

THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH OF COLEMORE AND PRIORS DEAN

FIELD FARM BARN, COLEMORE: 6.30 PM FRIDAY 18 MARCH 2016

MINUTES

Present:

Keith Godfrey (Chairman), Nigel Barton, Neil Blackley, David Bridger, Venetia Bridger, John Britton, Elizabeth Britton, Joanna Brown, Mollie Butters, Martin Evans, Ruth Evans, Carolyn Fair, James Fair, Vivienne Godfrey, Deirdre Green, Richard Keyser, Rosemary Keyser, Rachel Nicholson, Christopher Slater, Julia Slater, Angus Whitehead and Jane Wyman

Nick Drew (District Councillor), Rod Gaskin (Director, Rod Gaskin Ltd), Graeme Cottam (visitor)

1. APOLOGIES

Rem Moser and Vaughan Clarke (County Councillor)

2. MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2015 were agreed, and signed by the Chairman, as a true record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

(a) Broadband

The Chairman had written to the Prime Minister, Damian Hinds MP and BT detailing the dissatisfaction of the Parish regarding the provision of broadband.

Mr Britton had attended a meeting with East Hampshire District Council (EHDC) and the National Farmers Union (NFU) where it was disclosed that 64% of rural communities did not have broadband. Recently Chris Grayling MP had published a report which criticised the Government's slow progress in providing broadband to rural areas. Ofcom were pressuring BT to address this by 2020. In particular, in this Parish, parts of Field Farm Lane and the road up to the White Horse pub make up a "not spot" where no broadband was available.

Mr Drew (District Councillor EHDC) reported that EHDC was not happy with the progress of the rural broadband programme and was proactively engaging with BT and other providers. Once funds had been agreed this Ward of EHDC will be included in a pilot wireless broadband scheme.

Mr Blackley agreed to contact Mr Townsend, Chief Executive of BD UK (part of DCMS), to ascertain whether he could offer any advice or assistance in improving broadband to the Parish.

(b) Road to Priors Dean (Bakers Hill)

Temporary repairs had been done and the road was scheduled to be resurfaced in April 2016.

Comments were made that the road from Priors Dean to Hawkley had been resurfaced but that for some reason Bakers Hill, which was by far worst section of this road, had not been included.

Parishioners were encouraged to put pressure on EHDC by individually contacting EHDC by phone or through the website to report pot holes and other poor road conditions.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman had received late notification of the "Clean for the Queen" initiative but unfortunately had not had time to organise anything. Parishioners from Priors Dean had arranged their own litter pick which had been very successful. Mr Slater reported that he had recently collected 2 large bags of rubbish mainly from the lane leading to Mr Whiteheads Cider, Rod Gaskins and the chicken farm. It was suggested that these businesses request that customers and delivery drivers be more aware of how they dispose of their litter. EHDC had a litter pick up scheme which the Parish could access by contacting the Council.

The Chairman expressed disappointment at the use of public money to paint the telephone box in Priors Dean considering there was a Food Bank 6 miles away. He was advised that plans were progressing to have it properly fitted out as an Information point.

Mrs Fair reported that the closure of Button Lane had been extended.

5. COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT (VAUGHAN CLARKE)

Due to another engagement Mr Clarke was unable to attend the meeting but he had kindly provided a written report which was read by the Chairman.

The drop in the Government Support Grant to Hampshire County Council (HCC) this year was far bigger than had been expected. As a result the County Council's share of the Council Tax would rise by 3.99%. Despite this Hampshire had the lowest Council Tax for any Shire County in the UK.

HCC was in the middle of a three-year £564m capital spend. The money would mainly be spent on new schools, extensions to schools, new roads, bridges and junctions, new Extra Care Housing and capital repairs to buildings.

The new street lights, installed a couple of years ago, which direct light downwards had greatly reduced light pollution. South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) was seeking this area to be designated a dark skies area.

The Boundary Commission has been redrawing the boundaries between divisions so that each division has a similar number of electors. This division, Petersfield Hangers is to be increased in size by about 1,200 voters for the election in 2017 and will now include East Tisted, West Tisted and Ropley.

Superfast broadband continued to be a concern, especially in rural areas. In the past few months more connection boxes had been erected in parts of the Division but there was still concern that the eventual target of 99.9% could be reached. Experiments were continuing with different methods to reach really remote areas.

Mr Slater expressed disappointment that Mr Clark was unable to attend the meeting. With the Government grant being progressively removed from all local authorities and recent proposals to remove all schools from local authority control and make them academies, which he understood HCC Education Committee did not support, he felt it was a missed opportunity to hear Mr Clark's views on HCC's position. An objection was made that the Parish meeting was not a platform for political views, but the Chairman felt that in the interests of freedom of speech Mr Slater's comments be allowed.

6. DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT (NICK DREW)

Mr Drew reported that with grants disappearing and budgets being cut EHDC continued to investigate ways to increase their revenue stream. One way was to offer services and expertise to other Councils; another was to charge for additional services. Revenue creation schemes were now more entrepreneurial and strict financial controls were in place to ensure money was not used in a negative way. Mr Slater questioned the appropriateness of a local authority becoming a property developer and introducing two tier services.

Network Rail continues to drive closures of road crossings and it was important that local communities were aware of this.

Strong representations had been made by MPs, County Councils, District Councils and Parishes affected by the proposed increase of airspace at TAG Farnborough Airport. The original proposal was not going ahead and news of the new proposal was awaited.

EHDC were offering local small business grants of £500 and support with accounts and marketing. So far in 2016 23 businesses had taken advantage of this scheme.

EHDC also operated an apprenticeship scheme which they were keen to make available to all age groups.

7. PLANNING COMMITTEE

A lengthy discussion took place regarding establishing a Parish Planning Committee.

Mr Drew was able to offer some advice on the subject. Due to recent changes in legislation in order to have a Planning Committee the current system, whereby the Parish met on an annual basis, would need to change. The Parish would be required to form an elected Parish Council which would be required to meet on a regular basis; the Planning Committee would be a sub-committee of that. Members of the Planning Sub-Committee would be required to undergo training. Comments from that sub-committee on planning applications would be fed back to EHDC. In order to cover the administrative costs the Parish would need to raise a precept to the Council Tax.

An alternative would be to integrate with Froxfield Parish Council's Planning Committee and request that they review planning applications within the Colemore and Priors Dean Parish on our behalf. Froxfield Parish Council would charge £40 per month for this service. Any resident of this Parish could attend the meeting but would not be able to comment at the meeting. Mr Britton questioned whether using another Parish to vet our planning applications would be in our best interests.

SDNPA was the planning authority but EHDC undertook the planning on their behalf. SDNPA paid EHDC planning for this service. Currently an application must be considered by the Planning Committee if five residents object. The Chair of the Parish is also invited to comment and may object on behalf of the Parish. If the objection is turned down, the applicant can appeal.

Concern was expressed that the Parish had received no formal notification of the changes in legislation referred to by Mr Drew and the matter would therefore need further investigation before any decisions were made.

It was agreed that a group comprising Nigel Barton, David Bridger, Martin Evans, Carolyn Fair and Rachel Nicholson would visit Steep Parish Council and EHDC and report back to an Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish in approximately 2 months time. Mr Drew would arrange for EHDC staff from the Planning Department and Democratic Services to address the meeting. With the assistance of Mr Drew the Chairman would write a letter to every household in the Parish explaining the purpose of the Extraordinary Meeting. Mr Slater offered to deliver the letter by hand.

8. PARISH PRECEPT

It was agreed that the decision with respect to a Parish precept would be deferred until after the extraordinary Parish meeting.

9. ELECTION OF CHAIR

For an interim period Martin Evans was nominated Chair, proposed by Mr Fair seconded by Mr Bridger.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that an extraordinary Parish meeting be held in approximately two months time to consider the future constitution of the Parish when the nominated representatives had consulted with EHDC and observed a meeting of Steep Parish Council. The extraordinary meeting would be attended by representatives of EHDC Planning Department and Democratic Services.

Signed

Chairman
31 March 2017