

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF
CROOKHAM VILLAGE, NETHERHOUSE MOOR
& ZEBON COPSE WARDS
HELD ON MONDAY, 2 APRIL 2007, AT 8 PM
IN THE WI HALL, THE STREET, CROOKHAM VILLAGE

Present: Cllr. Simon Ambler
Parish Council Members 5, Residents of the Parish 14,
Ward Cllrs. Appleton, Ambler, Bennison and Jenny Radley

Apologies: County Cllr. Peter Hutcheson, Ward Cllr. Singh,
Parish Cllrs. Ashton and Brooks

The Chairman welcomed everyone and explained the background to the Annual Parish Meeting and advised that this was an opportunity for residents to tell the Parish Council Members what was working and what was not working for them. He said that he was expecting PC Webster and he would adjourn her report until such time as she arrived.

1. Report from PC Webster (Beat Officer)

Adjourned.

(Post meeting note: PC Webster had emailed her apologies due to a family issue).

2. Report from Mark Blackwell (HCC Youth Officer)

The Chairman welcomed Mark Blackwell and asked him to give the meeting an update on Youth matters in the Parish. Mark advised the meeting that County wide there was a restructure and the County Youth Service was now part of the Childrens Services Department. The youth service will now work with other agencies. The idea is to bring several agencies together to deliver services. The Youth Buses are being worked in Derby Green area successfully and the people running them want to get it right for all areas. When it was tried in Hartley Wintney it failed dismally because there was no Community involvement and when the young people became unruly there was no local knowledge to help put them back in line. The buses will only work with the help of the community. When thinking about youth work in the parish it is all about getting the support of the community to carry things forward. The youth gatherings in the parish over the past two years have not reached the levels of many years ago and there does not seem to be an issue. He acknowledged that the Parish had put money aside for youth work but he did not want that money to be wasted on projects which would not deliver outcomes. There followed a lengthy question and answer session.

3. Chairman`s Report

The Chairman spoke as follows:

“As we have a fairly full evening, I propose to keep my report brief, particularly as some of the Parish issues I will mention, overlap the district council issues, which will be covered later this evening. So that you don’t get fed up of hearing me, I won’t give you a separate report in my capacity as district councillor, especially as we have a surfeit of district councillors covering the Parish. I will leave it to my fellow councillor for the ward, Jenny Radley to give you any additional Hart DC information in her report.

Before giving you a brief resume of the activities of the Parish Council in the past year, I would like to thank the many people who have given their time to help the Parish Council in its work over the past year.

Particular thanks go to Paul Dickinson, our honorary planning consultant, who has provided invaluable expertise to our planning committee for many years. Paul helps them to review and comment on planning applications, some of which contain a lot of complex technical detail. Paul has now left us for pastures new in Bentley and we wish him well in his new home. The level of expertise that Paul was able to provide will be impossible to replace but I know that he has imparted a good level of understanding on relevant issues to our planning committee.

Our internal auditor, Phil du Gay, helps us to meet our obligations on a financial front. These become ever more onerous year on year.

Patrick Grace has also continued to act as our flooding consultant and has had a busy year on that front, more on that later.

I should also like to thank our various representatives on local bodies including Ann Kay who represents the Council on the Cottrells Almshouses Trust and the Fleet, Crondall & Crookham Welfare Trust. Our thanks also go to Jean and Alan Symes for their continued upkeep of the Crossways flowerbed.

I should also like to thank my fellow councillors for their hard work over the last year. Like all the other people I have mentioned, their time is given on a voluntary basis and is unpaid.

My Vice Chairman, Indra Sinka has put an enormous amount of time into work on the Parish plan and continues to do so.

I would also like to thank those of our District Councillors who have given us their support over the year.

During the year, Anne Murray our treasurer resigned in order to take up take up a further education course. I should like to thank Anne for the work she did in her role as Treasurer and help she gave with the Parish Plan survey. I should like to welcome Angela Sayers into this role. Angela also acts as clerk to our planning committee.

That brings me on to a final thank you to our overworked clerk, Carol who, despite her many other activities, manages to keep on top of all the Parish work.

Whilst interviewing for the role of Finance Officer, I was impressed by the calibre of candidates applying. We are a relatively small council, our employees are only part time (or that's all they get paid for) and contrary to what you may read in the press we certainly don't pay them highly. So we should be proud of the fact that we can attract such good people to work for us.

On to your Parish Council's activities over the past year.

Transport

The community transport project is a scheme which is designed to provide on demand transport to rural areas. The scheme is supported by Hampshire CC, Hart DC and most of the Parishes in Hart, including this one. We have had concerns over the administration of the scheme and the level of usage by residents in the parish. Nevertheless we continue to support the scheme, not wishing to jeopardise it for those who do need it.

It has been recognised by all interested parties that the scheme is not operating particularly effectively and a review will be carried out over the next year.

Pilcot Hill Footway

This is one of our projects which I am particularly disappointed to see appearing within my report as ongoing for yet another year.

We are still actively pursuing this project which will greatly improve safety for people walking between Crookham Village and Dogmersfield, particularly the children going to school. Despite the huge amount of work that has been done with Dogmersfield School to help them produce a school travel plan to assist with the justification for the path, the County Council were still not persuaded of the need for the path.

To help move things along we have formally offered a funding contribution of £34,000 towards the construction of this footway. This is currently being considered by Hampshire CC and we await a response.

Velmead Community Centre

Apologies to those who have heard about this topic a number of times before. If you have been following this matter, you will have seen that a proposal has been agreed by Hart District Council cabinet to phase the handover of the management over a four year period. This would see the Parish Council taking over the running costs on a scale increasing by 25% each year until full responsibility is achieved.

The Parish Council have accepted this proposal and are in ongoing discussions to agree the mechanism for this to happen. The interim period will allow us to manage the facility jointly with Hart and also allow us to work towards our stated aim of providing a far better facility for the benefit of the residents.

I still have some names of people who volunteered to help on this project some time ago; and I will be speaking to you shortly. If anyone else is keen to get involved, please let me know.

Redfields Lane / A287 Junction

This again has been a topic of discussion with the County Council for many years. I attended a meeting recently with the county highways officers where they explained their proposals to put sophisticated Vehicle Activated Signs on the A287. These will not flash all the time but just when there is traffic waiting to turn out of Redfields lane. These signs should be installed within the next two weeks and we would be interested to hear your feedback once they are operational.

Flooding

We have experienced a number of periods of very heavy rain over the last six months, some of which have been the cause for concern in various areas of the Parish. In particular, last November, a number of properties on Zebon Copse were flooded. This was partly caused by poor maintenance of the drainage ditches and balancing pond at the Redfield's end of Zebon Copse. These ditches are the responsibility of Thames Water who have cleared the offending ditches and culverts to address the problem in the short term. This does however remain a cause for concern for the future. There is ongoing work to review the situation and once again, I should like to thank Patrick Grace for his work liaising with the Environment Agency and David Jackson, who, in his capacity of Zebon Copse Residents Association Chairman, has coordinated feedback from affected residents.

Finally, something we working towards for some time, a Parish News Letter. You should all have received a copy recently and we plan to distribute this twice a year to keep you up to date on issues we are working on. Again any feedback on this first issue and suggestion for content of future issues would be welcomed. “

4. District & County Councillors Reports

Cllr. Bennison was invited to give the meeting an update on the Farnborough Aerodrome Consultative Cttee of which he is a Member. Before dealing with that subject he advised the meeting of his committee and outside body appointments since he was elected to Hart Council. He then explained how he had been appointed to the FACC and advised of its remit. He said it is really a talking shop and has parish, county and borough representatives. Previous meetings appeared to him to be antagonistic until a recent meeting when the newly appointed Chief Executive appeared to be trying extremely hard to resolve the issues of the past and he is now very hopeful of getting a satisfactory solution – notwithstanding this though, people should still ring in whenever they believe a flight path has been altered. In response to a question he advised that residents should advise of the time and place of the incident. Any changes to the flight paths have to be cleared with the CAA.

Cllr. Appleton advised the meeting that part of his ward is Netherhouse Ward. One of the things he is keen on is the creation of a Town Council for the unparished parts of Fleet and Church Crookham. He is concerned at the speed of vehicles on Hitches Lane and Crookham Road. The development on Hitches Lane is now certain and he has asked HCC to look at providing additional cycleways from Netherhouse Moor to the school. He said that provision of a Youth Shelter was something which was being considered on the new development. With the mitigation land being offered he thought there might be further opportunities for youth provision. He is also asking for provision of allotments and requested that those interested wrote to the Council registering themselves on the allotments list. He mentioned the use of the Probation Service and voluntary labour which could be of service in clearing ditches etc in the Parish. He said that he had also been at the TAG Planning Appeal and his belief was that this was a dry run for a huge increase in landings and takeoffs.

Cllr. Radley advised that she was one of the two district councillors for the ward of Church Crookham West, which is one of the 3 district wards that cover Crookham Village Parish. The other wards being Fleet West and Crondall wards. She explained that the ward of Church Crookham West covers Zebon Copse, which forms a significant part of this Parish.

