

HARPSDEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at Harpsden Village Hall

on

Wednesday 17th April 2013

Present: Cllr Kester George (KG) Chairman
Cllr Odette Moss (OM)
Cllr Malcolm Plews (MP)
Cllr Robin Dorkings (RD)
Mr Mike Kennedy (MK) Henley Town Clerk

Residents: Over 40 plus five apologies

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

- 1. Welcomes:** KG welcomed everyone to the meeting, and especially Mike Kennedy, Henley's Town Clerk, who had kindly agreed to give the opening address.
- 2. Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the APM held on April 18th 2012 were signed as a correct record.
- 3. i. Financial Report:** The financial report for the last year was available for everyone to examine. KG explained that the Parish Council tried to keep the precept as small as possible and that most of the budget went into the Clerk's salary. The Chairman asked for the financial report to be approved. This was proposed by Malcolm Plews and seconded by John Turner.
- ii. Chairman's Report:** KG gave his annual report, in which he highlighted changes to the personnel on the Council, in particular the loss next month of Dr Peter Skolar, the Council's County Councillor, when he would be standing for Benson, and the retirement of Councillor Karen Tross Youle, to whom he was particularly grateful for improving email connection with parishioners. The Council's main concern during the year had been the threat of substantial housing in the area. He explained that the Parish Council had had to agree to include the whole of the Parish in the Neighbourhood Plan area and that the arrangements for working out the joint plan with Henley would be the focus of the evening's discussion. He was most grateful to Mike Kennedy for agreeing to lead this discussion. A full text of KG's report is attached to these minutes.
- 4. Joint Henley/Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan**
Mike Kennedy (MK), Clerk to Henley-on-Thames Town Council, gave an interesting and informative talk on the Joint Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan and made the following salient points:
 - Following the introduction of the Localism Act 2011, communities were now able to draw up a Neighbourhood Plan (NP), setting out planning policies for the development and use of land for a given neighbourhood area.
 - Neighbourhood Planning was designed to be more collaborative and gave communities the powers to shape the future of the area in which they lived and

worked. A NP was a planning document drawn up by residents of the NP area and organisations and businesses within it as well as by the Councils involved.

- The NP would be subject to a professional independent examiner and would be put to a referendum at which every resident in the NP area would be entitled to vote.
- Harpsden had accepted that restricting the original NP area to the parish of Henley alone meant that the impact of the three sites in Harpsden (land at Gillotts School, Treetops and 11 acres at Highlands Farm) could not be considered as part of the town's strategic needs and priorities.
- 75% of those who responded to the questionnaire sent out by Harpsden Parish Council had voted in favour of developing a joint Henley/Harpsden NP.
- An invitation to tender had just been sent out to planning consultants inviting them to bid to work with the NP committees and working groups.
- A budget of £50,000 had been set aside for the NP by Henley Town Council and it might be eligible for a further £15,000 of funding from SODC.
- Four councillors from each Council had formed a joint working committee to establish the initial way forward for the NP.
- Topics for the working groups would be decided by residents and councils. Working groups would be made up of two councillors from each Council and up to six residents, depending on their skill set.
- Others could become involved by making presentations to working groups and by making suggestions via suggestion boxes which were soon to be installed in Henley and Harpsden. There would be a separate NP website and further Public Opinion Days in Harpsden and Henley would also be held. The aim was to keep the public as informed as possible and to consult as widely as possible at every stage of the Neighbourhood Planning process.
- The planning Minister, Nick Boles MP, had announced in January that Communities that drew up a NP would receive 25% of the planning levy (CIL) charged on new developments in their area. This could be put towards improving infrastructure adversely affected by housing developments.

KG thanked MK for his address and in summing up, reiterated that parishioners could help in three ways: i) by applying to join a working group, ii) by joining in discussions with or making presentations to working groups, iii) by suggesting working group topics. Now that Harpsden was committed to a joint NP, he urged residents to make the best of it and think of ways in which they could positively contribute to it.

Questions were then received from the floor as follows:

Q: Why did Harpsden have to accept housing at all when it had been designated a 'small village'?

A: Harpsden was still a small village but SODC's requirement for land to build new houses had overridden this.

Q: Harpsden would have significantly fewer voters than Henley at the referendum stage.

A: The plan would reflect the desires of the people who helped produce the plan so it was critical that Harpsden had good representation on the working groups and that Harpsden residents came forward with their views either to the Clerk or directly to particular working groups, whether orally or in writing.

- Q: It was difficult to agree to join a working group until the time commitment involved had been established.
- A: At least one evening meeting per month was envisaged with email communication in between. RD suggested those interested should look at a NP that had already been produced such as that in the Eden Valley which might give an indication of the work involved.
- Q: What ideas for the working groups had already been suggested?
- A: Housing allocation, traffic, access, parking, education, medical and chemists, protection of the Harpsden Valley, sustainability. There were clearly others that could be put forward.
- Q: Could Townlands Hospital be re-sited at Highlands Farm and houses built on the allotment sites in Henley?
- A: Any suggestions should either be sent by email to MK or ST or put in one of the suggestion boxes. All suggestions would be considered and discussed by the relevant working group. Other sites, including Thames Farm, Chiltern End, Forty Acres, the Town Green and the old Wyevale site, had also been mentioned.
- Q: How many people had volunteered to serve on a working group?
- A: Over 60 of whom 12 were from Harpsden.
- Q: How might the working groups be coordinated or interlinked?
- A: This had not yet been established but the consultants would be involved at every stage. The suggestion was made that the chairperson of each working group could make up the coordinating committee.
- Q: Had the Terms of Reference for the working groups been established yet?
- A: Not yet but they would be approved by both councils.
- Q: Was SODC's Core Strategy fundamentally flawed as its map had indicated that Gillotts School and Highlands Farm were both in Henley?
- A: Harpsden and Henley were contiguous and the sites were mutually dependent on each other so they had to be included in the 'Henley area' despite being in the parish of Harpsden.
- Q: The County Council had no money to spend on road improvements so how could roads, such as Gillotts Lane, be improved as part of the NP?
- A: Communities that drew up a NP would receive 25% of the planning levy (CIL) charged on new developments in their area. The money had to go back to SODC but it could be ring-fenced for road improvements in the affected areas.
- Q: When did the Councils envisage agreeing the working groups?
- A: A timeline had been produced and there was a link to the NP from the Town Council's website.
- Q: Were there any other mandates in the Core Strategy or was development in the Henley area restricted to the 400 – 450 houses?
- A: There were no other mandates.
- Q: Could windfall development be included in the count of 400 houses?
- A: No. However early applications on the sites specified in the Core Strategy would be included.

The Chairman urged residents to help in any way they could, thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9:10pm.