



Minutes of the Annual Assembly of Hadlow Down Parish Council

Held in the Village Hall, Hadlow Down
at 7.00 pm on Tuesday April 21st 2009

Present: Cllrs Paul James (Chairman), David Walker, Lucy McConachie, Graham Terry, Michael Lunn and Colin James
In attendance: Cllr Tony Reid (ESCC), PCSO Tam Bennett, Helen Simpson-Wells (Clerk) and members of the public.

Paul James welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Presentation by Jason Lavender:** Jason (Co-Director of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit) gave an excellent illustrated presentation. He then answered questions from the audience.
2. **Apologies for absence:** Apologies had been received from Cllr. Colin James and Cllrs. Norman Buck and Ken Ogden (WDC).
3. **The minutes of the 2008 Annual Assembly:** These were approved and agreed as a true record by all.
4. **PCSO Katie Breeds:** Katie apologised that PC Dave Charlton was unable to be at the meeting. She advised that there hadn't been a lot of crime recently other than burglaries, attempted burglaries, speeding and criminal damage. People can report anti-social driving through 'Operation Crackdown' on the website. Highlighted distraction burglaries where either people are looking for scrap metal, advised villagers to keep it out of sight and locked away, also burglars are saying they are from the water/gas board. A monthly neighbourhood panel surgery is held, next meeting 30th April from 6:30 at the Buxted Reading Rooms looking for more people to join.
5. **Financial Report:** Copy of report attached. Villager commented that final column should read differently as should be i.e. 10% increase rather than 110%.
6. **Reports from Representatives:**
 - a. Mayfield Charities: Fiona Bickerton reported that 3 people had benefited this year. She is in contact with Claire Rivers in order to help children at the school. There is cash available for Christmas for those in need.
 - b. St Mark's School: John Elliott reported that apologies received from Claire Rivers and Wendy Coleman. Leaves me to report on St Marks. Mavis Farrar's articles appear in Parish Magazine. 74 pupils.

SATS Key Stage 2

Our Year 6 children took their Key stage 2 SATs last May, achieving an 87.5% pass rate at Level 5 in Maths and English and 100% in Science when the target was Level 4 (which is lower). These results put the school top in East Sussex and although we still don't have the national statistics are likely to be in the top 2 – 3% nationally. The results reflect outstanding teaching, focused learning and engagement by the children and excellent parental support.

Building Development

Our latest building development began last July and is complete, with one or two minor jobs outstanding, at a cost of around £400,000. Gowings, the building contractors, did well to minimise the disruption to the school. And the result is an attractive extension that matches the older part of the building, whilst having a modern 21st century feel to it.

The black brick cross in the gable of the new building provides an outward sign that we are a church school.

The new building is not intended to make space for extra children, but to create a reasonable amount of room for our present numbers. With the help of a government grant (secured by the Diocese), plus a 10% contribution from the governors, donations from the village societies and fundraising by the parents we now have:

a brand new purpose built classroom to replace the undersized room previously used by our Y2/3 children

a covered outdoor playdeck for our youngest pupils

a library with new child friendly shelving units

a convertible ICT suite with 24 workstations and interactive whiteboard

an accessible toilet

more office and storage space, in the latter case freeing up extra room in the school hall.

and a decent size staffroom.

One of the casualties of the project was the loss of part of the John Farrar Memorial Garden, which now lies under the new building. However, as the work progressed it became apparent that we would be gaining an even larger area that could be utilised as a garden. Clara Thompson is working with children to produce a large mosaic butterfly to go on the wall above the garden and John Rivers, who is a professional garden designer, as well as a teacher, is drawing a planting plan for a walk in, sensory garden. Neil Kempson and Julian Michaelson-Yeates held a very successful fundraising dinner earlier this month for the garden, which was enjoyed by everyone, and raised some £600.

I thought I should touch on 2 themes of life at St Marks: Community Cohesion and the Government's Every Child Matters agenda.

Community Cohesion

The school values its links with the community at all levels and has been actively working to strengthen and develop them. Key elements include:

The parents, who run after-school clubs; village friends, such as Janet Tourell, who runs the Drama Club; and visiting speakers like Arthur Razell who spoke about Poppy Day.

Among the several government and non government bodies who support the school, a major player is the Village Schools Association, which organises shared sporting and cultural events.

The links with St Mark's church are much appreciated and particularly the support given by John Challis, Di Blackden and Mike Ford.

The school likes to be involved with Village events. Examples include 'Cinderella Re-cycled', the Village Fayre, the Community Tea and the school's Community Challenge Award for pledges to re-cycle within the village. St Mark's benefits greatly from the support of village friends who turn up to support events, such as, our Music Concert, Family Assemblies and functions.

