

# SINGLETON PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF SINGLETON PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL ON WEDNESDAY 28 MARCH 2007 AT 7PM

**Present:** Cllrs. J. Doff (Chairman); W. Spence (Vice Chairman); Mrs. J. Belton; I. Casdagli; D. Deans; J. Elliott; Mrs. S. Farman; and M. Pollock.

**In attendance:** County & District Cllr. M. Hall; Mrs. J. Martin, Clerk; and seven local residents, being Mr. A. Brown, Mr. R. Champion, Mr. A. Geddes, Mr. B. Gattrell, Mr. and Mrs. J. Hutchison, and Mrs A. Pollock.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### 1. Apologies

All Councillors were present. Cllr. Ms. T. Boyes had resigned with effect from 22 March 2007.

### 2. Minutes

On a proposal by Cllr. Elliott, seconded by Cllr. Pollock, the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting on 22 March 2006 were **APPROVED** and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 3. Report Sussex Police

Sgt. David Fisk was warmly welcomed, along with Mo Pantony who, until recently, had been PCSO (Police Community Support Officer) for the Lavant Valley. She was now Schools Intervention Officer. He introduced Jason Lemm, who was nearing the end of his PCSO training and hoped to replace her in five or six weeks time.

Mo Pantony thanked all those who had welcomed her to Singleton and provided such good feedback. She had enjoyed her time in the Parish and was pleased to report that during this time, crime had been very low. The Chairman thanked her for her work and the contribution she had made to Parish life. Jason Lemm looked forward to starting work. In the meantime, the Lavant Valley was being covered by PCSO Sarah Watson, who also worked in Boxgrove, Tangmere and Oving.

The problems of parking on pavements and cycling without lights remained, despite reminders. Specific cases could be discussed with PCSO Sarah Watson and later on, with PCSO Jason Lemm.

Sgt. Fisk confirmed the low crime figures in the Parish. In 2007, only one report had been received, with six during 2006, which had included vehicle crime, harassment and counterfeit money. Most reported incidents had related to such things as fallen trees, animals on the road, suspicious persons and stray dogs.

Sgt. Fisk was expecting a small reorganisation of Police personnel, but final details were not yet available. He ran through the contents of the March/April 2007 Neighbourhood Watch Briefing Sheet, drawing particular attention to 'Beauty Spot' crime, since there had been a number of incidents in January and February in such places as Selhurst Park, Midhurst and Eartham. He urged people to take their valuables with them and not to leave pin numbers where criminals could access them. He also warned against bogus callers, since a couple of calls had recently been received, including a suspicious white van seen in Charlton. All genuine callers would be happy to produce ID. Chief Inspector Mark Eyre had introduced a Suspicious Vehicle Policy which allowed members of the public to report a suspicious vehicle, knowing that this would be checked on the Police National Computer, then the vehicle would be sought and its driver challenged. Although this led to false alarms, it was a powerful deterrent to criminals. The Clerk added that Mr. David Mather was looking for Neighbourhood Watch volunteers. Anyone interested should contact Mr. Mather or the Parish Council.

Sgt. Fisk asked residents to keep a watch for drivers travelling at excessive speeds. Reports could be made to Inspector Trimmer.

Sgt. Fisk and his colleagues were thanked for attending the meeting and left at 7.50pm.

