

SINGLETON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING FOR SINGLETON PARISH ELECTORS HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL ON WEDNESDAY 25 MARCH 2009 AT 7PM

Present: Cllrs. Bill Spence (Chairman); Ion Casdagli (Vice Chairman); Mrs. Joan Belton; John Elliott; Mrs. Sue Farman; Maurice Pollock; and Mrs. Diane Snow.

In attendance: Mr. Rob Martin, Locum Clerk; County Cllr. Mike Hall; District Cllr. Henry Potter; PCSO Jason Lemm and colleague; and four local electors.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr. Keith Hope-Lang, and Mrs. Jenny Martin, Clerk (back injury).

2. Minutes

On a proposal by Cllr. Elliott, seconded by Cllr. Pollock, the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting on 26 March 2008 were **APPROVED** and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3. Report from Sussex Police

PCSO Jason Lemm described problems experienced at the Triangle car-park at Goodwood. In the past three months, a large quantity of household heating oil and an appliance tester had been stolen, and an abandoned vehicle had been moved from the Oilfield access road. The third meeting of the Neighbourhood Management Panel had taken place, at which exploitation of teenagers was discussed. He had put posters on the notice-boards advertising an Army Day for youngsters. He had been involved in the operation of SID at West Dean and following a risk assessment for a suitable site, SID would be operated by Police officers between Singleton and Charlton, at times suggested by local residents. "Countrywatch" was working very well, with a number of Section 59 notices issued to motorcyclists riding on public rights of way. PCSO Lemm thanked the Parish Council for the warm welcome he received at Parish Council meetings, to which Cllr. Pollock replied that the increased Police presence was very much appreciated by local residents.

4. Report from Singleton CE Primary School

The Chairman read Mrs. Barker's report. There had been much to celebrate at the school over the last year. In July, they were inspected by both Ofsted and the Diocese and were extremely pleased to be judged 'Outstanding' in all areas: the highest possible grade. She was delighted that pupil numbers were steadily rising, currently 54 pupils, necessitating expanding from two to three classes. Fifty-four was a significant number personally, being double the number on roll when she was appointed Headteacher.

As a school community, they were keen to continue to maintain strong links with the village and Parish and always welcomed voluntary help from local people. At the moment, they were enjoying and appreciating help with the children in both gardening and art work. Mrs. Barker hoped that the school reciprocated by 'giving back' in events such as the Lychgate ceremony, the Christmas concert and the Village Fete, which hopefully, would continue in the future.

5. Henry Smith's Charity

Cllr. Mrs. Sue Farman reported that as agreed with the London Trustees, the grant of £3,150 for 2008/2009 had been paid as one sum to the Parish of Singleton, to include Charlton. Once more, there had been a welcome increase on the previous year. Ion Casdagli had become a local Trustee, representing the Parish Council, joining herself, Joan Belton, and Rev. Richard Woods.

The Trustees had met on 25 November 2008 to determine the distribution of grants and had also decided that from 2009, grants would be paid mainly by cheque, to save handling large amounts of cash. An account was being opened with Barclays Bank, with £20 being kept back as opening deposit. The remaining £3,130, had been distributed by the Trustees, in time for Christmas, to seven families through Singleton School, to 34 residents of the Parish, with a donation to "Dignity".

6. Chairman's Report

Cllr. Bill Spence outlined Parish Council activity during 2008/2009 by repeating his thoughts from last year, that the Parish Council was interested and involved in many different issues. The majority of time was taken up ensuring that numerous small issues were discussed and completed, and in particular, that the many national and local consultation documents were considered with the needs of the Parish of prime importance.

The six Parish Council meetings held each year carried an agenda item specifically to allow local residents to speak. Local people were encouraged to put forward items, preferably in advance, so that they could be given due consideration. Such positive input from residents was welcomed, to guide the Council's future planning. The Parish Council had carried out fairly limited works over the last year, primarily the opening of the refurbished Lychgate, attended by the school and many residents. The playground continued to be well used, especially in the summer. Particular thanks were given to Cllr. Ion Casdagli for his continuing efforts in managing the playground and cutting the grass, and to Alex Brown for cutting the more difficult external grass area. A specially commissioned survey of the trees on the boundaries of the Glebe Field had deemed them unsafe, so after approval by the District Council, they had been felled. The newly replanted hedge and trees would improve the area for many years. Minor repairs to signs had been completed, with assistance from Roger Champion, and volunteers continued to maintain the grass areas around the pond and Jubilee Plantation. The new development at The Leys, completed last year, had integrated into the village despite some early uncertainties, and was an asset to the village, providing much-needed affordable housing for local people. Regrettably, some minor drainage works were still not completed, despite the efforts of District Council colleagues. The Parish Council maintained a good relationship with WSCC Highways, but with limited funds, requests could not always go to the top of the list. Nevertheless, the County Council always tried to find some cash or materials to help, such as letters for the recently refurbished finger-posts.

