

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF BALCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 16<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2012 AT 8.00 PM IN THE FOREST ROOM RESTAURANT, BALCOMBE SOCIAL CLUB.**

Present: Messrs. Robin Williamson, Robin Lindsay Stewart, Rodney Saunders. Mesdames Alison Stevenson, Linda Short, Catherine Dennison & Carol Jarvest.

In attendance: Richard Greig – Clerk to the Council.

**2839. Public Participation**

Mrs Kathryn Metcalfe (professionally known as Kathryn McWhirter), a resident of Balcombe, addressed the Council through a prepared statement. In this she referred to the meeting of the Council of February 10<sup>th</sup> 2010 and criticised the Council's handling of a planning application to WSCC *"to upgrade an existing stoned platform and drill an exploratory borehole for oil and gas exploration"* at the Balcombe Lower Stumble site. Cllr. Alison Stevenson explained that the only communication the Council had received on the matter was a short letter from WSCC mentioning the application. As this was in letter form rather than accompanied by a full set of planning documents the letter was placed in the correspondence box and included on the correspondence list of communications received. During the meeting Cllr. Greenwood drew the attention of the Council to the letter, and this was duly recorded in the Minutes. A brief discussion on the matter took place at which the consensus of the meeting was that this was a repeat performance of an earlier drilling, and no objections were raised. Following the meeting WSCC asked for the Council's response to the application, and in his reply the Clerk correctly reflected the views of the Council that there were no objections, and had not exceeded his authority in so doing.

Cllr. Robin Williamson said that he was the Chairman of the Council at the time of the meeting. He apologised on behalf of the Council, acknowledging that in retrospect the application should have been handled with greater diligence.

Ms. Nancy Towers & Messrs. Kevin Bottomley & Owen McDonough also spoke on the subject.

Mr Richard Cooper referred to his letter to MSDC relating to planning application **(BA)/11/04053/FUL & 04053/LBC** Bagpiths Cottage, Haywards Heath Road & amplified details of his concerns at this proposed development – refer **2850** below.

**2840. Declaration of personal or prejudicial interest**

Cllr. Carol Jarvest declared a personal interest in respect of application **(BA)/12/00071/TCA** – The Coppice, Oldlands Avenue.

**2841 Apologies for Absence**

Councillors Mike Talman (on business), Simon Greenwood (on leave) Alan Dearden (arrived but retired sick), Peter Huxley (transport problems).

**2842. To approve Minutes of the Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2011**

The minutes, having been circulated to all Members, were approved & signed by the Chairman as a true record.

**2843. Matters Arising**

**2836** - Bretts. It had been noted that notwithstanding our concerns MSDC had recommended the application for approval. It would be discussed at full committee on 19<sup>th</sup> January. The Chairman would attend to present our case.

**2824** – Seemingly Marcus Slegg has not met the promised completion dates for the outstanding work. The Chairman promised to look into the problem & report back.

**2838** – School parking/Crossing Patrol problems. Cllr. Saunders reported on the circulated the reply from the Cabinet Member regarding the overdue selection of a “Lollypop” lady indicating that this will take place “shortly”. Cllr. Jarvest requested consideration to installing a controlled crossing outside the school. Cllr. Williamson mentioned from his experience that even if approval was granted the cost involved would be considered very high. Agreed that Cllr. Saunders would now check out the precise cost as well as details of the approval process that would be required. It was reported that the parking & congestion problem down towards Westup continues, but that the PCSO is investigating.

**2844. Urgent Matters – items not on the agenda that the Chairman of the meeting is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.**

The Chairman advised that all matters were adequately covered as agenda items.

**2845. Financial**

a). Cash Book Receipts & Payments for December – noted as presented.

b). 2012/13 Budget – finalisation. Members agreed that based on the circulated information assumptions remained as accurate as could reasonably be forecast. The matter would be readdressed at the next meeting & if accepted used in the set up of the 2012/2013 accounts.

c). Precept 2012/13 – after detailed discussion, including the Chairman’s query as to whether an increase to £63k would perhaps be more appropriate, Members subsequently decided to hold the present £60k.

Proposed by the Chairman & seconded by Cllr. Saunders the proposal was approved nem con. The Clerk will advise MSDC. d.). to consider contribution towards replacement of St. Mary's toilet roof. Members noted the additional information received but backed the recommendation of the RFO, namely that they felt unable to take any decision until a final breakdown detailing the final figure recovered from insurers were to hand.

