

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SOPLEY PARISH COUNCIL**  
**HELD ON 19<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2012 AT SOPLEY PARISH HALL**

**Attendees:** Parish Cllrs. Shutler (Chairman), Paul, Springate & Westmacott.  
County Cllr Rippon Swaine.  
Parish Clerk G.N.Lewis & 18 Parishioners.

**Apologies for absence:** Parish Cllrs Eccles, Pease & Rawstron, District Cllr Woodifield.

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

**1) Review of the Minutes of the Meeting of SPC held on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2012 and Matters Arising.**

The minutes of the March meeting were reviewed. Matters Arising:

**Pavement Parking.**

The Clerk confirmed that, following complaints at the previous meeting, he had contacted the HCC Community Safety Team who had since visited the village on three occasions and had spoken to the drivers of vehicles found to be obstructing the pavements. Some of the cars involved belonged to family members of local householders – the remainder had been parked whilst the drivers were visiting local businesses. Everyone involved had been informed that it is an offence to obstruct a public right of way and that a minimum clearance of 2ft / 600mm of pavement must always be maintained for pedestrian use if a vehicle is parked on a verge adjacent to a footpath.

**'No Through Road' Signing for Priest Lane**

The Clerk confirmed that following the request from Mr Tanner, he had asked HCC to investigate the provision of additional signing further down Priest Lane to advise drivers that it is a dead-end with no turning space.

There were no further matters arising and Cllr Shutler duly signed the March minutes as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

**2) Public Participation**

**Vegetation Overhanging Footpaths - Sopley Village.**

Mrs Ramm asked if steps could be taken to arrange for overhanging vegetation to be cut back from several of the footpaths around the village – notably on the North-bound one-way system alongside and just beyond the new section of footpath and also on the South-bound section close to the bridge

(between the Forge and the Parish Hall). The Parish Clerk explained that the responsibility for keeping the vegetation under control rests with the adjacent householders or landowners and that he would investigate who needed to be contacted and would issue the necessary requests. In the event that responsibility could not be established, he would arrange for the work to be done through the Parish Council. Mr Tanner also asked if the northern end of Priest's Lane and the cross-country footpath (No 14) that joins it could be cut back - and Cllr Westmacott agreed to organise a swipe cutting in the short term and to request a flail cut later in the year. Mrs Dear asked if the footpath alongside the B3347 south of the village could also be kept clear – as the cessation of the school bus service during the summer holiday meant that Sopley residents would have to walk to Winkton to catch the bus to Christchurch during July and August. The Clerk agreed to investigate the possibility of using the Community Payback Service to undertake this work.

### **Redundant Telephone Box.**

The meeting was asked if any progress had been made in agreeing a future use for the redundant phone box. The Clerk explained that despite appeals at the previous meeting, no volunteer group had yet come forward to take the task on – although Mr & Mrs Dunn had very kindly stepped in to tidy and repaint the box to prevent further deterioration – for which the Council were grateful. Mrs Ramm suggested that the box might be used as an informal book exchange – a proposal that met with general support. The Clerk agreed to investigate how the box could be adapted to take shelving and to report back to a subsequent meeting.

### **3) Presentation concerning the suggested routing of the Onshore Cabling for the proposed Navitus Bay Wind-Farm.**

The Chairman introduced Mr Daniel Bates from Eneco Ltd who gave a 20 minute illustrated presentation on the proposed route of the on-shore cabling should the off-shore wind-farm at Navitus Bay be given the go-ahead following the current consultation period. A copy of Mr Bates presentation is appended to these minutes.

In the discussion that followed Mr Bate's presentation, it was noted that, although the proposed route mainly crosses private farmland, there were also, within Sopley Parish, five road crossing points – including one across Derritt lane and another across the B3347 – that could give rise to major local congestion if road closure orders or traffic control measures were imposed during the cable laying. Mr Bates noted the concern – and indicated that it was too early in the planning process to be able to give any firm information or assurances about how the road crossings would be carried out. However, it was envisaged that tunnelling techniques would be used in locations where trenching was impossible or inappropriate (such as the river crossing under the Avon at Week Common) and this technique could also be applied to road crossings where necessary.

As, at present, the proposals for both the offshore wind-farm and the associated on-shore cabling are subject to ongoing and lengthy public consultation before any political decisions will be reached regarding the granting or refusal of planning permission, the Chairman suggested that the Parish Council could do little more than maintain a watching brief on the matter until such time as a detailed planning application was submitted and considered. He thanked Mr Bates for his informative presentation and asked that Eneco should continue to maintain contact with the Parish Council as the proposals evolve.

#### 4) **Parish Clerk's Report.**

##### a) **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 July 2012 were :

Current A/C £15,079

Deposit A/C £20,488

Parish Hall A/C £19,522

Co-Operative Bank A/C (Shirley Allotments Charitable Trust Income) £4,883

He confirmed that, as agreed at the March Meeting, a sum of £10,000 had been transferred from the Deposit Account and placed on 12 months term deposit with Lloyds at an interest rate of 1.8% (the current interest rate of the balance of funds being only 0.05%). The transfer would generate £181.00 in interest over the coming year. The reported balance of £20,488 for the Deposit Account included the £10,000 now held on term deposit. **The Chairman signed the summary spreadsheet as an accurate record of the current financial position.**

##### b) **2011/12 Annual Accounts and Auditors Report.**

The Parish Clerk circulated copies on the 2011/12 Annual Accounts and Auditors Report - the internal audit having taken place in late May. Total expenditure for the year (including costs incurred in respect of the Parish Hall refurbishment project) totalled £58,951 against income of £58,674 - leaving a small deficit of £277. Liquid assets at year-end totalled £59,303.

The Auditor had given the accounts unqualified approval and had also approved the Council's business processes and record keeping – making three minor suggestions for improvements next year. The Clerk confirmed that he had prepared the documentation in respect of the external audit certificate and this would now be forwarded to the Audit Commission once the Council had accepted the auditors report and formally approved the accounts.

**Cllr Westmacott proposed and Cllr Springate seconded that the 2011/12 audit report and annual accounts should be accepted and formally approved. Carried unanimously.**

c) **Audit Commission Fees Dispute**

The Clerk reminded the Council that they were still in dispute with the Audit Commission regarding the fees charged in respect of the 2010/11 Audit Certificate and he circulated a Memo detailing the background to the dispute. Recent correspondence between the Clerk and the Ms Marcine Waterman (Director of Audit Policy & Regulation at the Audit Commission) had failed to resolve the matter as the Commission were still refusing to explain or justify the £660 charge - beyond confirming that it was correct in relation to their published scale of fees for local Councils. The Clerk had also sought advice from our own auditors – who were of the opinion that, whilst the Audit Commission fees could not be justified in terms of the type and volume of work that they had undertaken, the Audit Commission did have a legal right to impose the charge. Consequently, they had advised that the Council should be prepared to settle the account – not least because the Audit Commission does have powers to impose fairly draconian penalties on the Parish Council should it persist in refusing to meet the full sum that had been invoiced. After a brief discussion, **Cllr Westmacott proposed and Cllr Paul seconded a motion giving Council approval to the Clerk to settle the disputed Audit Commission invoice once all remaining avenues of appeal against the charge had been exhausted. Carried unanimously.**

d) **Proposed Changes to the Financing of Local Councils**

The Clerk circulated a briefing paper recently received from NFDC giving prior notice of legislative changes at National Government level in respect of Council Tax Benefits. The changes – as currently proposed - could have a significant impact on the precepting arrangements for local Town and Parish Councils and NFDC were intending to hold a briefing / consultative meeting with the Association of Local Councils in the New Forest in mid August (probably on the evening of August 23<sup>rd</sup>) to discuss the implications and what might be done to minimise their effect. The Clerk confirmed that he would be able to attend the meeting and that the Council Chairman (or a deputy) would also be welcome to attend.

e) **The Localism Act and Standards Regime**

The Clerk circulated documents from NALC, HALC and NFDC explaining the new Standards Regime for Local Councils that came into effect on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2012. From that date, the old national standards regime for Local Councillors had been abolished, to be replaced by a statutory duty on each individual Council to approve and adopt their own standards of conduct for elected members in accordance with National Government guidelines. Because there is no longer a prescriptive national code of conduct, several organisations – including NALC, HCC and NFDC had drawn up their own draft proposals to assist Local Councils in trying to decide the best way forward. Common to all three drafts – and laid down in the national guidance – is

an expectation that all Local Councillors must make a written annual declaration of both pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests that might influence their decision making. The Clerk had sought advice from HALC who had indicated that, although the Parish is at liberty to adopt any of the draft codes of conduct available to them (or to even draw up one of their own if they so wished), their recommendation would be to adopt the code in use by their own principal council - which, in the case of Sopley, would be NFDC. The Clerk also drew the Council's attention to recent press articles in which some Parish Councils had objected to a perceived increase in the level of detail required in the declarations of interest – which now extended to interests held by the spouse or partner of a Local Councillor. The Clerk explained that declaration of interests related only to matters of concern at Parish level such as local land-holdings, shares in or partnerships or employment links with local businesses etc - and not any wider financial investments or business links that would have no bearing on local decisions. NFDC's Legal and Monitoring Officer, Grainne O'Rourke had confirmed in writing that there should be no material difference to the way in which Councillor's interests had previously been disclosed, beyond a change of terminology from 'personal' and 'prejudicial' interests to 'pecuniary' and 'non-pecuniary'. After a brief discussion, **Cllr Shutler proposed and Cllr Westmacott seconded a motion approving the adoption of the NFDC Code of Conduct for Local Councillors and authorising the Clerk to proceed with the distribution and collection of the Register of Interest forms from individual Parish Councillors in due course. Carried unanimously.**

f) **Merryfield Park. NFDC Sites & Development Management Plan Consultation.**

The Clerk confirmed that he and Cllr Westmacott had attended the open consultation event at Merryfield Park on June 29<sup>th</sup> at which the site owners had displayed a range of development options that, subject to local opinion, they would like narrow down to a single scheme that they would then pursue as a formal planning application. Cllr Westmacott told the meeting that the site owners had offered to host a separate meeting of the Parish Council at the site to discuss their ideas in more detail – but that he felt that it would be more appropriate to do so at a neutral venue and with the benefit of some prior advice and input from the NFDC Planning Department. This suggestion was well received and the Clerk was asked to investigate possible dates for an extra-ordinary Parish Council meeting and, once a date had been agreed, to issue an invitation to attend to Chris Elliott, Head of Planning and Transportation at NFDC.

h) **Lengthsman Scheme**

The Clerk reported that he had attended the annual HCC Parish Liaison Meeting at Winchester in late May. Of the discussion groups that he took part in during the day, the most interesting and relevant to Sopley was the trial introduction by HCC of a Parish Lengthsman scheme – details of which were circulated. A further local meeting to discuss the scheme would be held

on July 30<sup>th</sup> at Brockenhurst Village Hall. Cllr Westmacott asked if the Clerk would attend on behalf of SPC to confirm that the Parish Council would be interested in taking part in the pilot if there was sufficient interest from the neighbouring Towns and Parishes to proceed.

g) **Correspondence received and sent since the previous Parish Council meeting.**

Traffic Calming – Sopley Village.

The Parish Council had been sent a copy of a letter of complaint from a resident of Shackleton Square, Bransgore to HCC concerning the traffic calming build-out at the junction of the B3347 and Derritt Lane. The letter was for information only and no further action on the part of the Parish Council was required

Damage to the banks of the River Avon.

The Clerk had received an anonymous letter alleging that livestock were causing significant damage to the banks of the Avon. As the location of the damage was not specified, it had not been possible to verify the allegations – but Cllr Westmacott had been made aware of the letter and would query the matter with the Avon Tyrrell Estates Farm Manager, Mr Bovett.