All Parish Councillors were conscious of the increasing bureaucratic needs that contemporary representation expected, so the Parish Clerk was thanked for her work in guiding the Parish Council, and for her skills in securing grants, which all Members appreciated. Finally, the Chairman gave heartfelt thanks to all fellow councillors for their contribution to the maintenance of this vibrant and pleasant community and the support received from them. He would be stepping down as Chairman at the next meeting, but looked forward to continuing to be of assistance to the community as a Parish Councillor.

7. Planning Committee Chairman's Report

Cllr. Maurice Pollock presented a report on business transacted during 2008/2009, since the last Annual Parish Meeting. Thirteen Planning Committee meetings had been held, to consider twenty two applications. Two of these meetings had been held during the course of Parish Council meetings, where applications were straightforward and not contentious. Applications had comprised a variety of proposals, including tree works in a conservation area, house extensions, listed building consents, and the drilling of four additional wells at Singleton Oilfield. One further application had been submitted by the Parish Council, for dangerous or diseased trees and hedges at the Glebe Field. A request had also come from a local business, to support a new brown direction sign. The Parish Council had objected to no applications this year, but on occasion, specific concerns had been expressed which in general, had been included in the District Council's response to the applicants. For the Singleton Oilfield application, under the WSCC Minerals Planning Committee, Cllr. Pollock had attended the committee meeting, together with a local resident who had made an address on noise concerns. Our County Councillor, Mike Hall, in addressing the committee, had included the Parish Council's traffic management concerns. Cllr. Pollock had also attended several meetings and workshops during the year, relating to planning issues, particularly where the agenda included housing or planning in rural settlements.

8. The Richmond Playground Report

Cllr. Ion Casdagli reported that 2008 had generally been a good year for the playground, with regular usage and no reports of serious damage. Signage relating to the dangers of climbing on the roofs of two of the units had been destroyed and not replaced, without the problem re-occurring. Dog control and litter signs were now in place. Whilst the playground and Glebe Field were generally being kept free of dog waste, there was a problem with dog bags being placed in ordinary rubbish bins. Enquiries were being made into installing a dog bin to serve the area. The first grass cutting for 2009 had been done after the mower's winter service. Funds still existed to cover current running and maintenance costs, but would need to be boosted before too long. Fundraising ideas were being considered, with any suggestions welcome. In 2009, he looked forward to a meeting new playground company booked to carry out the annual safety inspection, and to new ideas that may come about as a result of the change.

9. Village Hall Management Committee Report

Bill Spence was delighted to report a successful year for the Village Hall, with many regular users. Unfortunately, some Adult Education was lost, but the revamped hall at East Dean did not appear to have affected usage at Singleton. The introduction of the Lunch Group, a new venture for the village run under the umbrella of the Village Hall as a non profit-making benefit for residents, had proved a great success, with regular attendees being treated to a complimentary Christmas lunch. The organisers had introduced a monthly afternoon tea drop-in which it was hoped would provide a further social event for residents.

This year, some great improvements had been achieved, thanks primarily to the monthly lunch group.

- A new kitchen had been installed.
- Refurbishment of the toilets had been ordered.

- An industrial dishwasher had been ordered.
- New cutlery had been purchased.

All were supported by grants from the Lottery, WSCC Social Services, two small local charities and the contractor undertaking the toilet works. A formal opening would be arranged followed by an open afternoon of cream teas for all residents.

Outstanding works for the coming year were:

- To consider replacing the existing heating and lighting.
- Redecoration of the main hall.

Fund raising next year would include:

- A Singleton Supper.
- Sunday snacks and strolls over the summer.
- Jumble sale.

Bill thanked all who had helped keep the Hall going, particularly Sue Saunders, who had the onerous task of keeping the bookings register, Penny Spence and Sarah Casdagli for arranging the various catering events, and to committee members who never failed to provide support. This was reflected by other Members.

10. Financial Report for 2008/2009

The Clerk reported that it was too early to submit Final Accounts for the 2008/2009 financial year, which ended on 31 March 2009. The approximate position was expected to be:

Parish Council

Balance brought forward as at 1 April 2008	£ 8,185
Overall income 2008/2009, including £11,025 Precept	£ 15,667
Expenditure 2008/2009	£ 17,026

Expected Year-end balance:

Parish Council	£ 5,720
Richmond Playground	£ 1,106

A total of £4,124 ex VAT had been spent on a professional tree survey at the Glebe Field, followed by essential tree surgery. Long-awaited planning approval had enabled the Parish Council to deal with the south and west boundary hedges at the same time, which would greatly improve the appearance of the area when they had grown up. A grant £840.50 had been awarded by WSCC "Trees for Shade" to cover the cost of the new trees and half the cost of the new hedging.