**2846. Working Groups & reports from Group Leaders on**

a). *Housing & Environment* – refer agenda item **2847** below.

b). *Safety & Security* – Cllr. Dearden was absent.

c). *Young People* – Cllr. Jarvest updated Members with news of contract negotiations with AirS, seemingly now to be included. This would secure a Youth Worker for 1 year, payments to be quarterly, in conjunction with some other Councils although there had been some withdrawals by several initially involved. Once finalised Club meetings would resume on Mondays between 7-9 pm, manned by the AirS leader + volunteers. The recent email request for information from Mid Sussex VS was being actioned. A meeting of the Mid Sussex Rural Partnership was planned for 24<sup>th</sup> January & would be attended by herself & Cllr. Dennison. Regarding the reminder from MSDC, namely that our allocation of £10k for equipment needed to be actioned by the end of March this would be discussed with Mark Naylor, especially in regard to securing a new slide, although this could be problematic because of safety regulations & our suggestion of considering a circular running track.

d). *Traffic Matters* – Cllr. Saunders updated Members on situation relating to

- WSCC securing DOT approval of their proposal to allow a stop sign adjacent to Threads
- Speed limit introduction on the High Street &
- Possible change/rearrangement of the duties of George Chisenga, currently Senior Manager, Gatwick Diamond Area

Cllr. Jarvest asked the Clerk to speak to the Clerk dealing with Worth Parish regarding any likely road traffic changes following the untimely death of a young Abbey pupil.

e). *Local Societies/Facilities & Amenities* In the absence of Cllr. Talman Cllr Dennison spoke on his hard work in finalising a snow plan & referred to the circulated list he had prepared detailing arrangements. The Chairman requested that his good work be minuted accordingly.

The cycle rack at the station was now being utilised regularly.

The Chairman mentioned the recently sponsored projects (the racks & bus shelter renovation) from MSDC 106 monies & indicated that information received from our District Councillor indicated similar projects could likewise be funded – up to a possible ceiling of £32k. If making an application we should mention a 106 funding application.

**2847. Neighbourhood Plan – to establish sub committee & agree time table for commencement**

Detailed discussion took place & the Chairman drew attention to our recent comments on the District Plan. Regarding the figure of a possible £20k for completion of the Neighbourhood Plan she advised that this would very much depend on the degree of detail involved. Possibly the Neighbourhood Plan could be structured in a similar manner to the former & some examples were suggested. The time scale for formulating this plan would be decided through recommendation from a sub committee to be headed by the Chairman together with Councillors Jarvest, Saunders & assistance on the financial side from Cllr. Williamson (RFO) if required. It was hoped that an initial meeting would be possible before the February meeting when an interim report would be made confirming time scale, depth of subject & estimated cost of preparation.

**2848. Sunday Freighter – to discuss possible self-funding for 2012/13 at estimated cost of £300 per (2 hour) collection**

Members were not in favour of funding being taken over by this Council in view of the high cost involved. It was mentioned that MSDC might be considering taking over this function now that WSCC had terminated assistance & this would be kept in mind.

**2849. Oil exploration – Lower Stumble Site**

*Cllr. Saunders addressed the earlier comments made under Public Participation & cited information obtained from independent sources on fracking already released on behalf of the Council. He suggested that the Council has a responsibility to obtain accurate, factual information on the matter & circulate it to residents. He proposed that the future actions by the Council should be expressed in three phases, i.e.*

*Phase 1 - To gain as much accurate information about the fracking process as possible, and to share this information with the residents of the village.*

*Phase 2 - Thereafter to seek actively the views of the residents.*

*Phase 3 - Thereafter to act as an advocate on behalf of the residents in promoting their views to the relevant authorities, and in supporting such lawful actions as may be appropriate in the furtherance of those views.*

*This was agreed.*

*In consequence it was agreed that a working group be formed, comprising both councillors and other residents of Balcombe, and that a circular be delivered to every address within the parish inviting residents with relevant expertise and/or experience to volunteer to join the group.*

*The Chairman then exceptionally re-opened the floor for limited period when*

- a query on mineral rights was raised, and it was confirmed that in the UK all hydrocarbon rights are vested in the Crown*
- it was suggested that the make up of the working group should not include either individuals perceived to hold “extreme” views, or persons known to have connections with or to be shareholders in Cuadrilla or any company associated with Cuadrilla.*
- it was accepted that it might be appropriate for the organisers of the recent meeting to be represented on the working group.*
- an additional proposal was that thanks should be extended to the organisers and chairman of the recent public meeting.*

*Members present thanked Cllr. Saunders for the detailed work he had done to date to address concerns raised.*

## **2850. Planning**

### **a). For representation by 6<sup>th</sup> January 2012**

**BA)/11/03920/LBC** - Yew Tree Cottage, Haywards Heath Road - proposed change of existing timber door to stable door of a similar style material and colour. No Objection.

