

Minutes

The Chailey Annual Parish Meeting was held on Friday 23rd April 2010 at Chailey Parish Hall, commencing at 7.30pm.

Present - 37 in total:

Parish Council: Cllrs P. Olbrich (Chairman); D. Cowan, M Downey, K. Gould, M. Evans, J. Tillard, Don Cranfield & L Waller and Parish Clerk, Mrs V Grainger.

Speakers: Inspector Katie Walford, PCSO Steven Knowles (Sussex Police); Mr J Gould (Chailey Sports Club), Ms J Wilmot (ESCC Countryside & Rights of Way), Mr C Kirkpatrick (ESCC Chailey Ranger); Mr T Cook (ESCC), District Cllr Sharon Davy; County Cllr Meg Stroude .

1. Welcome from Chairman of Chailey Parish Council, Cllr Peter Olbrich

Apologies and Matters Arising from the Minutes of the 2009 Parish Meeting

Cllr Olbrich opened the meeting by welcoming the speakers and members of the public and noted that Norman Baker MP had been obliged to send his apologies due to the forthcoming parliamentary election. There were no matters arising from the annual parish meeting held on 2009. Apologies had previously been received from Cllr Millam and Cllr Ellis. An additional item under reports from local organizations had been added; Mr. J Gould would provide an update on behalf of Chailey Sports Club.

2. Annual Report from Parish Council Chairman, Cllr Peter Olbrich

Cllr Olbrich presented his report for the previous year:

In 2009 the Parish Council carried out a survey sending a questionnaire to all homes in the village, the main concerns raised by residents were:

- *Lack of footpaths along A275 to N. Chailey*
- *Danger crossing A272 at N. Chailey crossroads and crossing the A275 ay Chailey Green, South St and Mill Lane*
- *Speed of traffic on A275 (especially the stretch near the S Chailey stores)*
- *Lack of cycle ways*
- *Safety at junctions of the Beggars Wood Rd & A272*
- *Lack of facilities for teenagers and young people*
- *Better public transport*

It was noted that the majority of respondents favoured increased provision of starter homes for young adults and small families.

The Parish Council holds quarterly meetings with Highways department and is constantly raising issues highlighted in the survey. The council is pleased to see that a petition from residents has resulted in a commitment from highways to a speed limit outside South Chailey stores.

Members have agreed that the Highways department should look at the possibility of a footpath/cycleway from N Chailey to St Peters School using s106 development contributions from New Heritage site to fund the works.

The Parish Council held a community transport assessments needs meeting in February which was well attended, the findings are being assessed.

In 2009 the Council seriously considered purchasing a plot of land behind Markstakes for youth facilities. Public funds could not be committed to the scheme until we were sure of forthcoming problems with access, planning permissions, fencing; we are still looking for a suitable plot

In November the Parish Council received a presentation on a proposed affordable housing development at Oxbottom Lane some 14 units are anticipated the properties would be carbon neutral and rely on the burning of woodchips for central heating and hot water. Councillors showed interest in this scheme which would help younger people in the village.

A pre application presentation for the proposed £20 million retirement village at Gradwell Park South Chailey was received in January they acknowledged the first application had been unpopular with residents due to its scale and had been withdrawn. It is now proposed to reduce the accommodation from 159 to 115 units, and it is also claimed there would be a significant reduction in traffic movements. We await the new application.

Something that may not be popular is that for the first time in two years we have raised the precept from £43,000 to £46,500 this is to keep up with inflation and help top up our reserves. We spent £13,600 repainting the Windmill last year we had provided for most of this by setting aside £2000 a year for the past six years.

The Council has installed a new bus shelter in S. Chailey next to Mill Lane. We also pay for grass cutting around the village such as the Green, Rowheath and the sports ground. We also help the sports club as much as we can.

We pay for tree surveys and the trimming and cutting of trees owned by the Parish Council.

We support Chailey News with an annual grant of £1000. We have awarded last year £4,700 in small grants to village organizations.

With the worst winter for several years we had several requests for salt bins, the highways department has now pushed responsibility to the Parish Council.

We find much of our time is now taken up with health and safety, risk assessments and legal issues. This year we had to set up a management licence for Chailey green involving the owners of the Green and the Parish Council.

