



Minutes of the Annual Assembly of Hadlow Down Parish Council

Held in the Village Hall, Hadlow Down
at 7.00 pm on Tuesday April 19th 2011
*Note – this is a draft copy to be agreed and amended
at the next Annual Assembly*

Present: Cllrs David Walker (Chairman), Graham Terry and Michael Lunn

In attendance: Cllr Tony Reid (ESCC), Cllr Ken Ogden (WDC), PCSO Mark Carter, Helen Simpson-Wells (Clerk) and members of the public. Apologies were received from Cllr. Norman Buck (WDC).

David Walker welcomed everyone to the meeting.

- 1. Presentation by Cllr Michael Lunn:** ML gave an excellent presentation on the Community Plan, he went through the results of the six workshops that were held and the issues that were identified from these. He then answered questions from the audience on the timescales involved and where funds will be coming from. The Parish Council (PC) have responded to a consultation advising that localism will only work if money flows down from government for it. ML advised that it will not be feasible to do everything within the plan so items will need to be prioritised. Comments were also made regarding localism, apathy in the village and regarding liaison between the PC and the owner of the New Inn.
- 2. Apologies for absence:** Apologies had been received from Cllr. Lisa Scott.
- 3. The minutes of the 2010 Annual Assembly:** ML proposed that the minutes be approved and agreed as a true record, seconded by Vicky Richards.

- 4. ESCC and WDC Reports:** Cllr. Tony Reid (ESCC) - **FUNDING** - We are all only too aware of the precariousness of the national finances and the Coalition Government's commitment to reduce the deficit by the end of this parliament. For ESCC government is reducing our base grant funding by 25% over the four years 2011/12 – 2014/15, starting with a 12.6% reduction this financial year. There are additional reductions of some specific funding areas. Overall we are planning for spending reductions of near £100 million over the four years, with £37 million of that this year. Half these savings are a direct result of grant reduction, the other, accommodation of increased service demand pressures. **COUNCIL TAX** - Along with grant reductions to contribute to the deficit reduction, Government has provided increased funding in support of their new priorities. Council Tax is not being increased due to a special grant, as is also improved support for elderly care.

HEALTH - Government is making major changes to health provision, with GP's being given control of much of the health budget in order to focus directly on the clinical needs of patients. As part of an improved health offer, much of the public health service is being transferred to counties. At ESCC some 50 NHS staff have already been seconded to ensure seamless care, especially for elderly clients.

HIGHWAYS - The Coalition Government has recognised the need for improved funding for transport, particularly for road maintenance and locally important schemes. ESCC has been awarded nearly £30 million over two years for road works and a further £2.6 million to assist with the repairing roads badly potholed by the severe winter weather. This will augment the major 2 year road maintenance program begun last year.

SCHOOLS - Another Government priority is the improvement of education attainment with secondary schools being encouraged to become academies. For ESCC the first three "new" academy schools are identified, with construction of the first of these due to commence in two months. Over the last year two new primary schools have been built along with a new high school in Bexhill and a major rebuild of the arson damaged Tideway School in Newhaven.

POLICIES – THE REAL STORY - Along with changes and improvements to our basic service areas, ESCC is experiencing, like all local authorities, the major shift in focus of the new Government from strict central "Whitehall" control to freedoms to allow responses to local needs and priorities. ESCC has been quick to grasp these freedoms, driving the change from reliance on central government departmental "approval" to initiating local action. Working with our 6 S.E. England neighbouring authorities (Kent, Medway, Surrey, West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and Hampshire) we are driving efficiencies (cost saving), sharing four major service areas, (highway maintenance, waste management, Information technology and Special Education Needs) with an expectation of annual gross savings of several hundred million pounds.

Another element for relieving national funding pressures, Government is driving efforts to improve wealth generation, offering residents via local government, incentives to approve sustainable housing growth and similarly for expanding business. In both instances increases in taxes raised from these activities will stay in the local economy and not be siphoned up by central government.

But perhaps the most wide ranging and fundamental (and potentially exciting) policy change is that of "Localism", where the Coalition is driving local responsibility and activity to take over from "Central Control". There is a deep and genuine opportunity for individuals and communities to build a better and realistically sustainable way of life, based on local values and needs and not those of "one size fits all" dictates we have lived under for too many decades.

In the UK, as in much of the developed world, we must be honest with ourselves and acknowledge we can no longer pretend we can live a life style where "government" would see-to our every need without our accepting any personal responsibility for the cost.

