

COLLINGBOURNE DUCIS PARISH COUNCIL

D R A F T

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD AT COLLINGBOURNE DUCIS VILLAGE HALL ON THURSDAY 10th MAY 2007 AT 7.00 PM

Present: Cllr M Cox (Chairman)

Cllrs Bale, Chandler, Risborough and Whinton

Mr J Dowsett, County Cllr R Hall, Dist Cllr C Howard, Mr J Mason, Mr J Robinson, Mrs L Rogers
and one member of the public.

Apologies for absence: Cllr K Rossiter and Sgt Mark Randle.

1. Annual Report of the Parish Council.

Cllr Mike Cox, Chair, said that the past year had seen a start to the first of the major developments in the village, at Saxon Rise where 25 new homes are under construction. Work on the other developments, at Bourne Rise and the Old School is still awaiting planning permission.

An initiative to provide useful social facilities for the 90 or so teenagers in the village was started during December, aided by Wiltshire Police. This has been on the back burner for a variety of reasons, but has not been forgotten and hopefully can be taken forward by the new Parish Council. It is, however, a long term project.

Vandalism and anti-social behaviour have been a real problem during the past year. The difficult decision to remove one of the bus shelters at the Chicks Lane/A338 junction had to be taken as the shelter had become a base for anti-social behaviour and under age drinking, not to mention playing chicken with passing traffic. At least two of the village amenity benches refurbished last year have been destroyed – the bench at the War Memorial has now been replaced with a new one, with decisions awaited on the ones on the recreation ground. Collingbourne Ducis is now a regular agenda item on the Tidworth Community Safety Committee agenda, not something to be proud of.

The year-long experimental litter picking contract on the whole has been successful, though it was disrupted last summer due to the operative needing major surgery and a long convalescence: however, he is now back and the Parish Council will shortly decide how to proceed after the experimental year.

Dog fouling on the recreation ground has been an agenda item for the past four Annual Parish Meetings at least with no real solution in sight. On one occasion last winter it took one hour for the football pitch to be made playable by removing dog faeces and the litter bins reached a point where they were considered a health danger. In consequence the two small dog waste bins were removed and the Parish Council requested dog-walkers to take their pets droppings home and dispose of them in their black wheelie bin, so that the big litter bins on the recreation ground become less of a health hazard.

Flies were once again a problem in last summer with the south end of the village being particularly badly affected though the east side less so. Kennet District Council have made some moves on this – however all meetings have been in closed session with the public excluded and all minutes and reports classified as confidential. Time will tell if the measures taken have been sufficient.

There was little progress to report on Highway matters during the year. However, one half of a pair of school warning lights has been installed (but no progress on the other half). This in spite of money being specifically set aside for Collingbourne Ducis.

The Great Mere Group has made progress and is to be congratulated. The Electricity Company has offered some reparation for the unauthorised felling of two trees by way of new plantings in the autumn. The Group project co-ordinator, Mrs Ann Bernard, has resigned due to work commitments, so the Mere Group is looking for new, equally enthusiastic people to build on her excellent foundation and take the project forward as a valuable amenity for the village. The Group's AGM takes place on Wednesday 23rd May at 8.00 pm at the Village Hall.

The Chairman then answered questions from those present.

2. Summary of the Council's financial performance for the year ended 31 March 2006.

Cllr Cox presented the report which had been prepared by the previous Chair of Finance who was no longer a member of the council.

The Parish Council worked within its budget for the year and was able to transfer £2,926 to reserves at the year end; reserves now stand at £16,662. Income for the year was £20,430 against a forecast of £18,781, the increase due mainly to unexpected high income from the burial ground and higher interest on our deposit account. Expenditure for the year was £17,169 against a forecast of £18,446, the decrease due mainly to fewer requests for donations, low expense claims from Councillors, lower than expected training and publications costs and grass cutting costs. Audit fees and software costs were higher than expected.

Audited accounts are expected to be available in July.

For the year 2007/2008 the Parish Council approved an income forecast of £5,631 and an expenditure budget of £22,156. £15,000 precept and £1,525 from reserves will fund this. The main areas of increase in expenditure forecast for the year are the purchase of a computer for the Parish Council, the litter picking contract, election costs, legal and land registry fees relating to the Great Mere and an increase in general maintenance expenditure.

There were no questions from those present.

3. Headteachers' Report from Collingbourne C E Primary School.

Mr Jeff Mason, Headteacher, said there were currently 94 pupils on roll – this is forecast to increase to 104 in September. Numbers are still fluctuating but for the first time in three years there is a waiting list for the Reception intake for September 2007.

Three new members of staff joined in September 2006 and have settled in well. The School maintains a high level of teaching assistants to meet a wide range of needs.

Mr Mason outlined a number of exciting curriculum developments in the school.

- ICT: the school now possesses 19 new laptops which has taken the ratio in the school to one computer for every two pupils.
- Library: this has been revamped as a Learning Resource area with a new ICT suite, facilities for small group teaching and a new non-fiction library area.
- Healthy Schools Award: the school has achieved considerable success in its programme working towards this Award for promoting an active/healthy lifestyle for its pupils.
- PE: The school has successfully taken part in a number of tournaments achieving 2nd place in Tag Rugby, 3rd place in the Hockey Festival and 4th in Netball. PE development has benefited from a number of visiting coaches: Fundamental Skills Project (Wiltshire County Council), and Netball and Hockey (Avon Valley College).

The School continues to work on improving its grounds and now possesses a pond, a vegetable patch (with the help of the Gardening Club) and should soon have sun sails for shading (Friends of Collingbourne School). In the longer term they plan for an amphitheatre and further development of the Class 1 Reception playground.

The school is improving its community links with regular Assemblies at the Village Hall which are open to all villagers and also the Coffee Club at Collingbourne Kingston. Other events during the past year were the Skateboarding community project and hosting the Annual Garden Club Flower Show.

Mr Mason then answered questions from those present.

4. Report from Wiltshire County Councillor.

Cllr Robert Hall described the development of the Parish Steward Scheme which replaces the previous Parish Lengthsmen. The County Council now possesses a new piece of equipment for filling in holes in the roads – the only one of its kind in Europe!

Grass verge mowing will commence during May/June and continue until October starting with the smaller roads.

Cllr Hall has been appointed Deputy Speaker of Wiltshire County Council.

He reported that the first stage of Wiltshire County Council's bid for Unitary Status has been successful and the consultation period has begun. This will lead to a single authority replacing the County and four District councils if it is approved by the Government.

The consultation runs until 22nd June 2007 and more details can be found at:

www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1509022 .

Comments may be submitted to the Secretary of State either by email to

www.structures@communities.gsi.gov.uk

or by post to: Unitary Structures Consultation Team
 Zone 5/E8
 Eland House
 Bressenden Place
 London SW1E 5DU

5. Report from Kennet District Cllr C Howard.

Cllr Charles Howard paid tribute to the outgoing District Councillor Tony Still who had been the member for the Collingbournes for no less than 12 years, and during that time had accumulated a wealth of experience in District Council matters. As a newcomer to the District Council, Cllr Howard said he was well aware that he had much to learn.

The fly problem has been a major issue in the Collingbournes, and he very much hoped that a solution may have been found during the past year. During the year Kennet District Council commissioned an investigation by a special expert which has, he understood, identified the source of the problem and the appropriate notices have been served on those concerned. Whether or not the source of the problem has been correctly identified and the appropriate action taken will only become evident in the future.

Cllr Howard said that the proposal to create a Unitary Authority for Wiltshire is going to be a major focus of discussion and interest during the coming months. The County Council has applied to the Department of Communities and Local Government for unitary status for all Wiltshire, and an announcement as to whether this will take place is expected in the next few months when a consultation process has been completed. If unitary status happens, all four District Councils in Wiltshire will be abolished and their functions taken over by the County Council. Kennet District Council is strongly opposed to this proposal.

Members of the public and organisations such as parish councils may let the Government know their views. Details of the postal and email addresses to write to may be found on page 30 of the May edition of the Courier.

Cllr Howard has been allocated to the following District Council committees :

The Regulatory Committee which deals with planning applications.

The Resources Executive which deals with a variety of Council business including the payment of Housing Benefit and arrangements for Local and General Elections.

He has also been selected to represent Kennet District Council as a member of the Wiltshire Historic Buildings Trust, and is on the Executive Committee of Tidworth Leisure Centre.

Cllr Howard said he looked forward to representing Collingbourne Ducis at Kennet District Council and doing business with the Parish Council, and would be happy to hear from members of the Parish with any problems that they may have on District Council matters. He could be contacted on 01264 850243 or by email at cmbh82@aol.com .

Cllr Howard then answered questions from those present.

6. Report from Wiltshire Constabulary.

In the absence of Sgt Nigel Porter and PC Mark Randle the Chair submitted a brief report.

Sgt Porter has been promoted and leaves Tidworth Section shortly and his successor is currently being selected.

The planned funding for three original Community Beat Officers has been severely cut down.

Sgt Randle had requested that questionnaires be distributed to attendees to ascertain concerns about policing in the parish and asking for volunteers. Cllr Cox also passed some to the Headteacher for distribution to parents at the school.

Things have been fairly quiet in the village although there have been problems with mini-motorbikes at the southern end of the village and the old railway track towards Ludgershall. However these incidents are on video so should be resolved fairly shortly. There have been incidents of loud music in the Tidworth Road area, currently being dealt with by Kennet District Council environmental officers. Speed monitoring will continue in the village.

Cllr Cox then answered questions from those present.

7. Statement of Accounts from Collingbourne Ducis Village Hall Trust.

Mrs Lindie Rogers, Chair, gave a brief outline of what had, she said, been a very exciting year for the Village Hall Trust. The doors to the changing rooms have been replaced, a new ceiling and lighting have been provided in the Pre-School hall and it is hoped to complete the window refurbishment during the coming financial year.

Mr John Dowsett, Treasurer, submitted an interim financial report (copy attached) on the Village Hall whose financial year runs until 31 June. As in previous years a full year's accounts will be provided after that date. He said that at the year end, after allowing for depreciation and setting a sum aside for repayment of the loan, he anticipated a surplus in excess of £4,000. As a result of appeals and funding from Wiltshire County Council and others for repairs to the roof they received sufficient funding to also been able to refurbish the décor and heating system. He assured the meeting that there was no doubt about the Village Hall's ability to repay the annual loan interest to the Parish Council. The outstanding sum of £25,000 was due for repayment in 2025. By putting aside £2,500 per year plus the proceeds of its insurance policy the Village Hall Trust would have sufficient funds to repay the loan well before it falls due in 2025. Mr Dowsett said that hall is now being marketed and its usage has increased since its refurbishment.

Mr Dowsett then answered questions from those present.

8. Report from the Great Mere Community Conservation Group.

Mr James Robinson said that the vast majority of the work completed on The Mere has been to the wild flower meadow. Many hours have been spent clearing, rotovating, raking, spot weeding and mowing the edges to keep the nettles at bay.

Other activities have included picking the blackberries and making jam and muffins to sell at the Village Show. The culvert on the south side of the Mere was strimmed prior to the winter rains.

The Environment Agency cut the overhanging willow and other bushes/trees to ensure the flow of the Bourne but was a little more enthusiastic than the Group would have liked. However a number of the smaller twigs from the branches cut from the willow tree were planted along the edge of the Bourne to provide a screen.

Following the high winds the SSEC came on site and felled trees which could have been a danger to the electricity wires which cross the land. The Group has been recompensed by the SSEC with a donation and an agreement to supply indigenous bushes which will be planted in the autumn to provide a wind break as well as a barrier for the Mere.

A number of trees toppled during the high winds in the spring and the Group was grateful to the Collingbourne Scouts for clearing the entrance of fallen trees and using this timber to make a beetle bench.

Looking forward there is work to do to prepare the wild flower meadow and buy the seed/plants for it. The annual insurance premium of £150 is again due and it is hoped to provide an interpretation board at the Mere sometime during this year.

Thanks were due to Mr Roy Chandler for donating a lawn mower for maintenance of the edge of the wild flower meadow and the paths. The Group was also delighted that Ms Nicky Warden has returned to her post at WWT after maternity leave as she has given much support since the Group was formed.

Sadly Mrs Ann Bernard has had to step down as Project Co-ordinator at the beginning of the year having done an enormous amount of work both investigatory and manual on The Mere. A new co-ordinator for the Group is needed.

Mr Robinson reminded the Parish Council that two councilors were required on the Steering Group commenting that it can be a lot of fun.

The Annual General Meeting takes place at the Village Hall on 23rd May at 8.00 pm.

Mr Robinson then answered questions from those present.

9. Written Resolutions.

There being no resolutions to consider the Chairman thanked all the speakers.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm.