

# LOXWOOD PARISH COUNCIL

The Annual Parish Council Meeting of Loxwood Parish Council was held at 7.30 pm on Tuesday 8 May 2007 in St John the Baptist Church Room, Loxwood.

**Present:** Parish Councillors John Andrews (retiring Chairman), Mirus Kuszel, Alison Sanderson, Tim Spence, Scott Taylor, David Townsend and Charlie Whitmarsh

**Also in attendance:** Peter Evans (Parish Clerk), 2 members of the public.

The retiring Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

## **64/07 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2007/8**

It was proposed by Tim Spence, seconded by David Townsend and agreed unanimously that Alison Sanderson serve as Chairman of the Council for the municipal year 2007/8. Alison thanked the Councillors, signed her Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Chairman, and took the Chair. She made a presentation to John Andrews, retiring Chairman, on behalf of the Parish Council, and John left the meeting at 7.40 pm.

## **65/07 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2007/8**

It was proposed by Tim Spence, seconded by Charlie Whitmarsh and agreed unanimously that David Townsend serve as Vice-Chairman of the Council for the municipal year 2007/8. David thanked the Councillors and signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Vice-Chairman,

## **66/07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

District Councillor Paul Mackey.

Members noted with regret that County Councillor Peter Moffatt had resigned because of ill health. The resulting by-election would be held on 7 June.

## **ADJOURNMENT:**

### **- QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

No matters were raised.

### **- COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS**

In the absence of County and District Councillors no reports were presented.

## **67/07 CODE OF MEMBERS' CONDUCT AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

(i) **Revised Code of Conduct for members of local councils:** the Chairman noted the change in provisions relating to members' prejudicial interests. Under the new Code members were now able to make a statement to the council before leaving the room when the matter was discussed and voted upon. Previously they would have had to leave without being able to speak.

This removed a prohibition which had always been contentious and difficult to understand. Under the new Code, if a parish councillor were the council's appointed representative on an outside body, and he/she wished to raise the question of grants for the body concerned, he/she could now make a statement to the council before leaving the room.

After discussion it was then proposed by David Townsend, seconded by Tim Spence and agreed unanimously that pursuant to Section 51 of the Local Government Act 2000 the Council adopt the Code of Conduct for members and co-opted members set out in Appendix 2 to the report "Adoption of Replacement Code of Conduct for Members", (circulated prior to the meeting) in place of the existing code with immediate effect; and that the General Principles of Conduct be annexed to the replacement Code.

**(ii) Declarations of personal or prejudicial interests:** Charlie Whitmarsh declared a prejudicial interest, as an acquaintance of the architect, in planning applications **LX/07/01722/LBC** and **LX/07/01726/DOM** - Oakhurst Cottage, Oakhurst Lane, and **LX/07/01720/DOM** and **LX/07/01725/LBC** - Oakhurst Farm, Oakhurst Lane (Agenda item 7(i), minute 70/07).

The Chairman reminded Members that they might declare interests at any stage during the meeting if it became apparent that it was necessary to do so.

### **68/07 APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

It was proposed by Charlie Whitmarsh, seconded by Mirus Kuszel and agreed that the minutes were a correct record of the ordinary Parish Council meeting held on 3 April 2007. The Chairman signed the minutes.

### **69/07 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

**(i) VIP canal cruise (minute 56/07(ii), 3 April 2007):** the Clerk was awaiting a reply to his request for details of the value of the hospitality offered by the Canal Trust. He would remind the Trust's Secretary of the need for Members to have this information should they need to declare it in the Register of Interests, and circulate to all Members the dates of forthcoming VIP cruises.

### **70/07 PLANNING MATTERS**

#### **(i) New applications for comment:**

Having earlier declared a prejudicial interest, Charlie Whitmarsh left the room when applications **LX/07/01722/LBC** and **LX/07/01726/DOM** - Oakhurst Cottage, Oakhurst Lane, and **LX/07/01720/DOM** and **LX/07/01725/LBC** - Oakhurst Farm, Oakhurst Lane were considered.

Proceedings were adjourned to permit Ian Neilson, the applicants' architect, to address the Council about these applications, in the light of which the Parish Council considered its response.

**LX/07/01722/LBC & LX/07/01726/DOM** - Oakhurst Cottage, Oakhurst Lane - Demolition of conservatory and link building. Erection of single storey link providing new entrance and two-storey extension providing new kitchen/breakfast area and bedroom and en-suite over. Internal alterations.

**Parish Council – concerns about the scale and bulk of the planned extensions and their effect on the existing listed building. The appearance and impact of the extended building is likely to be detrimental to the visual character and amenities of this rural area.**

**LX/07/01720/DOM & LX/07/01725/LBC** - Oakhurst Farm, Oakhurst Lane - Extension comprising of a one and a half storey front extension and a two storey to the rear elevation

**Parish Council – serious concerns about the scale of the proposed extensions, which it understands will increase the building's footprint by some 40%. The present house is in sympathy with its surroundings, and is an attractive feature of the rural landscape: if extended as planned, it will be out of scale, over-dominant and imposing, to the detriment of local visual amenities, plainly visible from properties on higher ground to the north and to users of the public rights of way around the site. The Council is also concerned that it is not clear from the plans which part of the existing listed building it is intended to demolish and what is planned for the existing basement.**

The Chairman thanked Ian Neilson for his contribution and reconvened the meeting.