Given those old ways are gone for ever, ESCC is seeking ways to work ever more closely with all bodies (local government, voluntary, civic, community, etc) to implement programs designed by and on behalf of residents. There are already many examples of communities actively working to promote services judged important to that community. We have entered a new world, there is now an acknowledgement of finite funding availability and the centre isn't going

to tell us what we can and can't do. This is the reality and the opportunity. ESCC not only accepts this reality, we are eagerly grasping the "offer" and will work with all parties to assist residents to enjoy the improvement they judge desirable for their communities. But make no mistake, it will be communities which "activate" which will see the most progress.

TR advised that PC's are vitally important and that Hadlow Down PC are ahead of the game with their community plan. Cllr. Ken Ogden (WDC) - KO advised that there has been quite a big reduction in costs and the number of staff at WDC, they are now more streamlined but are still getting the results. Officers are now listening to the members more. Nationwide there is a shortage of local councillors.

A big issue has been the removal of the development boundary in Hadlow Down. Planning laws are being altered which will make it easier for people to do extensions etc. without needing planning permission.

5. **PCSO Mark Carter:** Mark advised that they have been undertaking speed checks in the area and have issued tickets. They have been told that Neighbourhood Policing won't be affected much by the cuts currently being made. Uckfield Police Station's front office hours have been reduced.

In March the following crimes were reported:

Stockland Lane - copper stolen from generators - 2 arrests have since been made.

Hastingford Lane - attempted break-in, a few days later at another address in the lane a mini tractor and sit-on mower were stolen.

Heating oil has been stolen from other local areas.

6. **Financial Report:** The Clerk presented the attached report. Questions were asked on the dog and litter bin emptying, the website and on Councillors expenses.

7. **Reports from Representatives:**

a. **Mayfield Charities:** Fiona Bickerton advised that they had helped 3 people this year and given monetary gifts at Christmas, they also support Open Door at the CAB. FB asked that people advise her of anyone who needs help. It was suggested that FB put an article in the Parish Magazine which she will do

b. **St Mark's School:** Helen Bonnick presented the following report on behalf of Claire Rivers:

St Mark's continues to be a very happy place to attend and work, and as one secondary school pupil described the school following a joint School Council link up meeting "...it is like a warm blanket." Staff, children, parents and governors work as a team and have the same vision to provide every child with the opportunity to reach their full potential in our 'gift creating school'. Prospective parents visiting recently commented on the "calm atmosphere, and the positive and respectful way in which pupils interact with one another." We never say "never" and try to take advantage of the many special opportunities that come our way.

We are proud of the interesting and stimulating curriculum that is provided through wonderful learning journeys, enabling the children to be able to make connections and links between subjects. Basic skills are still taught but are then rehearsed through purposeful opportunities. The children are inspired to write, to use mathematical skills, to think, to question and more. A good example of this is the Stone Age Adventure, secured through a grant by 'Life Wisdoms', involving the children in hands-on archaeology and survival skills. Our children's attainment and achievements remain outstanding.

We highly prize our community links, or community cohesion, as it has been termed. It is important for our children to have a wider view on the world around them and we have valuable links with other schools within East Sussex, the UK, and the global community. The local school links help us to cost share and, as the financial belt is tightened, they enable us to continue offering our children exciting opportunities, good quality in-service training for staff and shared self-evaluation. Kind friends and parents of the school in our local community offer our children clubs that are free of charge. Our staff have, this year, visited our link school in Ghana for the second time and we were delighted to welcome Ghanaian visitors to our school again last September. These genuine relationships widen our children's view of the world and extend their understanding and respect for other cultures and traditions.

Our ICT facilities, already state of the art, have expanded with the purchase of netbooks that enable children to easily access technological facilities in the classrooms. We make good use of our flipcams to video aspects of learning, capturing key events, and have the very latest in Lego control technology. If children want to find out which is the noisiest class they can programme our 'Mindstorm Robot' who will travel to the other classrooms and use its data-logging sensors to measure noise levels which can then be downloaded on the computers- mindblowing eh? We are delighted to share our suite with those more mature students, kindly supported by Eddie, who attend the "DO IT HD" Club on Friday afternoons, and there is certainly an atmosphere of joviality.