We have had various legal issues with common land owned by the council usually this is not the main common but strips of land which are still registered as common land rights of way need to be clarified or there has been encroachment on common or parish council land.

BT decided to remove its red telephone boxes from Chailey. First offering the Parish Council the opportunity to purchase them the phone box on the green was safe as it is grade II listed box.

Councillors decided to purchase for £1 the box at south Chailey with the idea of using it to display information.

One of my scariest moments last year (apart from being on the front page of the Leader) was being strapped to the front of Cllr. Millam's tele handler (a machine with extremely long reaching hydraulic arm). I was lifted to the top of the flag pole on the green to untangle the flag hoisting rope which had jumped off its pulley. This enabled me to take some aerials photos of the green.

After I was safely lowered back to terra firma a resident came over to congratulate us on a good job, what fine work we were doing. He seemed like a nice chap someone who appreciates the work of the Parish Council. But then came the sting in the tail he asked if we would mind taking the machine across the green with me being out in the sky yet again to fix the gutter on the roof of his three storey house. A penalty for his praising comments, and a part of being a Parish Councillor. I would like to thank all of my fellow councillors for their help throughout the year. I would like to welcome Don Cranfield who has joined the Council and would also like to introduce our new clerk Vera Grainger who has joined us. Finally please make use of our excellent web site www.chailey.org which has much information about our village and the Parish Council.

3. Report from Norman Baker MP

As noted at item 1, apologies had been received from Norman Baker MP.

4. Reports from local organisations

4.1 Inspector Katie Walford and PCSO Steven Knowles

Inspector Walford explained that she covers the NPT (Neighbourhood Policing Team) for the area. There are five NPTs for Lewes District covering an area from Saltdean to Newick. Crime figures showed 11% reduction in all crime compared to the previous year that means 591 fewer victims. There had been similar reductions in most crime categories for last year, there had been 137 fewer violent crime incidents from last year. Generally, Chailey was a low crime area in 2009/10 there had been six burglaries (- 4 from previous year). There had been similar reductions in Public Place Violent Crime and Criminal damage. There had been an increase in anti social behaviour, these related to specific dates and reporting had increased. There was a commitment to high visibility in the community with Police Community Support Officer spending 30 hours in the community. This included listen lunches in local schools and youth centres. There had been an introduction of farm watch in the latter part of last year. A Text message is sent of thefts occurring. PCSO Buggins and

PC Hall are Wildlife Officers they deal with misuse of fire arms, pesticides, badger baiting etc. (there is further information available on Sussex Police website).

Police response times- the target is 20 minutes to respond, in East Sussex there had been 1,749 grade 1 calls, 77% were responded to in 15 minutes.

Sussex Police were establishing Neighbourhood Panels in all communities to enable Police to hear what is happening and identify the issues that are important to local people and any low crime trends. There was presently no Police Panel in Chailey.

PCSO Steven Knowles explained that he is the Police Community Support Officer for Chailey together with PCSO Julie Whittaker-Jones. Over the last few months there had been an increase in vehicle crime, break-ins and valuables stolen. There was a need to ensure that valuables are placed out of sight e.g. Sat Navs, handbags etc. There had also been a spate of van break-ins and tools stolen. A free marking facility is offered, tools may be marked free of charge. Anyone interested in the scheme was encouraged to contact PCSO Knowles. There was also a spate of criminal damage occurring to vehicles. Speeding is a local issue on A275 by South Chailey Stores and parking on the pavement outside the store forces pedestrians into the road in the face of speeding traffic. Customers are being encouraged not to park on pavement outside the shop. Chailey bonfire was a very popular event with Officers and was a useful opportunity to meet with members of the community. PCSO Knowles encouraged the use of Police website – the local PCSOs may be sent Emails to advise upon any local issue.

Questions and Answers for Police

Cllr. Mark Evans was concerned about the withdrawal of PCSOs and queried whether the Chief Constable was fully aware of their value. Insp. Walford confirmed that there were no plans to remove PCSOs.

Mr J Smith attended the bonfire event and noted that previously the details of cars unlocked or with valuables on show were passed to Police and that scheme was stopped.

The Inspector responded by explaining that leaflets on cars in car parks at beauty spots were being left. There had recently been a number of thefts and a culprit had recently been arrested and thefts had subsequently been reduced.