The school maintains links with other schools - one in London with penfriends and exchange visits, 5 in East Sussex involved in a videoconferencing project and Wesco in Ghana with exchange visits by staff. All of these initiatives offer exciting ways to meet other children and to share other people's ideas, cultures and interests. Right now Claire is in Germany with a group of Headteachers from the Village Schools Association, to establish a link with a German school near Hamburg and to look at the development of early Years education.

Every Child Matters Agenda

The agenda includes the following headings:

Health - St Marks has achieved the 'Healthy school' status.

Stay safe - We have an Anti Bullying policy, road safety training, talks by the police, fire and rescue service and RNLI, as well as staff trained in first aid, health and safety and safeguarding children

Enjoy and achieve - The curriculum is balanced with such extra curricular activities as Cultural Weeks, the Skill Share Day and British Food Week.

Make a positive contribution. We have an active School Council, with pupil representatives from across the school, who meet regularly. They take ideas back to their classes where they are debated further. The children make decisions about fundraising events e.g. Children in Need and other matters for example what should go in the new JFM garden.

Achieve Economic Well-being. The school has just completed the 'River's Den' - an enterprise project for the whole school, based on Dragons' Den. Each class, starting with a 'float' of £25, created and presented 'business plans' which they then put into effect, together making a profit of £535, which goes to Hamadou, the school's sponsored child in Niger. The children learnt a great deal from this exercise about the value of money and its management. It will become an annual event.

Music

Musically our school goes from strength to strength. Last July the children's production of 'Hoodwinked' was enjoyed by a packed audience in the village hall. The school offers teaching in violin, flute and clarinet. All Y4/5/6 children were given recorder lessons by one of the County Music Service and then went on to have clarinet lessons free of charge. We have 2 recorder clubs for older and younger children, and a thriving orchestra.

Thank you. This meeting is a good opportunity to thank 'Hadlow Downers' for their ongoing support of the school and their involvement of the school in village events. The School is delighted to be part of such a friendly, encouraging and happy village. Thank you.

Graham Terry advised that both he and Paul James had visited the school a few times and had been very impressed.

7. Reports from Councillors:

a. Planning, Rights of Way, Highways and Footpaths – Cllr. David Walker. – Chairman of the Planning Committee:

Planning - Again this year we have carried out a good number of site visits. This is important because you can't always get the whole picture just by looking at the plans.

There have been one or two contentious planning decisions which we as a PC can't always understand how WDC have come to their decisions. The PC has a duty when making decisions to keep the harmony of the area, yet moving with the times but always remembering that we live in a beautiful and outstanding part of the country.

Ongoing talks with WDC are continuing regarding affordable homes in Hadlow Down. This has been ongoing for several years, however the 'Hope project' ground to a halt, but we are hopeful that we can progress in the following year.

Two years ago in my speech I reported that WDC were giving more delegated powers to their officers, and that they will work closely with the Parish Councils. I said "this I have too see". Well we haven't seen it 3 years on!

As I have said before anyone who is thinking of making a planning application and is not too sure of what is and what is not permitted please do come to the PC for our views (not always the same as WDC) but hopefully we may point you in the right direction.

Rights of Way, Highways and Footpaths - After many years and much hard work Hadlow Down is now finally getting its 30 mph speed limit through the village. As you have probably noticed work has already started by removing the 40 sign in the red tarmac so not long to go now.

The bollards outside the New Inn have been a talking point. I must admit the PC did not know that they were going to look as they do. They have been put there to stop cars parking on the pavement and blocking the view as you come out of Hut Lane onto the A272 and many of you will be thankful tonight as you drive home. There is room to drive into the pub car park and there is ample space so the New Inn can continue to do business as usual. Martin was invited on several occasions to meet with East Sussex County Council but he never acknowledged any of the letters he received. There is a concern with the parking at the top of School Lane and we consider this dangerous at the peak times as cars are coming up School Lane confronting cars which have just turned into School Lane from the A272. We would like to see the double yellow lines moved down away from the junction.

It is nice to see the green lane between School Lane and Stocklands Lane re-opened after much work making it a joy to walk through, hopefully it won't get torn up by motorized vehicles.

It was good to see the A267 resurfaced last year, following pressure from PC, but we are concerned about the condition of our roads, and we seem to be contacting ESCC after every monthly meeting.

b. Burial Ground – Cllr. Tony Bonnick – No report in Tony's absence. New contract has been given for the maintenance of the burial ground.

c. Neighbourhood Watch, Emergency Planning, New Village Hall Working Party and Playing Field Committee – Cllr.

Graham Terry – NHW - This has been a relatively quiet 12 months for us. There is actually very little crime in Hadlow

Down although we have seen an increase this year. There have been a number of night time incidents with little taken but annoying and worrying nevertheless. These incidents have mostly been breaking into outbuildings and taking something, often not very valuable. A bottle of beer in one case and nothing in another. A tractor was taken having been hotwired but was found 200 yards away with the engine still running. In all cases they were on nights with bad conditions, raining etc, which presumably is designed to hide any noise but which meant that no dog barked and no-one heard anything. We also had the phone box and a nearby house sign vandalised. We continue to be vigilant and ask everyone to report anything suspicious. The police non-emergency number is 0845 60 70 999.

Emergency Plan.

Having got this project up and running Jo Dummer passed responsibility to Eddie Westfield who has done a sterling job in moving things forward. This task is one of those where it is highly unlikely that anything will happen but when it does it can be catastrophic. Remember 1987 and the recent earthquakes near Dover. It CAN happen and the aim we have is to be prepared so that if it does we know what to do. We recently sent out fresh questionnaires to the village to ensure we have up to date information on the resources and needs we have. The response was a little disappointing but with a little extra cajoling I think we have a fair amount of information. Please do not be concerned about the information. It is only for use in emergencies and until that time even members of the Committee do not have access to specific details.

New Village Hall Working Party

It seems to have taken a long time to move a small way forward on this project. We have got over the first hurdle of getting Village views and establishing the site most people consider the right one – the current Playing Field. We have taken the views of Wealden planning and East Sussex Highways into account and also looked at the other possible sites – the existing Hall for example – but have not found a better answer than the Playing Field. So now we move on to the next phase – actually getting plans drawn up, seeing about disposal of the existing Hall site, getting funding started etc. Richard Boswell has chaired the first stage and my thanks to him for the work he has put in. We are now looking for a new Chairman for the next stage. I do have one possibility but if any of you fancy the challenge please come and chat to me. Rest assured, you will not be left alone on the project – there are a number of willing helpers.

Playing Field Committee

Some sterling work from the Playing Field Trustees again this year. The Pavilion has seen some major work done on the roof and on the insides, giving us a watertight building and a fresh kitchen area. I am sure that the Cricket Club amongst others will appreciate the new facilities. In addition, the hedge at the front has been laid and a smashing job it is. Of course, at the moment with bare branches it doesn't look its best but come summer it will look very good indeed. The Trustees also have a new project for this year – to build a play area for children of all ages. Simple plans have been drawn up and funding applied for. If successful, this will be a major improvement and long overdue. My congratulations to the Trustees on a very hard year.

Speed limits

This is not, strictly, my topic. Vicky Richards was largely responsible for Hadlow Down achieving agreement to 30mph limits and these will be in force over the next few weeks. However, I have been involved recently on Speedwatch. As part of the project we will be operating the Speedwatch system in the village to try and ensure that speeds are kept to. Speedwatch does not involve issuing speeding tickets but motorists who exceed the limits will be advised by Sussex Police that they should be more careful in future. The scheme has been very successful where it has been used in other villages locally. Steve Hough started things off and Peter Gornall is now taking things forward with Paul Stephens of Sussex Police. If any of you would like to help Peter it would be very much appreciated.

Village Fayre and Winterfest

I cannot end without mentioning these 2 Village events. Both were very successful again last year and help was given to the Variety Club, Parish Magazine, School and ATC. If there are any other good causes we can support please let us know. Meantime, make a note of the next Fayre on 20th June this year.

d. Easylink – Cllr. Lucy McConachie – Community Transport - bus timetable has been put in the Parish Magazine, also details of the 249 bus. Tenders out for buses, hoping for 1 more bus to cover Hadlow Down. Attended Transport Seminar. Spoke to Age Concern and received details on volunteer driver scheme. Due to speak to person regarding the community car scheme.

e. Village Hall Management Committee, Wealden District Association of Local Councils and Safer Wealden Partnership – Cllr. Colin James - `My apologies that family medical problems prevent me attending this evening'.

[I] Old Village Hall - Last year in her farewell report Jo Dummer mentioned that a new Management Committee of the Village Hall was in place and headed by Janet Tourell as Chairman, Lisa Scott, Treasurer and Bookings Organiser, with me as Secretary plus representatives from the Village Clubs. This Committee, realising that the new Village Hall building would not be built for several years, decided it was essential to quick start a refurbishment programme on the existing building and to improve the facilities to encourage more Community Club users from our Village and attract outside users to help fund the extra expense.

Bands of volunteers organised by the Variety Club have carried out a `Big Clean` and more recently a `Big Paint` of the interior which you will have noticed. The cloak rooms have been refurbished, extra storage installed, the electricity meters enclosed in the entrance area, new heaters installed, and much more that is not readily visible. The kitchen will also have a spring clean very soon. The Variety Club also funded the installation of up to date lighting to the stage and temporary extension to the stage area which will be a great asset in the long term. A long list of other areas to be improved has been identified and will be tackled as funds can be obtained from a series of fundraising events and hopefully with the support of the Parish Council.

Unfortunately we suffered a major setback when the electrical installation needed a complete overhaul costing £1,048 towards which the Parish Council donated £500.

The very cold weather in the winter made the Hall unusable except for the bravest and even Parish Councillors had to retire to the Village School for some meetings. To combat this problem we have decided to have the exterior cavity walls foam insulated at a cost of £654 and installed blinds to all the windows by our own Lisa Scott which has already proved a good selling point to hirers of the Hall. If we can replace the ceiling tiles and roof insulation the building will become a much more attractive venue leaving only the restricted parking as the major problem area which can only be solved by availability of adjacent land.

[ii] Wealden District Council Association of Local Councils - On previous occasions I have said that this is very much in current parlance a networking gathering of representatives from all the Town and Parish Councils in the Wealden District. It has a very small budget which costs our Council only £20 per annum and meets about 8 times a year. Work is mainly concentrated on providing member Councils with the facility to raise their problems for wider dissemination or clarification. This often leads to an Officer from Wealden District Council attending to explain or to learn from our concerns. In the last year topics have included the methodology of building affordable housing that we all know is needed everywhere and equally important whether this housing is allocated and the rents fixed in the best manner to suit individual villages.

More seriously we currently have worries that Local Councils` views on long term District Planning and Development Strategy have not been adequately taken into account in the Local Development Framework which is vital in respect of such issues as where future housing etc is to be established. A constant problem is the provision of housing for Travellers of various denominations and dealing with the difficulties for local residents when these communities decide to invade private land. There have been increasing Press reports of these in the last five years which calls for us all to be ever watchful to prevent this happening when there is a statutory procedure for dealing with it.

There is of course always a planning problem that has seemingly not been decided in the best interest of all parties or where the decisions of Wealden District Council Officers have overturned local Council recommendations, often for reasons that are not understood or justified in terms of local planning policy. You will see from minutes of our Council meetings that we too frequently have this unfortunate situation.

[iii] Safer Wealden Partnership - This initiative was set up by Wealden District Council to support and to circulate information of Police activities regarding local crime and unruly behaviour to Town and Parish Councils. It proved to be a good support organisation but has probably outgrown its need because the arrival of PCSO`s has provided an even better link with Parishioners as you will have heard already from our own Katie Breeds. As a Council we get monthly reports now direct from Sussex Police Community Contact or personally from the Police District Commander. So we are well served in that respect and more importantly we are fortunate to live in an area where crime is mainly theft from our poorly secured garden sheds or parked cars. So there is no room for complacency even in that exceedingly desirable Parish known as Hadlow Down!

f. Community Strategies, Sustainable Development and Environment Matters – Cllr. Michael Lunn - My report starts with an acknowledgement of efforts and achievements of my fellow councillors and our Parish Clerk. The workload of a Parish Council is ever increasing. The Agendas have got longer and meetings more diverse.

As portfolio holder for Environment and Sustainable Development I have tried to ensure proper scrutiny of planning applications considering environmental impact and consideration of sustainability. I have also attempt to raise environmental issues, Litter in our lanes, and ensuring that recycling services are extended to all Parishioners. I have also highlighted some ongoing issues, such as the flooding on Five Chimneys Lane, and thankfully we had some results from the County Council after a report was submitted to them.

However, the most exciting and significant project I have been working on is the new Parish Community Plan. That's where you come in. I am calling on as many parishioners to get involved. You have all been invited. We will use the new Plan to guide us, and the numerous authorities such as the District Council who deal with us, on the future development of our village. We will also feed our Plan into the District Council's "Local Development Framework" (LDF), the LDF is the master plan for the District which guides the future development within Wealden.

Questions that will be discussed will include:

- Should there be more housing in the village?
- Should the village development boundary be extended?
- Should we press for more action towards a new village hall?
- What should the priorities be for our Parish Council?