Projects, such as, the 'River's Den' encourage children to manage money. Each class from its starting float of £25 had the challenge of using enterprise skills to make the money grow. The children, in groups, produced their business plans and set about a range of money raising activities- running circus skill clubs a special café, baking cakes, car washing, selling crafts etc. The money raised was in aid of Demelza Hospice for Children. St Mark's children made a profit of £754.

St Mark's is a musical school with its choir, orchestra, peripatetic tuition in violins, clarinets and flutes, and whole class teaching of the recorder. Every child in the school confidently performed at our March Music Concert and our production of the 'Peace Child' last summer had everyone's feet tapping.

SMILE Meadow, our very beautiful outside area, is developing with its outside classroom, bridge across the gully, new fencing and teepee. The children enjoy the space offered by this area which is ideal for many activities, such as, art, science, literacy and maths.

In the summer we will be refurbishing our School Hall which will have its ceiling re-opened to the gables, a new floor, re-decoration and technological facilities. Our Early Years class is soon to be provided with an 11' by 7' 'infant loft' a two storey area that can be used for role play, a quiet zone and for resting, as younger children will be entering the school in September.

If we attempted to tell you all that happens at St Mark's we would need the whole evening, not 2 minutes, so we

would like to extend to everyone a warm invitation to visit the school at any time. Just give us a call to say you will be coming. We are a very fortunate school to be part of such a friendly and supportive village and we would like to extend our thanks to our many friends in Hadlow Down, and beyond.

8. Reports from Councillors:

a. Planning, Rights of Way, Tree Warden, Highways and Footpaths – Cllr. David Walker:

Planning Report – Over the past year I have noticed there have been fewer planning applications, this may be down to the economic climate. As always when we have to make a decision we take account of the wonderful part of the country we live in and consider all applications with the sensitivity an AONB deserves.

We still wait to see what will happen to the New Inn.

Tree Warden Report – As reported last year the owner wanted to fell the wonderful old oak in Hut Lane. WDC are against this, as it just needs a good trim. This is still ongoing. Nothing else to report.

Highways report – Again we had a very bad winter, which left our roads in a very poor state, but there have been a lot of repairs. We have meetings with Highways every 3-4 months at Ringmer to discuss the condition of roads, hedges, blocked gullies, drains etc. Much work has been done, the drains just past Hadlow House have been raised making it better for both cyclists and motorists, the junction of the A272 and the A267 have been resurfaced.

Deer warning signs have been put in near Hadlow House and further west along the A272. The resurfacing work that was done last August along the A272 was a very good job and we have been told that the A272 through the village will soon be resurfaced – can't wait.

b. New Community Hall Working Party, Burial Ground and Playing Field Committee - Cllr. Graham Terry – New Village Hall Working Party now called Community Centre working party - Despite 12 months ago reporting that the Parish Council had given its support to a new Community Centre to be built on the Playing Field, we have not moved forward far. We have a new Chairman, Janet Tourell and have held a number of meetings. The issue seems to be that despite all the previous surveys agreeing to the proposal, the number of villagers taking part in those surveys is insufficient when we seek funding to demonstrate a clear need for the facility. In addition, voices have been heard who prefer the existing site. In an attempt to move forward we are doing two things, firstly establishing whether additional land is available around the existing hall and, if so, at what cost and, secondly visiting other local, new village halls to see what can be done. Once the issue of the land is resolved then we intend to carry out a door-to-door survey of the village to once and for all get an agreed way forward.

Playing Field Committee - Peter Gillies and his team finished the play area and we have seen a great deal of use by children (and adults!) during the year. For a village our size it is a very suitable facility and much more in keeping for a rural area than the standard types of equipment such as swings and roundabouts. Peter refused any official opening so I use this occasion to give him our warm thanks.

The field continues to be used for the junior football and the Cricket Club hold regular matches throughout the summer. Last year there was a wedding reception held there after a ceremony at the Church and this year we have another similar event taking place.

Burial Ground - I took over this again last year and there is little to report. There have been a number of funerals in the last 12 months and we have recently put the ground works out to tender again. Of more importance is the proposal we fought against this year but will come back again we are sure and that is that we take over responsibility for the Church Burial Ground. This will be preferable, as we will do it cheaper, than Wealden continuing to take responsibility but charging us for it. The proposed re-charge was over £7,000 which is a considerable amount when placed against our budget.

Speed limits - We continue to have problems with speeding but greater activity by the police has led to a number of drivers being cautioned and others being fined.

