West Itchenor Parish Council

Minutes of a Meeting of West Itchenor Parish Council held on Monday 14 January 2013 in Itchenor Memorial Hall.

Present: Mrs J Boadle, Mr M Chater OBE (Chairman), Mr G Colbourne, Mr J Hartley, Mr A Spencer, Mrs S Taylor

In attendance: Mrs C Smith (Clerk), 2 members of public, