

DANEHILL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes

Minutes of the Danehill Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 29th September 2016, at Chelwood Gate Village Hall.

Present: D. Birchell (DB), T. Blake (TB), C. Crouch (CC), A. Goodburn (AG), E. Mills (EM), A. Martorana (AM), N. Macleod (NM), A. Pattison (AP)

In addition Roy Galley (District Councillor) & Peter Roundell (District Councillor & Chairman of Fletching PC) were present as were 9 parishioners.

The Chairperson of the Parish Council, Andrew Goodburn (AG), opened the meeting at 7.30pm. AG advised that the new PC had started to take on their responsibilities and the first step would be to take stock of the situation – as such no big decisions would be taken other than to address existing issues. (e.g. finances, precept, outstanding points.)

16.9.1. Apologies for Absence

All councillors were present.

16.9.2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest from members in respect of any matter on the agenda

16.9.3 Previous Minutes

b) To approve minutes of previous parish council dated 31.3.16

The minutes of the meeting held on 31.3.16 (old PC) need to be approved. None of the councillors of the new PC were in attendance at that meeting, however as per PC Standing Order, these need to be approved and signed. These were therefore taken as read, approved and signed by AG.

c) To approve as a true record and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 18.8.16

These were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by AG.

16.9.4 Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 18th Sept. 2016

a. Chair of Working Group for Danehill Rec. & Jubilee Green

Rhodri Lewis (RL) was named as chair, proposed by AM and seconded by CC – this was approved unanimously.

b) Appointment of responsible officer for Internal Control

Andrew Pattison was proposed by AM and seconded by CC – this was approved unanimously. In addition it was noted (with thanks) that Lia Mackinlay had offered to audit the PC's internal controls

In addition the members of both Finance & Planning Committees were noted:

Finance: AP, RL, AG, EM, CC

Planning: TB, AP, NM, AM, EM, AG

16.9.5 to receive & consider any communications received and to take appropriate action

In addition to some new correspondence, the PC had been handed a file containing various communications dating back to March 2016 – these are detailed below along with the action taken.

General			
Date	From	Subject	Action
18.3.16	T Blake	Resignation Letter from old PC	Noted
8.8.16	L & P Lewer	Objection to Community Warden	Noted
20.4.16	P Watt	Objection to Community Warden	Noted
22.4.16	J & K Leuchars	Objection to Community Warden	Noted
22.4.16	A Gurr	Re: Need for Defibrillator based on discussions with other parishioners and also the number of elderly parishioners	Currently being investigated by NM. Once new Clerk on board then will ask for formal quotes. NM will provide & update at the next PC meeting.
26.4.16	C Gooders	Resignation as Parish Clerk old PC	Noted – New Clerk tba
29.4.16	D Bowes-Crick	Email of support to councilors of old PC a bit critical of the audience but offering services as a volunteer admin/posting/leaflets etc.	Noted – offer of services greatly received
30.6.16	SSALC	Note on new PCSO role by Sussex Police	Noted – no action necessary
Finance & Memberships			
18.3.16	S Brentnall	Internal Auditor's Report – no issues	Noted
May 16	OSS	Renewal of Membership to Open Spaces Society £45	On hold – Will ask new parish Clerk to review memberships and advise on need
May 16	SLCC	Salary Pay Scales	Noted
5.5.16	I Svenson	Request on status of first third payment of £22,500 3 year contribution to funding of a Youth Worker agreed by old PC	Paid on 27 th May
6.6.16	CPRE	Renewal of CPRE Membership £36	On hold – as above
26.8.16	HK PC	Email from Horsted Keynes PC paying back £68.50 from the Freshfield Action Group	Noted and received

Recreation/Green			
Date	From	Subject	Action

21.4.16	C Drewery	Pond Condition - much better than before and we have 9 newts	Noted
26.4.16	Steve Tilling	Requesting use of Jubilee Green for a Forest School	RL & AG met with ST to understand need /how this may impact CGVH & Nursery e.g. parking, insurance implications, risk etc. Needs further investigation - update at the next meeting.
8.6.16	Wealden DC	Sports and Rec survey to help Wealden DC determine funding provision - might help in things like drainage etc. Survey seems to be still open	To be reviewed by RL. Demise of Danehill FC means that there may be need to consider possible impact for Badminton, Cricket & Bowls clubs. Update at the next meeting.
16.6.16	Play Inspections	Operational inspection Report on Danehill Rec	Noted – gate fixed – no further action needed
24.8.16	C Bradford	Email from re demise of Danehill FC after 129 years and thus no need for use of field and pavilion	AG expressed regret – PC will look into the state of sports clubs in the community

Highways & Speed			
12.4.16	G Miller	Thank you email re 50mph signs between Roebuck & Pippingford	Noted – payment of £2268 as part of Parish contribution
21.6.16	I Johnson	Ian Johnson (Traffic & Safety at ESCC) - CC noting good relationship hoping it continues	Noted – no action needed
3.8.16	A Garman	Speeding on A275 between Wych Cross and Red Lion	Noted – NM has met with M Mockridge and picked up relevant files and info. Already starting to discuss possible solutions that are easy to do.
24.8.16	ES Highways	New Highways steward Andy Swanson	Noted

Planning			
27.5.16	Wealden DC	Order made on 10.5.2016 to divert part of a public footpath known as Danehill 7a running from junction on A275 SE for 145m to enable development to be carried out in accordance with planning permission – construction of a new science and tech facility at Cumnor House - costs paid for by Cumnor House	Noted
31.3.2016	M Lucken	Request to tidy up Whim Lane Entrance	Noted appears resolved
8.2016	S Miles	Need to tidy Hedges near Shooters Ridge	To contact land tenants
8.2016	S Barnard	Noise Issues at Heaven farm	TB advised that issue had been raised about the noise emanating from events at Heaven Farm. (see below)
8.2016		Report that part of the wood at the south end of Church lane is being considered for use as a Pet Cemetery.	TB has investigated – will need to speak to the owner – if this is correct then planning permission will be needed

16.9,6 Reports from County & District Councillors

Roy Galley

County & District Councillor Roy Galley (RG) reported that the final report on electoral boundaries has come in and is now being put forward for parliamentary approval – <http://www.lgbce.org.uk/>

Parish boundaries are not affected.

RG also highlighted reported detailing Sussex Fire Authority's plans. This is a blue print for the next 25 years and encompasses issues being faced e.g. far fewer fires than before, excess capacity, need to look at alternative use of manpower and skill sets.

RG gave an overview of the issues being faced by some parishioners in the Triangle at Danehill, namely positioning of the no entry signs from A275 (some drivers accidentally turning right from A275). Some of the actions being considered e.g. additional white lines and signage have cost implications and councils are under budget pressure.

Speeding remains a concern, and RG reported on a recent accident – this however was caused by driver error not speed.

RG also commented on the Heaven Farm noise issue. This is now being investigated by the Environmental Health Office.

As a result of some highways work, bin collections at Boxes Lane have been hampered or missed. A combination of the work being done and size of hedges has meant restricted access for bin lorries – special services have been put in place – RG involved and monitoring. (note for information: RG states that 90,000 bins are serviced every week in Wealden - number of missed collections is a couple of hundred)

Peter Roundell

District Councillor Peter Roundell (PR) PC congratulated the new PC, in addition, and as Chairman of neighbouring Fletching PC he looked for opportunities where the two PCs could cooperate.

PR advised that as a Ward Member for Planning, he could assist the PC (as could RG) on decisions, problems and concerns – it would therefore be helpful to receive copies of meeting notes, to share communication and keep a dialogue going on planning.

PR also highlighted that a result of budget cuts at Central Government level (grants down by 10%) some grants will be phased out. The District Council is therefore looking at alternative Income streams with the intention of maintaining services and keeping Council Tax down. The two being considered are:

1. To build a Crematorium in Horeham
2. Form a housing and regeneration company to cover the two areas that developers are currently not providing i.e. housing for the young or elderly.

RG picked up on RG's discussion on planning and mentioned an example of where DC can help the PC, referencing a successful objection to the proposed replacement of a shed with a large barn near Horsted Lane opposite Jane Brook.

16.9.5 reports from Parish Councillors

- a) Report from C. Crouch on PC Surgery held 17th Sept. at C. Gate Village market
CC gave an overview of the first Surgery. The idea was to give parishioners the chance to meet their Parish Councillors, raise any concerns (9 collected) and register their choice for digital communications (17 collected)
Poor weather meant that local attendance was down with a fair number of out-of-parish visitors. Nonetheless the general reaction was positive; a number of concerns were noted and have been passed on to councillors for action. These will be reported on at the next meeting.
The surgery will be repeated on the 19th November at the Danehill Village Market.
- b) Mike Fishlock (MF) thanked the PC for renaming him as the PC Tree Warden (responsible for action on Trees on Parish Ground NOT Trees In The Parish).

MF reported on current work progress:

- lifting (raising the canopy) on beech tress on A275 to 3.5m – comes after discussion with arbocultural expert
- removing small beech tree on the corner of A275 and Beaconsfield Road – not a copper beech and does not help with visibility at the junction
- lifting the oak trees to 2.5m on Beaconsfield Rd and Jubilee Green where they overhang the pavement and road
- A specification for the work will be prepared for the new clerk to go forward as a tender.
- 2 trees on Cumnor House (CH) grounds are overhanging the Danehill Rec – one branch down. CH has duty of care and needs to address. MF to follow up with CH.
- MF has spoke to A Lewis regarding request to plant an apple tree in the burial ground. MF to discuss with AG on way forward.
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Meeting opened to public to express a view or ask a question on any Parish relevant subjects

Danehill Village Hall

S Martin asked about status on communication regarding Danehill Village Hall. AG stated that the communication had only been received on 28.9.2016 and as a result was not on the agenda – and there was nothing to report. It will be reviewed and discussed at the next PC meeting.

Nursery

A question was asked regarding the status of the current planning application for the Nursery. AG pointed out that this was item 9 on the agenda and a full update would be given then.

N Morris (NM), raised her concerns regarding the Nursery' financial situation specifically the additional running costs impacting on the provision of materials and facilities for children. AG stated that he had met with Miranda Dingle the new manager and this was not mentioned. NM advised that a formal letter would be sent by the Nursery to highlight the issues. AG emphasised that the PC are desperately keen that the Nursery continues and that the Nursery and the School would continue to achieve their Ofsted ratings.

A comment was made by one of the parishioners that there was little information on the costings for the proposed new Nursery but that it was also a great pity that the Ashdown Forest Conservators were not supportive of using other areas e.g. Cricket Club etc.

Pond

A Gurr advised that the Pond has logs and pallets thrown into it. AG/RL had noticed this and would address.

Opening of Parish Council Meeting

A Gurr noted that the meeting did not start with prayers as per previous Parish Council meetings. AG stated that this was intentional as the PC is non-secular and non-political.

Speedwatch

A Gurr presented NM with a high visibility Speedwatch jacket.

16.9.9 Parish Clerk

AM advised that the PC had been looking for a new Parish Clerk since Charles Gooders had resigned and was the main reason for the emergency meeting in August in order to be able to kick off the process.

The PC has been in touch with SSALC to help with the process (as approved by the Interim Council) who did not have anyone immediately available.

We had been made aware that Fletching was in the process of recruiting a new clerk. Whilst it was not possible to share the clerk SSALC suggested that we piggy-back on the Fletching recruitment process and look at recruiting one of the experienced clerks being put forward – SSALC already having advertised and screened potential candidates.

The candidates were of a very high standard and the Interview panel of DB, AP and AM Proposed Emma Fulham (EF) as the new Parish Clerk. AG stated that EF is well qualified and well suited to the helping the PC. EF had been introduced to the rest of the PC before the meeting (except EM and TB).

The PC voted unanimously to appoint EF as the new Parish Clerk subject to references with SSALC proving support on contract definition.

Prior to the subsequent three agenda items AG stated that all three proposals were interesting and all pursued in good faith. However despite a lot of time and money being spent, they had needed to be debated properly and a decision taken as they had caused major concerns to the parishioner and eventually led to the resignation of the old PC.

16.9.9 Proposed New Nursery – Planning Application

Discussion on the Nursery needs to be reviewed and understood correctly also being separated from the planning application. RL stated that the first step would be to remove the planning application for the current 'POD'.

AG asked for any points for and/or against. AP stated that he needed to understand the economics and would be uncomfortable approving anything although being supportive of the nursery could not justify the expense based on the information to hand.

AG highlighted that there are also other issues such as the role of Jubilee Green as a recreation area, the parking issues and any impact on future projects.

AM stated that the importance of the nursery is very clear to the entire council and that all members are fully supportive on ensuring a sustainable long-term solution. If there are issues then the PC can look to help. The current proposal was done in good faith but probably not ideal so a rethink was probably necessary.

AG proposed that the planning application be withdrawn – seconded by AM – this was unanimously approved.