Village Fayre and Winterfest - I cannot end without mentioning these 2 Village events. Both events were financially successful last year as well as enjoyable events and we were able to donate over £2,500 to Help for Heroes and a number of village organisations who needed some support. Meantime, make a note of the next Fayre on 18th June this year.

c. Village Hall Management Committee, Youth, Neighbourhood Watch and Emergency Planning – Cllr. Lisa Scott –

The Clerk presented the following report on behalf of LS:

Apologies for not being there, I am on holiday with my family. This will be brief as 3 of the 4 village committees I look after have been fairly inactive this year.

Neighbourhood Watch is ticking over and information is updated by Eddie Westfield on the Village website. Ideally with more volunteers this could be a much larger concern and run more efficiently.

Our Emergency Plan Team is still together but is in need of a chairman and again Mr Westfield is doing a grand job of co-ordinating things via the website. We have had a few occasions in the past year when we have needed to take action, such as the prolonged power failure and heavy snow falls. The feedback from any help given has been very positive and much appreciated.

The Youth Council has yet to take off, I have made requests for volunteers and ideas but had very little response. We do have many youth based events and activities in the Village, such as Wilderness Wood's Junior Rangers, Jo Dummer's younger age group tap class and many under 18's are involved with the Variety Club. The annual Talent Night draws in many of the Village teenagers. I wondered if this year, with a little help, whether they would like to organise it themselves.

I am stepping down as a Councillor next month but plan to persevere with a Youth Council. I believe with a little communication and coordination, we could be holding regular events for the youth of the village. Any help or suggestions from any age group would be most welcome.

The Village Hall is holding its own, general maintenance is kept up to date and the hall is kept clean and tidy. Though any major work such as a kitchen refurbishment, has been put on hold due to the plans for a New Community Centre. Bookings are good and we have had many enquiries from new groups and classes.

d. Community Strategies, WDALC, Sustainable Development and Environment Matters – Cllr. Michael Lunn – ML advised that the PC have been lobbying WDC to get the recycling service extended out to the village and this is now happening. This is an ongoing item. There has been some fly tipping in lay-bys and on verges. If litter is seen in lanes people are encouraged to pick it up.

I attended a few WDALC meetings. There has been an issue with the LDF (Local Development Framework) this year, as a Parish Council (PC) we were consulted however what was produced by WDC was different to the PC's views. I see it as a key role as a Councillor to ensure that the PC (and community's) views are put across to WDC.

The Village Action Plan was discussed in my presentation.

- 9 . Chairman's Report:** I find myself here as chair after Paul stepped down after many years serving this Council, and I would like to thank him for all his hard work, and think how lucky he is, having the 1st Tuesday of every month to himself. Enjoy retirement.

Thanks also go out to my fellow Councillors and Helen for all their hard work and all their time they have given over the past year. I would also like to thank our local Councillors Ken Ogden from WDC and Tony Reid from ESCC for attending our meetings.

Next month are the elections, and this Council was hoping that we were going to have many villagers putting their names forward, as you can see we are down to 3 members leaving us 4 short of a full complement. I am pleased though that we have had 2 people come forward and thanks go out to them. This still leaves us 2 short. This means there will be no election for the PC this year, as there has to be 8 or more names put forward.

Over the past year there have been many people making criticisms' about this Council and I was hoping some of these people would have put their names forward to change the things they don't like. But no, I suppose it's easier to criticize than to take part on the Council.

Our workload is increasing year on year sometimes 3 long meetings each month and other committee meetings to go to. Again this past year no Councillor took their allowances to which they are entitled, but how long we can keep this up with the cost of fuel, paper and printer ink etc. I don't know.

On a brighter note congratulations should go to Helen who has passed her exams enabling this Council to become a Quality Council. Well Done!

It's not all negative and can be rewarding and we can make a difference to the wellbeing in Hadlow Down.

- 11. Questions from the floor –** It was raised by a member of the public that there has been criticism of the PC in the past however it is hoped that the new PC can work without receiving similar criticism.

Speedwatch was raised and that it has been effective in reducing speed limits. More people are needed to help. The police have also been more active and the Clerk has requested that they undertake more speed checks.

Use of the website by the PC was raised, DW advised that discussions have been held although it would be up to the new PC to decide what route to take. The minutes of PC meetings are now being added to the website.

- 12. Closure of business –** John Elliott gave a vote of thanks to the PC.

The meeting ended at 8.40 when those present enjoyed refreshments provided by the Council.