- High Street grass cutting – timing of first cut and standard of service
- Roadside posts and rails by the Pond
- use of volunteers to do work on the highway (after receiving an offer from a resident to mow the grass on the High Street, as he was not happy with the standard of work carried out by WSCC contractors, enquiries had been made about insurance cover. Zurich had replied that volunteers acting for the Parish Council would not be covered for this work as it was not the Parish Council's responsibility. Further enquiries were now being made regarding other activities involving volunteers. Zurich had suggested that WSCC might approach their own insurers to ascertain whether volunteers could be covered by them as there are other tasks that were carried out by volunteers on the highways, for example the Spring Clean and the work of the Tree Wardens. It was agreed to mention this to the new Local Area Manager, to raise awareness of the situation as WSCC had suggested that volunteers should deal with the epicormic growth on the trees in the High Street and Compton Road).

It was noted that WSCC had admitted ownership of School Lane leading to St. Nicholas Court and had carried out maintenance, including repainting of yellow lines.

268. LETTER SENT ON BEHALF OF THE FINCHES LANE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION REGARDING THE CONDITION OF FINCHES LANE

268.1 A letter had been sent to the Parish Council on behalf of the Finches Lane Residents' Association, regarding the condition of the land and requesting assistance from the Parish Council (and / or the Highways Authority) in carrying out general maintenance and repairs. We've had a detailed response to our enquiry about this, from the WSCC Rights of Way Officer. This was a private road although it was also a public right of way. Advice had been taken from the WSCC Rights of Way Department and the reply had indicated that the surface was more than adequate for the purposes of a footpath and that this was a private issue for the residents of Finches Lane. However the specification for resurfacing the lane would have to be submitted to WSCC Rights of Way team for approval. The Rights of Way Officer had suggested that it might be worth while for the Residents' Association to ask WSCC for a contribution towards the work, although this was not guaranteed and was likely to be nominal.

Members considered this request and the response from WSCC. Although there was some sympathy with the residents of Finches Lane, it was AGREED not to give financial assistance for the resurfacing of Finches Lane on the grounds that the Parish Council was not the Highways Authority and had no funds for road maintenance and because it would create a precedent, there being several private roads in Lindfield that were maintained by residents.

269. WARDING: TO RECEIVE REPORTS ON WARD CHECKS.

269.1 Written reports had been received from Cllrs. Nicolle and Upton, Cllrs. Gomme and Leach and from Cllr. Blunden, Cllr. Allen and Cllr. Hersey. In addition to reports produced specifically for the meeting, Members also reported issues to the Parish Office as they arose. The matters noted on the recent reports would be forwarded to the appropriate authorities.

270. RISK ASSESSMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES.

270.1 Members were asked to look at the printouts previously circulated to check whether the details are accurate, in particular to check that the scoring of risks and the frequency of checks were realistic and to add any other risks. The Clerk tabled two checklists for periodic checks of the public toilets and the allotment site. It was suggested that inspecting the public toilets once a month would be enough as the contract cleaner would report any faults or damage.

271. ALLOTMENTS: TO CONSIDER PURCHASE OF HEAVY DUTY TELESCOPIC POLE SAW.

271.1 The Chairman reported that a telescopic pole saw would be a useful acquisition as it would enable named personnel to remove with safety the branches of trees that were overhanging the sheds on the allotment site. Richard Powell had seen a suitable product at the Tatton Park Garden Show. It was understood that the pole was £30 and the saw attachment was £10. A fishing net attachment was also available for £10 which could be used to remove debris from the Pond without having to go into the water.

AGREED to purchase one pole, two saw attachments and one fishing net - £60 plus VAT.

272. FUTURE MAINTENANCE OF TREES

272.1 Compton Road - to reconsider the arrangements previously agreed for first two trees at the entrance from Hickmans Lane. A letter had been received from Mr. Colin Tyler, who had represented the Preservation Society at the meeting held in February, with WSCC and MSDC, to discuss the future management of the trees. In his letter Mr. Tyler asked the Council to reconsider the treatment for the two trees at the entrance to Compton Road from Hickmans Lane.

