

ROTHERFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Working for the Community
in Rotherfield, Town Row, Mark Cross, Eridge Green, Boarshead and surrounding areas

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19TH MAY 2010 AT ROTHERFIELD VILLAGE HALL

The meeting was chaired by Cllr. Les Pike, Chairman of the Parish Council, who welcomed everybody. 42 Parishioners attended together with:-

Cllr. Francis Whetstone, Councillor for the Forest Row Division of East Sussex County Council.

Cllr. Huw Merriman, Councillor for the Rotherfield Ward of Wealden District Council.

Cllr. John Padfield, Councillor for the Eridge and Mark Cross Ward of Wealden District Council.

Sgt. Steve Etherington of Sussex Police, Neighbourhood Police Sergeant covering Rotherfield Parish.

Jo Farmer, Waste Manager – Policy, Wealden District Council.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE. These were received from Cllr. David Harman and Cllr. Bob Tidy (ESCC). An apology was also received from a Parishioner, Mr J. Richardson, who also thanked the Parish Council for supporting the Allotment Association and the Millennium Green Trust.

2. INTRODUCTION OF PARISH COUNCILLORS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER ORGANISATIONS.

The other Parish Councillors introduced themselves to those present.

3. RECEIVE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 20TH MAY 2009.

Copies of these were made available to those attending. It was agreed that these minutes constituted a true record of the proceedings and were signed by the Council Chairman.

4. PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT.

The Chairman's report highlighted these issues:-

- A hedge has been planted between the new parking area and the Cemetery, funded by a kind donation from a Parishioner.
- A tap has been installed.
- A Wall of Remembrance is to be built in during the summer months, this to replace the derelict shed.
- In the Old Burial Ground to the rear of St Denys' Churchyard much clearance and cutting back of trees (particularly Yew) and hedges had taken place with further work planned for later in the year.

In the Recreation Ground the following work had taken place:-

- Some cutting back had taken place on the trees.
- The roundabout has received a new bearing and most of the play equipment is to be repainted this summer.
- The legal formalities relating to the pre-school new build have finally been completed and building work is to commence within the next week. Ownership of this building will revert to the Parish after 25 years.

Various Highways works had taken place:-

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- Trees had been cut back in Eridge Lane below the flats, this to eliminate the “tunnel” effect which was deemed hazardous, particularly in bright weather.
- The Council continues to work with ESCC Highways in an attempt to introduce speed limit reminder measures, particularly in Mayfield Road.

The Planning and Building Committee considered 102 applications during 2009 and passed recommendations on to the Planning Authority, Wealden District Council. 6 of the applications were refused by them.

5. WASTE AND RECYCLING PRESENTATION BY A REPRESENTATIVE OF WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL FOLLOWED BY Q & A SESSION.

Jo Carpenter gave this presentation covering the general and financial aspects of recycling within Wealden together with information regarding the use to which recycled materials are put. She gave the following recycling information specific to Rotherfield:-

February 2010 prior to introduction of pavement collection of recyclables.

- 65.8 tonnes collected for landfill
- 4.24 tonnes collected from Recycling Point in Station Road.
- 6% recycling rate.

April 2010 after introduction of pavement collections.

- 38.7 tonnes collected for landfill (41% reduction in waste to landfill).
- 35.4 tonnes collected for recycling & composting.
- 62% increase in glass collected from Recycling Point.
- 43.8% recycling rate (for materials collected directly from households).
- 47.8% recycling overall (including the recycling point).

She considered that these results were very good and was pleased that between 70-80% of households had got it “right first time”.

In response to a question from the meeting she advised that around £900K is received each year from ESCC as recycling credits for waste that would have otherwise become landfill. Around £700K is received each year from the sale of recyclable materials.

6. PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

Copies of the Draft Unaudited Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2010 were provided for those present at the meeting. The Clerk, in his role as Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), highlighted areas of the accounts where figures differed significantly to the previous year and gave reasons for these.