4.2 John Gould, Chailey Sports Club

Mr Gould advised that in 1980 there had been a football pitch and changing room at North Chailey. The ground was levelled for cricket to be played and the changing room extended for use by football and stool ball clubs.

Facilities were lacking though and to cater for the increased use, five years ago it was decided to extend the sports pavilion, to seek lottery funding via football association. The Football Foundation drew up plans and advised that that six changing rooms were required and separate WCs for females. Time was given to the drawing of plans and the process for obtaining funding commenced. The Football Foundation have changed their criteria frequently over time and the plans amended taking into account the number of changing rooms and WCs accessible from the outside.

After planning consent was achieved on the previous criteria the Club members then learned that lottery funds were unlikely to be achieved. The plans have therefore been reviewed again to provide a common room and two changing rooms to allow facilities to be let. New plans were ready for submission, pre application consultation with planners seem to indicate support.

The issue was where would the funding come from? £100,000 was needed for drainage and £500,000 for facilities. £250,000 would need to be raised without lottery funding if the Parish Council was prepared to increase its contribution to £30,000 and a precept it would be possible to go public with the proposals when there was progress towards achieving the two thirds of total funding. Members of the sports club were determined to support this provision.

4.3 Jane Wilmot and Crispin Kirkpatrick, Chailey Ranger

Crispin Kirkpatrick explained that he had been appointed as the ranger for Chailey Common in June 2009 and it had been a very busy time. The site itself is beautiful and the seasonal changes witnessed so far mean there is always more to discover. In addition to a Common, the site is a Local Nature Reserve, a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and also Open Access land under the CROW Act 2000.

This gives it national and arguably international recognition as a valuable and important site.

Habitat management by contractors

The Common's SSSI status as a rare habitat, (sub-Atlantic Lowland Heathland) means special funding from Natural England is available. This enables Heathland restoration and other works to be carried out-funded by the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

Summer Bracken Control

Last summer's bracken control saw the Working Horse Trust return to do rolling on Red House Common, with other areas rolled by tractor. This is to reduce the bracken in these areas. Once the stems are broken, the plants are unable to withdraw the energy they hold in the fronds back into the roots for the following year. Over time this will weaken the plant.

Winter works The winter works were done by a contractor and again funded by Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

- Pound- Clearance work and scrapes in south west. Some re-seeded.
- Red House- Clearance work by car park, Scrape east of windmill- and re-seeded
Clearance and scrapes north of windmill.
- Memorial- Scrape in central area and re-seeded.- The earth bunds of scraped material on Memorial remained for a while, until heavy trucks can get onto the site and limit damage.

Due to the wet weather it was not possible to remove most of the timber on Red House and Pound Common before the bird-nesting season began. This will now stay in situ until after nesting. The Working Horse Trust will be returning again this summer and will be carrying out bracken rolling in various areas, and there is one final bout of winter works to carry out. This has been the fourth year of a five year plan funded by the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

Invasive Species:

There are a few species of invasive alien plant species that can become a problem if not controlled:

- **Parrots feather** in Pound Common pond has yet to re-appear- so fingers crossed that previous work was effective at eradicating it.
- **Japanese Knotweed** along the sports pitch perimeter is to be chemically treated this season by contractors organised by Chailey Parish Council.
- **Himalayan Balsam** on Memorial will need monitoring.

Grazing

This has been continuing in small areas enclosed with electric fencing. The sheep were removed over winter and their return has been delayed by the prolonged cold weather, reducing the available food. However, it is planned to bring them back on site next week. The Hebridean sheep used are browsers, surviving on far less than commercial breeds. They reduce birch, bracken and grass re-growth, allowing heather to regenerate.

Volunteers

As residents were probably aware, a lot of volunteers come out with the Ranger for the day, trainee rangers are also regularly on the common. The collective number of volunteer days over the last year is roughly 640 days. To get an approximate value of the contribution in monetary terms, one volunteer is estimated to equal £50- that gives about £32,000 worth of labour.

Ongoing tasks with volunteers and trainees included: Birch clearance (felling and digging up) Heather seeding, Keeping footpaths clear in summer from bracken and brambles, and in winter from gorse and tree branches damaged by the weight of the snow. Pot-hole filling, Rare plant monitoring and habitat management. Dragon's teeth installation, Litter collection and generally keeping the place safe and tidy for visitors and residents.