11. County Councillor's Report

Cllr. Mike Hall, County Councillor for Chichester North, reported:

St. Richard's Hospital - following last year's campaigning and marches through the city, Cllr. Hall had, as a member of West Sussex Health Committee, fought hard for the retention of full A&E and Paediatric Services at St. Richard's. The Committee had referred the "Fit for the Future" consultation to the Secretary of State, for a full review. Shortly afterwards, Chichester DC had agreed to invoke a judicial review if the Secretary of State failed to respond to the call to retain full services at St. Richards. The situation had, however, changed dramatically over the past three months. The PCT had suspended "Fit for the Future" to allow both hospitals to consider merging to create the Western Sussex PCT, then to apply to the Strategic Health Authority to become two separate Foundation Trust hospitals. This had met with broad agreement from all concerned, provided that both hospitals were equally funded. The concept of Foundation status was to allow consultants to interact between each site, whilst patients would still attend their local hospital. The newly appointed Chief Executive of the new Trust was Marianne Griffiths. He had just received a worrying e.mail from the PCT, which appeared to question the structure of the commissioning process to be applied to the new Trusts, which he feared could be an attempt by the PCT to undermine the proposed structure. He was pursuing this and would keep the Parish Council informed.

Council Tax - WSCC's share of the Council Tax had been increased by 3.25% for 2009/2010, the lowest since the tax was introduced. This has been achieved by reducing staffing levels over the last three years, plus savings of over £40m from changes in Procurement Services. WSCC had again received the lowest grant funding per head of population from the Government, being £124. Had it received the £174 per head that some northern authorities enjoyed, a 15% lower council tax could have been achieved.

County Local Committees - These were now fully established. As well as making decisions such things as Highways, School Governors and OFSTED reports, they had allocated £28,000 to local groups and non-profit making organisations. Cllr Hall urged the Parish Council to send at least one appointed representative to CLC

meetings, there being an opportunity to raise matters of local concern during public question time. The next meeting would be held at Bourne Community College, Southbourne, at 7pm on Tuesday 31 March 2009.

District Councillor's Report

Finance - Cllr. Henry Potter reported that the District Council's greatest concern was the economic down-turn, the "credit crunch". Interest on Reserve Fund investments was severely affected, down by approaching £1m. Income from planning applications and development control fees was down by approximately 60%, whilst job losses had led to more households being in receipt of benefits and Council Tax relief.

Implementation of free bus travel for over 60's was funded by central Government to the tune of £1m, but by February, it had already cost the District Council an additional £400k, which had to come out of Reserve Funds. Also in the pipeline was the introduction of free swimming sessions for under 16s and over 60s, which would bring yet another loss of revenue to the Council and its tax payers. The District Council was not planning any cuts to services, although this would have to be reviewed if the down-turn continued for too long. Members' allowances had been frozen, and any job vacancies through retirement or moving on, would be filled from within. The District Council was treating the recession very seriously, but had managed to keep the increase in its share of the Precept to 3%, which was amongst the lowest in the South, representing an additional £3.90 per week for the average Band D Council Taxpayer.

St. Richard's Hospital - Cllr. Potter was encouraged by the progression in negotiations for the future of St. Richards Hospital, and the ever increasing possibility of the Foundation Trust becoming a reality. Procedures for a Judicial Review were still in place, should the PCT interfere with these preferred plans, but he felt this would be unnecessary. In relation to County Cllr. Hall's recent e.mail from the PCT (see above), Cllr. Potter was unaware of any such changes being communicated to Chichester DC, so would investigate further.

PCSO Team - Cllr. Potter praised the work of the PCSO team, led by Jason Lemm, and hoped that the formation of the Neighbourhood Management Panels would be fruitful. At last, SID (Speed Indicator Device) had been active locally, where West Dean had successfully deployed it with interesting, though unofficial, data gathered.

Flooding - the recent incident of flooding within the sewers had passed, but he feared that Southern Water would fail to address the problem with any intent, owing to shareholders' interests. He found these recurrent problems unacceptable in 2009.

Cllr Potter concluded by thanking Singleton Parish Council for its hospitality and to the Clerk for her assistance.

12. Public Session

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 7.50pm to enable members of the public to speak.

Helicopters Over-flying Charlton – Mr. Ian Farman complained that helicopters were still flying to and from Goodwood over Charlton, despite numerous complaints. In the past, Goodwood had agreed to direct pilots between the villages, away from inhabited areas. The Clerk had made representations to Goodwood and the CAA on a number of occasions and had been repeatedly assured that every attempt would be made to avoid this nuisance. Mr. Farman also questioned whether helicopter pilots were being trained from Goodwood. County Cllr. Hall would pursue this.

Southern Water: Recent Sewerage Problems – the Parish Council was asked whether it was aware that sewage was being pumped into the River Lavant. County Cllr. Hall replied that the Clerk had sent him a copy of the Parish Council's letter of 11 March 2009 to the Chief Executive of Southern Water, and was awaiting a reply. He was pursuing the matter in conjunction with this, to try to find a long-term solution.

The Chairman reconvened the meeting at 8.09pm.

There being no other business, the Chairman thanked those present and closed the meeting.

Closure: The meeting closed at 8.10pm.

Signed:

Chairman of the Council