

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SOPLEY PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON 17TH NOVEMBER 2011 AT SOPLEY PARISH HALL

Attendees: Parish Cllrs. Rawstron (Chairamn), Eccles, Paul, Shutler & Westmacott.
District Cllr. Woodifield, County Cllr Rippon Swaine.
Parish Clerk G.N.Lewis & 5 Parishioners.

Apologies for absence: Parish Cllrs Pease & Springate, Parishioners Mr & Mrs Dunn

The Parish Clerk confirmed that the meeting was quorate. There were no declarations of interest from the Councillors present regarding any of the agenda items.

1) Review of the Minutes of the Meeting of SPC held on 15th September 2011

The minutes of the September meeting were reviewed.

Matters Arising :

It was noted that the 'Please Keeps Doors Closed Sign' had not yet been put in place in the Parish Hall Foyer. Cllr Eccles apologised for this oversight and undertook to deal with the matter ASAP.

The Clerk reported that he had followed up the query regarding the use of land for commercial 'long-stay' parking with NFDC and had been advised that this would require planning consent.

There being no other amendments or matters arising not covered by the November meeting agenda, Cllr Eccles (who had Chaired the September meeting) signed them as a true and accurate record.

2) Public Participation

NFDC Proposal to impose parking charges in village car parks from April 2012.

Mrs Hiscock asked if the Parish Council had been consulted over the proposal to impose parking charges in the NFDC Car Park in Bransgore Village. The Clerk advised that notification had been received during the past week and that the matter would be discussed under the 'Correspondence Received' item later on the agenda.

3) Parish Clerk's Report.

a) Report from the meeting of the Finance Committee held on November 10th 2011.

The Clerk summarised the recommendations of the Finance Committee meeting

a. 2012/13 Budget and Precept Requirements

The meeting had approved and circulated a draft budget for the 2012/13 financial year that would result in estimated expenditure of £21,450 – the same level as in 2011/12. In trying to maintain overall expenditure at this level during a period of rising cost inflation, the Committee had needed to make some small reductions in planned expenditure in some areas – notably the equipment and maintenance budgets – in order to offset cost increases elsewhere (salaries, subscriptions and insurances). As in 2011/12, the Committee had recommended that £20,500 of the required budget should be raised from the Parish Precept (0% change from the previous year), with the balance to be found from miscellaneous receipts or drawn from reserves.

Cllr Eccles Proposed and Cllr Rawstron seconded a motion that the budget and precept level should be approved as recommended. Carried unanimously.

b. Review of Financial Regulations & Risk Management Register

The Committee had reviewed the current financial regulations and risk register – copies of which had been circulated to the full Council. Attention was drawn to a small number of minor changes to both documents that had been made at the suggestion of the Council's internal auditor and/ or their insurer brokers. The Clerk also noted a small increase in the hourly rate paid for Cemetery maintenance – which reflected a change to the national minimum wage implemented in October 2011.

Cllr Eccles Proposed and Cllr Rawstron seconded a motion that the financial regulations and risk register be approved for the coming year as per the Finance Committee recommendations. Carried unanimously.

c. Parish Clerk's Contract

The Committee had also approved an employment contract for the Parish Clerk as per the recommendations of the Internal Auditor. The Contract is based upon the standard NALC / SLCC template with a retrospective commencement date of 1st January 2011. The salary had been set at spinal point 22 of the national pay scale for Local Council Clerks (currently £10.20 per hour) and payment will be based upon a 60 hour working month, inclusive of annual holiday entitlements.

Cllr Eccles proposed and Cllr Springate seconded a motion that the contract as described should be endorsed and signed by both parties. Carried unanimously.

d. **Review of Standing Orders**

Lastly, the Committee had reviewed the latest version of the National Model Standing Orders (May 2011) and had amended the optional sections of the document to reflect recommended practice for Sopley Parish Council. Draft copies of the amended 26 page document (with the recommended changes marked in red type) had been distributed to all of the Parish Councillors for final approval.

Cllr Rawstron proposed and Cllr Westmacott seconded a motion that this item should be deferred to the January Parish Meeting to allow time for the Cllrs to study the document in more depth. Carried unanimously. Cllr Westmacott also asked if guidance could be produced for the Councillors regarding enquiries from the Press – the Clerk undertook to investigate if other Councils already have such guidance that could be adopted by Sopley.

b) **Financial Report - Current Balances and Transaction Summary**

The Parish Clerk circulated copies of the current financial summary spreadsheet and advised the meeting that the Parish account balances as at mid November 2011 were :

Current A/C £24,083

Deposit A/C £20,427

Parish Hall A/C £16,170

Co-Operative Bank A/C (Shirley Allotments Charitable Trust Income) £4,683

He confirmed that the second half-year precept transfer of £10,250 had now been received from NFDC and that expenditure to date was broadly in line with the planned budget – with overspends against audit fees (which were being contested), subscriptions and salaries being partially offset by under spends on maintenance and equipment. He also noted that there would be a further small influx of funds from the SITA into the Parish Hall account once the final grant claim had been settled. Cllr Rawstron confirmed that this matter was in hand.

A list of cheques issued since the last meeting, together with a summary of income and expenditure during the same period was circulated, approved and signed as correct by Cllr Rawstron.

c) **Correspondence received and sent**

1) Bournemouth Airport – Parish Liaison Meeting.

A letter had been sent to our Airport Liaison Member (Cllr Pease) inviting us to send two representatives to a Parish liaison meeting to be held at the airport at 9.30am on Thursday

24th November. The Clerk has consulted with Cllr Pease (who is currently in South Africa) and he has asked Cllr Westmacott and the Parish Clerk to attend in his place. A reply had been sent back to the Airport Management Team accepting their invitation.

2) Proposed introduction of Parking Charges – Village Car Parks in the NFDC Area.

The Clerk confirmed that NFDC had advised SPC of their intention to debate the possible introduction of car parking charges at village car parks – including the one in Bransgore – at their December 7th Cabinet Meeting. Opposition to the proposal from both local residents and the Parish Councils and traders in the affected villages was already widespread and SPC had an opportunity to voice their views on the matter – for or against the proposal – via either Cllr Woodfield or Cllr Steele (who is the transportation lead member at the ALCNFD). As yet, NFDC had not published any details of the proposal (except for a list of the affected villages) nor any cost / benefit analysis of the possible impact of the changes on the communities affected. After discussion, it was agreed that Cllr Woodfield would be the most appropriate person to convey the views of SPC on this matter and that, the initial response to the proposal (without the benefit having seen a detailed report on the matter) was one of concern that the adverse effect of parking charges on the village shops could easily outweigh any income generated for NFDC.

3) New Forest Citizen's Advice Bureau – Grant Request

New Forest CAB had written thanking SPC for the £100 grant donation that was made to them following the September Parish Council meeting.

4) New Forest Disability Information Service – Grant Request.

NFDIS had written asking if SPC would be willing to make a grant donation to help with their work in 2011/12. The Clerk advised the meeting that there was currently £50.00 remaining in the Parish budget that was allocated for grants to local voluntary organisations - £50 having previously been given to Victim Support and £100 to the CAB. After discussion, it was decided that the remaining funds should be offered to a more local charitable group rather than to another organisation that served the whole of the District. **Proposed Cllr Westmacott, seconded Cllr Eccles that the £50.00 grant fund balance should be donated to the Fortune Centre – approved unanimously. Parish Clerk to action.**

5) New Forest Passenger Transport Forum Meeting.

An invitation had been received inviting SPC to send a representative to the next NFPTF meeting to be held in Lyndhurst at 10.00am on November 29th. SPC had also been contacted by two local residents and the staff team at the Fortune Centre who are concerned about the dramatic reduction in bus services through Bransgore and Sopley (now down to 3 buses a week and no weekend service at all). Parishioners attending the meeting also confirmed that

the 175 bus service had become increasingly poor and erratic in recent months and changes to the routing of the bus had resulted in occasions when the driver had failed to enter and stop in Sopley village at all. The Clerk advised that the Lyndhurst meeting agenda is centred on addressing the problems that are occurring as a result of the transport subsidy cuts – so it would be beneficial if SPC could arrange to be represented. He was unable to attend in person as he had a conflicting meeting of the New Forest RDPE Grants Committee in Lyndhurst that morning – but he would be happy to give a lift to anyone who could attend the NFPTF meeting.

- 6) Boundary Commission for England – Review of Parliamentary Constituencies.
The proposed changes to Parliamentary Constituency boundaries were published by BCE on September 13th and are open for consultation until December 5th. The Clerk advised that, if SPC wishes to respond, the Cllrs will need to reach a consensus view and pass their decision to the Clerk for action within the next two weeks.

