

WEST DEAN PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING FOR WEST DEAN PARISH ELECTORS

HELD IN ROOM 115 AT WEST DEAN COLLEGE ON WEDNESDAY 17 MARCH 2010 AT 7.30PM

Present: Cllrs. Dick Hill (Chairman); Geoff Collier; Steve Corbett; Chris Kelly; David Kendall; and John Ruffell.
In attendance: Mrs. Jenny Martin, Clerk; Mr. Simon Ward, Agent and Secretary for the Edward James Foundation; County Cllr. Mike Hall; and Mrs. Gill Moss, Headteacher, West Dean CE Primary School. No local electors attended.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr. Ian Odin, Cllr. Mrs. Cathy Slade (work commitment) and District Cllr. Henry Potter (on leave).

2. Minutes

The Chairman read the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting on 13 May 2009. On a proposal by Cllr. Kendall, seconded by Cllr. Corbett, they were **ACCEPTED** and duly signed as a correct record.

3. Report from Sussex Police

PCSO Carly Churchill-Wright did not attend the meeting or send a report.

4. Report from West Dean C of E Primary School

Mrs. Gill Moss, Headteacher, was warmly thanked for her very interesting and informative report (attached) and congratulated on the school's "outstanding" Ofsted inspection report.

Should there be more affordable housing in the Parish, Mr. Ward asked whether there was potential for increasing the number of children at West Dean School, or whether they would need to be accommodated at nearby schools, such as Singleton. Mrs. Moss felt it was unlikely that her school would be expanded, but priority was given to children residing in the Parish. At times, children moving into the area had to go to other schools if West Dean was full. More than half the current pupils came from outside the area, as a matter of parental choice. This ensured the future of the school by keeping numbers healthy and provided a diversity of backgrounds and experience, which benefitted all pupils.

5. Chairman's Report

Cllr. Dick Hill reported the appointment of the new Clerk, Jenny Martin, shortly after the beginning of the 2009/2010 Council Year.

The Committees were working well and producing good results. The Planning Committee dealt with planning applications between meetings, ensuring responses were made to Chichester DC. District Cllr. Henry Potter was thanked for his welcome support.

The Traffic Action Committee had shown what could be achieved, thanks to all parties working closely together. Cllr. Hill particularly thanked the staff, governors, and children at West Dean Primary School, County Cllr. Mike Hall, Mr. Simon Ward, and Cllrs. Steve Corbett and David Kendall. They had worked very hard to get WSCC policy revised through the County Local Committee, in line with the Department of Transport's Guidance that a 30mph speed limit should be the norm in villages, taking into account specific factors, such as schools, shops, public houses and churches. It was hoped that the 40mph speed limit would soon be reduced to 30mph. In the meantime, a VAS flashing sign had been erected near the school and was now in operation.

Another Hastoe Housing project had been completed and all but one of the new homes occupied, the development having attracted a Sussex Heritage Award. The Chairman thanked Mr. Ward and the Edward James Foundation for making this possible.

The money spent on the Cemetery had been justified by the positive response from local residents, who were very pleased with the results. This was borne out by the increase in applications for burial plots!

The new PFI Contract had been signed with WSCC, which would hopefully sort out past problems. The Contract included replacement of columns, if required, and ongoing maintenance.

A new notice board had been erected in front of West Dean Stores, and a seat in memory of Mrs. Bet Bushell had been installed in the Cemetery, following a donation from the W.I.

The South Downs National Park was up and running and would be fully operational in April 2011. Its progress would be watched with interest.

Thanks to the Clerk, the Parish Council's finances were in good order, making possible a number of good community projects.

Finally, the Chairman sincerely thanked all Members for their support during the 2009/2010 Council Year.

6. Planning Committee Chairman's Report

Cllr. Steve Corbett provided a summary of activity during the 2009/2010 Council Year. Most had been routine rural planning applications, but The Pool House at Binderton and The Fish House at Chilgrove had taken a great deal of time and remained unresolved, despite the efforts of the planners at Chichester DC. It was hoped that current enforcement action would be effective. He was very grateful for the continued support from District Cllr. Henry Potter.

7. Financial Report

The Clerk reported that although it was too early for the final accounts for the 2009/2010 financial year, ending on 31 March 2010, the current position was:

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| Balance brought forward as at 1 April 2009 | £12,218.72 |
| Overall income to date 2009/2010, including £8,500 Precept | £10,956.74 |
| Expenditure to date 2009/2010 | £13,556.34 |

The expected year-end balance was expected to be around £8,000.

The Precept for 2010/2011 had been increased to £10,500, which provided scope in Reserves for projects to benefit the community, such as replacement of the bus shelters on the main road. Income from the cemetery was expected to be around £2,000, four times that expected for 2009/2010, due mainly to the purchase of burial plots.

