

THE VILLAGES OF BIRLING GAP, CROWLINK, EAST DEAN AND FRISTON

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of electors held on Thursday 11th May 2017 in the Village Hall, Village Green Lane, East Dean, commencing at 5.30 pm with displays from village organisations. Business commenced at 6.30 pm

Meeting convened under Schedule 12, Part III of the Local Government Act 1972.

In the Chair: Councillor S Fuller (Chair of the Parish Council).

Present: representatives of the Parish Council, the Residents' Association, the Parochial Church Council, the Village Hall Trust; the Roads Company; village clubs and societies (thirteen of whom mounted displays); and approximately 100 other residents.

In attendance: Katrina Larkin (Parish Clerk) took the minutes.

- 1. WELCOME:** The Chair of the Parish Council welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 2. MINUTES:** The minutes of the last Annual Village Meeting, held on 28th April 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair of the Parish Council. The Questions raised at that meeting had been considered by the parish council at their meeting on 7th July 2016 and a report was contained in the minutes of that meeting.
- 3. ANNUAL VILLAGE REPORT 2017:** A number of village organisations had published written reports of their activities in the past year, and these are available to view in the Annual Village Report 2017. [Copies are available on the council website, <http://www.edfparishcouncil.org.uk/index.asp> - see the online Library, or can be obtained from the parish clerk, eastdeanclerk@btinternet.com]. The following organisations gave oral reports:
 - **OpenArt** – Mr John Dann reported that this biannual event would next be held on 8th- 9th September 2018, with Grayson Perry again as patron. The exhibitors would still be local, this being part of the ethos of the event, and all artistic media would be welcome. Offers of local venues would be much appreciated. The co-founder and first Chair, Mrs Maureen Honey, had retired and Mr Dann was now Chair.
 - **The East Dean Downlands Roads Company** – Mr Ron Pringle reported that 77% of Downlands Estate residents had paid their contributions for 2017, and over 90% for 2016. The Company pursued all late payers, with ultimate success. The £43,000 expenditure projected at the 2016 Annual Village Meeting had been disrupted during essential work to the gas mains, but would resume. The continued successful operation of the company was vital to the maintenance of the fragile Estate roads and to the value of residents' properties. Sadly, Mr Alan Mundy, co-founder of the Company, had died during the past year. Mr Pringle

himself wished to retire, and invited residents to look for a successor. *The Chair on behalf of the Meeting thanked Mr Pringle for the continuing valuable work of the Company.*

- **East Dean & Friston Women's Institute** - Mrs Eva Oliver reported on the activities of the branch during the past year and outlined the ethos and aims of the Federation, promoting education, care for the environment, and friendship. The branch also supported the Eastbourne District and General Hospital, and the W.I. movement as a whole supported ACCW (Associated County Women of the world – an international charity). The annual subscription of £39 paid for 11 meetings and other activities, and a second membership would only cost a further £19. This offered very good value to residents as there were two branches in the parish (Micheldene W.I. being the other).
- **The East Dean Players** – Mrs Marilyn Sharpin (Chair) reported that the Players had been founded in 1947 and this was their 70th anniversary year. The company had an ambitious programme, and had been praised in the *Eastbourne Herald* for the recent production of *Ladies in Lavender*, which had incorporated four locations. Recruits were needed for all tasks, including set building, and would be most welcome. The next production would be *Murder to Death* in November 2017.
- **The Parochial Church Council** – The Revd Kip' Chelashaw reported on a number of ongoing activities, including a parenting course; marriage preparation; a carer group; Coffee for Carers, which had proved to have wide appeal; Saturday lunches; pastoral care; church fellowship; children's groups; the annual Holiday Club; the Friday youth group; and outreach work including provision of aid for refugees in Beirut. On the political front, all the candidates for the Lewes constituency in the forthcoming general election had been invited to come and speak, and Maria Caulfield (Conservative) had accepted. Responses were awaited from the Liberal Democrats and Labour. Thanks were due to many helpers, who typically did more than one task. Kip' Chelshaw himself was about to leave for Nairobi. *The Chair on behalf of the Meeting thanked Kip' and wished him well for his new posting.*
- **Compassionate Neighbours** – Dr Jo Shawcross reported on the possibility of setting up a new local scheme to give support to people who might otherwise be unable to return to their homes, e.g. after a stay in hospital. Statistically the parish had many ageing residents, and nationwide it was known that the great majority of people wanted to be able to stay in their own homes throughout their lives, but that only 20% managed to do so. Dame Joan Bakewell had suggested 'Compassionate Neighbours' as part of the solution, whereby neighbours would volunteer to befriend and assist vulnerable people for a period of six weeks, from a first introduction in hospital to assistance during and after their return home. Age Concern would be willing to manage a local scheme of this kind, giving training to the volunteers, who would all be DBS checked and insured. Volunteers would not give personal care or administer drugs. Dr Shawcross asked the

meeting whether there was a need for such a scheme locally, whether it might work, and whether it could be done. *The Chair indicated that there would be further discussion of this item in the Q&A session – see below.*

- **The Residents' Association** – Cllr Paul Seeley (Chair), reported on a year in which all the officers and committee of the Association had changed, but support had remained strong. The RA still aimed to give all residents a voice and assist in keeping the parish a good place to live. The annual subscription was only £5 per person or £10 per household, and multiple kinds of assistance were given in return, which was very good value. The RA would organise the Village Fete on 22nd July 2017, on the Greensward (also managed by the Association on behalf of the Greensward Company), and would welcome volunteers for this event. It also maintained a list of emergency volunteers; organised the Team Grit initiative; and had an interface with the Sussex Police through Mr Frank Flowers. The Welcome Packs, which the Association gave to all new residents, were about to be reprinted and all the village clubs and societies would be welcome to supply information for inclusion. Thanks were due to all the new committee members, who had undergone a steep learning exercise.
- **Playground Update** – Cllr Ruth Maxwell spoke on this item in the Annual Village Report 2017, pages 15-16, on behalf of the parish council. [*For discussion of this topic, please see the Q&A session below.*]
- **Sheltered Housing** – Cllr Ian Haydock spoke on this item in the Annual Village Report 2017, pages 17-18, on behalf of the parish council. Subsequent to the publication of the Annual Report, the parish council had learned that BUPA (owners of The Grange care home) might consider it an option to sell some land for assisted living accommodation. However, BUPA's existing car park area did not fall within the Development Boundary proposed in the planning authority's draft Local Plan. [*For discussion of this topic, please see the Q&A session below.*]
- **Friston Crossing** – Cllr Paul Seeley spoke on this item on behalf of the parish council. The council had been investigating ways of improving safety at this crossing, which lay between the northbound and southbound Friston bus stops, and was well used by school children, walkers, residents and churchgoers. The crossing was very dangerous due to its location between the 60mph and 40mph sections of the A259; the proximity of a complex junction; and limited visibility on the main road. The council had lobbied East Sussex Highways for improvements, and it had become clear that any solution must involve match funding and must be affordable: the current proposals for a partial build-out by the bus layby on the south side of the A259 represented the only solution that might be both affordable and meet Highways standards. Cllr Hill had met an East Sussex Highways Project Manager on site on 10th May 2017, and ESCC would now study movements at the site over several weeks and report to the parish in six weeks' time. A paper would then be brought to the July parish council meeting for consideration.

4. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION: the following were discussed –

