

# HARPSDEN PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at Harpsden Village Hall

on

Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2014

Present: Cllr Kester George (KG) Chairman  
Cllr Odette Moss (OM)  
Cllr Malcolm Plews (MP)  
Cllr Robin Dorkings (RD)  
Cllr David Bartholomew (DB) County Councillor  
Cllr Rob Simister (RS) District Councillor

Residents: About 25 with two apologies

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

- 1. Welcomes:** KG welcomed everyone to the meeting. Nick Young, the mostly recently co-opted member of the Council, had sent his apologies.
- 2. Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the APM held on April 17<sup>th</sup> 2013 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. He also highlighted the donation to the Woodland Trust, which had carried out a significant amount of work in Harpsden Woods after the winter storms, and the donation to the PCC for the upkeep of the cemetery. KG asked for the financial report to be approved. This was proposed by David Chenery and seconded by Eileen Bottjer.
- ii. Chairman's Report:** KG gave his annual report, in which he explained that the year had been dominated by the Council's participation in the joint Henley/Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan, which would be the focus of the evening's discussion. He also made reference to the possible changes in the parish boundaries and the transformation of the cricket ground and its pavilion. He was most grateful to Tony Wright, a Patron of the Cricket Club and Chairman of Fundraising for The Project Committee, for agreeing to provide the meeting with an overview of the project. A full text of KG's report is attached to these minutes.
- 4. Cricket Club Project Overview**  
Tony Wright (TW) gave an interesting and informative talk on the redevelopment of the Cricket Club ground and pavilion and made the following salient points:
  - Cricket had started in Harpsden in 1887 in the field next to the village hall before moving to its present site in 1906, a year before the Golf Club started.
  - The only substantial improvement work during that time had been the installation of showers and toilets by the Myatt family some 25 years ago.

- In recent years a growing number of cricket balls had been hit into the car park and onto the road. Fortunately no injuries had occurred but they had caused damage to parked cars.
- The increase in the average height of cricketers and an increase in the weight of the bat over the last 100 years, meant that balls were being hit further than when the cricket square had originally been built.
- Fortunately the size of the field meant that there was scope to move the cricket square away from the road and car park, and level the boundary to the north side of the field, to provide a safer playing area. This, together with the erection of a 40 ft safety net, should result in fewer balls leaving the ground and, consequently, providing a safer facility for all
- The £185,000 remodelling and rebuilding work had been partly financed by grants from the John Hodges Trust for Harpsden Hall, from Sport England and from SODC but a significant amount had been donated by individuals.
- TW paid tribute to Rod Birkett, the club's chairman, for master-minding the whole project, to Julian Burt, the club's president, to Charlie Stevens for managing the remodeling of the ground, to Joanna Cary for managing the pavilion project and to James Woosnam, a Trustee of the John Hodges Trust for Harpsden Hall.

KG thanked TW for his address and in summing up, invited all those present to take the time to admire the remodeled ground and pavilion.

## **5. Open Forum around the Joint Neighbourhood Plan (JNP)**

KG praised Henley Town Council's organisation of the JNP, emphasising that Dieter Hinke in particular had kept the plan moving forward, which was important to prevent any disruptive action by developers. Following a leak to the Henley Standard, it was now general knowledge that the Working Group had allocated over half of the 400 – 450 houses to sites within the parish of Henley with the only allocation in Harpsden being that at Highlands Farm. The main area of concern now was to mitigate the effect of the inevitable increase in traffic up and down Gillotts Lane. KG emphasised that the severe problems of Gillotts Lane had been addressed time and again at every working group meeting and that all members were sympathetic to the situation and keen to find a solution.

David Chenery, a resident of Gillotts Lane, wondered if improvements could be made to the road immediately, prior to the site being developed. David Bartholomew (DB), OCC Councillor for Harpsden, explained that the Section 106 money released from the building of new houses to improve infrastructure, could only be allocated once planning permission had been granted.

Eileen Bottjer, another resident of Gillotts Lane, had reported the severe potholes outside her house on FixMyStreet.com but had heard nothing. DB advised her, and everyone present, to make a note of the reference number from reports they had made on that website, and if there was no result, to raise it with him and he would take it further. He further explained that roads were allocated a 'points' system and improvements such as kerbing would only be carried out to those roads with a higher points ranking.

RD explained that, despite several invitations, OCC had not provided any input into the JNP but it was hoped that once the plan had been approved, discussions with OCC regarding

improvements to Gillotts Lane could be started. Joanna Cary, a Harpsden resident, wondered why an allocation at Highlands Farm had been made when OCC had stated before the plan that it was its least preferred site. KG agreed that it would be interesting to see how firmly they would maintain their previous view and MP reminded her that an industrial estate at Highlands would generate the same amount of HGV traffic as 150+ houses. DB added that the Government's requirement for additional housing meant that the problems generated by that housing would have to be mitigated by the developers.

Tony Austin, a Harpsden resident, wondered if the JNP would stand up in a court of law as Neighbourhood Planning was still in its infancy and had not been put to the test. Rob Simister (RS), the SODC Councillor for Harpsden, explained that SODC had to ratify the plan and ensure it complied with the Core Strategy and, once approved, it would be a legally binding document, intended to prevent developers building houses at random.

Several residents wondered why the former Wyevale Garden Centre on the Reading Road had not received an allocation. KG explained that the JNP was considering a form of rural-type employment on that site, but this obviously depended on what the owner wanted to do. MP explained that the Wyevale site was outside SODC's Core Strategy as the requirement was to build home 'at Henley' and Wyevale was closer to Shiplake. Nexus Planning, the planning consultants employed by Henley and Harpsden, had heavily discouraged allocating housing at Wyevale as it lay outside the Core Strategy.

Tony Austin wondered if pressure could be put on other landowners in Henley to release land for development. KG explained that landowners in Henley had all been approached by Nexus Planning but that compulsory purchase was not available. One of the Town Council's sites, known as 40 Acres alongside the Henley College playing fields, had been suggested but turned down because of access problems.

In summing up, KG explained that all residents of Henley and Harpsden would be receiving notice of the public consultation on the first draft of the JNP via a new magazine being delivered to everyone in both parishes. KG urged all residents to respond to this public consultation, due to commence on 16<sup>th</sup> May, and to make their views known. Any comments or suggestions to do with Gillotts Lane could also be made at that time.

## **6. Other Issues**

One resident brought up the issue of the third bridge over the River Thames at Reading. DB explained that in his view, and in the view of 8 out of the 9 parishes he represented, the addition of a third bridge would bring a flood of cars onto South Oxfordshire's already overcrowded roads. He reiterated that OCC currently had no budget for new roads.

## **7. Close Meeting**

KG thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.50pm.