This is your village and therefore we want you to have an opportunity to have a say over its future. The process will consider local issues including the environment, planning, rural economy, housing, our community, and our sense of wellbeing. We are keen for as many people to participate in this short but important exercise."

May 13th Session 1 – Introduction of the process - Identifying our Assets, Concerns, Values and Vision for our community

May 27th Session 2 – Measuring our Success - How do we know we are heading in the right direction for our community?

June 10th Session 3 – Understanding our community - Crime, education, rural economy, planning, sense of community, community groups.

June 24th Session 4 – Ideas for the Future - Identifying things that could be done to make our community a better place

July 8th Session 5 – Towards a Community Strategy - Turning ideas into practice

July 22nd Session 6 – Agreements - Building a consensus on priorities and actions

g. Tree Warden – Jo Dummer (former Councillor) - Sends her apologies as she has lost her voice. There aren't a lot of Tree Protection Orders in Hadlow Down. Most of them are in the garden of Hardy Beacon, a few at the back of the New

Inn and some others scattered around the village. Application has been made from Tree Consultants for various works to be carried out at Hardy Beacon concerning Cypress, Oak, Beech and Birch. The Head of Planning and Environment Policy has replied in detail to the Tree Consultant explaining what and how the work he has approved must be carried out.

Attending a seminar today on Wealden Ancient Tree Survey - no charge for this.

Mrs Rivers at St Mark's School has agreed for the children to be involved in the nationwide Tree Week in the Autumn.

This is something the Tree Council are now encouraging us Tree Wardens to participate in. The idea is to help the children collect seeds and then grow them in pots for planting on somewhere – perhaps in their own gardens.

- 8. Chairman's Report:** Paul thanked his fellow councillors for all their hard work during the past year. The workload of the Parish Councillor has changed dramatically since I first became Councillor about 14 long years ago. The meeting's lasted between 1-1.5hrs and we met once a month with a training session when you were a new member, if you were lucky. Now meetings can last up to and sometimes over 3 hours, with up to 3 meetings in some months. We all attend various committee meetings in and out of the village. Various seminars and conferences are attended throughout the year. Councillors are expected to attend training day's that cover a multitude of subjects. So you can see we all work very hard and put in a lot of our time as one of your Parish Councillors.

Talking of training this council is setting its sights on becoming a Quality Status Council. This is a benchmark that most Council's would aspire to and although we are a small Council we are no different. This will involve all Councillors and our Clerk taking on more training and other work to achieve our goal.

We would also like to be able to use a new power that is available to us and more to the point available to you, the population of Hadlow Down. This is the Power of Wellbeing. This in a nutshell allows you the public to inform the Council of your needs and then for the Council to try and provide it. This new power has swept away many of the constraints that had stopped Council's carrying out community projects. All your Councillors will need to attend even more training to allow us to use this power.

As you have already heard the Council's precept has increased by 3.5% this year, mainly due to the ever increasing workload placed upon our Parish Clerk. It should be noted that no Councillors have chosen to accept the Councillor's allowance we are able to claim, so this was not added to the Precept. How much longer we Councillors can give up our free time and take time off work and away from our families without taking up the allowance, remains to be seen.

Special thanks should go to our new Clerk, the wonderful Helen. She has picked up the job and run with it, we all appreciate her hard work and all the effort she puts in.

9. ESCC and WDC Reports

ESCC – Cllr. Tony Reid advised that the current term finishes on 4th June 2009. He asked that people vote at both the County and European Elections. Audit Commission awarded ESCC their highest rating, 4 years ago they were considered weak. In last four years have focussed on the elderly (50% budget) and vulnerable young people (25%). Spend 9 million pounds getting rid of waste and 9 million pounds on highways. Have removed the problem of elderly people being stuck in hospitals, now at zero. Speeding – all villages in the area now 30mph. Hadlow Down school children made a film which helped convince people that speed needed to be 30mph. Building programmes in a lot of schools.

In future priorities are to: help communities look after their environment; community transport; activities for young people, particularly in rural areas.

No reports from WDC Councillors in their absence.

- 10. Questions from the floor** – Questions were asked regarding the bollards outside the New Inn. The Parish Council advised that they were put in to improve visibility for vehicles coming up Hall Lane. Villagers had complained about the difficulty in getting out of Hall Lane. Initial plans for the bollards were originally seen 5-6 years ago before Standen Mews was built. ESCC decided on the design and quantity. Another villager advised that there weren't enough bollards.

- 11. Closure of business** – John Elliott thanked the Parish Council for the wonderful job they do.

The meeting ended at 9.25 when those present enjoyed refreshments provided by the Council.