

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting
Held in the WI Hall, The Street,
Crookham Village on
Monday, 6 April 2009.

Present: Cllr. Simon Ambler (Chairman)
Mrs. Carol Leversha (Clerk)

In attendance: Parish Cllrs. Ambler (J), Ashton, Jackson, Ney, Whyatt, District Cllrs. Ambler (S), Bennison, Davies and Radley and 7 residents of the parish.

The Chairman welcomed all and explained how the APM differed from a Parish Council Meeting. He pointed out that the Agenda had AOB which was something which never appeared on a Parish Council Agenda.

CHAIRMAN`S REPORT

“Good evening ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the 2009 Annual Parish Meeting for 2 Crookham Village Parish Council

Over the past 9 years that I have been a member of the Parish Council, I have seen an increase in the level the work undertaken. This is partly caused by changes in legislation and partly by pressure on District budgets. This means that as a Parish, we have to choose whether we wish to support discretionary services that would otherwise be cut or allow them to be phased out. A prime example of this is the Velmead Community Centre, which last year took up a considerable amount of CVPC finances and time. Unfortunately, this has meant that this year we have had to increase the Parish Precept by a significant percentage. This still puts us in the lower half of the table of Hart parish precepts being sixth from the bottom and I am pleased to say that this increase only makes a difference of 27p per week per Band D household.

As we are in the position of having six district Councillors and one County Councillor looking after our interests, I haven't asked them to all to make formal reports this year, but there will be an opportunity for you to ask them specific questions.

At this point, it is customary for me to thank all the members of the community who have given their time to help the Parish in various ways. I am very grateful that this year we have had a lot of involvement from many people helping out with various projects and I apologise now if you are one of those people and I don't mention you by name; your help is much appreciated.

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

Thanks also to Ann Kay who has represented the Council on the Cottrell's Almshouses Trust and the Fleet, for many years and has now stepped down from this role. Mrs Joan Brooks has represented us on the Fleet & Crondall Welfare Trust for which we thank her and for all the other work she has done over the years for the Parish Council. We wish her and Jeff well on their forthcoming move to Scotland.

Also thanks to Daphne Gandy, who continues to help with the preparation new contracts.

I should also like to thank my fellow councillors for all 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. Angela Sayers, our Responsible Financial Officer, is doing a sterling job on assisting with budgets, preparing financial information for us and managing supplier contracts.

Last but not least, 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. This year she celebrates 25 years in post and over the years has served five chairmen and goodness knows how many Councillors. Carol is dedicated to achieving Quality Status for her Parish and is undertaking

training which will result in a formal qualification. Quality Status is designed to promote a professional approach to the work that Parishes do, and will greatly enhance the activities of CVPC. As an example; you may also have noticed recently that Carol has changed the format of the minutes to ensure that they are clear and succinct in accordance with the recommendations.

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

Parish Boundary

As I mentioned last year, we have been trying to get a review of the parish boundary to tidy up the anomalies around Zebon Copse estate for many years. I am pleased to report that this change has finally been approved and comes into effect from 2010

Traffic Issues

Over the last year we have debated at length the issue of traffic speeds on Crondall Road. We had a special meeting during the year to discuss this topic and the current position is that Hampshire Highways will be implementing the changes that we published in our December newsletter. We recognise that the new scheme does not fulfil all the expectations of the residents in this area so we have formed a Parish working group to work with the Crondall Road Action Group to look at what additional measures are possible.

We recently purchased our own Speed Indicator Device which we will be deploying around the Parish to monitor speeds and warn motorists exceeding the limit.

It is disappointing to report that yet again, we have had no further success over a footpath for Pilcot Road. We have been assured by the highways department that changes to the road markings and a reduction in the speed limit to 30 mph will be implemented shortly and will continue to monitor these changes to determine their effectiveness.

General Improvement Projects

In mid 2008, we refurbished the amenity area next to the phone box in the village which included the provision of a new, bigger and better notice board.

We have had a number of complaints about the boggy area at the junction of footpaths 2 and 14 and have put in a Boardwalk to overcome this problem and to separate the horses in the field from walkers. Nearby, we have also worked with the landowner of Hillyburrow to put a fence around the copse at the summit to protect it from damage by the horses.

In the new year, we purchased the red phone box by the post office from BT in order to stop it being removed. Later in the meeting, we will hear from Mrs Walden about plans for its upkeep.

Basingstoke Canal

As a valuable local amenity, we have supported the canal for a number of years. There has been much discussion throughout the year about the funding of this valuable local facility and, I am pleased to report that agreement has now been reached between the District Council and the Riparian Parishes to provide funding for the canal's maintenance.

