

COLLINGBOURNE DUCIS PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD AT COLLINGBOURNE SCHOOL ON THURSDAY 14 MAY 2009 AT 7.00 PM

Present: Cllr M Cox (Chairman) Cllrs B Crompton, G Chandler, K Pickis, , K Rossiter, N Whinton, N Williams, County Cllr R Hall, Ex KDC C Howard, Mr J Mason, Mr R Cater, Mrs L Rogers, PCSOs M Downham & O Royston, five members of the public and Mr P Gill (Clerk)

Apologies for absence: Cllr A Jones, Cllr B Bale, Cllr P Risborough, PC G Wilkins, Mrs. K King and Mrs J Crook.

1. Annual Report of the Parish Council.

Cllr Mike Cox, Chair, presented the following report:

Report from Chairman of the Parish Council.

“The current Council was elected during May 2007. Since then, two have resigned for good business or family reasons, Call B Crompton has been co-opted and there is currently one vacancy on the council. Planning and development in the village continues to be a major item on Parish Council agendas. Garden grabbing where one dwelling is demolished and replaced with two “executive” dwellings and thus avoiding the low-cost housing rules has led to some inappropriate proposals and the Council sees this as a trend which should be resisted. The Council has co-operated with the Church and the Old School developer to bring mains water and drainage up to St. Andrews for the first time in over 800 years. St. Andrews now has working catering facilities and underground mains services are in place to enable their proposed toilet extension. The Parish Council is supporting this project with grant aid so that the building can be used for community events such as concerts and exhibitions – the Church has a particularly fine acoustic which currently is difficult to exploit. The village bus shelters which were replaced last year have proved popular and the Council intends to look into providing at least one more. A quarterly cleaning regime has also been set up to help make sure they stay clean and tidy. Work started this time last year on enhancing facilities at the recreation ground, including improvements for spectators, lighting and a simple three sided shelter as a place for young people to socialise out of the weather as well as providing BMX, skateboard and 5-a-side equipment. This project has recently been completed and on the whole has been very well received in the village. Graffiti has appeared, some obscene, though this is probably to be expected and it is noteworthy that it has been on the whole confined to the shelter on the recreation ground and not elsewhere in the village. The Council have made technical provision to enable lighting of the football pitch should this ever been deemed a good idea. Requests have been received from a number of sources to further augment provision on the rec. by adding swings and a roundabout and this will be discussed at future Council meetings. On a less positive note, over the weekend of 30/31st July 2005 persons unknown removed the southerly goal posts from the ground and this was not reported to the Parish Council. Subsequently someone has claimed that they fell over a metal part which they claim was left protruding from the ground and they have now started Court proceeding against the Council to recover damages. Progress of a sort has been made with the play area in Saunders Meadow. The promised re-equipping has now happened, but delays in the bureaucratic system at Kennet meant the area was not handed over before the formation of Wiltshire Council, where the bureaucracy seems equally or more impenetrable so there is still no handover from Persimmon Homes in sight. Currently the area is usable due to the grass having been cut at the insistence of the Parish Council however Persimmon cannot be blamed for not being particularly enthusiastic to pay for maintenance on a project which should have been taken over by Kennet ten years ago. Some of the children who played in the area when it was first built and equipped in 1998 are probably now themselves parents – and still no end to the saga, so at the current rate of progress they could be grandparents

before handover. A similar saga is true of the play area in Saxon Rise which has fallen into the same bureaucratic handover trap. Grass cutting in general has been an issue – last year saw the re-tendering of the rolling three year contract to cut those areas of the village not cut by Wiltshire. After a very wobbly start, this resolved itself satisfactorily by midsummer and spring this year proved to cause few contractual problems. However, those parts of the village cut by Wiltshire have yet to settle down and the Council is trying to make contact with the correct person at the new Wiltshire Council to get things sorted out. Dog fouling on the recreation ground continues to be a problem and there is no easy answer to this. The Parish Council keeps the situation under review and asks dog owners to clear up after their pet and take the droppings home, rather than leave them to become a health hazard in the bins on the recreation ground. The village litter picking contract generally keeps the litter and general rubbish left on the recreation ground under control and is currently up for re-tendering, which is in progress. Many thanks to the volunteers who also help with litter. The Burial Ground has been tidied up and a mound of old flowers and rubbish was removed last autumn. However, this is starting to re-appear and the Council are working with the Church authorities to resolve the problem. Work was also carried out last autumn to level some of the more uneven parts of the ground and the Council is grateful for the co-operation of villagers while this was carried out – new grass is now starting to grow and any remaining bald patches will be re-seeded. Further work on hedges and planting is currently out to tender with the objective of further enhancing the appearance of the ground over the next year or two. The village green hanging baskets were for many years provided by Mr. and Mrs. Cogdell and the Council is grateful to them and expresses its thanks for those many years of effort. The task has been taken over by the Blue Lion, to whom the Council also expresses its thanks. The telephone box on the village green is currently proposed for removal by British Telecom, something the Council is objecting to as, although probably unprofitable, it is an important social facility in the centre of the village. The Parish Council has submitted a proposal to Wiltshire Highways for improvements in road safety in the Chicks lane/A338 area. The response from Highways was a tad arrogant and dismissive, but the proposals are currently part of the plan submitted by the Tidworth Community Area Transport Committee, so hopefully some sort of progress can be made. Once the elections for Wiltshire Council are over next month, the Parish Council intends to take this issue up with the new Councillor. The Parish Council is aware of considerable interest in the village in allotments and currently has an on-going project to facilitate some provision as a pilot. There used to be allotments in the village provided by Kennet District Council, but Kennet long since adopted a policy of not providing them and the land was consequently leased out for other purposes. The Parish Council is therefore now trying to identify suitable land (and willing landowners) to facilitate allotment provision and any suggestions of suitable land and landowner contact details are welcome. It is worth mentioning for the record that reaction from the military authorities has been very negative and the Council is no longer exploring that option.”

In response to a question from a member of the public the Chairman explained the rationale underpinning the charges raised against the School for use of the recreation Ground.

2. Summary of the Council’s financial performance for the year ended 31 March 2009.

The Clerk presented the following summary:

“The Parish Council’s finances were very much lower than last year which was mainly due to the full implementation of the Casual Play Space Project in one year rather than the intended three years. At the beginning of the FY the Members agreed as planned to spend the £19.5K Sect 106 monies received in 07/08 by starting work on a Casual Play Space Project to be spread over 3 financial years and supported by grants from Kennet District Council and others. However, early in the FY the Members were informed of the demise of Kennet District Council as at 31 March 2009 and that grant funding would be available in this FY. This grant funding was to be matched by the Parish Council and drawn down by the end of FY 08/09. As a result, the Members agreed

to use reserves to supplement the work on the project and to purchase equipment in order to draw down the grants. This decision required the revision of the budget for FY 08/09.

For the revised budget the total expenditure was £59,389 against budget of £48,987; income was £34,550 against budget of £20,431. The budget was for a net deficit of £28,545; the end result was an operating deficit of £24,839. Although deficit sounds like a bad thing it is justifiable if planned and can be funded, which it was from ample reserves; moreover assets have increased by £22,000. Furthermore, reserves now stand at £15,903 against £34,049 for FY 07/08 which the Parish Council considers appropriate and more in line with the Precept of £16,300.

As part of good financial housekeeping the fees for the Burial and Recreation Grounds have been revised upwards to take account of the actual running costs and the Litter Patrol Contract is subject to competitive tender.”

There were no questions from those present.

3. Final report from Ex Kennet District Cllr C Howard.

Cllr Howard presented the following report:

“Kennet District Council and the other three District Councils in Wiltshire were replaced by the new unitary Wiltshire Council on 31st March, and you will be hearing details of the way ahead for the new Council from Councillor Robert Hall.

While no public body is perfect, I regret that Kennet is no more because it was generally well run and provided a good service to the public. However, the change has taken place, and we must now do all that we can to make the new arrangements work as well as possible. I am glad to say that in the short time that Wiltshire Council has been in existence all the departments that I have been in contact with appear to be functioning in a satisfactory way. Looking back over the past year, the main activity at Kennet has been the preparation for the changeover to the new Council. I have been involved in the following activities during the past year as your District Councillor for the Collingbournes and Everleigh:

1. Assisting this Parish Council in dealing with a variety of problems within the village, including the reopening of the Saunders Meadow playground and the construction of the new playground at Saxon Rise. It is disappointing that completion of the handover at Saunders Meadow to the Parish is still not complete and that the Saxon Rise playground is still not open, and the reason for this delay lies entirely at the door of both Persimmon Homes and Kennet District Council.
2. Work on reducing the amount of HGV traffic through the village, as already described elsewhere. This project is moving forward, and the aim is for the A338/A346 Working Group is to get to the stage within the next year of achieving an application by Wiltshire Council to the Highways Agency for the road to be De-Primed. Further work is required on this, and is in hand.
3. Serving on the Regulatory (planning) and the Resources Executive Committees of the Council. This has included my close involvement in two planning applications in Cadley Road.
4. Taking part in the initial development of the Tidworth Area Board which has held a series of pilot meetings over the past year in preparation for the regular ‘live’ meetings which will take place when the new members of Wiltshire Council start work after the elections on 4th June.

I am glad to say that the development phase for the new Area Board has gone well, and I hope that it will prove to be a useful and effective way for Parish Councils and members of the public to have their say and influence the way that their local government is run.”

Ex KDC Cllr Howard then answered questions from those present and the Chairman thanked Ex Cllr Hall for his help and support in the past.

4. Headteacher's Report from Collingbourne C E Primary School.

Mr Jeff Mason, Headteacher, presented a detailed report the salient points of which are as follows;

The School received a good inspection reports from OFSTED and the Diocese the basis of which was the dedication and hard work of the school staff. The school is now an "Eco School" which has really excited the children. Building on the ethos of giving the children a voice a committee formed from the pupils has come up with really good ideas some of which the school has been able to implement on site. The school is working on international school links to make the children aware of their place in the world. The school has links with a school in Uganda and one in the Canada. It has been a fantastic year for sporting achievement with the school winning a large number of individual and team trophies. Moreover the school has won a number of awards for a range of projects. There are 109 children on roll and the numbers are gradually increasing from within the catchment area. The Teacher to pupil ration is very good and all concerned are working very hard to move the school forward. Looking to the future the aims are to improve the reception playground, make the location more obvious, attractive and welcoming. The school is a community asset and should be used as such and work is in hand to take this forward.

Mr Mason then answered questions from those present and the Chairman thanked Mr Mason for his report.

5. Report from Wiltshire County Councillor.

WCC Cllr Hall presented the following report:

"We have seen the start of Wiltshire Council on 1 April this year. The Implementation Executive has, I judge, worked hard to achieve a smooth transition from WCC and the Districts; whilst some Councillors still fight against the change, our officers have worked hard to make the system work. From the 5 budgets £8M was saved in FY 08/09, partially due to staff leaving to work elsewhere. In FY 09/10 we will find ourselves paying for the redundancy of "chiefs" leaving but in FY 10/11 we are on course for a saving of £18M a year over the total of the old five budgets. I want to stress the importance of the new Area Board system that we have piloted in both Pewsey and Tidworth. For our parish councils it is a route to grants to help the life of your parish; from now on I advise you to take part and learn how this new system works and then use it to your advantage. Supporting the Board is the Tidworth Area Community Partnership, at present it meets four times a year in the Aspire Business Centre, you have place at the table - fill it. The Tidworth Area Board will meet six times a year, probably in the Community Centre in Tidworth in the evening. It can call those who deliver services to account. You have a seat at the table - fill it. Both you and the public can speak. I am not yet certain how much money is allocated to each Board this FY but it is £25 K plus a *per capita* amount. You need to start thinking now of what you want from this pot; if you do not bid it will go to someone else who has made a bid. You cannot vote at the Board but your Unitary Councillor can vote and he cannot but work on your behalf; the Board has three councillors and a Wiltshire Council Cabinet member attends, to hear what your concerns are but he/she has no vote. A rather unusual system has been devised to ensure that there are always three councillors at the Tidworth Board; if a councillor cannot attend, a substitute, from the Pewsey Board will act in his place; if the Pewsey Board is short of a councillor a Tidworth member covers the vacancy. As some of you know I am standing as the Conservative Party Candidate for the new Division called "Pewsey Vale" - the villages of Wilcot and Huish (with Oare) are in the Pewsey Vale Division but to the others I would like to say how much I have enjoyed the last four years working with you and say goodbye."

