



## Minutes of the Annual Assembly of Hadlow Down Parish Council

Held in the Village Hall, Hadlow Down  
at 7.00 pm on Tuesday April 17th 2012  
*Note – this is a draft copy to be agreed and amended  
at the next Annual Assembly*

**Present:** Cllrs David Walker (DW)(Chairman), Graham Terry (GT), Rona Hellewell (RH) and Sandra Richards (SR)

**In attendance:** Cllr Tony Reid (TR)(ESCC), Cllr Ken Ogden (KO)(WDC), PCSO Mark Carter (MC), Helen Simpson-Wells (Clerk) and members of the public.

David Walker welcomed everyone to the meeting.

- 1. Presentation by Louise Baxter, Trading Standards:** Louise Baxter gave an excellent presentation on Trading Standards and on the scams that are being undertaken. She encouraged people to report concerns they may have to her on her direct tel. no. of 01323 463446, through the main tel. no. of 01323 463430 or by email at: [louise.baxter@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:louise.baxter@eastsussex.gov.uk), they can also sign up to a monthly newsletter by contacting Louise. Advice can be viewed at [www.wiseguys.org.uk](http://www.wiseguys.org.uk)
- 2. Apologies for absence:** Apologies had been received from Cllrs. Damon Wellman (DWe) and Michael Lunn (ML), Norman Buck (WDC) and from villagers Steve Godfrey and David and Lindsey Waddington.
- 3. The minutes of the 2011 Annual Assembly:** the minutes were approved and signed as a true record.
- 4. PCSO Mark Carter:** MC gave details of the work the PCSO's undertake. A big problem is burglaries not in dwellings, this includes the theft of copper, heating oil etc. and the targeting of empty properties. People are encouraged to lock items away and to ensure windows are shut and to report the registration no. of suspicious vehicles by ringing 101. There is very low crime in Hadlow Down, MC updated the meeting on the reported crimes since March 2011. He confirmed that a local constable will be undertaking speed enforcement in Hadlow Down and also that tack had recently been found in Five Chimneys Lane, however it had not yet been claimed. MC encouraged people to sign up for the community messaging service, details can be found on: [www.sussex.police.uk](http://www.sussex.police.uk)
- 5. ESCC and WDC Reports:** Cllr. Tony Reid (ESCC) –

### SERVICE FUNDING:

ESCC's revenue budget for 2012/13 is £356 million, £241 million (68%) is from Council Tax and £114 million (32%) from Government Grant. You will be aware that this is the third year that Council Tax has not been increased. Government acknowledged that home owners have seen their tax more than double over the last decade and have encouraged local authorities to freeze current rates by offering a grant equivalent to a 2.5% local Council Tax increase. This may be the last year this Council Tax grant will be offered however. Outside the above, Government is reducing their base funding by near 25% over the 5 years to 2015/16. Budget pressures result not only from the declared Government grant reduction but inflation, both "normal" and from greatly increased service demand. Near 70% of revenue is spent in servicing demand for Adult Care and Children's Services, especially "At Risk" Children services. An ageing population and huge rise in children judged "at risk" (increasing 10% per year) is placing enormous pressures on managing service delivery. Understandably ESCC is undertaking a planned savings program which will result in savings of £116 million (£37 million last year, £19 million this and a further £60 million over the following 3 years) by 2015/16. At its heart savings planning is changing the way services are delivered. In the case of Adult Care, great emphasis is being focused on residents receiving services so they can remain in their home. The exploding demand to look after "at risk" children is being tackled by addressing prevention of family breakdown and so reducing the need to take youngsters into care.

Highways is tackling their need to husband resources by greatly increasing spending on road maintenance in the short term, improving the basic road fabric and so reduce maintenance demand in the longer term. As a key plank of Highways planned management change has been to address Highway issues via by a team of so called "Highway Stewards". Hadlow Down's steward is Phil Jennings and your Parish Council is working with Phil on your behalf.

### STIMULATE THE LOCAL ECONOMY – A BUDGET FOR GROWTH:

The state of the national finances are now known to us all. It is also well understood that to solve this precarious imbalance the country must both reduce spending and increase wealth generation, a mantra the current national coalition is striving to influence. It is perhaps less well known that East Sussex has (along with the Isle of White) only about two thirds the wealth generation (GDP) of south east neighbours. So it is clear from the need to fund local services via council tax alone, that low local income inhibits the ability to afford (fund) local services.

The current administration of ESCC has, since it took over the role in 2001, striven to improve the life chances of residents, particularly those of the most deprived communities in Hastings. Considerable progress has been made, with the community now benefiting from a University, two academies replacing three poorly performing secondary colleges, new prestige office space attracting business now employing 800 and most recently approval by government of a grant to help fund the long overdue Bexhill-Hastings Link Road. This infrastructure not only reduces the congestion on the current road system but more importantly opens up land for business development (attracting an estimated 2000 new jobs) along with land for some 1500 badly needed new houses. ESCC recently approved a four year Capital Budget of near £500 million, with the express intent of accelerating

the stimulation of the local economy -- this is a once-in-a-life-time opportunity to push hard to improve the income and thereby the quality of life of residents, totally in step with national needs. Of this sum slightly over half is funded from County sources, including £30 million released from reserves husbanded to cover possible risks installing new waste management services. Now these services are installed it is clear the risks are no longer present.

The single biggest initiative to be funded is the installation of high speed broadband availability across the County. Rural areas are less attractive for commercial company investment and County is focusing its funding to ensure rural areas receive the same level of service to be enjoyed by urban communities. The plan calls for detailed tenders to be submitted by year end and most areas covered by 2014/15.

Further, to assist local employment ESCC has worked to ensure all our capital work programs are advertised well in advance so local contractors are well placed to tender for work, both directly and as subcontractors. 600 mainly construction businesses are registered to avail themselves of these opportunities. In parallel, apprenticeship schemes are being partnered with these programs.

LOCALISM: The state of public finances, irrespective of societal values, dictates that communities and individuals take more responsibility for their needs. Nationally we are adjusting to recognising we have been living beyond our means and must now prioritise how our precious resources are spent. Government expresses this very fundamental reappraisal under the "badge" of Localism or perhaps "The Big Society".

It has long been the practice that individuals and communities have worked hard on behalf of family and neighbours, nowhere more so than across East Sussex. The change is that Government is openly congratulating these endeavours and encouraging all sectors of the public services to co-operate and partner more positively with those striving to deliver prioritised local needs. Rather than the recently experienced "top down" approach to prioritising service/facilities for communities we are relying on "bottom up" identification and support for what is important locally. The critical factor in delivery of this perspective is for residents of communities to work together more effectively than ever before. A key player in co-coordinating local action is the Parish Council and Hadlow Down is fortunate in having a Council effective in doing just that. Your Parish Council was the first in my experience to work to identify and prioritise local needs. Councillors are engaging well with partners to progress your wishes and desires. However, success to deliver plans depends very much on your support and encouragement. Please continue to recognise and support the good work your council is doing on your behalf – even better, get involved yourself.

Cllr. Ken Ogden (WDC) - KO advised that he was privileged to work with the active Parish Council (PC). WDC had supported the European Habitat Law which was expected to block building of anything within 400m of the boundary of the Ashdown Forest, however this was altered by Europe to within 7km, WDC are now looking at how this can be overcome. KO advised that as Hadlow Down's local representatives he and Norman Buck like to be involved with local issues. He confirmed that local Town and Parish Council Clerks attended a meeting with WDC officers yesterday.

6. **Financial Report:** The Clerk presented the attached report. The PC had anticipated spending the amount that was precepted, however the expenses required due to a new Council turned out to be minimal and the expected legal fees have been delayed. £6900 was therefore transferred to reserves.

7. **Reports from Representatives:**

- a. Mayfield Charities: Fiona Bickerton gave the following report - three people or children were helped by the Trust this year. Age occupation or lifestyle is no barrier to receiving help. I have done this enjoyable task for 27 years and think it is time to think of handing over to someone else in a year or two. We have four meetings a year in the Hon. Solicitors beautiful cottage, coffee and biscuits on offer and although we have some sad cases to consider there is usually something amusing or touching to keep the spirits up. The other Trustees are good to work with but we are all getting older and if anyone would like to take over please contact either myself or the PC Clerk. Fiona advised of a recent report in the press that highlighted the number of people who don't know their neighbours.

