

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

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of electors held on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2018 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 M Keller (Chair of the Parish Council).

**Present:** representatives of the Parish Council, the Residents' Association, the Parochial Church Council, the Village Hall Trust; the Greensward Company, the Roads Company; village clubs and societies (fifteen 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. On behalf of the meeting he thanked Stewart Fuller, who had recently stood down from the council, for his hard work and time over the years, and especially his very effective chairmanship from 2014-2017. (*Applause*)
- 2. MINUTES:** The minutes of the last Annual Village Meeting, held on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017 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 council at their meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2017 (Report Item 8) and the discussion was recorded in the minutes of that meeting (Minute C.413).
- 3. ANNUAL VILLAGE REPORT 2018:** 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 2018. [Note: the date on the front cover of the report is incorrect: it should be 26<sup>th</sup> April 2018. Copies are available on the council website in the Library section, <http://www.edfparishcouncil.org.uk/index.asp>, or can be obtained from the parish clerk, email: [clerkedfpc@gmail.com](mailto:clerkedfpc@gmail.com) ]. The following oral reports were presented to the meeting:
  - **Chair of the Parish Council** – Councillor Keller reiterated his thanks to the members of the council, including those who had stood down during the year, and gave special mention to Jolyon Fyfield who had served in various capacities for fifty years, passing away in December 2017, only a year after leaving the village. The parish council also continued to be supported by a number of volunteers in a range of activities, including those who helped spread bark chips on the footpaths; Stewart English and Derek Drury who provided technical support for the AVM; and David George, the council's Honorary Solicitor. All these, and others named in the Report, did valuable work for the community. Cllr

Keller then highlighted the main items in his Chair's Annual Review in the published Report, including the council's decision to increase the precept in 2018/19 due to rising costs, and also to undertake projects approved at the 2017 AVM.

- **The Village Hall Trust** – Mr Bill Hallett (Chair of Trustees) outlined the ongoing work of the Trust, which had become central to the life of the community thanks to the vision and aspirations of those who had undertaken the building of it – a major project completed in 1999. The board of trustees had varied membership, some being appointed by parish organisations, and some offering particular expertise. Thirty village clubs and societies were the mainstay of the hall's activities, plus regular community events including the weekly market, supplemented by parties and functions, film shows and occasional national events. The Trustees maintained an up-to-date website, and had recently taken on the production of the Village Diary. Trusteeship was open to all residents.
- **The Residents' Association** – Cllr Paul Seeley (Chairman) drew attention to the RA's contribution to the published Annual Report (pages 8-9), and recorded the fact that the Gas Board had at last completed their work on the Downlands Estate, to universal relief. A final reinstatement of damaged areas was to be arranged, and suggestions from residents would be welcomed. The RA would be organising the Village Fete on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, with Bob Salmon and Rosie English heading the team. There would be a Fun Dog Show. Cllr Seeley intended to stand down as Chair at the next AGM in July, and a volunteer would be needed to take his place.
- **The East Dean (Downlands) Roads Company** – Mr Ron Pringle spoke about the finances of the company. The current annual voluntary subscription was £65 (£4 was the non-indexed amount mandated by the original covenants). Only one property in three owned a share in the company, and attendance at meetings was below 5%. The company had done well for the 30 years since it was founded, and its funds were healthy, but contributions should be increased. Looking ahead, more expenditure would be needed, and cheap solutions such as concrete slab surfacing would not be durable. Residents should not expect East Sussex County Council to adopt the roads: they had made it clear they would not (and in this location adopted roads would have to accept unpopular alterations such as street lighting). A contribution of £200-£300 pa would not be unreasonable but did not seem obtainable; even index linking the original contribution levels should raise them to £75-£100pa. About 90% of residents had paid their dues for 2017, but the other 10% must be obtained, and residents should consider how payment might be enforced.
- **The Parochial Church Council** – the Rev David Baker outlined the key social and community activities laid on by the church, including the Coffee Friday sessions (free of charge); the Saturday lunches; and annual activities such as the Holiday Club week; the Pie and Wine event; and two new events: a June picnic and September Hogroast. The PCC was building links with the Beachy Head

Chaplaincy, who spoke to 400-500 distressed people every year on the cliffs, and saved many lives, though their work was largely unsung. Kip' Chelshaw had returned to Kenya and been replaced in September by the Rev Andrew Spear as associate vicar. Andrew had spent 30 years in the ministry and was pleased to be back in Sussex, having once served in Eastbourne.