Volunteers groups:

7th Burgess Hill Scouts have been out twice- once to help clear a ditch and once to burn up some brash. A team from American Express helped install dragon's teeth at Pound Common. A group of local day centre users came onto the common for an afternoon, and we hope they will be able to return in the future and carry out some tasks.

Access

A lot of paths became difficult to pass in the summer due to the bracken, and in the winter due to the snow's weight collapsing gorse and snapping out branches and whole trees.

Mr Kirkpatrick thanked all those who alerted him to particularly difficult stretches, and encouraged reporting of any blocked paths in future. This was a great help as there are a huge amount of paths criss-crossing the commons.

There are three new foot-bridges on Red House- funded by the ESCC Capital Works programme. Over the coming months it is planned to replace a lot of footpath marker posts, notice boards and signs. There are also quite a few smaller footbridges that could be replaced.

Ridleys Pond broke its bank in the very wet weather, over-flowing. This has happened in the past in times of extremely rainy conditions. A quote had been obtained to reduce the likelihood of this happening again. This would be an expensive undertaking and possible funding sources are being explored.

At Beggars Wood Road crossroads,

In early summer, the Highways team cleared back vegetation from the edge of the road to improve visibility. A later cut pushed back the edge so the view is better along Beggars Wood Road.

This area was highlighted as a priority area due to accidents. A hard cut will be carried out every three years.

Publicity, education, interpretation and training courses

- Bat evening- the ever popular 'Bat Lady', Jenny Clark from Sussex Bat Hospital came and gave a talk last summer, bringing some of her charges. Fascinating and beautiful creatures.
- Chailey Heritage walks and talks- Mr Kirkpatrick is working quite closely with Chailey Heritage School, leading several walks onto the common, and giving talks in the classroom. In June they are holding an environment day and Mr Kirkpatrick will be leading 3 walks onto the Common during the course of the day.
- Over the summer holidays there will be three guided walks for the general public.
- Articles have been written for the Chailey Parish News, Chailey Common Society newsletter, the Meresman, ESCC Volunteer Task programme and Season Watch posters on notice boards across the Commons.
- Earlier this year a Heathland Training Day was held, attended by about 15 of our volunteers. Despite the torrential rain, this went very well.

Future work/grant bid work/s 106

Mr Kirkpatrick had been working with an organization called Talking Trees to help engage the local community and improve people's understanding and appreciation of the heathland. The focus would be non-traditional users. Potential funding sources are being identified to carry out a project of this kind. Funding known as Section 106 money was made available as part of the New Heritage development. This funds:

- The Rangers time for two days a week for 3 years
- One year's free annual membership for residents of the development
- £6,000 for interpretation- notice boards, signs, and leaflets
- £6,000 for education and surveys
- There is a total of £68,000 available.

Notable discoveries in the last month

A local enthusiast has found Fairy Shrimp, (*Chirocephalus diaphanus*) in a temporary seasonal pond on one of the Commons. *(He had looked at the pond in daylight, and seen nothing. He had a quick look while out torching for newts at night... and the pond was teeming with thousands of Fairy Shrimp!).* Fairy Shrimp is a protected species, and a temporary pond specialist. *(The eggs can survive prolonged drying out, and in fact must go through a period of this desiccation in order to mature. They are never found in permanent ponds. This is presumably a survival mechanism, drying out kills off predators or serious competitors in temporary or ephemeral ponds.)*. The pond now becomes a 'Priority Pond' under the Pond Habitat Action Plan.

There was also an exciting discovery on Red House Common -a Neolithic or maybe Mesolithic flint scraper. It was in an area where there had been no discoveries of this age before, and means that Chailey was occupied by hunter gatherers between 5000 to 8000 years ago! All in all, it had been a busy year on the common- and there is still much to do. Mr Kirkpatrick summed up by expressing that it was a privilege and honour to be Chailey Ranger, and looked forward to assisting in the restoration and enjoyment for all of this valuable and precious landscape.

