

CUCKFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Twenty Fourth Annual Meeting held at 8 pm on 21st May 2009

Present: Mr R Salisbury (Chairman), Mrs S Burgess, Mrs R Macintyre, Mr C Mercer, Mrs A King, Mr S Blanch, Mrs J Revell, Mr P Gallagher

In Attendance: Mrs F Jones (Clerk)

1 Election of Chairman: Mrs Revell proposed that Mr Salisbury be elected as Chairman of the Council, Mr Gallagher seconded the proposal and Mr Salisbury was duly elected as Chairman.

2 Election of Vice-Chairman: Mrs Macintyre proposed that Mr Gregory be elected as Vice-Chairman, Mrs Burgess seconded the proposal and Mr Gregory was duly elected as Vice-Chairman.

3 Apologies for Absence were received and accepted from Mr K Gregory and Mr S Gilboy

4 Declarations of Interest: There were no declarations of interest regarding any items on the agenda.

5 Standing Committees for the Year 2009-2010:

Planning:: Robert Salisbury, Ken Gregory, Jane Revell, Sue Burgess, Colin Mercer, Stephen Blanch, Andrea King

Environment: Ken Gregory, Pat Gallagher, Stephen Blanch, Sue Burgess, Robert Salisbury, Stuart Gilboy

Roads & Traffic: Jane Revell, Robert Salisbury, Ruth Macintyre, Ken Gregory, Stephen Blanch, Colin Mercer

Finance Ruth Macintyre, Ken Gregory, Pat Gallagher, Robert Salisbury, Jane Revell, Andrea King

Queen's Hall: Andrea King,, Ruth Macintyre, Robert Salisbury, Ken Gregory, Pat Gallagher, Sue Burgess

There was a discussion regarding the frequency of the Roads & Traffic meetings as these had been reduced to four per annum. It was agreed that, for the current year, any outstanding matters could be discussed at the next Council meeting in July and an additional meeting held prior to the Planning meeting at the end of August if required. The programme of meetings would be reviewed at the year end.

6 Nominations for Parish Council Representation

6.1 Cuckfield Youth Club: Mrs Revell was nominated as the Parish Council's representative.

6.2 Cuckfield Museum Trust: Mrs Burgess was nominated as the Parish Council's representative.

6.3 Mid Sussex Association of Local Councils: Mr Salisbury and Mr Blanch were nominated as the Parish Council's representatives

6.4 Holy Trinity School: It was noted that Mr Salisbury was now a Governor at the school.

7 Approval of Minutes of the Previous Meeting: The minutes of the meetings held on 6th March, as previously circulated, were taken as read and confirmed as a true record.

8 Clerk's Report & Matters Arising from the Minutes

The matter of reclaiming the Cuckfield Chain of Office from the District Council remained outstanding. The Chairman noted that no response had been received from the Food Market. The importance of food hygiene and the need for all hall users handling food was discussed. The possibility of setting up a hygiene course at the hall would be investigated. A quotation in the sum of £200 had been received for a wooden Chairman's Board of Honour to be placed in the new office. It was agreed to go ahead with this item.

9 Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

The Standing Orders, revised in 2008, and the Financial Regulations, revised in 2007, were re-approved by the Council. It was noted that revised Standing Orders were expected from NALC. The Chairman underlined the increasing importance of these documents and the need to ensure that they were reviewed at regular intervals. It was agreed that these documents would be reviewed at the next Finance Meeting. The delegated powers of the committees and budgets, as approved by Council in January, were re-approved by members.

10 Annual Review of the Parish Council's Risk Assessment

This had been previously circulated to members and was approved by the Council. The Chairman asked that each Committee reviewed their risk assessment on an annual basis, if possible prior to the six monthly interim internal audit. This would then be approved annually by the Council

11 Annual Performance Review of the Internal Audit

The internal audit had taken place two weeks ago. As the accounts now had to be approved by end June and there was no further Council meeting scheduled before July, there had been insufficient time to enable the Internal Auditor to make his report. It was hoped that in future years greater notice would be given of the internal audit to enable councillors to attend. It was considered that the issues raised at the previous review, including the need for councillors to attend training sessions, had now been addressed and the review was approved by the Council.

12 Accounts and Annual Return for the financial year ending 31st March 2009

The accounts and annual return had been circulated to members. The accounts and annual return were unanimously approved by the Council and signed by the Chairman. The Chairman reported that regular monthly reviews of the accounts were taking place with the Chairman of Finance and the Clerk. It was expected that, together with the additional assistance in the office, this should enable improvements to be made in the forecasting of the budgets throughout the year.

13 Schedule of Paid Cheques

14 Appointment of the Internal Auditor for the year 2009/10

Andrew Sturgeon, Deputy Town Clerk at Haywards Heath Town Council, was willing to continue as Internal Auditor for the Parish Council. This appointment was unanimously approved by the Council.

15 Chairman's Report

The Chairman had visited the Basepoint Business Centre in Crawley. Basepoint provided well managed offices/workspace for small and start-up businesses. The Gatwick Diamond was interested in the scheme and keen to understand what could be done locally. The Chairman was to attend a further meeting on June 10th but there would be a need to gather information and to explore the possibilities bearing in mind the limitations of land availability and design requirements.

The Chairman also reported that one of the groundsmen had parked his car in the lay-by at the cemetery and a stone had hit and shattered his windscreen when they were working in the area. A claim had been put in to cover the cost of this repair. Liability had been queried by the Council and information sought from the Insurance Company. The position was unclear, dependent on who had caused the actual damage and any claim would be subject to an excess with the possibility of a rise in future premiums. After discussion, it was agreed that, as a gesture of goodwill, the claim would be paid in full but that in future staff would be informed that the Parish Council would not accept any liability if they parked their vehicles on Parish Council property and that any vehicles so parked would be expected to carry full insurance.

16 Committee Reports

16.1 Planning Committee: The minutes of the meetings dated 19th March, 16th April, 7th May were noted by the Council. The Chairman reported that the new permitted development rights were now in force.

16.2 Roads & Traffic Committee: The minutes of the meeting dated 16th April were noted by Council. The planning decision on Chatfield Road was still awaited and it was understood that the highways issues had not been resolved. The Parish Council had yet to receive a response from WSCC with regard to the possible closure of Horsgate Lane. It was noted that the residents association had commissioned a safety audit and that this had brought several issues to light. Concern was expressed that Cllr Binge (MSDC) had requested the use of the SRTS S106 funds to be used for improvements to the footpath along Courtmead Road. The Chairman had been in contact with Mrs Binge and informed her that the Parish Council did not consider that this was an appropriate use of these funds. The work was the responsibility of the County Council. Mrs Revell reported that the SRTS works in Ardingly Road would now go ahead in the autumn, this would include a textured crossing point. Positive advice had been received from WSCC with regard to the installation of VAS signs at Whitemans Green and it was hoped that this work would be put in hand. The plans for the new roundabout by the Rose & Crown were awaited and it was expected that the work would be undertaken in the autumn. There were concerns that the roundabout at The Copse was unsafe and not working properly; this would need to be reviewed. At Whitemans Green it was considered that the yellow lines had not achieved the desired result. The planning application for the new car park was now under consideration and it was hoped that the Rugby & Football Clubs had now secured the necessary funding.

16.3 Finance Committee: The minutes of the meeting dated 19th March were noted by Council. Mrs Macintyre reported that Nicky Sage, the Clerk's assistant, was now in place. This was working well and the clerk was very pleased with the appointment. It was noted that, following the unsuccessful appeal for a rates reduction, arrears on both the toilets and cemetery had had to be paid. It was agreed to look at the rate relief and to check that this was applied to the most expensive property.

16.4 Queen's Hall Committee: The minutes of the meeting dated 7th May were noted by Council. Mrs King reported that there were a lot of enquiries for weddings and the hall would be busy throughout the summer. Unfortunately, two regular bookings had been lost and the hall was currently advertising for more bookings. Quotes for the exterior re-decoration were in hand.

16.5 Environment Committee: In the absence of Mr Gregory, Mrs Burgess reported that planting had been undertaken in the Observer Field using funds received from WSCC. The Community Service would provide labour to clear the weeds in the new hedgerow. However an action plan, risk assessment and equipment would need to be provided. An enquiry had been received from an enthusiast wishing to open up the Observer Post to interested parties, using his collection of equipment. This would be discussed at the next Environment Committee meeting.

Mr Gallagher reported that the process of identifying allocated graves where there was no supporting documentation was nearly complete. It was expected that this would result in approximately four additional burial plots being released in the existing burial area before moving to the new ground. Plans were in hand for the new burial area, this included leaving a margin by large land drain and allocating space for trees, benches and wide footpaths. It was expected that there would be between 370-400 burial spaces, plus the natural burial plots available in the new area.

17 Actions in the Parish Plan

It was agreed that this item be deferred until the next Council meeting.
The meeting closed at 10 pm.

Signed _____