- **The Badminton Club** – Maurice Horlock gave an appreciation of the work of Ron Laws, a founder member of the Village Hall Trust and of the Club, who had died during the year. (*Applause*). The Hall had deliberately been built high enough to accommodate badminton, and a tournament trophy was still kept there. The club met on a Wednesday night and all were welcome.
- **Coffee for Carers** – Stephanie Carter drew attention to this monthly meeting (on the third Monday) held in the church at no cost, for any carers to meet people in similar situations, share problems and give mutual support.
- **The Fruit, Vegetable and Flower Show** – Cheryl Veitch invited everyone to contribute to the next Show, to be held on the August Bank Holiday. There would be categories for crafts, photography and baking as well as garden produce. Full details and schedules would appear in the July parish magazine. The popular scarecrow competition would also run again.
- **The Gardening Club** – Tony Deadman spoke about the activities of the club, which met in the Hall on the afternoon of the second Friday in the month, usually with a talk (on very varied subjects), plus questions and social time. Outings were also organised by the club, e.g. to Leeds Castle, Wisley and Sissinghurst. Members could obtain a loyalty card for Paradise Park in Newhaven with a 10% discount, and the club itself organised annual deliveries of topsoil, bark chips etc. to members at good rates. Annual social events included the Strawberry Fair, the summer party, and a Christmas party. Membership was only £7pa, and the club was proud to have 151 members. All were welcome.
- **Micheldene W.I.** – Lesley Shillinger spoke warmly of the W.I. as a ready-made group of friends for anyone new to the village. There were 85 members from a wide age range. Meetings were held monthly at the Village Hall, featuring many activities: a learning programme and invited speakers, as well as Laughing Yoga, Latin dancing, genealogy, and of course social time including a Christmas party and providing a tea, cake and prosecco stand at the village fete (for fund raising). The branch donated about £1,000 to local charities every year. There was also an annual garden party, three book groups, cinema trips and one longer trip each year; plus a crochet group, walking group, and more. The Micheldene branch had taken part in the 'Sisters Walk for Suffrage' to commemorate the eventual success of the Suffragette movement. All were welcome, including guests.
- **OpenArt** – John Dann confirmed that this biennial event would take place again on 8-9 September 2018, with Grayson Perry as patron. Visitors would be able to view and buy, and exhibitors should enter by 4<sup>th</sup> May to be in the catalogue.

Twenty exhibitors had so far signed up, and more would be most welcome. In the Hall, a potter would be displaying his work, and on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> September professional dancers would perform to complement the work (there would probably be a charge for this event). All residents were invited to join OpenArt, view the exhibits – and buy.

- **Over 50s Fitness** – Frances Mace told the meeting that this club had been running since 1974 when it had first met in the old Farrer Hall (a World War One convalescent hut with asbestos in its construction!). The club met from September to April, in the Village Hall. Its current format (set out in the published Annual Report) combined hard work with fun to improve coordination and circulation, and provide relaxation. All were welcome. The club would be selling Pimms at the Village Fete.
- **Table Tennis** – Stephanie Carter publicised this mixed ability club which met in the Hall on the second and fourth Thursdays in the month, from September to May. Members ranged in age from 11 to those in their 80s, and the club was proud to have a youth club meeting an hour earlier from September onwards. All were welcome.
- **The Parish Council**
  - **Play Area Upgrade** – Councillor Greenwell reminded the meeting that there had been a presentation on this topic in 2017, when the council had received support for upgrading the play area, though not for a full £60,000 renovation, which would have required borrowing. The council had therefore chosen to replace the two oldest pieces of equipment, both decaying, with one multi-function piece of high quality new equipment with a new safety surface. Thanks to a grant of £10,000 from the Big Lottery Fund; a grant of £1,000 from SGN Ltd (the company that had replaced the gas main on the Downlands Estate); and a payment of £3,000 from the developer of The Fridays for permission to install a soakaway under the corner of the recreation ground; the cost to the council had come down from £35,000 to £21,000, and had been met out of current funds. The equipment had been chosen on the basis of the extensive public consultation undertaken by two former councillors, Jane Branson and Ruth Maxwell. Work had just been completed and the new equipment was officially open for use – and proving to be a hit.
  - **Community Resilience and Village Emergency Plan** – Councillor Greenwell reported on the changed understanding of what constituted an emergency, beyond the scale of what the blue light services would count as normal activity. Locally this might include extreme weather; a major utility failure, gas leak or explosion; a major transport incident; a major fire or building collapse; disease; terrorism; or something unknown. The Plan would aim to promote timely recovery from an incident; to support the community; and to complement the Emergency Services during an

emergency. It would be coordinated by Parish Councillors; operate from the Village Hall, which would act as a focal point for communications; and coordinate local resources. To this end, the 2018 revision of the Emergency Plan would update the lists of emergency contacts and 4x4 drivers (kept as confidential information); review and revise the local risk assessments; emphasise Community Resilience; review any information about vulnerable persons (to be kept confidential); and look at the use of various phone types in emergency situations. Hopefully, it would never be needed. In discussion of this item, residents were invited to give their contact details to the council if they were willing to go on the list of emergency drivers etc. A resident commended the Residents' Association for putting out good information when toxic gas had recently drifted ashore at Birling Gap. *There was applause and thanks for the excellent communications put out by Councillor Seeley on behalf of the Residents' Association.*

- **Fireworks at Christmas** – Councillor Seeley reminded the meeting that there had been no fireworks event in November for three years, due to the overwhelming numbers that had turned up at the last event. A working group had been set up by the council to look at a new approach. The group recommended an event to be held on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2018, combining a firework display at the recreation ground, and a torch-lit procession, with the lighting of a Christmas tree and singing of carols outside the Village Hall. There would be no catering, and the event would be village orientated. In discussion, John Dann reminded the meeting that he organised an annual carol singing event at The Tiger, nearer Christmas, to raise funds for children with cancer. However, the fireworks organisers hoped that the new event would not interfere with the established event. A show of hands was requested from those in support of the proposal. *There was a large majority in favour.*
- **Parish Council Grant Scheme** – Councillor Keller drew attention to the parish council's new policy and grant scheme, intended to benefit local groups. £2,000 was available in 2018-19 and applications would be welcome until the end of April. Decisions would be made at the council meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> June, and grants paid shortly thereafter. Applicants should say who would benefit from their proposed projects, and should ideally be able to meet half of the cost from their own funds.
- **General Data Protection Regulation** – Councillor Hookham outlined the aims of the new General Data Protection Regulation, and its implications both for the council and for village clubs and societies. Individuals would be given more rights over the use of their personal data, which could only be used with their specific consent: the old 'opt out' contact systems must be replaced by 'opt in' systems, and no one would be permitted to sell on the personal data of others. The GDPR would replace the Data Protection Act 1998 and would take effect on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2018. Compliance would not be a choice, and organisations must be able to prove their compliance.

The council was auditing all its data with a view to deleting any that was no longer strictly required or appeared to be out of date or incorrect. Subscribers to the email news service would be asked to opt in to remain on the circulation list (this to be done before 25<sup>th</sup> May). Clubs and societies would need to take similar action with their subscribers. Any organisation handling sensitive personal information must be especially careful to ensure compliance with GDPR. In discussion, it was suggested that the council might provide a seminar on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> May at 7.30 pm to help club secretaries/administrators review the actions they needed to take. *On a show of hands, about 15 people requested a seminar. It was agreed that a session should be held on 15<sup>th</sup> May.*

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

- **Centenary of World War One** – were any events planned in the parish to commemorate this centenary? The Local History Group would be mounting an exhibition on the Armistice at the Village Fete, and the Church would have a commemoration linked to Remembrance Day.
- **The East Dean (Downlands) Roads Company** – if so few shareholders came to the company's AGM, could it not be opened to all those who paid contributions to the upkeep of the roads? Mr Pringle explained that shareholders meetings had to be held under company law, but that anyone could apply to him to own a share and become a shareholder. A further question was whether the covenanted payments made to the company could be updated? The covenanted contributions payable to the company by residents were fixed at £4 2s 6d. The covenants probably could not be updated because they had been built into the title deeds of the properties, and some of the original parties no longer existed. Enforcement depended mainly on sending reminders, but debts were not allowed to drop out of sight. Finally, the Chair of the Residents' Association queried the company's plans for reinstating parts of Summerdown Lane and Micheldene Road, which were said to involve the complete closure of parts of the road for two days. For practical reasons, it seemed essential that the carriageway be closed for a half-width at a time: meals on wheels, carers and home deliveries would otherwise be unable to get through. Half closure would involve some extra cost, but residents would appreciate the opportunity to comment on whether the cost was worth it. Please could the directors reconsider this? Mr Pringle agreed to take this issue back to the directors.
- **Village Fete** – Bob Salmon (RA Fete organiser) invited volunteers to help set up the Village Fete. Volunteers should make themselves known at the RA desk.
- **Thanks to Team Grit** – Mr Chiswell-Jones proposed a vote of thanks to Team Grit for their sterling work in the March snowstorms. *This was seconded by Cllr Keller and there was applause for Team Grit.*

- **Cuckmere Community Bus** – Stewart Fuller reminded the meeting that the community bus service 41 was supported financially by the parish council, but usage was tending to dwindle: it was a case of ‘use it or lose it’. The driver would accept all travel concession cards and would stop anywhere in the parish – like a taxi. A full timetable was included in the Annual Report (page 4). The bus could be valuable to residents wanting to visit the library in Eastbourne, now that the Mobile Library service was being withdrawn.

**5. CONCLUSION**

Councillor Keller thanked everyone for coming, and formally closed the meeting.

*There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.10 pm.*

Signed: ..... (Chair of the meeting) Date: .....