- **Should the parish council organise another Village Safety Day?** – Cllr Fuller reported that the parish had an opportunity to hold another Village Safety Day, possibly in September or October 2017. A number of key organisations were willing to take part. However, on a previous occasion attendance had been low. On a show of hands, about 50 people indicated support, which was deemed to be sufficient for an event to be arranged.
- **Should the parish council organise a Bonfire event in 2018?** – Cllr Fuller reminded the meeting that due to the overwhelming numbers of non-residents that had attended the last event, no Bonfire had been held in 2015 or 2016, and none was planned for 2017. However, the parish council had promised to gauge opinion again in time for an event in 2018, if residents so wished. At least 30-35 volunteers would be needed to marshal the event. On a show of hands, there was some support for holding Bonfire in 2018, but only 10-12 volunteers.
- **Vacancy on the parish council** – Cllr Fuller drew attention to the current vacancy and invited residents to come forward if interested in this role.
- **Potential development of land east of Gilberts Drive** – the potential developer had requested time to do a presentation on the proposed development at the start of the next Planning Committee meeting on 16th May 2017 (6.30 pm in the Small Hall). Residents would be able to ask questions and make statements. This would not be an occasion for the parish council to consider the proposals, as no planning application had yet been submitted.
- **Compassionate Neighbours** – the Chair invited the meeting to respond to Dr Shawcross's presentation. The Rector strongly supported the scheme on behalf of the PCC. Dr Shawcross stated that volunteers would be committing to give one hour a week for 6 weeks (the Age Concern standard arrangement). This would enable volunteers to befriend, give confidence, and keep an eye on vulnerable people, while also supporting their professional carers. A show of hands indicated strong support for this initiative. Dr Shawcross thanked the meeting and agreed to take the project forward.
- **Friston Crossing** – in discussion of this topic several points were raised for future consideration, namely:
 - a) There was support for a 'proper crossing' where residents would have right of way, but it was explained that this would be prohibitively expensive. Any project would have to be match funded (50% by East Sussex Highways and 50% by the parish), and it was already known that the current proposal to reduce the width of the main carriageway at the crossing was the only improvement that was financially viable. The carriageway was too narrow for a central refuge to be installed without moving the bus stops. It was then suggested that the bus stops be

moved. The Chair advised that this had been considered, but that East Sussex Highways would be asked to comment on all these questions in their report, which the parish council would pass on to residents.

- b) The council was requested also to consider improving pedestrian access from Jevington Road to Old Willington Road. Even cutting back the verges hard would be some help. However, it was noted that South East Water had pulled out of a scheme to install a pavement (in return for an easement across Friston Green to their reservoir), due to cutbacks within the industry. The cost would be beyond the resources of the parish.
 - c) A concern was raised that if motorists could no longer undertake through the bus layby, to get past vehicles waiting to turn into Windmill Lane, there could be tail-backs. The Chair explained that it should remain possible to undertake, though the space for it would be reduced.
 - d) It was agreed that a reduction in the speed limit would theoretically make the crossing safer. The parish council had been asking for this for some years. However, the location did not meet the Highways criteria for introducing a 30 mph limit.
- **Playground update** – discussion centred on several points, as follows:
 - a) The financing of the project - the Rector indicated support and it was suggested that there should be a village Appeal. There was some support for the idea that the project should be undertaken by the parish council rather than by a 'Friends' group, as the parish council could reclaim VAT (up to an annual limit), and a 'Friends' group could not, thus making a 20% difference to the overall cost. However, the parish council had limited ability to seek grant aid because the great majority of grant giving bodies would not donate to a council with powers of taxation. A question was asked about the effect on the precept of raising an extra £30,000 (about half of the cost of the project). The Chair advised that the cost per average Band D household would be less than £1 per week. If, however, the parish were to take a loan from the Public Works Loans Board, the cost of borrowing £30,000 over 20 years could be absorbed without raising the precept. Overall, there was a preference for drawing finance from a combination of sources.
 - b) The need for shade – both grandparents and toddlers would be grateful for some provision in this exposed location
 - c) Safety – the Cricket Club expressed concern about the proposed zip wire which would be closer to the pitch than the existing play area, and could be dangerous if used during matches. Balls could enter the play area, and safety during matches must be a consideration.
 - **Sheltered Housing** – discussion centred on the availability of sites, which would be a key limiting factor. It was explained the parish council could not promote the development of any particular site, nor would the project be one for the parish to manage or finance. A project would depend on site owners being put in touch with providers. A query was raised over the availability of land east of Gilberts Drive, and it was noted that the development currently proposed by a private developer on land belonging to the Old Parsonage and an adjacent site was not

intended to be sheltered housing. However, the Rector stated that the church would support housing as a community asset, in principle, and would not object to the use of the field adjacent to the Rectory for this purpose. There was clearly local support for the provision of sheltered accommodation.

5. CONCLUSION

The Rector thanked the parish council for arranging the Annual Village Meeting once again. The Chair added his thanks, to all those who had attended, and all who had helped with the arrangements for the evening.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.05 pm.

Signed: (Chair of the meeting) Date: