

ICKLESHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on the 12th January 2009 at 7.15pm at the Memorial Hall, Icklesham

Present: Councillors Mrs F Bates, C Bronsdon, B Chishick, R Comotto, J Horsman, Mrs S Lyward, Mrs C Merricks, T Moore, Mrs J Stanford (from item 08/225), H Sutton, M Terry. B Thompson.

In Attendance: Cllrs. N Ramus & P Osborne (RDC), K Glazier (ESCC), D Rosewell (Clerk), J Cannings (Assistant to the Clerk). Members of the public were also present.

09/001 The Chairman welcomed those present to the meeting at 7.15pm.

09/002 The Chairman will invite members of the public to comment or ask questions on any matters they wish to raise, relating to today's business of the Council (15 minutes).

Mr Spencer of the Marsh Link Action Group spoke regarding the recent accident on the level crossing at Winchelsea. He said that barriers were the safest option but were expensive. The Action Group was in communication with the rail company to improve safety measures and had pointed out that the klaxon, for warning pedestrians, is not making sufficient noise. The rail company maintains it is functioning correctly. Mr Spencer said a letter from the Council, supporting improved safety measures, would be helpful. He went on to say he was a Poppy Appeal collector and was concerned and disturbed by the recent letter in the press, and the furore, concerning the Remembrance Day wreath. He hoped the matter could be dealt with apolitically and 'laid to rest'.

09/003 To receive reports and ask questions of Cllrs. K Glazier, N Ramus and P Osborne concerning County Council and Rother District Council matters.

Cllr. Comotto asked Cllr. Ramus to report on progress regarding the Council's request for a larger waste bin outside the public conveniences in Winchelsea and on re-arranging bins. Cllr. Ramus said these matters had been mentioned to the department concerned but there had been no response. Cllr. Terry asked if it would be more effective for the Council to write again. Cllr. Ramus said he would tackle the department again. Cllr. Ramus went on to say he had nothing particular to report. Extensive meetings on setting rates were starting. He said funding from central government had only increased 0.5% and council tax increases had been capped at 5%. Cllr. Comotto then asked about prosecution of unauthorised fly posters. He had brought samples of signs to the meeting and asked if something would be done. Cllr. Ramus said he had brought this matter up in Council and understood all types of posters must be treated in the same way and should have a small sign on them showing they had been approved. He suggested the lack of prosecution may be related to saving money. Cllr. Comotto said the District Council now has powers to recover legal costs and asked Cllr. Ramus to report back on this issue.

Cllr. Osborne also mentioned the 0.5% increase in government funding and said the District Council would have to identify savings. He advised that the LDF Consultation finishes on 30th January. He reported that 9,000 new green bins had been ordered and that the grant to the Citizens Advice Bureau had been increased by £38,000.

Cllr. Glazier said current business was devoted to the budget for next year and a reduction in services looked likely. £40M had been taken out of running costs over the last 7 years. He said he would take up the issue of illegal fly posting and obtain an official response. In response to concern expressed by Cllr. Glazier about the cost of taking offenders to court, Cllr. Comotto pointed out that the District Council could issue fixed penalty notices..

Mr Turner (a member of the public) asked Cllr. Glazier for input on the closure, for public use, of Spring Steps in Winchelsea. Cllr. Comotto said he could advise on this matter. The closure was prompted by an accident, but the steps had been dangerous for some time. The closure is indefinite. The County Council has yet to decide what to do. Repairs, if undertaken, could cost in the order of £50,000. Cllr. Glazier said he was unaware of this and would ask the department to update the Clerk in writing.

09/004 The meeting was formally opened at 7.34.p.m.

09/005 To receive and record any apologies for absence.

None had been received.

09/006 Disclosure of interests.

Cllr. Moore disclosed a personal interest in items 11(a) and 11(c).

09/007 To consider and approve the signing of the minutes by the chairman of the meeting of the 8th December 2008.

These had been previously circulated for comments. Proposed by Cllr. Thompson, seconded by Cllr. Comotto, that that the minutes be signed as a correct record of the meeting. **Agreed.** The minutes were signed and dated by the Chairman.

09/008 Matters arising.

a) The Clerk updated councillors on payment sheet items including the tree work at Winchelsea which had arisen as an urgent matter during the latter part of December. He explained that the cost was in excess of the Clerk's emergency sum. However, for safety reasons, it was not a matter that could be left until the next meeting and he had consulted with the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Cllr. Comotto as ward representative, before authorising the work. He said this highlighted a need to review the Financial Regulations and he would be bringing this matter back to Council shortly. He said the tap, and stopcock, at the Cricket Field allotments in Winchelsea had been repaired. He reported on the matter of the verti-draining of Icklesham Recreation Ground and the payment to Bourne's which is being withheld. Bourne's were restating their position that the work was satisfactory. He was in contact with the company that had originally done the work on the field. Cllr. Bronsdon suggested paying half the invoice value. Cllr. Mrs Lyward said she didn't agree with paying half an amount for a job badly done. If it was not satisfactory, nothing should be paid as the Council would have to pay to have the work done again. Cllr. Terry said a third party should carry out a survey before any payment is made and Cllr. Horsman said he feared it was now too late to prove anything by taking a soil sample. Cllr. Mrs Merricks reiterated that Bourne's had gone ahead with the verti-draining in unsuitable weather conditions. The holes had now all filled up so a specialist would not be able to assess the work. The Clerk said an independent survey was required to advise whether the current condition of the ground was as it should be if the work had been well done. Cllr. Horsman proposed that the cheque be signed but payment of the invoice withheld until an independent survey indicates that the verti-draining has been effective. **Agreed.**

b) Icklesham Memorial Hall car park and path. The Clerk reported there were changes to the initial proposition. Cllr. Mrs Merricks explained that, on the advice of RDC, DDA regulations apply due to the hall being used as a polling station. The surface of the car park, and the path to the hall, must be upgraded and resurfaced and signs on the main road erected, as well as signs indicating disabled parking. Cllr. Horsman reported on a meeting at the site with Hailsham Roadways who had given a verbal quote of £6,000. They had not yet provided a written specification. Once that is received, other quotes can be obtained. Cllr. Terry commented on the fact that there is no lighting at the entrance into the car park from the road and Cllr. Merricks said this would be addressed as part of the work. It was **agreed** that once a specification is available further quotes would be sought but, in the meantime, the amount of the £6,000 should be included in the budget.

09/009 Financial Matters.

a) Receipts and payments report for year to 31st December 2008. Cllr. Comotto queried the absence of a virement on the report. The Clerk said he would look into this. Proposed by Cllr. Comotto, seconded by Cllr. Thompson that the report be approved. **Agreed.**

- b) To approve items for payment for January 2009. The Clerk tabled items of expenditure totalling £8,461.02 for January which concerned cheques numbered 2024 to 2034 sequentially, a Direct Debit for £48.55 plus £730.00 Standing Orders. With the proviso that cheque 2034 for £4,553.13 is withheld pending a satisfactory survey (minute 08/229a), it was proposed by Cllr. Comotto and seconded by Cllr. Thompson that these be approved. **Agreed.** Cllr. Mrs Merricks made a request to the Clerk that the independent expert who surveys the Recreation Ground is provided with the notes taken during the meeting with Bourne Amenity at the site.
- c) The Clerk seeks approval to proceed with tree works in Jubilee Field, Winchelsea. Estimates were tabled. On seeing the estimates, Cllr. Mrs Merricks advised the meeting that she should declare a personal interest in this item and completed a declaration form. Proposed by Cllr. Comotto, seconded by Cllr. Terry, that Houlbec Forestry be asked to straight fell the beech tree and re-balance the beech and acer tree. **Agreed.**

09/010 Budget 2009/10.