Leisure facilities

I am delighted to announce that the end of the long running saga of the Velmead Community Centre is finally coming to an end. In April 2008, following presentation of the Parish Council's business plan, HDC approved the expenditure of the S.106 money on the refurbishment project and in January 2009, we signed the agreement with HDC for the handover of Velmead to the Parish Council.

Despite the initial round of tenders coming in over budget and having to revise the plans to be less ambitious, by February HDC was able to award the contract for the refurbishment. Work started almost immediately and is due to be completed by August 2009. Councillor Jackson will be updating us on the progress of the work to date and the future for the Centre in a short while.

One of the changes to be made at Velmead, is the replacement of the small children's play area. At present, parents are making good use of the available equipment in the larger play area and along with the other play area that we maintain on Netherhouse Moor, I am always pleased to see how well these facilities are used. We will be enhancing the play equipment available in the area by the addition of a play boulder, which we obtained through a

successful bid for part of a Big Lottery fund grant. The play boulder should be installed shortly at the Community centre.

Twinning

We are twinned with the French Village of Levignen. Whilst the formal twinning charter is between the councils of the two villages, the organisation of visits and events is managed in an extremely efficient way by the respective Twinning committees. As this year was the 25th anniversary of the original agreement, I was invited to Levignen to sign an oath of renewal on behalf of the Parish. The Twinning committee carry out fund raising events and are very good at ensuring that they receive grant funding where available. The Parish Council are happy to provide support where they can and this year is funding the prizes for the children's art competition.

Planning

Despite not being a decision making authority, the Parish Council is a statutory consultee on all planning applications in the Parish. Over the last year, we have had a number of contentious planning applications in our area and the Planning Committee has held public meetings to hear the views of residents. As responses need to be with the District Council within 21 days, this sometimes gives rise to a concern that these public meetings are not publicised sufficiently well. We always do our best to alert the people affected when applications are being discussed, but please keep an eye on the notice boards and web sites for notice of meetings. We are very grateful to those residents that come to these meetings to air their views and it is gratifying to note the present trend at HDC to give considerable weight to the comments from the Parish Council when an application is decided by the District Council.

Publicity

On a general note, we try and keep everyone informed by the website, notice boards and newsletter. We are always interested in feedback from residents so if you feel there is anything we can improve please let us know."

The Chairman then invited questions on his report. He then presented the Clerk with a huge bouquet of flowers to mark her 25 years of service to the Council.

COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLORS` QUESTION TIME

The Chairman explained how we now had 6 District Councillors representing the 3 wards of the parish. Doug McCallum asked for clarification about what was happening at the Harlington Centre. Cllr. Radley said the HC was a huge expense for the unparished area – it costs Hart Council between £300K and £500k to subsidise per annum. Fleet & Church Crookham Expenses pay for the running of the Centre and it is all part of the Hart District Council budget. A working party (over the past 21/2 years) had been looking at this and the current administration decided that because this is an onerous issue they needed to review how it is run. Consultation had taken place with the staff but unfortunately Hart had failed to consult with the users. She went into depth about the background to the whole issue. Cllr. Davies believed that Hart would take on 25% of the cost when it is transferred to the new parish. He said if he was the new Elvetham Heath parish council he would not be prepared to accept any liability for it as Elvetham Heath has its own centre. Cllr. Bennison said the Centre would continue, the library will remain and the café will continue. The hope is that the new parish councils will take over the maintenance etc but they will not have the freehold. Cllr. Ambler said if you look at what it has been costing, once you start adding on-costs it is proportionally what you have at Velmead Community Centre. He reminded the meeting that the Crookham Memorial Hall runs at a profit with just a few people on the management committee. Cllr. Jackson said the bottom line is that these costs have to come out of

the Hart budget and it is unlikely that they will be getting rid of a solicitor but will continue to have to cover the cost previously allocated to the Velmead Community Centre. Cllr. Davies said this was an issue he had raised previously. Cllr. Jackson said whilst the re-organisation might look good on paper it did not look so good for the residents of the unparished area. Cllr. Bennison said as has been said there are 6 ward councillors and he was not a regular attendee at these meetings because of a clash of meetings with Crondall Parish Council. He comes to special meetings and any meetings where he is specifically invited. Cllr. Jackson said he would like to raise issue of lack of access to a Hart Officer with regard to the need for immediate action on enforcements issues out of working hours. Cllr. Bennison said he would raise this at a working party meeting next week. Cllr. Ambler said there had been two occasions, during his 4 years as a Hart Councillor, when there has been a need for out of hours action. A resident said he understood that there was an issue with having 24 hour cover but surely there should be an emergency number in order to prevent such losses. Cllr. Ambler said it would have to be a member of the planning department because they have the statutory powers to act. Cllr. Radley said this was an instance where the parish council could have presented information which could have been used by the police to stop the works. The resident said he had put an environmental complaint in over the internet about the problem and he was still waiting for a response. Cllr. Radley said she would follow up on this.

TRUSTEES & APPOINTEES REPORTS

The Chairman explained that he represents the Parish Council on the Crookham Memorial Hall and this is not an onerous job. As a long established hall it is a well run set up. Mrs. Brooks has had to retire from the Cottrell Almshouses Trust as she is moving away. If anyone would care to take up this role it has only two meetings a year. Cllr. Ney has become a trustee on the Crondall/Crookham & Fleet Welfare Trust. The Chairman said that a vote of thanks should go to Mrs. Brooks for all her help to the Council.

RURAL EXCEPTION HOUSING SITES WITHIN THE VILLAGE

The Chairman explained what a Rural Exception site was and how the Rural Housing Enabler had carried out a survey to ascertain the needs of residents. He read to the meeting the definition of a RES which were to meet the need of local people who were unable to purchase on the open market. Some debate took place on the various sites. Cllr. Bennison said that Crondall had recently had the same exercise done and when this goes into Hart they will cross off a lot of which are not suitable for development. One resident asked about the Hitches Lane site – would that have affordable housing. It was explained that all large scale development is expected to have 40% affordable housing but this goes to people on the housing lists and is allocated on a points basis and this is different from a RES which is for local people and they do not need to have points.

VOLUNTEERS FOR YOUTH PROJECTS

Youth provision is one of the things which the Parish Council is keen on. We have been speaking to Youth Services and Charlotte Tickner is our contact. She does an excellent job and has been out and about the parish and talked to youngsters during the evening hours. As a parish we are happy to offer funding to help run youth projects. We do not have a lot of problems but now and again we get phone calls saying that gangs are roaming around. Volunteers are required to engage with

young people. On Elvetham Heath there is a group of 8 parents who have been trained and CRB checked by the Youth Service and are working extremely well. We would welcome feed back from residents as to what they might know young people would like to engage in.

VOLUNTEERS FOR VELMEAD COMMUNITY CENTRE MANAGEMENT

Cllr. Jackson addressed the meeting and explained how we had arrived at this point. He said we had people from the old village here tonight and they might not be too aware of what goes on with the VCC. He showed an aerial view of the site and explained the various areas. He then went on to show the building layout and explained how the sports area is separate from the main building. He then showed the old layout and the new layout. He explained how the small meeting room had been requisitioned as storage space. The hall loses something in the region of £50k per year. That is the reason that Hart wished to get rid of it – negotiations began in 2001 and finally concluded in the earlier part of this year. He then showed the proposed changes which gave a great deal more storage space and with internal alterations it freed up one of the halls for other uses than the long term play group. The kitchen has been totally revamped and will enable events such as weddings to be undertaken. A small stage is being added in one hall and the whole of the back wall will have a matt white surface to enable a projector to display. The acoustics are also being upgraded. This needs someone to run it and we have installed an office which at some future date may also become the parish office. All of this is due for completion by the end of August. The small play area will be completely replaced with the money which should have been spent on the green space between Brandon Road and Jessett Drive. There will also be a play boulder added to the older children's play area. We now need to get the losses down to something approaching a manageable amount. So we need to increase the usage. Community involvement is key to this – we need events and would like to think that at least once a month something will take place. We would also like a voluntary management group. We seriously need some help now and would welcome any offer.

RED TELEPHONE BOX UPKEEP

Mrs. Walden had sent an update on the telephone box and had sent her apologies for being unable to attend this evening. Cllr. Brian Whyatt had originally offered to help with the maintenance of the box and it was suggested that he become the Lead Member for the box. The Chairman read to the meeting the update from Mrs. Walden. With regard to the request for some funding from the Parish Council the Chairman said that this was something for the Agenda for the next Parish Council meeting. The Chairman said he believed that ownership might have to remain with the Council as it was only Councils who were invited to purchase these boxes.

CONSIDER RESOLUTIONS OF WHICH WRITTEN NOTICE HAS BEEN RECEIVED.

None received.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No one wished to raise anything.

The meeting closed a 9.41 pm