

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

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of electors held on Thursday 28th April 2016 in the Village Hall, Village Green Lane, East Dean, commencing at 6.00 pm with displays from village organisations. Business commenced at 7.00 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 Church, the Village Hall Trust; village clubs and societies (fifteen of whom mounted displays); and approximately 100 other residents.

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

Apologies: the speaker for Micheldene W.I (who was called away); and Mrs E Worsfold.

- 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 30 April 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair of the Parish Council.
- 3. ANNUAL VILLAGE REPORT 2016:** 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 2016 [<http://www.parish-council.com/eastdeanandfristonparishcouncil/>] - see the online Library; copies can also be obtained from the parish clerk, eastdeanclerk@btinternet.com]. The following organisations also addressed the meeting: the Parish Council; the Residents' Association; the Parochial Church Council; the Roads Company; OpenArt; Community Watch; East Dean Responders; the East Dean Players; and the Fruit, Vegetable and Flower Show. The following suggestions were made:
 - The Community Watch suggested that the parish council should look again at the Village Plan.
 - **The East Dean Responders urged all residents to make sure their house name or number was clearly visible. This information was vital for emergency services.** Residents should also have a personal emergency plan, so they would know how to let emergency responders in; how to inform them about medication being taken, etc.
- 4. UPDATE ON SUSSEX POLICING:** Cllr Haydock reported on a meeting he had attended on the future of policing in Sussex (1st April 2016 at Maresfield), with

District Commander C/Insp Rob Leet who covers Eastbourne, Lewes and Wealden. The following key points emerged:

- On the monetary side Sussex Police have seen a reduction in Government grant which they claim has hit them more than others owing to the fact that East Sussex pays the 4th lowest amount of council tax to the police, nationwide.
- Sussex Police have already made £57m of savings resulting in 700 fewer officers than a few years ago, and the government require them to make a further £35m of savings. This at a time when Sussex Police have to deal with more cyber-crime and train up more firearms officers only for them to be lured away to the higher paying Metropolitan police.
- No savings will be made to response officer numbers, but they will be situated in hubs with fewer police stations, thus selling redundant stations to raise funds.
- Sussex Police intend to create a 'resolution centre' so that where possible, problems can be sorted out over the phone or passed on to other agencies.
- Sussex Police will no longer respond to 'noise' problems: that is the responsibility of local councils. Neither will they normally attend parking issues.
- Technology will be used so that 'notes' can be done electronically and then downloaded rather than officers spending time writing them up when back at their station.
- The number of PCSO's will be halved but those remaining are going to be 'fitter, better trained and skilled so they can, and will, undertake more problem solving tasks'.
- Lewes will have 4 PCSO's per shift, Eastbourne 5 and our area covered by Hailsham 4 PCSOs + 1 sergeant and 3 constables per shift. Two other town/parish councils were known to have objected to the new arrangements.
- Although council tax recently went up by 3.4% or £4.95 a year for a band D property this will not fund any extra officers at the hubs.
- Sussex Police would be concentrating on threat/harm/risk, with the view that 'visibility does not solve problems'. Therefore there will be no officers on the beat in the parish. If the community wished to pay for a Community Warden it would cost in the region of £25,000 - £30,000 for one year, though the cost could be shared with other parishes, and the outgoing Police and Crime Commissioner has said she would fund 50% for the first year and 25% for the second. It is not clear how the Warden's time would be shared between subscribing parishes.

- The Commissioner has not responded to an enquiry as to how much would need to be added to the police share of the council tax to provide one extra officer at the Hailsham hub.
- The office of Police and Crime Commissioner would be up for election on 5th May. Residents were urged to research the candidates carefully, as the outcome would be relevant to the whole community.

In discussion, Mr R Webb (Chair of the Residents' Association) stated that the Association had not been invited to the Maresfield meeting, despite the fact that the new policing model implicitly relied on the help of volunteer organisations such as the RA, to keep services like Neighbourhood Watch going. This was unsatisfactory. The RA had attempted to correspond with the Police and Crime Commissioner about the redeployment of PCSOs, but had been told that the Commissioner 'does not deal with strategy'. This too was unsatisfactory. The employment of civilian staff at 'resolution centres' was not particularly helpful: several residents had found the 101 service of no use at all, as its operatives had no local knowledge. Nevertheless, there was acceptance that the Sussex police did need to operate a new business model, and the parish was a low crime area. The RA considered it would be impractical for the parish to employ its own PSCO. It had considered the use of CCTV but this too could be impractical (who would monitor it? Would residents object to it?). Over all, the RA considered that the parish should accept the new policing model and try to work alongside it e.g. by enhancing the Neighbourhood Watch.

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

- **Could the Annual Village Report be printed on both sides of the paper?** – the Chair of the parish council agreed that this should be done
- **Could pedestrian access to the Village Hall from Gilberts Drive be improved?** – the pavement in Gilberts Drive was on the other side of the road from the village hall drive, and up a steep bank. It would be very helpful if steps could be provided, otherwise a long detour was required. The Chair agreed to raise this with East Sussex Highways at the next parish liaison meeting.
- **What powers might a Community Warden have?** – the Chair responded that CW powers would be minimal, as they would not be police officers. They might be able to deal with litter and dog fouling. Their main value would probably be as a presence. The parish council would find out if there was more to the role than that.
- **Could mobile phone reception in the village be improved?** – it probably could not. Coverage had improved with the installation of new

boosters, but due to the lie of the land there were blind spots e.g. in the lee of slopes. Wealden District Council had issued a questionnaire about communications across the District, and difficulties should be reported to them. The council was aware that Arqiva might wish to replace the wooden radio mast with a metal lattice tower, and had asked whether a mobile phone booster could be added to it, but no more had been heard from the company.

- **Could access to Neighbourhood Watch information be improved?** - It was noted that some elderly and vulnerable residents did not have computers, and it was essential to be able to reach them by other means. The Chair agreed that the community must monitor the shortcomings of the new policing model and try to address them.
- **Relocation of Village Hall defibrillator** – Secamb had asked for the existing defibrillator to be relocated outside the village hall, and the hall Trustees had agreed. It was objected that the new location could be masked by a door which was frequently open. The Chair (who was also a Trustee) confirmed that the defibrillator could be moved again if need be.
- **Did the parish council want to hold a bonfire event on the Greensward?** – a resident had noted a suggestion to that effect, but was not in favour of it. The Chair asked whether residents were in favour of holding a bonfire event at all. A vote was taken and opinion proved to be evenly divided. In response to questions, Cllr Hill explained that the council had tried to keep the event local, and manageable in size, by holding it on the same night as bigger events in Lewes and Eastbourne, and restricting advertising, but that the increasing use of social media meant that it was now impossible to prevent news leaking out, and if advertising were banned entirely, there would be no sponsorship. Experience showed that visitors from London who could not get into the bigger events would gravitate to East Dean in large numbers. At the same time, the number of volunteer helpers had dwindled to unsafe levels: only three people had come forward when the council had tried to recruit for 2016. On this basis, Cllr Hill would not be willing to organise a bonfire event in 2017. *(There was supportive applause).*

6. CONCLUSION

Councillor Fuller concluded the meeting by thanking all the participants.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.45 pm.

Signed: (Chair of the meeting) Date: