

THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH OF COLEMORE AND PRIORS DEAN

FIELD FARM BARN, COLEMORE: 6.30 PM FRIDAY 31 MARCH 2017

MINUTES

Present:

Martin Evans (Chairman), Dawn Beasley, Fiona Blackley, Neil Blackley, John Britton, Elizabeth Britton, Noni de Zoete, Simon de Zoete, Ruth Evans, Carolyn Fair, Hector Fair, James Fair, Keith Godfrey, Vivienne Godfrey, Dan Heapy, Grace Holloway, Karl Jeffery, Richard Keyser, Rosemary Keyser, Rachel Nicholson, Caroline Scott, Charles Scott, Julia Slater, and Jane Wyman

Vaughan Clarke (County Councillor), Nick Drew (District Councillor), Graeme Cottam (visitor)

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chairman welcomed the members of the parish and the visitors attending the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Joanna Brown, Rem Moser, Rupert Muldoon and Christopher Slater.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the annual meeting held on 18 March 2016 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

None, other than those matters on the agenda.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT (MARTIN EVANS)

EHDC had confirmed that a parish with a parish meeting had the same standing as a parish with a parish council. Accordingly, it had been decided that there was no need to hold a second parish meeting to consider changes to the parish's governance.

The Chairman reported that Nigel Barton had been prevented by pressure of work from taking on the role of Chairman, as had been agreed at the last Annual Meeting. Mr Evans had therefore continued to act as Chairman for the whole year. He noted however that the issues facing the Parish were surprisingly time-consuming and he therefore would be proposing the appointment of a Vice-Chair, Clerk and a Planning Committee (item 9 below).

The Chairman thanked Keith Godfrey for his work as Chairman for the three previous years. He was pleased that Keith was willing to retain a role in representing the Parish in the matter of Farnborough Airport's expansion proposals. The Chairman also thanked Vivienne Godfrey for the excellent minutes she had prepared.

The Chairman thanked Carolyn Fair, Karl Jeffery, Dawn Beasley, Dan Heapy, Dee Green, Rachel Nicholson, Neil Blackley, and Nigel Barton for their help over the year. He also thanked Vaughan Clarke and Nick Drew for their service to the Parish as County and District Councillors.

The Chairman noted the deaths during the year of Judy Onslow (former District Councillor) and local resident Sue Atkins, who had been a keen participant in Parish affairs.

The Chairman reported that substantial progress had been achieved on the two main planning issues facing the Parish: the continuing occupation of "Warren Barn", and the multiple applications at Downlands Farm, both in Priors Dean. On the former, the Chairman believed that matters were coming to a head, following closer engagement with EHDC, SDNPA, Natural England, The Woodland Trust and other bodies. On Downlands, the Chairman noted that EHDC's refusal of an application for additional equestrian facilities had been upheld on appeal, and that the Inspector's Decision included favourable comments on the tranquillity and natural beauty of the area. Three other applications remained undecided, along with issues of compliance with past decisions.

5. COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT (VAUGHAN CLARKE)

Councillor Clarke reported that the Support Grant from Central Government continued to fall. There is real concern for Adult Social Care, which costs at £1m a day, and is being hit by both increased demand and increased costs, in part attributable to increases in the National Living Wage. At the same time, care home providers were withdrawing from the market due to lack of profitability. On a more positive note, services were being restructured to improve the scope and quality of care. For example, it was hoped that Bulmer House and Ramscoate House in Petersfield would reopen in 2020, offering a combination of care home and flats, supported by services open to the general public, such as a restaurant – a recipe which had worked well elsewhere.

Adult Social Care accounted for 3% of the 4.99% increase in the County Council's share of Council Tax in 2017/18. The other 1.99% related to other County services, such as Highways and Education, but these also benefited from innovative financial arrangements. There had been no library closures, other than the mobile library service, and no reductions in opening hours; indeed some libraries had increased their hours. The Museum service was now operating successfully as an independent trust and was well-placed to secure grants from other bodies. The Childcare and IT departments had taken on more income-generating work from other councils without an increase in costs. The County Architects' Department was now working for other counties and was competing successfully for private sector contracts.

Despite some impressions, Hampshire has the lowest pothole count and the lowest compensation rate of any county in the south of England. He noted that many county lanes were just ancient tracks which had been tarred over and were much less durable than modern roads.

The County's energy bill had been reduced by 38% through measures such as the conversion of street lights to LED, a measure which also improved the area's status as a Dark Sky Reserve.

BT's commitment to connect 95% of the country to superfast broadband was of no use in areas such as the Parish which were in the 5%. The County was experimenting with alternatives.

Unemployment in the Hangers Division was around 0.2%.

Councillor Clarke reported that, after eight years as a County Councillor, he would not be seeking re-election in May. From the election, the boundaries of the Division would extend to West Tisted, East Tisted and Ropley, making a total of 12 parishes.

Councillor Clarke thanked those members of the Parish who had put in time and effort to improve Parish life and encouraged everyone to give them their support.

6. DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT (NICK DREW)

Councillor Drew endorsed the Chairman's comments on the legal opinion on the status of the Parish Meeting. This had brought out the key message that it was action and engagement, and making more noise, that got things done. As an example, he cited Keith Godfrey's role representing East Hampshire parishes at a recent full meeting of EHDC to discuss Farnborough Airport.

Councillor Drew reported that EHDC was the only District Council in England that was reducing its share of Council Tax in 2017/18. The aim was to continue reducing the amount charged, but never at the cost of Council services. The Council could do this because the income from investments in property and small businesses was growing faster than the reduction in central government grants.

Every District Councillor had an annual budget of £4,500 for community grants, which was available to all parishes (up to a maximum of £1,000 per project). The Leader of the Council was keen to raise the amounts available. EHDC had also provided a substantial grant to the expansion of Petersfield Museum, opening in April 2017.

On broadband, local government had let the area down. The 95% agreement should never have been signed. The good news was that 4G mobile broadband was being trialed in Steep and Froxfield.

Planning had a huge long-term impact on the District. He was taking action on complaints that Enforcement was not coming out and that objectors were not being listened to. He confirmed that Parish comments would be taken into account. The more action the Parish could take, the more that could be achieved. If the Parish still felt that Enforcement was lacking, the Leader had promised that he would be prepared to require action to be taken in a test case.

As a member of the EHDC planning committee, Councillor Drew could not object to a particular planning application without abstaining if the matter went to committee.

In response to a question from the floor, Councillor Drew confirmed that the Parish was very much part of the 5% that was not included within BT's superfast broadband plans. It was important therefore to look at alternatives such as 4G.

In response to a question from Neil Blackley, Councillor Drew said there no initiatives to extend the use of surveillance cameras more widely to stop littering. He believed that the warning signs were effective. He confirmed that litter-picking on major roads was occurring less frequently because it was necessary to close roads for safety reasons. He acknowledged that EHDC's litter officers spent most of their time in urban areas, but he would try to get them out to the rural parishes, particular if there were any situations where they could act quickly. He said the number of litter officers was going to be increased as they were a source of net income from the levying of on-the-spot fines. He asked the Parish to write to him to request better litter enforcement.

In regard to commercial rubbish, Councillor Drew asked that it be reported quickly to EHDC, but that no attempts should be made to identify the source, as this might amount to tampering with evidence and prevent a prosecution. Only EHDC officers should collect evidence.

In response to a comment on dog fouling, Councillor Drew asked residents to email him if they knew of areas that should be targeted by wardens. [nick.drew@easthants.gov.uk]

In response to a comment from Karl Jeffery that cameras pushed crime into other areas, Councillor Drew agreed to find out if cameras could be used more in rural parishes.

In response to a question from the floor, Councillor Drew said broadband was a County matter, rather than a District issue. EHDC Councillor Robert Mocatta (East Meon) however was looking into the possibilities of commercial involvement by EHDC. Councillor Drew also noted that two members of Froxfield and Privett's Parish Council were communications specialists.