- 7) The Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Beacons.
In common with all Parish Councils, SPC has been invited to take part in the lighting of a beacon at a prominent site in our Parish as part of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations to be held on Monday 4th June 2012. If the Parish Council wishes to participate in the celebrations, the Clerk has an information pack on the necessary arrangements that will need to be made. After a brief discussion, the Clerk was asked to contact Youth UK at the Avon Tyrrell to ascertain if they would be interested in hosting a beacon on Whitefield Hill – in which case the Parish Council would arrange to meet with them to discuss the possibility of jointly staging the event.

OTHER ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

The following publications had also been received since the September meeting and were available for inspection / loan on request from the Clerk :

- CPRE & NALC Booklet ‘How to respond to Planning Applications – An 8 Step Guide’
- Came & Co ‘Parish Matters’ Insurance Newsletter
- Local Council Journal – Autumn 2011 Issue
- The Clerk Magazine – Autumn 2011 Issue
- Eneco – A pack of summary documents and a CD regarding this Company’s proposal to construct an offshore wind farm in Christchurch Bay. This information has been sent to all local Councils in SW Hants and SE Dorset as part of a consultation process that will last until October 2013.

d) **Planning**

A list of local planning applications currently in circulation for Parish Council consultation together with any recent planning decisions reached by NFDC and the NFNPA was available to the meeting and was certified as correct by Cllr Rawstron.

Since the September meeting, two new applications had been received – both relating to Meadowbrook, Ringwood Rd, Sopley (the first for an animal shelter / feed-barn and the second for a conservatory extension). Both applications had gained the support of SPC members during the consultation period and NFDC had been advised accordingly.

NFDC had also advised of two decisions reached since September affecting properties in Sopley. The application for Home Close (change of use from a holiday let to a permanent dwelling) had been refused (a view endorsed by SPC) and Lakeside (conversion of a detached garage to a holiday chalet) had been approved (this application had been supported by SPC).

The Clerk confirmed that he had now heard back from NFDC Planning and Arboricultural Staff regarding the felling of the large Willow tree in the grounds of the Woolpack Pub in September. NFDC had confirmed that the tree had been felled without their approval but apparently only after the tree surgeon concerned had erroneously been given permission to proceed by Christchurch Borough Council who thought that the tree was within their administrative area. NFDC have now informed all three parties of the error and have instructed the Woolpack to plant a replacement tree.

Lastly, the Clerk informed the meeting that a Licensing Act variation application had just been notified to SPC by NFDC in respect of Avon Tyrrell. The application was to amend the conditions of their current license to permit a maximum of 15 outdoor entertainment events per annum (previously 6) and to extend the termination time of these events from 23.00rs to midnight. If any parishioners wish to make representations to the Licensing Authority about the application, they can only be lodged on the grounds of Public Safety, Prevention of Crime and Disorder, Protection of Children from Harm or Prevention of Public Nuisance. The closing date for representations was November 24th.

4) Burial Board

Cllr Eccles reported that there had not been any recent internments. Cllr Eccles also acknowledged that the annual meeting of the burial board was long overdue and he undertook to arrange a convenient date for the meeting as soon as possible. It was noted that the Board meeting would need to review the cemetery fees and also arrange for the maintenance arrangements to be reviewed and a new contract offered for tender.

5) Parish Maintenance, Footpaths, Rights of Way Issues

There were no significant maintenance issues to report. The Clerk had recently thanked the staff and students at Moorlands College for their assistance in clearing part of the pathway alongside the B3347.

Mrs Hiscock reported that the 2011 series of Parish Footpath walks had raised a total of £65.00 in voluntary donations and that this sum had been given to the Stable Family Home Trust at Bisterne. The meeting recorded a formal vote of thanks to Cynthia and Norman for their enthusiasm and hard work in organising and leading the walks.

6) Highways and Traffic Management Issues

The Clerk asked those present to notify him via e.mail of any maintenance issues that needed to be relayed to HCC. It was noted that some of the trees on the Avon Causeway approach road had recently been damaged by high-sided vehicles.

Carriageway surfacing repairs have recently been completed in Anna Lane, Court Lane and London Lane and these had greatly improved the driving conditions on these roads. Further surfacing repairs were shortly to be scheduled to take place in Bennetts Lane and Thatchers Lane. HCC had also advised that they were planning a radical cutting-back of the overgrown rhododendrons on both sides of the C49 Ringwood Rd between North Ripley and Sandford - with the work probably taking place early in 2012.

7) Parish Hall Progress

On behalf of the Hall Committee, Cllr Eccles reported on a growing programme of successful fund-raising events and noted that income received by the Committee up to the end of October was £8,002 against expenditure of £2,558. Of the balance, £3,550 will be passed to the Parish Council in December to meet the next instalment of the Public Works Loan repayment. Hall usage continues to be good – exceeding the business plan projections – although the Hall Committee are still keen to attract some more day-time groups to make regular use of the building.

In terms of the next phase of the planned redevelopment, Cllr Eccles acknowledged that grant funding was becoming increasingly difficult to find and that he was therefore planning to meet with Graham Davies (the Project Manager from the first phase of the project) to review the plans and see if the remainder of the project could be reduced into a series of smaller and more financially manageable stages.

8) County Councillor's Report

Cllr Rippon-Swaine reported on the following items relating to Highways, Traffic Management and Transport issues in the local area :

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SCHEMES 2011/12 (sub programme of Capital Programme)

- Review of Speed Limits on A & B Class roads in accordance with DfT Circular 01/2006 B3347 Ringwood (A31) to Sopley (Dorset County Boundary). Report expected in January 2012.
- Traffic Calming, Sopley (Phase 2) – Footway works on northbound section of Salisbury Road now completed. (A Parish Partnership Scheme)

PROPOSED HCC NEW FOREST TM PROGRAMME 2012/13 COMMITTED SCHEMES

- Sopley – review of temporary TM measures, could be 2011/12, but may move to 2012/13.
- Trial measures to be removed or made permanent
- Estimated cost £6,000.

PROPOSED HCC NEW FOREST TM PROGRAMME 2012/13 MINOR CAPITAL WORKS 2012/13

- Members Workshop held on 9 November 2011 to decide programme.
- B3347 Salisbury Road, Sopley – to construct a further section of footway on the west side of Salisbury Road, extending the recently completed scheme.
- HCC agreed scheme for 2012/13 programme.

HCC LOCAL BUS SUBSIDY GRANTS CONTRACTS

- Govt. funding to HCC reduced by £1.1 million in LBSG and £544k in Rural Bus Subsidy Grants for 2011/12.
- 70% of bus services and 85% of passenger journeys in Hampshire are provided commercially, without subsidy.
- Bus subsidy has increased by 10% over 5 years to £6.7 million.
- Attached Appendix provides links to further information covering the New Forest.

HCC READY FOR WINTER

- Media releases are published daily on hantsweb at: <http://www.hants.gov.uk/mediareleases>

9) District Councillors Report.

Cllr Woodifield reported that, she had attended and observed (but not spoken at) the recent planning enquiry into the appeal against various enforcement orders at Merryfield Park. After the enquiry, and following the discussions at previous SPC meetings, she had opened a dialogue with Cllr Ann Hickman of Bransgore Parish Council regarding the future use of the Merryfield Park and had attended a site meeting with Cllr Hickman and Mr Bailey. Although the dialogue is still at a very preliminary stage, she was of the opinion that Bransgore Parish Council appears to be more receptive to the idea of some form of limited redevelopment of part of the Merryfield site (in order to enable the remainder to be restored to agricultural, forestry or amenity use) than had been the case in the past. Cllr Rawstron confirmed that it remained the stated policy of Sopley Parish Council to support a strictly controlled redevelopment of part of the site in order to facilitate the restoration of the remainder and was encouraged that Bransgore seemed to be coming around to a similar point of view. Cllr Woodifield undertook to keep SPC informed of any subsequent discussions at District and / or Parish level regarding the Merryfield site and suggested that a further joint meeting of all interested parties would be beneficial once the enquiry findings had been announced.

Cllr Woodifield also drew the meeting's attention to two initiatives that might have potential benefits for local residents :

Insulate Hampshire - which is a joint initiative between the County and District Councils and Scottish Power to provide free or subsidised insulation to homes that are currently inadequately insulated (full details at www.insulatehampshire.co.uk)

Alcohol Awareness Week – which is a grassroots campaign running from the 14th – 21st November, carried out by local and regional groups and organisations to raise the awareness of the public to the social and health issues surrounding alcohol. It tells people what they can do to make a difference in their own lives and those of their friends and family, and how they can campaign locally and nationally. The local NHS Trust host a regular drop-in service to provide alcohol and drug advice at Oak Tree House, Gooseberry Lane, Ringwood.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.30pm

Date of the next meeting : Thursday 19th January 2012 at 7.30pm at Sopley Parish Hall.