### 4. Report from Mrs. M. Barker, Headteacher, Singleton CE Primary School and other Organisations in the Parish

- (i) Singleton CE Primary School - the Chairman read Mrs. Barker's report (Appendix A). The school had once again achieved excellent results, with last year's leavers' test results being well above the national average. This was due not only to pupils' hard work, but to small teaching groups. Last year, pupils had written to the Parish Council expressing concern about road safety outside the school. Thanks to the Parish Council and WSCC Highways, the footpath had been extended, making a safer crossing place. There had also been concern over trespassing and vandalism in the school grounds. The Governing Body had decided to keep the school gates locked out of school hours, which prevented youths on bikes and motor-bikes causing wear and damage, but young people continued to trespass by climbing the fence or gate, resulting in more minor damage. The lay-by outside the school had long presented a problem, being too small to accommodate parents', staff and visitors' vehicles. This meant that some were parked on the grass verge, causing a lot of damage. The large tree in front of the building was dangerous and was due to be felled. This presented the opportunity to enlarge the driveway to create more staff parking spaces within the school grounds, to alleviate the situation. Some parents had complained about "dog poo" on the grass verge outside the school. This had been reported to Chichester DC and a response was awaited. Mrs. Barker hoped that the village would continue to support the school and she looked forward to more collaborative events.

The Chairman added that there were thirty-eight children on roll at the school. A recent Fashion Show event had raised £200, which would be spent on the Early Years part of the school.

- (ii) Henry Smith's Charity – Cllr. Mrs. Sue Farman explained that both Singleton and Charlton received an annual grant from the charity, which had been set up following the death of Henry Smith in 1628. The money was administered through the Parish Council and local trustees and she held the Minute Book, Accounts and Receipts. Mrs. Farman paid tribute to Phil Norrell, who had been a local trustee from 1963 until his death last year. His meticulous records had made the job easier, but his quiet wisdom and knowledge of the village and its residents was much missed. The remaining trustees, Rev Richard Woods, Joan Belton and Sue Farman, had met at Singleton Rectory on 28 November 2006. The forms for 2005 were completed, signed and returned to the Charity's HQ in London and the distribution of monies for 2006 agreed. As fewer parishes were taking up their grants because of difficulties in administering relatively small amounts of money, last year's amounts for distribution had been increased from £400 to £2,000, allowing the trustees to give bigger sums and help thirty-four people, which was more than usual. Joan and Sue had distributed the gifts on 8 December 2006.

The money was given to specifically help the poor, sick and elderly in Singleton and Charlton, but could also be used for projects that directly helped one or all of these groups. Assuming that a similar sum was received in 2007, the trustees invited suggestions from anyone in the Parish as to how the grant could best be used and who might benefit from some financial help (Appendix B).

## **5. Chairman's Report**

Cllr. John Doff outlined Parish Council activity during 2006/2007 (Appendix C). He reminded Singleton parishioners that the Parish Council was far from being interested in one particular issue. The vast majority of its time was occupied in ensuring that numerous small tasks were discussed and completed.

The refurbishment of the Lychgate, below Levin Down, had been suggested twelve months ago. The agreement of various Ecclesiastical authorities was obtained and funding raised. The Project entailed a tremendous amount of work behind the scenes, with the first part, the renewal of the roof, being undertaken and completed last week. The more intricate work on the woodwork would be done by specialist craftsmen in the summer, once again making the Lychgate a village testament to be treasured. The Parish Council had been approached by children who waited for the school bus in the Charlton Road, for a bus shelter. With a successful application for a WSCC Bus Shelter Grant, the shelter had been in place in time for the Autumn Term. It was also being used occasionally as a teenage shelter. It was decided that the bus shelter in Charlton was serving no useful purpose and was becoming something of a hazard. It was duly removed and instead, the Parish Council had asked Mr. Roger Champion to make a new notice-board to stand in the same place. It was most grateful to Mr. Champion, who had also made and installed a solid wooden bench in the brick bus shelter on the main road and had delighted the village with his whimsical finger-posts.

Concerning the controversy over the projected new development at The Leys, the Chairman drew attention to the fact that it was the Parish Council which had first recommended and vigorously pursued the setting up of the Steering Group. It had met for the first time on Monday 26 March.

The Parish Council maintained a good relationship with WSCC Highways. The Division had limited funds, so it did not always follow that requests went to the top of the list. Nevertheless, it had succeeded in getting the white lines repainted through the village on the A286 and new repeater roundels installed on the Charlton Road.

The playground continued to be used, especially in the summer. Turnout tended to be cyclical as village children grew older and moved on, but there was an encouraging group of small children to enjoy it. The playground had been used successfully for birthday parties by West Dean parents, so perhaps Singleton parents might like to follow suit.