When elected she took it to be her duty to help to represent the local residents and help to liaise between District and Parish Council. She hopes that she has already demonstrated a level of motivation and action to show that she is keen to assist the Parish with its work. In fact when she realised that part of Church Crookham West ward was un-parished, and realising just how many benefits there are for the part of the ward that is covered by Crookham Village Parish Council, this helped to justify action taken by her Group last year. This is in fact why her Group made the effort last summer to raise a petition to bring about the parishing of the unparished area of Fleet and Church Crookham. They were able to start off this process by identifying a suitable parish for the remainder of Church Crookham and by including the part of Fleet, which was contained within the natural boundary south of the canal. The understanding was this effort would also instigate action to create a parish for the remaining area of Fleet as well. It made sense to bring about at least 2 parished areas to ensure more local democracy and control over what the parishes could concentrate upon for the residents of their areas. They now wait in hope that the

decision that is still to be made by the Department for Community and Local Government (DCLG), will enable this to happen soon.

Over the past year the District Council has made some major steps toward having better control of its budget and finances, but it has not been an easy task. There were some serious issues that needed to be dealt with and every department has had to identify and carry out significant cuts in order to bring the spending by the council back under control. That part is now done, although the task remains to maintain control of the budget and not to allow overspend once again. Then hopefully it will be possible to consider proper growth items in future years that will give real benefit to the District.

She then dealt with the changes to the waste and recycled materials collection service over the past 6 months, with the introduction of the Alternate Bin Collection service (or ABC as it is known) at the end of October. She hoped that this has worked for most residents, although there have been a few problems with confusing information and problems with staffing levels. This has been due to the financial constraints under which the move to ABC had to be introduced due to inadequate budgeting for it by the previous administration. Unfortunately this also had effects on associated services such as street cleaning and grounds maintenance, as the staff there were needed to assist with the waste collection services.

However, the scheme is proving to be effective. The level of recycling has increased considerably and has brought Hart District up to standard in comparison to other authorities in Hampshire, and we all should be proud of the part we have played in that. We, as a population, are taking responsibility for the waste we produce and we are all helping to make a difference. The move to ABC was a major part of that process, however there are still ways we can continue to improve.

Turning to local planning issues, despite all reasonable best efforts the Hitches Lane development is to go ahead and the details of the initial phase for 120 of the intended 300 homes is being finalised to agree on the associated works, facilities and improvements. That includes changes to the road along Hitches Lane which should mean that a new roundabout will be constructed at the entrance to the development, near to Calthorpe Park School and the Hart Leisure Centre. They are to be accessed from their own road from the new roundabout and will mean that there will not be main road traffic past them in future. There are currently negotiations for the sports facilities and provision of local health services to provide for the new residents.

The Queen Elizabeth Barracks (QEB) planning application is to go to appeal starting on the 15th May, in just a few weeks time. There is no suitable local venue available for the 2 & a half months that the Inquiry is expected to take, so the Inquiry is to be held at the Princes Hall, in Aldershot. There is a new Planning Inspector who has taken over the role of hearing the Inquiry, he will then be reporting to the Secretary of State, who will make the final decision. This Inspector has also accepted amendments to the application without need for proper consultation, which will be tabled at the inquiry. He has also ruled out the chance of any evening meetings that might enable a wider selection of the public to attend the inquiry in order to discuss some of the sensitive issues such as the reduction in the size of the Bourley Road car-park.

The QEB inquiry will include the Redfields Garden Centre appeal, as they have been deemed to raise similar issues, so the first part of the inquiry will be mainly to do with the Redfields Garden Centre Appeal.

Meanwhile the continuation of the appeal for the TAG Aviation application to double the number of weekend and bank holiday flights at Farnborough Airport recommenced today 2nd April. The 4 days allocated in January were insufficient, so they now expect to complete the appeal this week after a further 4 days in order to hear the applicants case and the remaining local resident groups views.

In fact, there is a new Chief Executive Officer at TAG Farnborough who is keen to address some of the issues that local people have raised, especially with regard to noise disturbance. They have decided that they need to try to improve local relations and have offered to instigate new noise abatement measures to reduce the issues for local people. They have initiated a group of their experts and local resident representatives to test out a variety of measures to bring about improvement and this will be reviewed at regular intervals. This is a positive step after years of denial by TAG of the adverse effect that they have on the quality of life for local residents. It is hoped that this new initiative may provide a sensible way forward to balance expansion at the airport with ways to avoid unnecessary disturbance to residents.

There is also a new Chief Executive Officer at HDC, his name is Geoff Bonner. Since he started in late September, he has been making careful assessments and is reviewing the structure and processes to improve the way and the efficiency by which the council operates and provides services to the public. Improvements do take time but Hart is well on the way to turning the 'corner'.

There are to be improvements to local facilities, such as the Hart Leisure Centre, where long overdue maintenance and refurbishment work will be undertaken during the forthcoming year. There is to be a new sport development officer who will be there to help support local sports groups and fundamentally seek grants to provide better leisure services in this district. Hart are the only authority in Hampshire not to have such a post.

She hopes that she is able to continue to offer further backup to the Parish Council in order to raise important issues at District Council meetings and to discuss matters with Council Officers and relevant others. It can help to add to the 'noise' to get some matters properly considered. However all general issues are dealt with admirably by the Parish Council members themselves. It was good to see the Parish Council dealing so well working on the Parish Plan and all the hope that it stands for, as residents will soon see for themselves, as well as items with Maintenance, Highways, Planning, Lighting, Crime and Disorder and the many other items.

She was very impressed by the steadfast work and commitment shown by the Parish Council members. She was learning a lot about how best to deal with some issues through the advice and reports from your Parish Councillor members. She therefore looks forward to this coming year with a great deal of hope. There are real opportunities to make a difference for the Parish, with the steady and continued support of the Parish Council.

Cllr. Ambler had incorporated his Ward Cllr report within his Chairman of the Parish Council report.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at this point to allow for residents to raise issues with Councillors and for further refreshments.

5. Trustees and Appointees Reports

Mr. Richard Hellier gave a short presentation to the meeting regarding the importance of retention of headland strips and for people to leave aside a part of their gardens to be “wild” to encourage flora and fauna growth and regeneration. The term “headland” goes back 20 years and is usually associated with agricultural land. In response to concerns about the loss of wildlife “headland” came into being. It gives a breathing space for wildlife. The Parish itself it is a fantastic place and outstanding for birds in particular. Most of the woodlands in the Parish are ancient woodlands and they usually have a fantastic flora. He has recently seen a lesser spotted woodpecker. We have a great deal of wetland and there are a number of small ponds. We are on the edge of the Thames Basin Special Protection Area and are sandwiched between that and the Hampshire Downs. There is also a small patch of heathland. There are very healthy populations of birds and the skylarks have been singing all winter. The Government has been using song birds as an indicator of quality of life. He recommended the retention of a metre or so of grass along headlands and footpaths and said this would give grasshoppers and other insects an opportunity to live and expand. Headlands are fairly continuous corridors. A question and answer session took place with particular emphasis on hedges and the cutting of them in October just when Redwings immigrate and need the berries which would have been on them. He had seen many instances of individual people encouraging wildlife as well as large landowners and he wondered whether the Parish Council would consider offering a Conservation Award on an annual basis. The Chairman said that he would ask the Parish Council Members to consider the suggestion and he felt that the many varied environmental projects around the village should be collated and put on the Council Website.

6. Play Areas within the Parish

The Chairman said that there are several play areas in the Parish. One on Netherhouse Moor belongs to the parish and the others are on Zebon Copse. He was aware that these facilities were well used by the correct users during the day time but a different set of users appear after dusk. The question he wished to ask was did residents think there was a need for a play area this end of the village. Representatives from The Crescent expressed their opposition to any form of equipment being installed on The Crescent. Another resident said it would be nice to have somewhere to meet other parents but she did not feel that The Crescent was the place. From those present from The Crescent there was strong opposition to any form of equipment being installed there.

7. Sense of Place Survey – affects residents of Netherhouse Moor and Zebon Copse

The Chairman said that most of the people here tonight were residents of the village and would not be part of the survey being carried out by Hart Council and he therefore would not dwell too much on this tonight. Cllr. Appleton expressed his view that the residents of Netherhouse Moor would find more in common with the unparished areas. The Clerk asked that when Hart sent out its Sense of Place Survey it made clear to residents that there was a large difference in the precept which they could expect to pay – the Parish Council precept is approximately £20 per household whereas the Special Expenses precept is approximately £60 per household. Cllr. Appleton said that the Harlington Centre was to be taken out of Special Expenses and become a district charge and this would make a big difference to the precept on Special expenses. The Clerk begged to differ.

8. Consider Resolutions of which written notice has been received.

The Clerk advised that she had received 12 letters of objection from residents on The Crescent to any play area being sited there and the Chairman said that this would be noted.

9. Any other business

The Chairman gave the meeting a précis of how events had led to the decision to produce a parish plan and how events had changed in the interim in that it would no longer form part of the Local Development Framework being produced by HDC. Anything which goes into the plan has to be evidenced based – nothing can be introduced just because someone thinks it is a good idea.

He was pleased that Richard Hellier had offered to help with the environment part of the plan and he was seeking other volunteers to help with different parts of the plan. The questionnaire had been worked on and the parish council was aware of the areas of interest to residents.

Mrs. Williams asked that the Parish Council actively pursued getting a cyclepath link between the village along Hitches Lane and up towards Elvetham Heath. She believed that the pavement was wide enough to permit usage by pedestrians and cyclists at the same time. The Chairman said that this was a piece of work which had been taken up by a Councillor who had since resigned and he would see that it was followed up on again.

Cllr. Jackson said that there is one other thing which should be mentioned and that is that there is an election in May 2008 when the whole of the parish council has to stand down and put themselves up for re-election. He hoped that those present tonight might consider putting themselves up for election to serve as Councillors.

The meeting closed at 10.35 pm.