At the meeting on 25 June the Council had agreed with the recommendation of the E&A Committee that Compton Rd trees should be pollarded later this year with the exception of the two at the entrance from Hickmans Lane which were to be left alone on the understanding that one of them was not a lime and the other one would balance it. These two trees had since been identified as limes and Mr. Tyler asked for them to be pollarded along with the others. This view had been supported in an email from Mr. David Macmillan on behalf of the Preservation Society and Mr. Ullmer (WSCC) had confirmed that he agreed with this change of view and had apologised for the misleading guidance on which the decision had been based.

As the decision had been made by Council within the last six months, in order to comply with Standing Orders, the Council needed a recommendation from the Committee before the decision could be rescinded. Mr. Ullmer had confirmed that this would be in time for him to apply to MSDC for permission to pollard.

It was AGREED to RECOMMEND to Full Council that the two trees at the entrance to Compton Road from Hickmans Lane should be pollarded at the same time as the rest of the trees in the road.

272.2 Removal of epicormic growth The epicormic growth on the High Street and Compton Road trees had been removed by WSCC but the Council needed to agree a policy for future years. In view of the difficulties in organising volunteers and the fact that Parish Council's insurance policy would not cover them for this work, it was AGREED that if WSCC expected the Parish Council to deal with epicormic growth, this should be done by contractors.

273. APPOINTMENT OF NEW TREE WARDEN.

273.1 Hilary May had proposed Ollie Swan as a new Tree Warden and this had been supported by Jane Donald. AGREED the appointment of Ollie Swan as a Tree Warden. WSCC would be notified that the Parish Council had confirmed this appointment.

274. CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL NIGHT / CHRISTMAS LIGHTS ARRANGEMENTS.

274.1 Christmas Lights. Members of the Working Group would be looking into whether it would be possible to put up any Christmas Lights which would be determined by the height of the newly pollarded trees.

274.2 Road closure. The Clerk was to make enquiries to find out which Traffic Management Consultants could be asked to manage the road closure on Christmas Festival Night as it was understood that CERT were no longer able to do this.

274.3 Craft fair. The Parish Council had been approached by Mrs. Beverley Smith who was planning to hold a Lindfield Crafts and Market at the King Edward Hall and hoped that this could be done in conjunction with Christmas Festival Night. Mrs. Smith had suggested that it might be beneficial to advertise together.

Members expressed concern regarding the advertising and agreed that it must be made very clear that the Parish Council's name must not appear on any material which may be displayed unlawfully by fly-posting. Otherwise it was considered that there was no strong reason to discourage the Crafts and Market event.

275. CHESTNUT TREE FOUNDATION: PROPOSED LINDFIELD ARTS FESTIVAL MAY 2010.

275.1 It was noted that the organisers of a proposed Lindfield Arts Festival, planned to take place in May 2010, would be attending the next meeting of the Parish Council to explain their plans for the event and to seek advice on funding and other issues. The representatives had also contacted Cllr. Davies who had replied by email to explain the procedure they should follow.

276. ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

276.1 Power of Well Being. The Chairman announced for the record that he, and Councillors Gomme and Davies had attended the Councillors' training on the Power of Well Being and had received Certificates. The training had not been onerous and other Members were encouraged to attend the next available event.

This part of the meeting ended at 8.55.

There followed a further period for questions and comments from members of the public.

Village maintenance. Mr. Kerslake re-iterated his comments about maintenance of the Village infrastructure and stated that this must be the Council's first priority. There must be a policy in order to establish a schedule of work stating the priorities and frequency of the various tasks. In Mr. Kerslake's view the Parish Walk was hardly a priority and it was not the job of Parish Councils to engage in leisure activities. Regarding the MSDC "Wish List" Mr. Kerslake stated that the items on the list should be prioritised or nothing would be done and that there would have to be follow up meetings with Rupert Browning to keep up the momentum. Street cleaning must be taken up with David Harper as the standard had dropped since Paul Frost was relocated. The Parish Council should ask MSDC what their contractors were obliged to do according to their contracts and report any non-compliance. Regarding double taxation, the Parish Council should be prepared to put its hand in its pocket and work with the other authorities for the good of the Village.

Mr. Kerslake also pointed out that WSCC Highways workmen had recently used tarmac instead of block paving after work had been completed outside Pear Tree House. All of these issues had to be pursued by the Parish Council which must determine its priorities.

The meeting concluded at 9.06 p.m.