- b. St Mark's School: Claire Rivers presented the following report:

The family atmosphere, warmth, up-beat feel and caring environment at St Mark's all emanate from the excellent community cohesion and links we have tried to develop with parents/carers, members of the local community and church, as well as national and international links. The school gathers great strengths from the external support and experiences it has built, as well as gaining financially from cost sharing, in this current economic climate, through well-established networking. Our staff are involved in research projects, such as, one related to providing stimulating opportunities to develop reading. We have aimed to retain a village school ethos whilst ensuring we are not parochial, but outward looking, and preparing our children for the future wherever they may live. Our mission statement, aims and values are all in child-speak and familiar to everyone. Over the past and current year we have focused attention on values-based education, looking at Christian values, Olympic values and service with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Our cross-curricular approach enables children to make connections in their learning and to rehearse the skills they are learning through real and relevant experiences. Exciting enrichment activities inspire the children and they have enjoyed a wide range of ICT experiences, making excellent use of the school's ICT suite, now used for County training, the 20 netbooks available for use in the classrooms. We are about to begin purchasing android tablets. The Cocoons, our Y2/3 class, were able to video conference with 'Vikings' from the Jorvik Museum, York. We are also delighted to have Mark Chapman running a web design club. SMILE Meadow is a wonderful resource which provides a great learning opportunity for a whole range of subject experiences. We have a great working party of parents who regularly join Andrew Warren, one of my staff, on Saturdays, and they are managing the Meadow sensitively- we now have an outside classroom, a gully walk and are working towards a shelter and toilet. We are have been so fortunate in the support we have received from Sound Architect and Life Wisdoms which has enabled us to tap into grants in order to access some amazing learning experiences, such as, the 'Stone Age Adventure' which gave the children access to an archaeologist from Sussex University, museum visits and a survival residential, at no cost to parents.

The school's solid academic record of attainment and achievement has been maintained. The league tables can be misleading in the results they portray as small schools are particularly affected by such small cohorts of children e.g. last year each child represented 10% of the total marks. One child contracted Gastro Enteritis during the week of the SATs tests, and thus, our results were 10% down, but still above national figures.

I know Health and Safety can sometimes be the bane of our lives, however, having just returned from a country where there was little, I can see the benefits. We were delighted back in December to be awarded 98% in a Health and Safety Audit carried out by the County. A big thank you, to John Eliot who chairs our H/S Committee for his help in achieving this score. Safeguarding of children, is, and must be, a high priority and we have very efficient systems in place.

Finally, St Mark's is very lucky to have the 'Dream Team'- people who are passionate about what they do, whether staff, governors, parents or members of the local community. They are all lifelong learners who pull together to try and make sure every child reaches their full potential. We constantly self-evaluate, and are never complacent, and, if we continue to work together, as our mission statement says, 'St Mark's, will give us wings to fly'.

## 8. Reports from Councillors:

### a. New Community Hall Working Party, Village Hall Management Committee, Burial Ground and Playing Field Committee - Cllr. Graham Terry :

New Community Centre Committee - This Committee was set up just over 12 months ago with the aim of getting a replacement for the current Village Hall. Its first task was to carry out a survey of the entire Village. This was needed both to establish a need and to decide where the new facility would be sited, and it was carried out door to door. There was an excellent response with around three quarters of the Village giving their responses. At the same time views were also obtained from Wealden District Planning and East Sussex Highways. The vast majority expressed the need for a new Centre and the majority opted for the Playing Field site. Based on this the Committee agreed to go ahead with the next stage based on the Playing field and recommended their decision to the Parish Council who accepted and supported it.

The Committee are now in the next stage where detailed plans will be drawn up, surveys of wildlife etc carried out, funding obtained for the work needed. They are drawing up a detailed GANT chart showing the stages needed and the critical points on the path. A number of sub-groups have been formed to take the various separate requirements forward. There are issues with the existing Village Hall and the freehold but the Parish Council are dealing with these as a separate project.

Village Hall Management Committee - The Village Hall is a charity and the Trustees really have done an exceptional job in re-vitalising the Hall over the last few years. The number of users has grown significantly as people have seen how much improved the Hall is with its wall insulation, clean and fresh paintwork and general feeling of a good facility. Clearly, although we would wish that all funds available went towards a new hall the old one must be kept going until the new one is ready, which may be some years. To this end, the most recent expenditure has been on woodworm treatment which was desperately needed as the little vermin were attacking much of the underside of the flooring. The next stage is to re-furbish the kitchen and the intention, where possible, is to buy equipment that can be re-used in the new hall.

The Burial Ground - The Parish Council owns a burial ground next to the Church and as the Church burial ground was closed to new internments some while ago this is the only burial place available to anyone in the Parish who wishes to be buried here. I find it a lovely spot and try to go up there each week. In the last 12 months we have had much of the wooden path edging replaced and have new contractors maintaining both the burial ground and the Playing Field play area. You may be unaware that it is possible to reserve a plot in the Burial Ground but you can.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> April we will be planting a Jubilee Tree – an English Oak - in the burial ground, assisted by the pupils at St Marks. Last year we had to have an oak in the Playing Field removed as it was diseased and becoming dangerous – this new tree makes a good replacement for that and the pupils at St Marks will be nurturing the tree whilst it gets established. The planting is due to take place at 2pm and anyone is very welcome to attend.

Playing Field Committee - Like the Village Hall, the Playing Field is a charity and the Trustees have the task of maintaining and controlling the facilities for the benefit of all. The Play Area remains a significant attraction for mothers and children and I have seen the zip wire and basket ball area both used regularly. The Playing Field does suffer from being very wet in winter or after significant rain and the Trustees are currently investigating grants to install drainage in the worst areas. Subject clearly to planning consent the new Community Centre will be built on the Playing Field which will enhance further the facilities there.

### b. Rights of Way, Highways, Footpaths and Wealdlink – Cllr. Sandra Richards:

Having joined the Parish Council last May, it was a steep learning curve to understand how things work and what was going to be required of me but believe that I have begun to get a grip of what is required.

One of the first things that was raised to me by a parishioner were some problems in School Lane and we have tried to address these. Firstly, I would like to thank all of the villagers who responded to our questionnaire about the extension of the double yellow lines at the top of School Lane. We had a response which represented 17.5% of the village and 96% of these agreed with the proposal to extend the double yellow lines. We also had a meeting with the Police and the Ambulance service who agreed that the junction was dangerous. Using the strong support of the village, and with the help of Tony Reid of ESCC, we have managed to get a date of when they will start the rather complicated process to extend the double yellow lines and this process will start in July of this year. We will keep you informed of the progress.

In the autumn, we had a site meeting with a representative of ESCC in School Lane to address the issues of speeding, signage and the zigzag lines. ESCC will add additional 30 mile-an-hour signs and relocate some of the existing signs to increase the awareness of the fact that this is the speed limit. In addition, ESCC will install some speed monitoring equipment which will measure the speed over a seven day period and, depending on this data, we will then discuss with them further measures that could be taken. This will also be done within the next few months. Finally, the school requested that we try to arrange for the zigzag lines outside the school to be extended and we have had it confirmed

that this will also be done within the next couple of months.

One of the next issues that has been discussed is the fingerpost signs that we believe are very important for our village. Hadlow Down has 17 of these signs within our village and recently the cost of repair/replacements for these have been shared between the PC and ESCC. There is an overall budget for sign maintenance in ESCC – however, other items take priority and therefore, if we want to maintain the fingerposts in our district, which we believe are an iconic part of East Sussex countryside, it may be that the cost of maintaining these will fall by default to the Parish Council. For your information, the estimated cost of replacing one sign is approx. £1,000. We will continue to work out the best way forward on this issue.

Buses - we currently have a bus service from ESCC which runs three times a day between Hadlow Down and Uckfield. We are extremely concerned that people are not really aware of this service and therefore it is under-used and we are worried that it could be withdrawn or stopped. With the help of Helen, we have been 'badgering' ESCC to put up some bus stops to help advertise the fact that we have a bus service. We were promised that these would be installed last week however they haven't gone in and I have therefore spoken to Tony Reid to raise this matter with ESCC. With the high cost of fuel nowadays, we hope that people will take advantage of this service so that we do not lose it. We are also looking at reinstating a bus shelter.