7. OTHER REPORTS

a) Broadband (Neil Blackley)

Mr Blackley reported that superfast broadband was available in Petersfield through a fibre optic network. Rural parishes however had to rely on the old twisted-copper lines, which could deliver fast broadband only to those living close to the exchange. Some residents have achieved improved speeds by switching suppliers to Plusnet.

In order to improve the chances that the area would be included in any future improvements, Mr Blackley urged everyone to register on www.hampshiresuperfastbroadband.com.

Until improvements were made in the fixed line network, residents should consider using a wireless broadband service, such as www.notspotbroadband.com (which used the EE network and could achieve speeds up to 20 MB/s). Rachel Nicholson commented that the Vodafone mobile broadband service could achieve 45 MB/s. <http://www.vodafone.co.uk/shop/mobile-broadband/dongles-and-mobile-wi-fi/index.htm>

Councillor Drew commented that wireless speeds were affected by proximity to the mast and line of sight; our hills were not helpful.

Mr Blackley distributed a summary of his presentation detailing the key websites and alternative options.

b) Farnborough Airport (Keith Godfrey)

Mr Godfrey reported that his presentation to the Council, mentioned by Councillor Drew in his report, was more of a swipe than a report. He had emphasized the emotional points that the proposal only benefited rich and privileged people with no connections to the area and who used large, non-UK registered aircraft for their sole use. The matter was now awaiting the decision of the Civil Aviation Authority.

Councillor Drew reported that Damian Hinds MP had complained that the consultation process had been conducted unfairly in that the airport operators, TAG Farnborough, had been responsible for conducting the public consultation on their own proposals.

Councillor Clarke added that SDNPA had also objected strongly, comparing the proposal to building a motorway through the National Park.

c) Parish communications (Karl Jeffery)

Mr Jeffery noted the difficulties of organising parish communications when the parish lacked an obvious hub and there few people on the electoral roll. As a first step toward improving the sharing of information, he had set up a parish website at <https://colemore-priorsdean.org/>. The website currently had four pages of basic text which were more in the nature of placeholder pages. He asked the meeting for suggestions for further pages? Images? News items? Local businesses?

John Britton said it would be helpful if minutes of meetings could be published online.

Councillor Drew suggested that the website should have links to the planning portals at EHDC and SDNPA.

Fiona Blackley asked whether the Facebook page would be continued.

Mr Jeffery agreed to take these suggestions into account when developing the website.

8. PARISH PRECEPT

It was agreed that, as usual, there should be no precept.

Councillor Clarke commented that HCC grants required a bank account. Councillor Drew said a nominee could be used. Councillor Clarke said there could be problems if the nominee was not a body open to all. Councillor Drew believed there were workable solutions to avoid the need for a bank account.

Councillor Drew said he would consider whether fly-tipping cameras could be funded by a grant.

The Chairman noted that a group of private individuals was currently funding professional planning advice on certain applications. Councillor Drew said he thought advice could not be funded where EHDC had its own professional officers.

9. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND OFFICERS

The Chairman proposed the following nominations:

Chairman:	Martin Evans
Vice-Chairman:	Rem Moser
Clerk:	Graeme Cottam
Communications:	Karl Jeffery
Broadband:	Neil Blackley
Planning Committee:	Neil Blackley, Carolyn Fair, Dan Heapy, Rachel Nicholson
Flight paths:	Keith Godfrey
Rights of Way:	Vacant

The nominations were proposed formally by John Britton, seconded by Fiona Blackley, and agreed unanimously by the meeting.

A vote of thanks to the Chairman was proposed by Mr Britton and endorsed by the meeting.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

On behalf of the Parish, the Chairman presented a gift to Councillor Clarke to mark his retirement as a County Councillor, and to thank him again for his service to the Parish.

In response, Councillor Clarke gave a spontaneous talk on Petersfield's toll roads.

11. DATE OF NEXT ANNUAL MEETING

Since Good Friday falls on the last Friday of March in 2018, it was agreed that the next annual meeting would be held a week earlier, at 6.30 pm on Friday 23 March 2018.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm.

Signed

Chairman
23 March 2018