AG asked for input on any lessons learned given that the Nursery and CGVH had clashed – how could we get around similar issues and that possibly a broad cross section of the community was not being listened to – as well as communication issues.

AM stated that it was also likely that the process did not work as well as it could have done. Given the importance and size of the budgets involved, then the consultation should have probably started first otherwise miscommunication undermines what you are trying to achieve. In this respect, anything that involves sizeable sums of money, then the consultation should start first. This was echoed by TB who also pointed out the need for greater dialogue.

16.9.10 Proposed Parish Warden

NM highlighted that the previous council had looked at the use of a parish/community warden in response to the loss of a PCSO. The subject had been controversial not only because of cost (£47, 200 although there would be some part payments and use of the warden's time on other projects). However, there were also 247 signatories against the proposal and none for.

It was considered that there would be no benefits because of no formal power, with anecdotal evidence pointing to similar issues in Forest Row, which suggests that the Parish Warden's role as ineffective. Given that a former Chief Constable at the PC Annual Meeting had stated that parish warden provide no tangible difference then it is questionable whether this should be pursued.

AG stated that the PC had tried to share with other Parishes and we should keep an eye on progress. NM highlighted how well Facebook was helping the Parish in terms of reporting suspicious activity.

Given the above AM proposed that the proposal to employ a Parish Warden be rejected, this was seconded by RL and unanimously approved by the PC.

In terms of lessons learned AG stated that the PC needs to ensure that the feelings within the community should be listened to strongly and that the Neighbourhood Watch (NW) should be re-launched and asked that NM look into it. This will involve strong co-operation with the Police, and learning from best practices as there are some excellent NW models. The PC agreed that an additional lesson was that for certain key services we should take our lead from the professional e.g. Police, Schools etc.

16.9.11 Proposed Solar Farm

The Solar farm proposal is a high cost proposal with an investment of over £2.7 million.

A feasibility study had been commissioned at a cost of £5000 – the report states *"The high grid connection cost and recent significant depression in subsidy support mean that the financial appraisal does not return a positive cash flow and therefore does not fulfil the overriding objective of securing a future annuity income for the community"*

RL stated that the lack of an early consultation process meant that the Solar Farm came to most people as a surprise, which was compounded when it transpired that £5k had been spent on a feasibility report. RL also hope that despite this, that this episode should not kill any potential future investment for sensible investments that could generate income for the Parish i.e. done sensibly with the right level of risk, this could be useful.

NM highlighted the significant risk associated with the project being not just in terms of the investment and payback period but also the running costs and technology changes over the lifetime of the investment.

AM stated that the intent was good and idea created in good faith and that the PC might want to pursue something similar – if so then it would have to be done with the right level of up-front consultation to ensure that it has right level of backing from the community.

AG proposed that the Solar Farm proposal be rejected. This was seconded by AM and approved unanimously by the PC.

16.9.12 Finance

AP reported the £157k was carried over at the beginning of the fiscal year and looking back at the two previous years the surplus has grown. The PC has £287k available, however as Wealden has been funding the Danehill PC expenses since the old PC resigned, £26.6k has to be allocated to cover those expenses (this includes £10k for Danehill School, £3k for Wych Cross signage and £3.5K for insurance).

Given the above the PC has £230k going forward, however there is still some investigation required and this is having to be done manually via paper records as there is no access to the electronic spreadsheets. As a consequence this is a time consuming and labour intensive exercise, which includes looking at all contracts. AP looking to use new software e.g. Scribe or RBS – tbd with new Clerk what accounting software we use moving forward.

Insurance

The insurance contract is a 3-year commitment, with one year to go before the PC can look at alternative quotes. The PC also needs to review the assets and any duplication in contracts/insurances etc. Essentially some costs look high and need to go through every account on a line-by-line basis.

Bank Mandates

These have been signed by AP, AG, CC, DB, RL and AM – awaiting response from Barclays bank to allow signature – until then the PC cannot sign cheques.

Tennis Courts

The PC has received 3 quotes for work to repair and repaint the lines at the Tennis Court. Unfortunately as they have all been done in a different way it is not possible to compare them fairly. RL to review the initial tender documentation and contact the suppliers for additional clarity – to be reviewed at the next meeting.

16.9.12 Date and Venue of Next Meeting

27th October 2016 at Danehill School

Meeting closed at 21.00