8. County Councillor's Report

County Cllr. Mike Hall was warmly thanked for his tremendous support in getting local voices heard over the traffic and speed problems and bringing about a change in WSCC policy. In turn, he paid tribute to the dedication of Cllr. Corbett and the Road Traffic Committee, and Mrs. Gill Moss and the staff, governors and parents at West Dean School, in achieving a landmark victory in their campaign for a change in WSCC policy. Whilst there might still be hurdles ahead, such as negotiations for the TROs (Traffic Regulation Orders), he was confident that the speed limit would be reduced. He read a letter he had drafted to Cllr. Derek Whittington, WSCC Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport, asking him to add West Dean to the list of TROs and to include the 30mph limit in the current Chichester to Cocking Route Management Scheme. He was anxious to get a quick turn-round for West Dean. The VAS, financed by WSCC, was already in operation. It was hoped that the SID, to be used in turn by a group of parishes under Community Speedwatch, would be purchased and in operation very soon. The Chairman confirmed that the Parish Council's share, being £250, had already been paid to Funtington Parish Council.

Cllr. Hall was disappointed that despite the Policing Plan, there was little Police presence at Parish Council meetings and PCSOs seldom attended those in his Ward.

He had just had a meeting with planning officers to discuss the South Downs National Park. Planning was expected to be delegated back to local authorities for at least the first four years. About 60% of Chichester DC's area was within the National Park, so there were serious concerns over how Planning would be financed. It had also been questioned whether the National Park could call in and over-turn decisions made by district councils, so it was essential that there was a clear written Agreement between both parties.

Cllr. Whittington had written several letters to Parish Councils setting out what WSCC was doing to repair the roads and fill potholes left by the exceptionally cold winter. This would be financed by deferring existing highway programmes.

Cllr. Hall's concerns over Southern Water continued. He felt that the easiest way to oblige them to do something was to include this in the LDF. Chichester DC still maintained that houses should not be built unless there was suitable infrastructure, but had been over-ruled.

9. District Councillor's Report

District Cllr. Henry Potter sent his apologies for not attending, being away on a week's break.

He had been greatly relieved to learn the future for St. Richards Hospital last year, which would allow the continuation of the good services available. He had recently heard that a change in the appointments system had some failings, but as the Western Sussex NHS Trust was having regular Stakeholder meetings, he was sure the problems would be addressed.

The South Downs National Park was up and running, with the Committee realising the mammoth task ahead. It was the second largest National Park in the country after the Cairngorms National Park, which was very thinly populated. The South Downs National Park had by far the greatest population within a National Park. The South Downs National Park had held a forum at Farbridge, Binderton, on the 25 February, when two members

of the new Authority had been announced, being Mr. Tom Tupper, who farmed at Bignor, and Sir Sebastian Anstruther of Barlavington Estates. The nominated representative for Chichester DC was Mr. Andrew Shaxson. They were all gentlemen with good farming backgrounds and he believed they were a wise choice, although time would tell.

The extensive housing project at Graylingwell was well under way, with the first of the affordable houses nearing completion. Prospective occupiers were being invited to go along and have a look.

The saga with Southern Water continued after the Winter's spring water deluge. When would they ever learn? Mr. Max Davis, Chairman of East Dean Parish Council, who had attended the meeting last year when Southern Water had stated they were "squeaky clean", had re-opened the dialogue with David Bialas of Southern Water, and included Gavin Holder at Chichester DC. Cllr. Potter was writing to Andrew Tyrie MP, to see if there was anything he could do.

The fairly stringent measures taken by Chichester DC during the Services Review, still ongoing, had already resulted in a saving of £2.6million, with more to follow over the next couple of years. This had resulted in a 3.25% increase in the overall Precept this year, with the District Council's share being 2.5%. The additional increase was attributable to WSCC, Sussex Police Authority, and Parish precepts. These savings were not helped by the cost to the District Council of enforcement action at Chilgrove and Binderton Lane. Things were moving slowly, but he was confident that things would be done properly in the end.

10. Traffic Action Committee, including Community Speedwatch and SID

Cllr. Steve Corbett reiterated tremendous thanks on behalf of the community for County Cllr. Hall's tireless support, without which the victory in achieving a WSCC policy change would not have been possible. Cllr. Hall strongly believed it was essential that decisions made by County Local Committees were acted on for the benefit of the local communities they served.

Mr. Ward asked whether a similar campaign could be launched to do something about the condition of local roads, which had been neglected for years, despite more houses being built, bringing more people and vehicles to the Parish. Cllr. Hall suggested that one way to raise the profile of a 30mph limit would be to make the village more visible, such as reducing the height of hedgerows and carrying out some landscaping and feature works, including around the school. This would have to be carefully thought-out, as residents tended to prefer to block out the traffic with screening. Cllr. Ruffell reminded Members that there had been an attempt to get "gateways" a few years ago, but WSCC had been unenthusiastic. This suggestion would be discussed further at the next meeting.

11. Public Session

No members of the public were present.

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

Closure: The meeting closed at 8.50pm.

Signed:

Chairman of the Council