All Parish Councillors had been conscious of the increasing bureaucratic needs that contemporary representation expected. He praised the Parish Clerk for her work in guiding the Parish Council and skills in securing grants, which all Members appreciated.

Finally, the Chairman gave his heartfelt thanks to fellow councillors for their contribution to the maintenance of a vibrant community which, despite momentary variances, remained a remarkably pleasant place in which to live.

#### **6. Planning Committee Chairman's Report**

Cllr. Bill Spence presented a report on business transacted during 2006/2007. Eleven Planning Committee meetings had been held, to consider twenty-six applications. There had been a wide variety of proposals, from tree-works to house extensions. Whilst he accepted that satellite dishes were almost a necessity in the valley, there was a need to seek further advice from Chichester DC planners, since he understood that in a Conservation Area or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), such dishes could not be affixed to chimneys or walls visible from the public highway.

The Parish Plan was progressing well, with the help of Mrs. Marion McQuaid, who had offered her skills as an environmentalist. A walk-round had been done in Charlton to identify potential development sites, with a similar one planned for Singleton shortly. Although the Parish was not currently part of the LDF, it was important to have this information to hand in the light of future proposals.

#### **7. The Richmond Playground Committee Chairman's Report**

Cllr. Ion Casdagli outlined work done by the Committee during 2006/2007. The general state of the playground and condition of the surrounding area was good. Litter had been minimal and the refuse bins checked, emptied and maintained. All items of equipment received regular Health and Safety checks, with no signs of damage or improper use identified. The perimeter fencing, which had been damaged last year by youngsters climbing over the fence rather than using the gate, had ceased and remained in good condition, thanks to heavy-duty staples!

Once again, the aim was to make more frequent cuts. This would help the sit-on mower work more efficiently, but having been a bargain buy of domestic specification, the engine lacked the power for the job. A possible upgrade had been discussed, trading it in for a more powerful model whilst it still had a good trade-in value. Cllr. Casdagli had found that the next step up, providing a bigger engine and better grass-collection, would necessitate an outlay of £700 - £800, including trade-in. This would buy a sturdier machine with greater power, but with no increases in overall size, since a bigger model would cause storage problems. This would be considered further by the new Parish Council. Volunteer grass-cutters had not been committed for this year, but Cllr. Spence was thanked for sessions last year. He had received one or two offers this year, but more were always welcome.

Finances were healthy, with just over £1,500 in the Playground Account. A very successful fund-raising evening in 2006 had raised over £400 for a thirty-plus ticket event. No plans had yet been made for 2007.

Cllr. Casdagli would suggest to the new Parish Council that the Richmond Playground Management Committee be disbanded, as he was the only person left. This could be reviewed if circumstances changed. Playground finances were well protected and managed by the Parish Council and he could obtain volunteer help as and when needed.

#### **8. Village Hall Management Committee Report**

Cllr. Bill Spence, Chairman of the Village Hall Management Committee, extended a warm welcome to anyone who would like to attend the Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 11 April 2007 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall. Local residents could nominate candidates for the Committee and influence what was decided. The hall had made a surplus last year and improvements costing around £3 had been ordered. Cllr. Hall was thanked for the contribution towards the Village Hall from the proceeds of the Book Project.

## **9. Financial Report for 2006/2007**

The Clerk reported that during the 2006/2007 financial year, a grant of £3,000 had been received from an anonymous donor for the specific purpose of restoring and replacing the metal gate, posts and fencing included in the Lychgate Project. This work would commence shortly. Other grants received for the Lychgate Project were £500 from WSCC and £300 from the South Downs Conservation Board for the treeworks. Grants had also been received from Chichester DC for the Village Pump Project (£418) and a 50% contribution of £1,528 from WSCC for the new bus shelter by the school. Further grants for the Lychgate Project had been pledged by Chichester DC (£500) and the SITA Environmental Trust (£8,740). In all, grants awarded during 2006/2007 amounted to £14,986, of which £5,746 had been received to date.

Fund-raising by the Richmond Playground Management Committee amounted to £419. VAT of around £670 on all Parish Council transactions would be reclaimed shortly.

The Parish Council's overall income for the 2006/2007 financial year was around £16,000, including the Precept and grants. Expenditure including the bus shelter (£3,055), Lychgate Project works to date (£1,084) and the new laptop (£408), would amount to around £16,000, leaving a neutral effect on the balance to be brought forward to 2007/2008 of around £5,400, of which £3,500 was grant monies received and already committed. Reserves for 2007/2008 were therefore about £2,000.

The final accounts were being prepared for submission to the Annual General Meeting in May.

Mr. Rob Martin was thanked for his help with the Parish Council's accounts and the Clerk for obtaining the grant monies.

## **10. County and District Councillor's Report**

Cllr. Mike Hall read his report (Appendix D). He felt that without doubt, one single issue had been the focus of attention, this being the threatened closure of St. Richard's Hospital and the loss of the A&E service. The promised consultation of the PCT 'Fit for the Future' document had constantly been delayed, the latest date now being early May. He had joined a group of protestors, including leading consultants, doctors, and all West Sussex MPs, to meet Patricia Hewitt at the Houses of Parliament. Whilst not wishing to address the assembled protestors from throughout the UK, she allowed a representative from each group to put their case to her in her office. Her response had been bitterly disappointing, attempting to blame the local PCT which would be making the decisions.

Improvements to the A27 were still awaited, with the latest date for a possible start being 2016. In the meantime, the situation grew steadily worse, affecting trade and commerce.

The heavy Autumn and Winter rains had caused serious highway flooding. Large deposits of silt, blocking pipes and gullies had added to the problem.

The Local Development Framework (LDF) had been delayed, so the District Council had decided to continue with the planned consultation on an informal basis only, although all responses received would be drafted into a final document. He had made representations on two areas identified in Boxgrove and three Chichester sites.

Defra's appeal to the High Court against the Meryck judgment in relation to the New Forest National Park was dismissed and the Minister had decided not to pursue it any further. This decision would further delay the process, while Natural England, DEFRA and Natural Environment assess the implications and report to the Minister, who will then decide whether to reopen the South Downs National Park Enquiry. This would probably not be until late 2007 or early 2008.

The long-awaited Sir Michael Lyons Review into Local Government had been published. Cllr. Hall's reading of the overall conclusions was that Sir Michael considered that local government's place-shaping role was crucial, particularly to improve satisfaction and well-being through local choice and flexibility and economic prosperity through close working with business. Central and Local government needed to work more closely together as part of a single system with local people having a greater say in local priorities. He felt that Council Tax should be reformed rather than replaced. It was under too much pressure, seen as unfair and had limitations in that it was not a naturally buoyant source of revenue.

Climate change and its implications had also been high on the agendas at both County and District levels. The present government could do more, one method being to strengthen PPS3, requiring developers to install the latest technology in all new-builds, such as rain water/waste water re-use, ground water heat pumps, solar panels and higher density thermal insulation.

**11. Public Session.**

*The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 7.45pm to enable members of the public to speak.*

Mr. Geddes asked for an update on the affordable housing project at The Leys. Cllr, Spence, who had attended the Steering Group meeting on 26 March, advised that there were some Agreements to be finalised between Martlet Homes and Chichester DC and WSCC, but a start was expected in four to six weeks time. The drainage works were programmed for May/June 2007, with an overall completion date of February 2008. He had been given a copy of the Programme of Works, which was placed on a table for members of the public to examine.

Cllr. Elliott asked whether any final details remained to be settled. Cllr. Spence understood that the Section 38 Agreement with WSCC which related to five additional parking spaces was still pending. There were still parking issues to be addressed.

Concern was expressed that the Parish Council had still not been supplied with a copy of the final plans for the development. The Clerk would ask for these.

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

**Closure:** The meeting closed at 8.05pm.

Signed:

Chairman of the Council