Chailey Common Fencing Proposals

Ms Jane Wilmot provided an update on the Chailey Common fencing proposals. Following advice from Natural England, an independent consultant and extensive consultation the management Committee decided to put in an application for permission to fence the perimeter of Chailey Commons to enable extensive grazing. This along with scrub clearance and mechanical processes is considered to be only sustainable way to maintain the open heath land habitat, with its associated rare plants such as sundews and animal life such as silver studded butterfly that are so special for people to enjoy. Ms Wilmot provided some final fencing plans showing detailed access points and some question and answer sheets for anyone who would be interested.

Ms Wilmot explained the background to the decision and the timetable:

- 21st May 2009 applications submitted to Planning Inspectorate under Commons Act 2006
- 3 February 2010 notices and maps put up around Chailey common and information available at County Hall (^ weeks before inquiry)
- 17-22nd March 2010 Public Inquiry at Newick Church Barn Centre
- Attended by approximately 60 different people although attendance dropped off
- Both sides of debate were given plenty of opportunity to air their views and evidence in front of the inspector and he carried out a few site inspections to clarify issues

Time table

- Inspector indicated that he may make a decision in around 2 months- end of May and there may be amendments and conditions put on it if consent is given
- Still need to get permission under Highways Act for Cattle grids and get Traffic Regulation order for new speed limits. This could take up to 6 months, however the project on Red House and Lane End could be progressed without this.
- Majority of funding secured from Natural England through Country side Stewardship (80%) remainder from ESCC, contributions in kind and other sources.
- Contracts will be let over the winter with the possibility of grazing if all permissions forthcoming in spring/summer 2011.

4.4 Tony Cook, ESCC – Waste & Minerals

Mr Cook provided an update on waste and mineral issues relating to Chailey. A planning application had been received concerning extraction at Chailey Brickworks. Permissions are reviewed every 15 years. Ibstock submitted details and workings to the north and adjoining A275. Consultations had been received. The application cannot be refused but conditions may be updated. The Planning Committee will consider the application on 26th May although the decision may be extended to another date.

There had been a number of events/workshops to consult on the Waste and Minerals Core Strategy – this covers all kind of waste landfill and commercial waste. Construction is underway at Newhaven and recycling sites are being constructed around the County. There had been a consultation meeting at Newick Parish. A review of the consultation was being completed and all comments would be taken into account. It will be some time in the autumn before any proposals are put forward.

5. Report from Lewes District Councillor, Sharon Davy

Cllr. Davy provided an update on local issues:

Speed & Transport A number of representations had been received about speed limits outside Chailey Stores – some are of the opinion that bad drivers and not speed are to blame for the problems. Recently, guidance had been issued to local authorities to review speed limits on A & B roads and as a result Sussex Police and ESCC Highways will now support lower speed limits. Without the support of ESCC and Sussex Police there will not be any improvements.

AIRS and ESCC

AIRS (Action in Rural Sussex) and East Sussex County Council have provided information which indicates that a number of young people in rural areas find it difficult to get to the places that they want to reach and there is a proposed transport service to help them.

Planning & Environment

Many residents are concerned about Markstakes and considered that this land is valuable to the community. The Local Authority has the ability to apply direction to protect the countryside and under permitted development rights fencing cannot be erected without planning permission.

There had been some issues raised about New Heritage, plaques to New Heritage are on site and Lewes District Council has issued a high court injunction to ensure that the developers complete all works before leaving the site.

Recycling Boxes

Some service had been withdrawn from 37 households and boxes had to be left to be picked up. A request had been made for a small vehicle to be used for rural locations but this was not possible.

Pollution

There had been some pollution at Pelling Brook – a mobile fish monger had been tipping fish waste into the stream.

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty- Vale of Sussex

The Vale of Sussex aims were supported. The Vale of Sussex was the land between High Weald and South Downs and should be protected against development while supporting local people to remain in the area.

Green Lane/Setford Fields

The surface work was now completed LDC was requested to reconsider the request to the refuse service not to use this bye lane.

Councillors- What do they Do?

Councillors may give notice of motions for example:

Housing Issues -LDC support the direct payment of Housing Benefit to private landlords.

Registered Social Landlords insist on Housing Benefit being paid directly, there is no choice for private landlords rent is paid to tenants. LDC has written to Secretary of State to support choice – payments to landlord.

LDC previously did not support the flying of flag on St Georges Day this has been changed and the flag has been flown and will be flown each year on 23rd April.

Finally Cllr Davy expressed thanks to the Chairman and Councillors of the Parish Council and to the past and new Clerk.

6. Report by East Sussex County Councillor, Meg Stroude

ESCC has been able to plan services this year with a known budget but will be acutely aware of the shortfall in the coming years due to Government Grant and inflation. Therefore there are plans across the Council to look for efficiencies and potential savings. This will be achieved by working creatively with partners and voluntary organisations and especially with our neighboring authorities Borough and District Councils. It may involve outsourcing some services to cost competitive companies. The delivery of services will remain as last year and residents will appreciate it is due to good housekeeping and prudent use of funds.

Council tax rise for 2010/11 is at 2.7% the lowest for 14 years. This reflects the Council's concern for elderly residents and those on fixed incomes.

Transport and Environment:

The weather this winter has created serious road conditions across the County, as a result £800k has been agreed to mend potholes. Through prudent borrowing there are plans to deliver £10m for extensive road works across the County so be prepared to be inconvenienced this summer with road works which will require road closures and diversions. You will be rewarded by a much improved road network.

The rights of way team have produced the first ever full asset and condition survey of 2,040 mile footpath, bridleway and byway network this allows the team to create up-to-date customer focused priorities.

Officers and members are engaged in discussion about the role and focus on the South Downs National Park authority and how we will work together. ESCC has responsibility for rights of way and countryside sites.

Strong and Safe Communities

The Council is a member of the East Sussex Safer Communities Partnership and through joint working there has been an overall reduction of 30.5% in total crime recorded from 2005 to 2009. In 2009 the Council recorded 15% increase in the number of people in East Sussex volunteering there are approximately 75,000 volunteers in the County. £300,000 has been invested in the delivery of support and advice services for voluntary and community organizations across the County.

Adult Social Care

The current Government predicts free personal care at home for qualifying senior adults. While it will be shared by the PCTs, ESCC have had to allocate funds to cover anticipated costs. More elderly people are supported to continue to live at home, where they are happiest. Many of these people are able to choose the services they prefer delivered in the way they prefer. In the first nine months of 2009/10, the number of older people helped to live at home increased from 7507 to 7959.

Children's Services

This year is the best ever rate of improvement for the percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*- C grades at GCSE.

Chailey School continues to deliver outstanding results and has currently received an award from the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust for progress it has made in the number of students getting the top results for english, maths, science and modern languages.

The care of vulnerable children continues to be top priority for this department. There has been a 25% increase in referrals to the service since Baby P case. Subsequently there are pressing demands for an immediate increase in social workers, administration and foster carers all with associated costs. There are currently 520 children in our care. The new Children's centre has received planning permission to start to build on the Chailey School Site.

It has been a successful year for the Council and there are many new challenges to face in the future.

7. Question and Answer Session

Cllr Davy had a query for Mr Kirkpatrick about bracken control. She had heard of an environmentally friendly substance to remove bracken. There had been a report by a professor from Liverpool and the substance had possibly been used in Ashdown Forest. It was confirmed that there had been two trials on the common but it was an expensive solution. It was suggested that money could be gained from grants.

Secondly Cllr Davy expressed concerns about Mr Kirkpatrick's post when current funding runs out. Cllr Stroud suggested that LDC could possibly increase its contribution.

A further question to Mr Kirkpatrick was about the pile of branches by Beggars Wood cross roads which obscures sight lines. This was confirmed to be on private land.

A further question was asked of the Chairman about the progress of the sale of St Mary's. Church Cllr Evans confirmed that the sale was imminent and had been delayed by Church procedures and concerns of Conservation Officer, particularly about window openings and internal gallery.

There was a final question to Mr Gould asking if the sports club had considered revamping the existing sports pavilion. Mr Gould responded that this had been considered but there was a very distinct crack in the existing building, the structure was not good and changing rooms an inadequate size. It had been concluded that this was not a viable option.

8. Close of Meeting

There being no further questions the meeting closed at 9.10 p.m.

Signed:

Chairman

Date:

Thanks are expressed to the parish councillors for their assistance in setting up the hall and clearing away after the meeting. Thanks are also given to Cllr Gould for organising the refreshments.