A question was asked by a Parishioner as to the Council’s policy on street lights and altering them so that they were only on for part of the time. In response it was stated that the

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residents of Court Meadow were currently being consulted regarding introduction of such a scheme in their area

7. REPORT ON SMITH AND FERMOR CHARITY.

The Clerk is also Secretary/Treasurer of this small local Charity. His fellow trustees are the Town Clerk of Crowborough, Mrs Linda Butcher, together with Mrs Jean Harris for Rotherfield Parish and Mrs Joan Fermor for Crowborough Town. Gross income for the Charity for the year ended 31st December 2009 was £5.86, the usual annual income cheque being delayed but subsequently received after the start of the new financial year. There were six grants made during the year totalling £1647.00. Four grants have already been made this year totalling £1578.

8. REPORTS FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLORS, COUNTY COUNCILLORS, AND POLICE.

Cllr. John Padfield, Wealden District Council reported the following:-

- The WDC Chairman has recently changed with Cllr. Mrs. Sylvia Martin succeeding Cllr. Mrs Chantal Wilson.
- The decision to merge services on a single site at Hailsham has now been taken, estimated that this will save £350K annually.
- A site has been donated for construction of a community centre in Crowborough, this will be funded externally.
- The 2.7% Council Tax increase was the lowest in 15 years.
- Planning costs had decreased due to a lower number of applications being received and a reduction in use of external consultants.
- Charges are being introduced for pre planning consultations on larger developments.
- Electronic consultation methods are being introduced for Parish Councils to comment on planning applications.
- 565 new houses had been completed in Wealden during the past year, only 2 less than target; 88 of these were affordable housing.
- Road Safety. There had been 138 killed or seriously injured in Wealden during 2009.
- With other councillors he had recently attended an awareness session at Worthing mosque.
- Continues to be a member of the North Planning Committee and is a member of the Upper Medway drainage board on behalf of the District Council.
- Free parking is to continue in the 4 Wealden market towns, together with free bus passes for those eligible.
- All departments within WDC have achieved quality status making the Council one of only 6 in England to achieve this.

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Cllr Huw Merriman, Wealden District Council reported the following:-

- Continues as Deputy Chairman of the Internal and Audit Scrutiny Committee and as a member of the Licensing Committee. Has maintained a 100% attendance record during this year and last and continues to claim no allowances.
- Is aware of rumours regarding possible enlargement of the Tesco store at Jarvis Brook, and also acquisition of the site adjacent to the railway bridge to develop a petrol station but understands that there are no plans current
- Considers the latter would be more of a threat to village businesses than the main store itself.
- No major development plans for Rotherfield; whilst the need for affordable housing is acknowledged there is no desire for developments at all costs at the expense of the rural environment.
- Would be interested in organising a local Walk for Fitness family based event.
- Held a Parish Surgery last September, unfortunately there were no attendees.
- Considers Wealden to be a well run Council and thanked those attending for their support.

Cllr Francis Whetstone, East Sussex County Council reported the following:-

- Apologised that Cllr. Tidy was unable to attend as he is unwell.
- Whilst Budgets for this year have been fixed it is feared that the new Government may impose more savings. As ESCC have been identifying efficiency savings for many years it is difficult to make more of them. A £6m reduction in budget is already planned over the next 2 years.
- The ESCC website had achieved Four Star status, one of only eleven in the Country. A Gold “green apple” was awarded for Environmental Best Practice, this in connection with the Compost Doctor service.
- Education. The percentage of East Sussex pupils getting A-C grades in Maths and English is now 51%, a 5% rise for the County and the best ever. Two academies are being set up in Hastings to improve education in that area, a further one is planned for Eastbourne.
- Social Services. County has the highest percentage of residents over 85 in the country, with subsequent impact on costs. There has been a large increase in referrals in the aftermath of the “Baby Peter” case.
- The hard winter has highlighted issues with road maintenance. 30K potholes have been filled this year, many more than once. £8.5m has been borrowed and £1m taken from reserves to fund a resurfacing programme.