Finally, some of you may have seen that we have produced our first Parish Council Newsletter at the beginning of the year and the next one is due out shortly. We hope that this will help communicate to the village what we are doing on your behalf and, more importantly, we hope that it will encourage more people to communicate with us, so please let us have your feedback on what further information you may require

#### **c. Neighbourhood Watch and Joint Action Group – Cllr. Damon Wellman**

The Clerk read a report on Damon's behalf:

Neighbourhood Watch – The Hadlow Down website is a registered Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator and Eddie Westfield has done a great job this year of keeping anyone registered on the site updated with NHW issues, as well as posting them on the latest news section of the site for all to see. On the site is also posted updates from the Neighbourhood policing team listing recent crime events within the area.

Joint Action Group - The Joint Action Group meets every month to discuss local issues and priorities for Wealden District Council, Sussex Police, East Sussex County Council, NHS East Sussex Downs & Weald, Surrey & Sussex Probation Trust & East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service. Wealden Parish Councils are also in attendance and are able to see current risks, trends and forthcoming events from the various groups, as well as performance of the authorities, budgeting updates and publicity opportunities. They also have the chance to raise any concerns they may have.

#### **d. Planning and Emergency Planning – Cllr. Rona Hellewell:**

Planning – We have had a busy year considering many applications. We try to achieve a balanced objective point of view. This can be helped by applicants talking to the PC prior to the application. It looks like the PC's opinions will become more important in planning decisions in the future.

There was a major application for the land adjoining Hut Lane, the PC strongly rejected the application on the grounds given in a previous application.

Localism and change in planning rules – there is a presumption in favour of development in the new rules, however Hadlow Down is considered unsustainable by WDC for further development, although this could exclude development for affordable housing. If the PC chose to produce a Neighbourhood Plan it would need to comply with WDC's Core Strategy, it would therefore appear that the expense of a Neighbourhood Plan would be unjustified. The PC is however looking at several ways to protect the parish and optimize our resources.

Emergency Planning – The team is now active again and contact details will be circulated to villagers probably through the Parish Magazine and the website. The team will be looking at their role within the community and following these discussions they will be restating their objectives. A survey will be issued to residents in order to obtain an up to date list of resources within the village. We would encourage people to complete the survey, the information received would remain confidential.

- 9 . Chairman's Report – Cllr. David Walker** - It seems that every year the workload as a Parish Councillor gets more and more, not only with PC meetings but with all the other various meetings outside the normal monthly meetings etc. and of course on site planning visits. Therefore I would like to give a big thank you to all of my fellow Councillors for all their time and hard work over the past year.

This year we managed to keep the precept the same as last year which is always good, especially as times are hard and we also managed to support the new church spire. I think we would all agree that the church does look good with the new shingles.

Last but not least there is one other person which without their terrific help, organisation and hard work we would not be able to do our job. This of course is Helen, a big big thank you to her.

- 10. Questions from the floor** – Concern was raised that 25% of the precept was transferred into reserves, the PC was asked how much was in each reserve fund. The Clerk confirmed that she would put this information in the minutes [Burial Ground Landscaping £2500, Property Maintenance £1000, Village Hall Fund £6500, Road Safety Improvements £3500, Election Fund £2432, Fingerpost costs £2720, IT £500, Community Plan £3000 and Unearmarked Reserves £1153.59]. The Clerk confirmed that they had put extra in the finger post reserve fund as there were a number in a bad state of repair.

A member of the public asked about the parking in Buxted, TR responded.

The PC were asked if speed recording equipment could be installed heading east past Wilderness Wood on the A272 in the 50mph section as there had been accidents in this area, the chair confirmed that the PC had previously requested that this area have a 30mph limit. SR confirmed that members of the public had also raised concerns about the number of accidents near The Toll. SR requested that the public report any accidents to her in order that she can ensure that the information is passed onto Highways and will raise with them the concerns over the 50mph section. SR updated the meeting on the results of the speed recording that was undertaken on Main Road.

Concern was raised over the junction of the A267 and A272, the PC confirmed that this has been raised with Highways.

It was raised that on the website and in the Parish Magazine the meeting is advertised in different sections as starting at 7pm and 7:30pm, Clerk to investigate. **HSW**

Problems with the Buxted roundabout were highlighted.

The PC were offered a 6ft oak tree which they confirmed they would like to have.

The Chair confirmed that there was still a vacancy on the PC if anyone was interested in joining.

**11. Closure of business** – Vicky Richards thanked the PC for all their hard work.

The meeting ended at 8.50 when those present enjoyed refreshments provided by the Council.