WCC Cllr Hall then answered questions from those present and the Chairman thanked Cllr Hall for his past help and support.

6. Report from Wiltshire Constabulary.

PCSOs M Downham & P Royston introduced themselves and the following written report submitted by Sgt M Freeman.

“Tidworth Police station has dealt with 660 crimes between the dates of 01/04/08 and 31/03/09. Of these 186 have been detected meaning a detection rate of 28.2 %, which is above the force target of 28%. It is worthy of note at this point that from the 1st April all Police forces are being measured in a different way. The crime figures will become less important and we are now measured on our satisfaction figures. When someone reports a crime or incident they will be asked if they thought they were dealt with professionally and are confident in the service they received. This is the only home office "top down" target which we are now subject to. I am still able to get certain crime figures and if any councillors are interested then I will of course be happy to continue to keep you advised of the current situation. The restructuring of the division is now complete. You may remember that Insp Sweett suggested that Tidworth would get an establishment of 9 police officers. I can now advise you that I have 7 here as of today with an eighth starting at the end of May and a ninth starting in August. I know there was some scepticism at the suggestion of these extra staff starting, however they are now here !

There will be new computers and cars arriving at Tidworth shortly to accommodate the extra officers, however there is a very strong push within the force now to cut the umbilical cord which has kept officers tied to the station in recent years. The mobile and remote working project will be rolling out later this year, with police officers being issued palm top computers so they can do their reports whilst out in the car, rather than coming back to the station all the time. This will take us back a few years to the days when officers used to do their reports parked up in a lay-by rather than returning to the station. It will make a difference to visibility. Mr Spackman (ex PC Spackman) has now been employed on a full time contract and supports Tidworth police officers by recording all their statements. Again this frees them up to be on patrol etc. We also get to retain his 18 years of local knowledge. I am sure that you will agree there is a lot of positive change here, this can only be good for local residents and I look forward to your continued support and to working with you in the coming year.”

PCSOs Downham & Royston answered question from those present and the Chairman thanked them for attending

7. Report from the Collingbournes & Everleigh Link Scheme.

Mr R Carter presented the following report:

“The chairman of our Scheme is Basil Frost whose other public spirited interests prevents him from speaking to you tonight. In April 2004 Community First, from Devizes, called a public meeting in the Church to consider whether there was sufficient interest in the shape of potential volunteers to start a Link scheme for the three villages. No less than 21 people signed an interest that night and 5 years later 12 of the original 21 people are still Link Volunteers. We have lost a few drivers who have moved from the villages, some have retired but only two have actually resigned. And we have built our numbers up to 25 - which is a team of people which deals adequately with the number of requests we receive without anyone person having to do too many journeys. A steering Committee met no less than 8 times to get the show on the road: best practise was, and still is, paramount not only to satisfy the Charity Commission but also to provide a service which to date has not encountered any serious problems in the way of complaints, faults or failings. And this is so important since we have to be trusted by our clients, by the Public Bodies which give us grants and, if we are to attract new Volunteers, by those who we need to join the Scheme. The aim of our Scheme as proscribed by the Charity Commissioners is 'The relief of poverty, hardship and distress among the inhabitants of these villages by the provision of a home help/ Visiting and transport service and general assistance with gardening, shopping, prescriptions and similar activities for those who are in need. 90% of our journeys are 'health related' and can involve a journey to Bath, Bristol, Portsmouth, Salisbury, Southampton or

Winchester; but the majority are for a trip to a local surgery or to the chemist for a prescription which occasionally extends into a shopping trip. None of our journeys have been frivolous: and always deliver a very grateful client back to their doorstep. This is the purpose of the Scheme and we believe we are a valuable help to a rural community. As you know Dick Edwards is the first point of call for a telephone caller: he uses his endless patience and courtesy to ring volunteers until he gets a yes: the volunteer gets in touch with the client and agrees pick up times and gets some idea of the duration of the outing. We get to know some of our regulars and enjoy their company, learning about them and their lives and their problems being grateful for our freedom to come and go as we choose. CRB checks are now being introduced and we require two references with each application for membership. Ducis can be proud of the fact that 80% of our volunteers come from Ducis, 8% from Everleigh and 12% from Kingston. I would not quote figures for the percentage of clients who live in either place. Your Council gave the Scheme £200 in 2008 and we are hopeful that you will agree to support it as a valuable service to the carless in the village in the future. We now have to compete with other organisations for funding from Wiltshire Council. Clients contribute about 70% of the mileage costs of the drivers, the remainder being met out of grants and donations such as yours. Drivers receive a nominal 38p a mile. Clients place in an unmarked envelope what they wish to pay for that journey - tariffs are strictly forbidden - we are not a taxi service. Bureaucracy does not encourage the spirit of charitable giving and we hope that it does not further impede the willingness of 18 of your parishioners from giving of their time for others.”

The Chairman thanked Mr Carter for his report.

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

Mrs L Roger gave a brief overview of following report submitted by the trust:

“Annual Accounts to 30th June 2008

This is now largely historic, but for the record the Hall had overall income from all sources of £15,532 and a surplus after depreciation of £1,720. This effectively went towards building up a reserve for repaying the building loan, of which more in a minute.

Current position

As at 30th April 2009 we are four fifths through the current financial year – the full financial report for the next Village Hall Management Committee is available for those interested. The finances are healthy. This is partly due to steadily increasing lettings income, resulting from both increased activity and from reviewing the charges last year. We have thus been able to put some £2,500 ourselves into the building this year, in addition to £6,750 of grants from Kennet and from the Parish Council, for which we are grateful. Bank balances currently stand at some £17,000, of which £11,000 is currently allocated to the loan reserve fund. The remainder acts as a reserve for emergencies and basis for seeking further grants for improvements – most funders expect applicants to make some contribution to costs.

The building loan repayment fund

Possibly not all Parish Councillors will know the history – the Parish Council assisted the Village Hall in the early 1980s with securing a £25,000 loan from the Public Works Loans Board. This is in the name of the Parish Council, and at a fixed 10.625% interest rate carries the annual penalty of just over £2,600. We are stuck with this up to 2025; despite at different times the Parish Council and the Village Hall Trust taking the matter up with the Treasury and others. Originally a Standard Life insurance policy costing just £200 per annum was to raise the full £25,000; in practice it is expected to produce circa £8,000, and so we are currently setting aside at least £1,000 per annum to build up the necessary funds. At the present rate we will reach the £25,000 well in advance, and will then simply have the annual interest payment to meet. The Parish Council need thus have no worries!”

The Chairman thanked Mrs Rogers for the report.

9. Report from the Great Mere Community Conservation Group.

The Chairman presented the following report:

“The Great Mere Group has been fairly quiet since this time last year. However, last autumn the culvert was cleared of nettles ready for the winter, the meadow area was cleared of litter and fallen twigs and wood from the trees. The wood from the felled ash was cleared, so that the north west corner of the Mere is clear for future work to develop it. In spring, several new bird boxes were installed by teenage volunteers and a couple of broken ones removed for repair if possible. At the same time, some fallen trees were sawn up and set aside tidily and overgrowth slashed back. Also in spring, a meeting about the Bourne Valley Linear Path project took place in Tidworth, followed by a visit to the Mere by the project leader to make sure it can be included in route of the project.

Many of the hedging plants, shrubs and trees which were planted in spring 2008 have survived and are growing well – not as many as perhaps we would like, but enough to give variety. The group desperately needs new blood so as to increase the numbers and re-invigorate enthusiasm! Any volunteers, let me know. It can be (and usually is) fun.”

10. Report from Dragonflies Pre-School.

The following written report was submitted by Mrs King:

“This school year has been very busy for Dragonflies. We now have two new members of staff (one to cover maternity leave). In July 08 the pre-school funded a trip to Marwell Zoo which was great fun for all and we are doing the same this year. This time we will be going to Farmer Gows farm near Oxford. The pre-school is now full and have no vacancies until September and then we have a waiting list, so all is very positive at the moment. This term’s theme is “our village” and we have already been for a visit to the Church which the children loved and we are hoping to go to see Roger in the local shop so that the children can spend their money. We have made a fantastic display which includes the Duck Race, please feel free to go and look in the pre-school room when this meeting is finished. I'm sorry I couldn't make this meeting but will try and attend the next one.”

11. Written Resolutions.

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

The meeting closed at 20.15pm.