

# HARPSDEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at Harpsden Village Hall

on

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2018

Present: Cllr Kester George (KG) - Chairman  
Cllr Tony Wright (TW) – Deputy Chairman  
Cllr Hilary Andrews (HA)  
Cllr Catherine Rubinstein (CR)  
Cllr Matthew Phillips (MP)  
Cllr Paul Harrison (PH) - SODC Councillor

Residents: About 30

In attendance: Mrs Sarah Tipple (ST) - Harpsden Parish Clerk

**1. Welcomes:** KG welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**2. Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the APM held on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2017 were signed as a correct record.

**3. i. Financial Report:** The financial report for the last year was available for everyone to examine. The report was proposed by David Chenery, parishioner, and seconded by Robin Dorkings, parishioner. It is attached to these minutes at Appendix 1.

**ii. Chairman's Report:** KG gave his annual report, the text of which follows:

“2017 was marred for Harpsden by the loss of Thames Farm to the developers, a decision which conflicted with the Neighbourhood Plan (JHHNP) and was only granted because of an unjust twist in planning law whereby a planning authority (in this instance SODC) can be penalised for a developer's failure to make use of planning approvals given to him. The harm caused by this decision is of course off-set by the 30 odd affordable houses to be expected, which may provide accommodation for younger families, but this possible benefit is in turn off-set by the pressure for a more thorough-going urbanisation of the countryside behind Woodlands Road which threatens to change the rural character of the Thames valley between Harpsden and Shiplake.

Nor do our woes end there: Harpsden is being squeezed from the north west as well as the south east. An application that would virtually double the size of the new estate at Highlands Farm can be expected shortly which can only increase the pressure on Gillotts Lane, on the road through the village and on Sheephouse Lane to the Henley-Reading road. What is your Council doing about all this pressure? The answer is everything we can, starting with the prospective use of our CIL money on safeguarding Gillotts Lane, on mending the dreadfully dilapidated road through the village and on repairing Sheephouse Lane.

As usual we have also done what we can to stop bad or abusive smaller developments while commending any that we regard as improvements. The most striking example of the first category must be Little Hill Cottage along the valley, where the applicant abused his approval for one medium-sized house plus a small outhouse by building two much larger houses plus the base for a third. With the aid of the outraged neighbours, we were able to put a stop to this flagrant abuse of the planning system. A development that we commended was the replacement of the ugly grey cottage next to the football field by two

semi-detached dwellings that should offer scope to the deserving young, particularly those on low incomes such as nurses and teachers.

Finally, we have acquired two new Councillors – Matthew Phillips from Half-Way Cottage and Hilary Andrews from the other side of Harpsden Wood, and thanked Robin Dorkings and Malcolm Plews for their helpful service. As always, we are profoundly grateful to Sarah Tipple for her sustained competence and good cheer in a very difficult and demanding year.”

#### **4. Open Forum for Other Issues**

- i. Neighbourhood Plan:** Odette Moss queried the value of remaining in the next iteration of the JHHNP as she felt the Plan had let the parish down and as the new Local Plan had been overturned and the final housing numbers for the District had yet to be confirmed. Was there any value in joining Shiplake’s NP? KG replied that the Parish Council (PC) was still considering its options, although was very aware that Shiplake wanted to finalise its NP in the very near future in order for it to carry sufficient weight at an Inquiry into plans to build a Care Home on a greenfield site on the Reading Road south of the War Memorial. Overall, however, the PC considered that remaining with Henley in the revised NP offered more protection than withdrawing from it. SODC had recently changed its advice and had informed the Council that the 99 houses at Thames Farm would not count towards the new Henley/Harpsden allocation as it was closer to the ‘settlement’ of Shiplake; they were maintaining that the proximity of settlement carried greater weight than the parish boundary. The Council was in disagreement with SODC and was in an ongoing debate.
- ii. Gillotts Lane:** Henry Gummer (HG) of Incline Cottage, Gillotts Lane, thanked the Council for its efforts thus far in trying to agree with SODC and OCC which safety measures could be put in place along the lane. In summary, there was a proposal for a chicane to be installed by the developers at the top of the lane before it narrowed; it might be possible to install a vehicle activated sign to accompany the chicane; OCC was currently discussing the developer funding a 20 mph limit from the chicane down to the bottom of the lane, for which speed surveys would need to be implemented; it would not be legally possible to install a Traffic Regulation Order for the Lane to become Access Only; the installation of a 7.5T weight restriction would require an implementation of a Traffic Regulation Order, the current fee for which was £2600, and this would have to be accompanied by the physical works themselves which would also need to be funded; protecting the banks and verges of the lane with reflective bollards was indeed possible; and OCC would provide a quotation for the cost to retarmac the whole lane with first grade tarmac. HG reminded the Council that the wish of the residents was for safety measures to be installed first, prior to any improvement to the surface of the lane. As erosion had made it unclear where the individual properties’ boundaries lay, HG agreed to establish an agreed line of bollards with those properties that wanted them. Sam Austin of Oak Farm, observed that erosion was increasing along the verges of the entire length of the road running from Sonning Common through the village. KG confirmed that the CIL money from the Highlands Farm development would be able to pay for some if not all of the proposed improvements to Gillotts Lane, although some of the CIL revenue would also have to pay for improvements to the valley road and Sheephouse Lane. All improvements would have to be approved by OCC and it was their own contractors who would have to provide any resurfacing in order to satisfy their insurance requirements.
- iii. AONB:** Hugh Crook, of Rotherfield Road, asked if the Parish Council had embarked on an initiative to extend the AONB in the area. KG informed the meeting that Harpsden, together with Shiplake, Binfield Heath and Eye and Dunsden had indeed applied to extend the AONB

locally but as the staff concerned were only able to deal with two or three applications every ten years, any decision would be made at a much later date.

- iv. Speeding along Woodlands Road:** Colin Brooks-Johnson wondered if anything could be done to make the whole of Woodlands Road a 30mph speed limit zone – cars currently reached excessive speeds when entering the national speed limit zone, and this would only be exacerbated by the increase in traffic to be expected from the Thames Farm development. Paul Harrison, SODC Councillor, reminded the meeting that decreasing the speed limit would have the effect of urbanising the road, which could make it easier for planning applications to be approved, as had happened at the Chelford House site near the Shiplake War Memorial.
- v. No Idling Campaign:** Patrick Fleming (PF) introduced himself to the meeting as a member of Henley's Transport Committee, who were trying to ameliorate the affects of all the additional housing and traffic by running a 'no idling' campaign, which encouraged drivers to turn their engines off while sitting in traffic. Henley was known to regularly exceed the EU guidelines on particulates. KG and TW would provide PF's contact details if anyone wanted more information.
- vi. Thames Farm:** David Bryant (DB) of Thames Farm House, overlooking Thames Farm, wondered when work would start on the development. KG replied that no date had yet been set as a builder had yet to be assigned. With regards to the development at Wyevale, DB wondered if any restrictions could be placed on the usage of the commercial property at the site to reduce noise pollution along Bolney Lane. He also expressed concern over the potential increase in traffic along the lane. The PC agreed to ask OCC if it would be possible for the residents to adopt the lane and make it a private road.

KG thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.20pm.