The draft budget had been circulated. The Clerk pointed out that the budget proposal for 2009/10 was 40% higher than the current year's budget. He suggested that some of the larger capital items could be staged over a number of years to reduce the impact, but it was up to the Council to decide whether or not they wished to make any changes. Some items were reviewed again and the follow changes made:

2203 New Bus Shelter at the Strand (£5,000). Cllr. Bronsdon queried the need for a new shelter. Cllr. Comotto said the wood was showing signs of rot and damage, and the inside of the shelter is rather disgusting. A 3-side brick shelter was being proposed as a way of reducing vandalism and providing a more pleasant facility. However, the current shelter would last another year and, in view of financial constraints, Cllr. Comotto suggested it be deferred to next year. **Agreed.**

2221 New Play Equipment (£15,000). Cllr. Mrs Lyward said the larger items of new play equipment for Winchelsea Beach could be deferred, reducing the £15,000 to £5,000. **Agreed.** The Clerk suggested that perhaps the equipment could be funded over a 3 year period. He advised that government funding was coming through for play equipment and possibly the Council could apply. Cllr. Glazier confirmed that the 'Pathfinder' scheme was in operation with £2M available throughout East Sussex. It was also proposed by Cllr. Horsman, and **agreed**, that the £1,348 proposed for installing sides to the Icklesham Hang Out Centre be taken out of the budget.

1227 Election Costs (£2,500). The necessity for allocating election costs was discussed and Cllr. Comotto suggested that, if necessary, costs could be funded from Contingency. Cllr. Comotto proposed, Cllr. Terry seconded, taking the provision for election costs out of the budget. This was put to the vote. **Approved.** Votes: 9 in favour, 2 against, 1 abstention.

1301 S137 Grants (£450). It was also **agreed** that the provision for S137 grants be deleted. Cllr. Mrs Merricks asked if Salaries could be reviewed, but at the end of the meeting as it was confidential. This was **agreed.**

2220 Play Equipment Maintenance (£1,000). Cllr. Comotto asked whether the sum of £1,000 was needed. Cllr. Mrs Lyward said maintenance was necessary to avoid equipment rusting. A reduction to £500 was **agreed.**

2204 Churchyard Maintenance (£1,000). Cllr. Mrs Merricks asked if the amount for Churchyard Maintenance could be raised. As a grant application from St Thomas' Church was on the agenda (item 11c) and a representative of the PCC was present, it was agreed appropriate to suspend Standing Orders to take that item at this point.

Cllr. Comotto reminded the meeting that the churchyard at Winchelsea was the largest in the parish and at the centre of a conservation area. He advised of its connection to St Richard's Church, Winchelsea Beach and said he understood that the current grant of £250 for mowing was sufficient for St Richard's Church. He said £5,000 was a lot in the current financial crisis. Mr McKinna, representing the PCC, explained that the current contractor uses 3 people to carry out the mowing over a day and all material is taken away. Mowing is done when considered necessary by the contractor. The PCC had not found an alternative contractor. The idea of putting sheep, or goats, in the churchyard had been considered but the required fencing would be costly. Mr Spencer supported the continuation of mowing and pointed out that many people, from all over the world, visit Winchelsea and the church.

The meeting now re-convened.

09/011 Grant Applications:

- c) St Thomas' Church, Winchelsea. Application for grant of £5,000 for churchyard maintenance.
Cllr. Mrs Merricks thought payments should be equal to all wards and that the contribution should be raised. Cllr. Comotto said Winchelsea Beach did not need an increase. He thought £5,000 was too high. There was considerable discussion. Cllr. Comotto proposed, Cllr. Terry seconded, that £2,000 be granted. This was not put to the vote. Cllr. Mrs Stanford asked if this would be per annum. Cllr. Comotto said the grant could be applied for on a yearly basis. Cllr. Mrs Lyward suggested it might be more cost effective to include the mowing in the Council's grounds maintenance contract. Cllr. Horsman suggested keeping the grant to St Richard's at Winchelsea Beach the same (£250) as it was sufficient. Proposed by Cllr. Comotto, seconded by Cllr. Terry, that grants to churches in the parish for 2009/10 be £2,000 Winchelsea, £500 Icklesham, £400 Rye Harbour, £250 Winchelsea Beach. This was put to a vote.
Agreed. Votes: 8 in favour, 2 against, 2 abstentions.

(09/010) Budget 2009/10 now resumed:

2210 Icklesham Recreation Ground (verti-draining £4,000). It was **agreed** to delete this item for next year.

2244 Youth Projects (£1500). It was **agreed** to reduce the amount to £1000.

1231 Legal Costs (£750). Cllr. Bronsdon proposed taking this out of the budget. However, it was pointed out by the Clerk that there are occasions when correspondence with the Council's solicitor is required. The proposal was put to the vote. **Not approved.** Votes: 4 in favour, 6 against, 2 abstentions.

1301 S137 Grants (£450). Proposed by Cllr. Comotto, seconded by Cllr. Terry, that this be taken out of the budget. It was put to a vote. **Approved.** Votes: 8 in favour, 2 against, 2 abstentions.

1233 Website/Newsletter (£2,000). Cllr. Comotto queried this amount and suggested producing only 1 newsletter for the first year. It was **agreed** to reduce the amount to £1500.

Refurbishment of Winchelsea Memorial (£400). Cllr. Comotto proposed that the refurbishment be deferred and removed from the budget for 2009/10. **Agreed.**

'No Cold Calling Cards' for Winchelsea (£212). This was put to a vote. 3 in favour, 4 against, 5 abstentions. **Not approved.** Cllr. Comotto stated that this would be brought back as a grant request on the current budget.

Additional funds for oak bus stop post in German Street (£150). Proposed by Cllr. Comotto, seconded by Cllr. Terry. This was put to a vote. 5 in favour, 4 against, 3 abstentions. **Approved.**

Car Park at Pear Tree Marsh allotments (£7,000). Cllr. Comotto said that there was already parking on the site but only a privileged handful of residents had access. Other residents had to park in lay-bys in Tanyard Lane and were subject to a high crime rate. However, in view of financial restraints, he suggested it be deferred to next year. **Agreed.**

Clear ditch and land at Pear Tree Marsh allotments (£1,500). This was discussed and a reduction to £1000 was **agreed.**

It was proposed by Winchelsea councillors and **agreed** that the recalibration of the Winchelsea speed gun (£120) and a copy of the Conservation Area Appraisal for each Winchelsea household (£1500) be deleted from the budget.

Resurfacing & upgrading Icklesham Recreation Ground car park & path to hall (£6,000). **Agreed** (see Minute 08/229b).

1101 Salaries (See Minute 08/238).

The Clerk said he would circulate a new budget sheet, reflecting the changes, for approval at the February meeting.

09/012 Grant Applications.

- a) Rye Harbour Action Group (deferred from previous meetings). Application for grant of £1500 towards Youth Shelter on Pound Field. **Approved.**
- b) Rye Harbour Nature Reserve. Application for grant of £300 towards cost of 5 dog waste bins. **Approved.**

- c) St Thomas' Church, Winchelsea. Application for grant of £5,000 for churchyard maintenance. See 08/232.

09/013 The William Underwood Arnold Charity.

The Clerk gave a brief explanation of the charity. It was set up in 1916 for the purpose of providing clothing and footwear to the deprived children of Icklesham. Due to the Rector moving on, the Trust's treasurer, Marilyn Shone, had investigated the terms of the Trust and discovered it is the responsibility of IPC to appoint trustees. She is willing to carry out all administration as a trustee. Cllrs. Mrs Merricks and Mrs Stanford volunteered to be trustees, along with Marilyn Shone. **Agreed.**

- 09/014** Winchelsea councillors seek approval for the Clerk to write on behalf of the Council to ESCC requesting installation of a metal bollard on the corner of St Thomas' Street and the High Street, Winchelsea. **Approved.**

09/015 Cllr. Comotto submits the following resolution:

"Icklesham Parish Council will seek the consent of Udimore Parish Council to write to Network Rail and the Rail Accident Investigation Branch to urge the installation of a barrier at the crossing". **Agreed.**

Due to time constraints, items 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 and 28 were deferred.

09/017 Date and venue for the next meeting.

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Monday 9th February 2009 at Winchelsea Beach Community Hall, commencing at 7.15p.m.

The meeting now closed to the public for confidential business to be taken.

TAKEN UNDER CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

09/016 Staff Salaries.

The Clerk advised council that the budgeted figure for salaries would need to be increased to cater for the increased regular hours being undertaken by the Assistant, and the expected increase in her hourly rate, as discussed by council in November. He suggested that the sum of £2,000 be added, making a total for 2009/10 of £21,000. This was **agreed**.

The meeting closed at 9.32 p.m.