Charlie Whitmarsh then rejoined the meeting.

**LX/07/01441/LBC & LX/07/01442/DOM** - Old Gunshot House, Skiff Lane - Demolition of existing garage and room over. New garage and room over, new conservatory, new fireplace and chimney

**Parish Council – objections. The proposed extension by virtue of its scale, size and proposed roof height will be out of sympathy with the existing listed building and detrimental to its character and appearance.**

**LX/07/01551/DOM** – Wayside, Pond Close - 2 no. additional high-level windows, fixed (Variation of condition 3 of LX/06/00707/DOM)

**Parish Council – no objection.**

**LX/07/01233/DOM & LX/07/01234/LBC** - Beldhamland Farm, Skiff Lane - New link between house and barn (both in residential use)/alterations to window and door to form en-suite bedrooms.

**Parish Council – objections. The proposed extension by virtue of its scale and size will be out of sympathy with the existing listed building and detrimental to its character and appearance.**

**LX/07/01970/DOM** - Oakwood Farm, Drungewick Lane - Replacement Entrance Gates

**Parish Council – no objection.**

Members noted the following District Council **decisions**:

**LX/07/00050/FUL** – Holmbushes, Roundstreet Common - Replacement stables and storage building  
**PERMITTED**

**LX/07/00354/FUL** - Land East Of Lindene Gate And Newhaven, Guildford Road - 2 no. detached chalet bungalows

**REFUSED**

**LX/07/00806/DOM** - Cranbrook Farm, Skiff Lane - New room in loft space

**PERMITTED**

**LX/07/01104/DOM** - Pancake Cottage, Station Road - Proposed single storey extension.

**PERMITTED**

**(ii) Local Development Framework (LDF):** Members noted that the District Council's request to clarify the status of the North Hall site in relation to the LDF had been passed to the Hall Management Committee as the responsible body.

## **71/07 HIGHWAYS**

**(i) Signage:** Tim Spence reported that the new high visibility fluorescent speeds limit signs would be installed at the northern and eastern approaches to the Village (Guildford Road and Station Road). A number of the smaller "repeater" signs were to be replaced. The Clerk would remind County Highways that a firm price was awaited for providing a locality sign for Alfold Bars.

**(ii) Temporary closure of the B2133:** to allow work to the canal crossing at The Onslow Arms, the main road would be closed for 5 nights from 11 June and restrictions would apply to heavy traffic for 10 weeks. The diversion via Drungewick Lane would be prohibited to heavy vehicles.

County Highways had indicated that, within the next 12 months, they would alter local signage to send heavy vehicles along the A29 and A281 rather than the A272 and B2133 through the Village

**(iii) Speeding traffic:** the Police were considering how the Parish could be accommodated in the "Speedwatch" rota. Tim Spence intended to carry out another traffic survey in the Village centre. The cost of a County Highways survey, using twin rubber tubes across the road, would be £270. Members went on to discuss traffic calming measures such as village gateways, and possible sources of funding.

Mention was also made of the growing problem of inconsiderate and illegal parking at the junction of Station Road and the B2133, and in the vicinity of the shops. It was agreed to ask the local PCSO's to monitor the situation and to give advice to motorists as necessary. Tim agreed to draft an article on highways matters for inclusion in the next issue of the Parish Council's Newsletter.

## **72/07 FINANCIAL MATTERS**

**(i) Financial Report:** the report had been circulated prior to the meeting. Members noted the Parish Council's payments and receipts in April 2007, and summary transactions and account balances at 30 April 2007. It was proposed by Charlie Whitmarsh, seconded by Tim Spence and agreed to approve the payment of **£720.72**.

In accordance with the Council's agreed practice, the Clerk was asked to amend the bank mandate so that all Members were authorised to sign cheques and instructions to the bank. Members noted that all such orders had to be signed by 2 Members.

The Council had received a letter from the Sussex Association of Local Councils (SALC) justifying the increase in subscriptions for 2007/8. In light of this, it was proposed by Charlie Whitmarsh, seconded by Mirus Kuszel and agreed to pay SALC's invoice for £357.71.

**(ii) Parish Council accounts 2006/7:** copies of the accounts and budget outturn had been circulated before the meeting. Members noted the reasons for the more significant variances from the budget, and that part of the Council's balance in hand at 31 March 2007 was earmarked for particular projects. The Clerk would provide details at the next meeting, when the audit statements were available.

It was proposed by David Townsend, seconded by Charlie Whitmarsh and agreed to approve the Council's accounts as submitted.

**(iii) Internal Audit:** it was proposed by Charlie Whitmarsh, seconded by Tim Spence and agreed to reappoint Sarah Lane as the Parish Council's internal auditor for 2006/7. The external audit had been called for 20 August 2007.