Sgt. Steve Etherington, Sussex Police reported the following:-

- A new PCSO, Matt Boyle, has replace Ellie who is pursuing an alternative career.
- Underused police vehicles have been redeployed to provide transport for local PCSO's, two have been dedicated for their use but unfortunately damage to another vehicle has meant that this will be temporarily reduced.

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- PCSO's mobile phone details and e-mail address is to be passed to Clerk to display, it is stressed that these are for non-emergency purposes only. Feedback is always welcome as are suggestions for future activities.
- Shed and outbuilding crime continues to be an issue in rural areas, it is estimated that there are up to 50 teams of criminals engaged in this activity in Kent and Sussex. Advice is to ensure that all valuable items of garden equipment are locked up.
- Fly tipping. Enforcement is being pursued by WDC against a persistent offender.
- Matt is an enthusiastic user of the local speed gun. Has undertaken 8 speed checks recently, 40 drivers have received warning letters and is estimated that 20% of these are from within the Parish.
- The Sussex Road policing team has undertaken speed monitoring in North Wealden, during the week of 22nd February Mark Cross and Rotherfield were monitored on 6 occasions with 14 vehicles ticketed for speeding and a further 2 for other offences.
- Currently "Operation Triangle" is taking place in an attempt to address concerns about the high number of casualties on North Wealden roads particularly the A26 and A267. A multi agency approach is being adopted to educate motorists and enforce the law regarding speeding, dangerous driving, mobile phone usage and non-wearing of seat belts.
- Street lighting and crime. Parish crime figures are to be analysed for the Parish to indicate the times of day that incidents take place, information will be passed to the Clerk.

Questions from the meeting were taken.

- More street meeting with PCSO requested in the Spout Hill area.
- North Street and Mayfield Road speeding issues are still a concern.
- Deployment of SID (Speeding Interactive Sign) in the Parish is now the responsibility of the Police.

9. QUESTIONS/STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Q. Field opposite recreation ground adjacent to Highgate Flats. Local concerns that this had been divided into small plots and sold off leading to fears of an "invasion" of unauthorised occupants. Usual tactic is for this to take place on a Bank Holiday weekend. Should the Council be investigating a response to this?

A. This had been raised as a fear at Easter and investigations had been made with regarding to "on call" arrangements with the Planning Authority should the need arise. Ownership of this land is to be investigated further and the matter placed on the agenda of a future Council meeting to receive information on the matter and consider a response. Cllr. Merriman has offered to assist in investigating ownership details.

Q. What are the planning rules on fence heights?

A. Understood to be 6' before Planning Permission required, 4' in the AONB.

Q. What is the position with the premises at Jameah in Catt's Hill?

A. Understood that the building was now unoccupied, three families resident had moved

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out with one person resident for security purposes. Some visitors attended for Friday prayers. WDC have powers over repairs on this G2 listed building, enforcement team will be asked to investigate situation and report options.

Q. Dropped kerb in North Street still damaged and a hazard to the numerous pedestrians using the road. What is happening?

A. This was originally reported by the Clerk in January and subsequently chased for action. Details to be sent to Cllr. Whetstone who will endeavour to progress the matter.

Q. Thanks tendered by a Mark Cross resident regarding the care taken of the Green there so that wild flowers may thrive. What is happening with the car park resurfacing?

A. Quotes have been obtained and passed to ESCC Highways for consideration – a condition of the licence to the Parish is that ESCC contribute toward repairs as damage is caused to the surface by contractor's vehicles when undertaking work on the A267.

Q. Speeding issues. What is happening?

A. Costs involved with these not affordable without large increase in precept. Investigations continuing into possible measures in Mayfield Road.

Q. New Road/King's Arms twitten. Gate is no longer attached at top of twitten.

A. Clerk will investigate.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 21:50

.....Chairman.....Date

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