Vehicle Parking on the Northbound B3347, Sopley.

A letter had been received from a Sopley resident complaining about difficulties in parking alongside the northbound B3347 since the new section of pavement had been installed. The Clerk had consulted with the Co-Chairman and had sent a written reply.

NFDC Diamond Jubilee Celebrations.

The Clerk had received an e.mail from Dr & Mrs Gordon Hickish thanking the Council for his nomination as a ‘Diamond Resident’ and confirming that he and Aileen had greatly enjoyed the NFDC Chairman’s Reception at Appletree Court.

**Other items of correspondence for information only:**

The following publications and leaflets had been received and were available from the Clerk :

- Minutes of a meeting of the ALCiNF Rural Broadband Focus Group held on 12.06/12.
- The New Forest District Council Information Bulletin – June 2012
- Copies of the regular bulletins from the Hampshire Constabulary Western Country Watch Team and the New Forest District Safer Communities Office. (These documents are circulated electronically to the Parish Council members).

## h) **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 Shutler.

Eleven applications (relating to eight individual sites / properties) had been received for consultation since the last meeting – of which five were still in circulation for Councillors comments. Of those that had been agreed, full Parish Council support for planning approval had been given to applications in respect of the Avon Tyrrell Activity Centre (new boathouse); Avon Farm, Avon (new barn); 62 Ringwood Rd, Avon (domestic extension), The Old Kennels, Sopley Park (replacement barns) and Barcus Mead, Bennetts Lane, Shirley (domestic extension and garage). A second application in respect of the Old Kennels (for conversion to domestic residential use) had also been given conditional support. Those applications still under consideration were: The Coach House, Sopley (domestic extension); Sopley Court Sopley (3 applications relating to various property alterations and extensions and a new detached garage) and Little Nutley, Sopley (rear dormer).

The Clerk had also received notification from NFDC that the final draft of Part 2 (Sites and Development Management) of the Local Plan had been approved by a full Council meeting on June 18<sup>th</sup> and that the document had now been submitted for approval to the Secretary of State. It is expected that the Secretary of State will appoint an independent inspector to review to plan at a local public enquiry during the autumn / winter of 2012 – following which a final decision to approve or reject will be taken early in 2013.

## **5) Burial Board**

Cllr Springate reported that there had been no internments since the last meeting. The Burial Board had met on June 12<sup>th</sup> to consider ongoing maintenance arrangements and had decided to offer a trial maintenance contract to the Hampshire Probation Trust – who had been carrying out work at the Cemetery on an ad-hoc basis since last autumn. A work programme had been drawn up for the Probation Trust staff and the quality of their performance will be reviewed during the autumn so that a decision about retaining or dispensing with their services can be made in time to include Sopley in their 2013 maintenance schedule if it is decided to retain them. Repairs to the Cemetery store had been completed and further one-off tasks (tree pruning and removal, waste disposal, weed control and soil removal) had been identified and would be scheduled over the summer and autumn. A letter had been sent to Mr Slade, informing him of the new maintenance arrangements and thanking him for his work at the cemetery over the past years.

## **6) Parish Maintenance, Footpaths, Rights of Way Issues**

The Clerk reported that HCC had issued a temporary closure order on FP13 (running alongside Twobridges plantation between Fish St and Court Lane, Ripley) to allow repairs to the wooden footbridge at Fish St to be undertaken.

Mr Hiscock was thanked for his sterling work in keeping several of the local paths strimmed and clear of vegetation. It was noted that the 2012 programme of guided footpath walks was well underway.

## **7) Highways and Traffic Management Issues**

There were no significant maintenance issues to report.

The Clerk asked those present to notify him via e.mail of any maintenance issues that needed to be relayed to HCC and confirmed that he had requested a Parish Liaison visit from Richard Bastow, HCC Area Highways Manager. Cllr Rippon Swaine asked to be copied into this correspondence.

The Clerk confirmed that the SID had recently been deployed in Sopley (weeks commencing July 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>) and that he would circulate the analysis of the speed recordings when they were eventually received back from NFDC.

## **8) Parish Hall Progress**

On behalf of the Hall Committee, Cllr Eccles reported on an ongoing programme of successful monthly fund-raising events. On the financial front, and inclusive of letting income, £1,532 had already come into the accounts in the first quarter of 2012/13 against expenditure of £1,331 The Hall bank balance stood at £3,018 with £506 of bar stock being held against forthcoming events.

## **9) County Councillor's Report**

Cllr Rippon-Swaine presented the following report, copies of which were circulated to the meeting.  
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### **HAMPSHIRE ACTION TEAM (HAT) – August 2012**

#### **Traffic Management Schemes 2012/13 – (Sub Programme of Capital Programme)**

- **Sopley** – B3347 review of trial traffic management measures – assessment of whether trial pedestrian refuge island on B3347 and kerb build out at Derritt Lane junction should be made permanent. Review completion expected Spring 2013.

## **HCC A & B ROADS SPEED LIMIT REVIEW**

- Only one local road warranted alteration.
- Two sections of B3347 Christchurch Road.
- From 140m south of Hampshire Hatches Lane to 510m south of Hampshire Hatches Lane (Kingston); existing limit 40 – recommendation 30.
- From 510m south of Hampshire Hatches Lane to 520m south of Anna Lane (Bisterne); no existing limit – recommendation 50.

## **HCC PROJECT INTEGRA (PI) ACTION PLAN 2012-13**

- PI is a partnership of all Local Authorities in Hampshire with responsibility for managing household waste (collection & disposal).
- Formed in 1990's with HCC as key partner: financial and officer contribution.
- Action Plan 2012-13 working to reduce costs across the whole waste management process through:-
  1. Waste prevention;
  2. Recycling and increasing capture of materials;
  3. Reducing landfill;
  4. Training;
  5. Joint working.

## **HCC CHILDRENS SERVICES**

- Fostering Service – Good in 4 Categories & Outstanding in 2 Categories (helping children develop).
- 1,125 children in care in Hampshire.
- 2 children in north of England; both have extended families in the area.

## **HCC INTERNSHIPS PLUS**

- HCC have agreed to set aside £600,000 to fund an employment initiative supporting young people in and leaving care; Internships Plus Scheme.
- Part of HCC wider programme to boost young people's job related skills.
- It's specially supported apprenticeship offering 'preparation for work' courses followed by a paid work placement studying for a qualification.
- Includes pastoral care and guidance on money management and career planning.
- Scheme delivered in partnership with University of Winchester and Catch 22, the Training Provider.

## **HCC OPERATION RESILIENCE**

- End of 2<sup>nd</sup> year – 100 miles resurfaced and surface dressed in 2011-12.
- 2012-13 Programme set by consultation with various sources.
- No roads in and around Ringwood included.
- If people know otherwise, please tell Stuart Giddings, Operation Resilience Project Manager, via [operation.resilience@hants.gov.uk](mailto:operation.resilience@hants.gov.uk), including any sites for 2013-14.

## **HCC FULL COUNCIL MOTION**

- Petitioned Govt. to raise penalty to FPN £500 plus 6 Penalty Points for using hand-held mobile phone whilst driving.

## **HCC COUNCILLOR'S APPOINTMENTS**

- Forest Forge Theatre Co. Board of Trustees replacing Cllr. Adrian Evans
- Bournemouth International Airport Consultative Committee (Vice-Chairman)
- Community First New Forest Board of Trustees
- Hampshire Countryside Access Forum
- Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Panel
- New Forest Access Forum
- New Forest Passenger Transport Forum

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

**Date of the next meeting : Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2012 at 7.30pm at Sopley Parish Hall.**

**Date of the Extraordinary Meeting Ref Merryfield Park to be agreed – provisionally scheduled for Thursday August 9<sup>th</sup> 2012.**