**(iv) Risk assessment:** Members noted the format and contents of the Council's risk assessment, circulated prior to the meeting. It was agreed to include the risk of trespass on Parish Council property and to advise North Hall Management Committee of the potential risk to the Hall grounds.

### **73/07 CO-OPTION TO THE COUNCIL: APPOINTMENT OF PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES**

**(i) Parish Council vacancies:** the Chairman urged all Members to encourage family, friends and acquaintances to consider standing for co-option to the Council. With only 6 candidates now elected, one-third of the Council's seats remained vacant, and the Council would find it difficult to function effectively in such circumstances.

**(ii) Appointment of Parish Council representatives to other bodies:** it was agreed to defer appointing a representative to the North Hall Management Committee until it was clear who would be standing for co-option to the Parish Council.

It was further agreed that it was unnecessary to appoint representatives to all the local committees, forums, associations, etc. All Members would be advised of invitations to such meetings, and they could attend if they wished.

### **74/07 CORRESPONDENCE**

- The DTI had responded to the Council's letter about consultation on **Post Office closures**, and the local MP had supported the Parish Council's comments:
- RoSPA would inspect the **children's playground** in June:
- A reply was awaited from the District Council planners' explaining their policy on **trees at risk** from development.

### **75/07 RECREATION GROUNDS, HEDGES, TREES, OPEN SPACES**

**(i) Skatepark:** a local youngster had asked the Council to consider constructing a fixed skate park in the Parish. Members were sympathetic to the suggestion as there was precious little for youngsters to do in the Village now that the Youth Club had closed.

However, a skatepark would cost several thousand pounds and there was no provision in the current year's budget. Moreover there was no obvious site for a skatepark in the Village, the North Hall Management Committee having set its face against allowing the proposed mobile skatepark to be set up in the Hall grounds (*minute 13/07(b), Parish Council meeting 9 January 2007, refers*).

Members agreed that the matter needed careful and detailed consideration. They would discuss it further when they had had an opportunity to research suitable local sites, construction and maintenance costs, sources of finance, etc. It was hoped that local youngsters would be prepared to do some fund raising themselves.

In the meantime local youngsters might use the skateparks at Billingshurst or Rudgwick.

**(ii) Rights of way:** the County Council did not consider improvements to the surface of footpath 624/1 (linking Ifold with the canal towpath) to be a priority. Bridleway 809 (the canal towpath to the west) was thought to be in a reasonable state of repair and no remedial action was considered necessary.

**(iii) Repairs to sports ground entrance:** Members considered quotations from 4 contractors for this work. After discussion it was proposed by Charlie Whitmarsh, seconded by Mirus Kuszel and agreed to accept the quotation from EP Clark & Co Ltd in the sum of £968 plus VAT,

### **76/07 YOUTH CLUB EQUIPMENT**

North Hall Management Committee did not wish to keep the games equipment for use at the Hall, and wanted it to be removed. The Clerk had asked the School, Church, Chapel and Sports Association if they could make use of the equipment, and replies were awaited.

### **77/07 TRAINING COURSES AND OTHER MEETINGS**

**(i) SALC Training:** Members were encouraged to attend the SALC training courses in May and June.

**(ii) Other courses:** a seminar on the planning system, organised by the Campaign to Protect Rural England, was to be held in Pulborough on Tuesday 2 October, from 10 am to 4 pm. The cost was £40 per delegate. The Clerk would copy details to all Members.

### **78/07 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS AND INFORMATION**

**(i) North Hall:** Tim Spence said complaints had been made at a recent caravan rally in the North Hall grounds about erosion of soil adjacent to the concrete track. In some places there was a drop of some 9" from the track to the grassed area.

The Chairman said that the children's playground had been taped off by the caravanners, who seemed to be under the impression that hiring the site for a rally allowed them to use all the recreational facilities at the site to the exclusion of Loxwood residents.

He also regretted that security had been lax during the rally. At the time of his visit the Hall had been unlocked and insecure.

In the light of comments made at the rally, Members wondered what rent the Management Committee charged for the rally, and how this compared with rents charged for similar events elsewhere.

It was agreed to report these concerns to the Management Committee.

**(ii) Children's Playground:** Mirus Kuszel reported a broken fence rail and damage to the chainlink fence. The Clerk would request repairs.

### **79/07 PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER**

Members were pleased by the favourable reception given to the first issue of the Parish Council Newsletter. It was hoped to publish the second issue in August, and any copy would be needed by 4 June. The Chairman invited any Members who were interested to join the production team.

The Chairman also suggested including a piece inviting youngsters to say what facilities they would like provided in the Village.

### **80/07 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA**

It was agreed to consider further the suggestion to construct a skatepark in the Parish.

### **81/07 DATES OF FUTURE PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS**

Some Members found it difficult to attend meetings on a Tuesday evening. After discussion it was agreed to hold future meetings on Monday evenings, in the Parish Council office at North Hall.

The next Parish Council meeting would therefore be held at 7.30 pm on Monday 4 June in the Parish Council office at North Hall.

There being no further business the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.43 pm.

Approved at a meeting of the Parish Council held on (date)

(Signed)

Chairman