



Minutes of the Annual Assembly of Hadlow Down Parish Council

Held in the Village Hall, Hadlow Down
At 7.00 pm on Tuesday May 6th 2008

Present: Cllrs Paul James (Chairman), Vicky Richards, David Walker, Jo Dummer, Graham Terry and Marian Wilson

In attendance: Cllr Tony Reid (ESCC), Cllr. Ken Ogden (WDC), PCSO Tam Bennett, Joan Wiltshire (Courier), Jean Holmwood (Clerk) and members of the public.

1. An excellent illustrated presentation was given by Jo Carpenter of Wealden District Council, assisted by members from East Sussex County Council on recycling, rubbish and composting. They had been in attendance during the afternoon showing all aspects of their subject in the hall for members of the public to ask questions.
2. **PCSO Tam Bennett** gave a resume of crime in the Wealden area during the past 12 months. It showed that Hadlow Down was a low level crime area, the main crimes being bogus callers, theft, speeding and road traffic accidents (5 on the A272 in the last month). She reported that the speed gun was now in use by PCSO's and that SID was also available for local trained people to use. It was considered to be more of a deterrent than used for prosecution purposes, although the information was collated and followed up. Graham said that there were regularly motorcycles speeding through the village on Sundays at about 10 am of speeds possibly in 3 figures. Tam will advise the Road Policing Unit. Tam said that Neighbourhood watch was up and running although they were trying to improve it. She advised that WDC were currently fitting Lifeline alarms which were free for one year.
3. **Apologies for absence:** Apologies had been received from Cllr. Colin James and Cllr. Norman Buck (WDC).
4. **The minutes of the 2007 Annual Assembly:** These were approved and agreed as a true record by all.
5. **Financial Report:** The Clerk reported that (at the end of March) the Council had a balance of £4,826.49 in the current account and £15,705.65 in the savings (reserves) account. The new savings account was making a monthly interest of over £50.
6. **Reports from Representatives**
 - (a) Mayfield Charities: Fiona Bickerton reported that two pensioners had received help during the past year, but wanted to make it known that the fund was not just for the elderly. She suggested that it might be of use to help towards paying for school trips or similar. Help can be given as a one off and is totally confidential. Contact for requests for help can be made through the Parish Clerk or Fiona direct. Fiona also wanted it to be recorded that the Lions also arrange outings etc for the elderly. Paul thanked Fiona for her continued work with the Mayfield Trust and presented her with a plant.
7. **Reports from Councillors**
 - (a) **Planning – Cllr. David Walker. – Chairman of the Planning Committee.** David reported that in 2006 WDC advised us that they were going to give delegated powers to their officers, at which we expressed our concern. They said that they would work closely with Parish Councils. 2 years on, not a lot has changed. At this years planning conference I said that WDC should work more closely with PC's as the officers don't always know the area and all the facts. The response was that they will endeavour to do so. We wait to see. Most people have their views on planning. We (the PC) try to view all planning applications with the objectiveness that an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty deserves. Over the past year we have carried out more site visits and will continue to do so. If members of the Parish are planning building alterations and would like to discuss them before they go to WDC we are only too happy to see them. In the coming year we will continue to endeavour to act in a way to the beautiful area in which we live.
 - (b) **Rights of Way & Highways and Village Action Plan – Cllr. Vicky Richards**

As most of you are aware at some stage during this financial year Hadlow Down will be getting a 30mph through the centre of the village, down both arms of Wilderness Lane and as far as the Playing Fields down School Lane! A lot of people have worked very hard to help the Parish Council achieve this goal. From volunteers who have operated the SID machine in some terrible weather to Rev John Challis and the Hadlow Down Youth Club, with the backing of St Marks School, who spent a week last summer holidays making that great little film 'The Longest Lane'. As ever, there is a fight on the Council's hands to extend the 30 to cover what we consider to be the right limits and to buffer the village with a 40 mph to include Tinkers Lane. Another 'battle' is to get our recently closed green lanes repaired and opened again and to ban the use of 4 x 4 and bikes, which have totally ruined 2 lovely ancient rights of way. ESCC have a statutory duty to keep our bridle ways and paths in good repair – a plea of lack of funds is just not good enough. If you feel strongly about this and the bridle ways please get in touch with the PC to offer your help and support. In preparing for this meeting I had another read through the Village Action plan – which reflected the village's views at the time - and thought you would be interested to have an up-date on what has been achieved since it was sent out some 5 years ago:
The Parish Magazine – thanks to Wendy and Ned Neil, is flourishing!
We have a new Parish Noticeboard
We have Broadband

We have a Village Website – which is sadly extremely underused and needs looking at again
We have tried to rationalise parking outside the school – certainly more people are parking around the side but this, I fear, will be an ongoing problem.

We will be getting a 30mph speed limit.

There is now a Village Hall Working Party investigating various possibilities for the Village Hall

An area that I have tried to progress, and will now pass on to someone else, is developing better transport connections for the village – both bus and through a group of volunteers to help with travel for both the village's young people and those who, for whatever reason, who are unable to drive.

I have enjoyed my time on the Parish Council and, whilst I am leaving because I feel I now do not have the time to devote, I hope that they know that I will support them in any way I can.

(c) **Playing Field, New Village Hall and Neighbourhood Watch – Cllr. Graham Terry**

Neighbourhood Watch. The impetus this year was to get new signs up in the Village as a positive statement that we were up and running. Unfortunately, it took 6 months from the time I advised ESCC that we had the money and the agreed positions before we got the signs up. I tried to ensure that the sites I chose were ones where the signs were as visible as possible. Now, at last, they are definitely in prominent positions. I know that we have such a widespread village that some houses are outside the zone of the signs but I thought this was better than losing the prominence. Having got the signs we now have to move forward. Dave Smith, our Crime Prevention Officer, has retired and his place has been taken by Sgt Dave Price. Dave wants to get a better push for NHW centrally and will be in contact soon to discuss the best way forward.

New Village Hall. The School House Trust has been successful getting an extended lease agreed, for the land at the entrance to the playing field. After a lot of effort, first with the Diocese and then with the Charity Commission.. I would like to thank Mike Ford in particular and the other Trustees for their efforts on our behalf. We shall soon start the negotiations to get that lease in place. Richard Boswell is chairing the committee and we had the inaugural meeting 2 weeks ago. You will soon see in the Parish Magazine a questionnaire asking the Village for the things you think we need to consider for a new Hall. It is for your benefit and we need to know what you think. When it arrives, please complete it.

Playing Field. I am also the Council's representative on the Playing Field Committee where I also wear my Village Fayre hat! It has been a busy but successful year on the Playing Field. The Cycle track was completed, the Pavilion roof repaired, a new event, Cyclorama, staged and the Cricket Club had a number of successful matches. There was also the Fayre and a dog show as well as a couple of small, private functions. The Cricket Club are aiming to hold more matches this year and have ambitions to move into a higher league which is very good news for the use of the Playing Field. All the Playing Field funds they raise themselves, mostly from the Tinkers Park Rally so please go along there and support their stall. They mainly sell machinery and tools and if you have anything spare please call Peter Gillies who will be delighted to hear from you.

Hadlow Down Community Association. For some years we have been looking at ways we could reduce the total cost to the Village of the insurances we pay for – Village Hall, Village Fayre, Playing Field, Winterfest etc. Efforts by Peter Gillies and Bob Spencer led to a combined insurance at about 55% of the cost before! A cracking achievement. The insurers needed a single name so we “formed” the Hadlow Down Community Association. We hope that it may progress from just a name to be the overall body with all the village organisations forming part and benefitting from the economies of scale it could bring.

(d) **Village Hall, Tree Warden and Emergency Planning – Cllr. Jo Dummer.**

Jo said that she was sorry to have to leave the PC before the end of her 4 years, which is due to an overwhelming family commitment.

The Village Hall. The VH now has a proper working committee which meets on a regular basis and discusses and decides on, all issues in connection with the hall. Sadly Rena (acting Treasurer and Booking Clerk) had to retire after doing a magnificent job, however Lisa Scott has taken on the job and is doing an absolutely splendid job. Bookings have increased. I would like it recorded that Lisa is a mother of 4 and runs a successful business, so please don't take advantage of her. I recently resigned as Chairman and Janet Tourell was appointed to take my place. The village is lucky that she came forward. Our Secretary, Colin James, has represented the Committee in the negotiations to form the Hadlow Down Community Association, to give us all better terms on insurance, and the like. The PC supported the initiative.

Bank balances at the end of March were Community Account - £2,246.31 and Premium Account £2,077.94.

The Emergency Plan. This was my main job on the Council and has been fulfilled.. The Village is lucky to have a good team of people, dedicated and reliable. Radio sessions are being managed by Mark Davies and have never been missed. We were happy when Eddie Westfield agreed to take over from me as Team Leader. I am confident that he will do a great job.

Trees. Nothing significant to report.

(e) **Burial Ground – Cllr. Marian Wilson.** The contractor has maintained the grounds in good shape. The metal gates need attention along with the wooden seats which should be addressed in the near future.

(f) **Wealden District Assn. of Local Councils and Safer Wealden Partnership – Cllr. Colin James.**

Apologies for not being present this evening. I represent your Council on two outside bodies:

Firstly, the Wealden District Association of Local Councils where 42 Local Councils have the right to be represented to discuss current issues affecting us and to lobby Wealden District Council or East Sussex County Council to accept our recommendations or to justify their decisions. Unsurprisingly much time has again been devoted to the matters that affect us most in our daily lives. Such as;

Law and order, where East Sussex is generally at the lower end of the crime tables except that theft of metal and fuel oil is beginning to be more popular even in our local area;

Availability of Travellers and Gypsies Transit Sites are never sufficient or in the right place to prevent invasion of private land and causing much damage and anxiety. It requires us all to be alert and report any suspicious occupation or purchase of land (Argos Hill had a classic case on the main road where the Occupiers defeated the most astute legal brains and local residents who would have been quite able to buy the land had they been more alert).

The funding of our PCSO's is a hardy annual since the Government financed their initial employment but did not provide any means of essential transport for them (sadly in the North Weald we have not had the benefit of private car sponsors which has happened in the South so the cash has had to come by cut backs elsewhere).

One topic we shall be pursuing is the degradation by motor bikes and 4WDs of the two Green Lanes or Bridleways in Dog Kennel Lane and School Lane and your help may be needed by supporting a petition. The other Committee we support is the Safer Wealden Partnership which is an initiative by Wealden to provide financial and admin support for publicising Police activities that affect our domestic lives and we research the more timely crime statistics produced by the Police to alert Local Councils to trends that they can use down to Parish level.

8. Chairman's Report

Paul gave thanks to all those who attended and commented on the glorious day. He thanked his fellow Councillors for the hard work they have put in during the past year, especially to Vicky for at last getting Hadlow Down a 30 mph speed limit. She did all this in her own spare time and took on tasks like the video made by the local youths.

Thanks also goes to Jo for all her Emergency Plan work.

Paul commented that the 3 ladies on the committee were leaving as from tomorrow ("surely we men can't be all that bad!"). He said that he would be sorry to see them go but understand that they have other commitments with work and family etc. (Here plants were presented to the ladies).

Thanks also to Fiona for her ongoing work with the Mayfield Charities.

On behalf of the Council thanks also goes to Joan Wiltshire for reporting our meetings in the Courier and her general support.

It is a pleasure to see Tam, our PCSO, at our meetings, reporting all manner of things, but, thankfully we still live in a low crime rate area.

Thanks to our Clerk, Jean, who puts up with all of us and looks after the Council's affairs, very professionally and with great care.

Last but not least thanks to our WDC Councillors, Norman Buck and Ken Ogden and to Tony Reid our representative from ESCC who attends most meetings and helps us at every opportunity.

9. ESCC and WDC Reports (5 mins each)

ESCC – Cllr. Tony Reid. Tony commented that it was the third year that this meeting had clashed with Buxted. But he was pleased to be here this year. Tony commented on comments about services provided by ESCC. ESCC pay 70p out of every £1 spent with the Government only paying 30p. The Government increase is only 1% per year. Therefore funding is difficult. They have to make improvements fit within the budget. Road maintenance deflates due to the rising fuel costs. East Sussex also has the highest percentage of residents over 85 than any where else in the UK.

Tony commented that it was a credit to the Parish Council that the Public felt involved. He commended a good attendance. HD PC are very active in looking after their village.

He hopes to be able to apply more funding later in the year to highways and maintenance, but the older sector is draining the resources.

Sustainability is an important issue, we all need to take stock and make adjustments to our lifestyles and cannot continue as we have been. We must be aware of growth around us, if not in the village.

He applauded the Chair and Council.

WDC – Cllr. Ken Ogden. Ken spoke about the combining of the Crowborough and Hailsham offices of WDC which should happen by 2011. They will have closed Crowborough and moved to a newbuild in Hailsham.

He advised that he and Norman Buck were always available for advice on planning matters.

Paul asked about the Hope Project, which has gone very quiet. Ken said he would look into why.

10. Questions from the floor (15 mins)

There were no questions but John Eliot gave a vote of thanks to the Council.

11. Closure of business.

The meeting ended at 8.35 when those present enjoyed refreshments provided by the Council.