**(BA)/11/03942/TCA** - The Coach House, Oldlands Avenue - 4 Oaks - reduce height by 2.5m and thin canopies by 15%. Agreed that we should mention that we would accept the findings of the Tree Officer in this instance.

### **For representation by 27<sup>th</sup> January 2012**

**(BA)/11/04052/FUL & 04053/LBC** - Bagpiths Cottage, Haywards Heath Road No objections to the porch, which is nicely designed and fits in well, to the chimney, which will require skilled execution to preserve the immaculate front roof tiling but replaces feature that has been removed, or to the internal alterations.

Concerns regarding the rear extension include:

Listed Building. The rear extension would result in the demolition of the existing single storey rear kitchen/utility area, part of the listed building & of the historic context of the building.

Effect on the adjoining property Bagpiths Farmhouse includes

The planned extension would come very close to the garden boundary of the main farmhouse, Bagpiths. In places it comes over the line of the existing dividing garden fence onto land not the property of Bagpiths Cottage.

The extension is shown on land not owned by the applicant, there is no access for maintenance to that side of the building, gutters etc. The construction of the proposal would encroach into the garden of the farmhouse.

The proposal would result in a greater sense of overbearing and enclosure to Bagpiths Farmhouse. In particular to the kitchen windows and the space immediately outside the rear kitchen door. Although the proposal is only single storey it is still higher than the existing fence by several feet and the roofline, although receding, would further add to the sense of enclosure, by blocking the fairly open area to the west.

There is already a two storey section of the cottage outside the kitchen window but it is balanced by the shape of the Farmhouse itself. The extension results in a long length of building to the west boundary. As a result the proposal will undoubtedly form an unacceptably overbearing feature to the rear garden of Bagpiths Farmhouse by being right on (or over) the boundary line between the two properties.

We would suggest that MSDC consider the position regarding demolition of a section of Listed Building and that the applicants propose an extension that keeps within the bounds of their own property and that allows a set back from the fence-line to allow for construction and maintenance and that even more importantly, reduces the feeling of enclosure and overbearing on the neighbouring property.

b). to consider any additional applications received by the date of the meeting

**For representation by 3rd February 2012**

**(BA)/12/00071/TCA** – The Coppice, Oldlands Avenue – Fell one Beech, one Lime, one Scots Pine & one conifer

- No objection to the removal of the trees if they were replaced by a cohesive planting plan for the front garden which includes some semi-mature trees. The layout of trees in this garden was never good and those remaining are not well placed although they contribute to a consistent street scene along the avenue.
- Since the application the applicants are understood to have spoken to the neighbours and agreed to keep the conifer which provides some screening. The only tree coming out at this time is that growing through the drain cover. However they may remove some of the others as re-planting commences.

**2851. Digital Changeover meeting Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> February. Room manning.**

Councillors Jarvest & Huxley, together with the Clerk, would assist in the Parish room from 10 am onwards. AirS would be co-ordinating the event & also make staff available.

**2852. Correspondence**

**M3** Residents encouraged to comment on Draft District Plan consultation. Copies of the draft District Plan had also been circulated to Members.

**Other** – letter from Brian Curry. We should thank him for his observations on fracking but mention that once an application had been granted there was no mechanism in place for planners declaring it null & void. Also suggest he may wish to become involved in the proposed local group to be formed

**2853. Exchange of Information**

**General** – Nicky Evans had asked about possible Jubilee celebrations within the village. Agreed that we should thank her for her interest & invite her to talk to the Council at the February meeting.

Cllr. Short – Road works on Row Hill Lane were now complete.

– asked about the history of the bench opposite Bramble Mead.

Also mentioned potential road works along *Row Hill Lane*.

The Chairman – would attend the forthcoming planning meeting & present our case on the Bretts application & report back.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 22.27 hours.

***Signed*.....**

**Date: 13<sup>th</sup> February 2012**

**THE NEXT MEETING OF THE COUNCIL WILL BE HELD ON  
MONDAY 5<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2012 AT 8 PM**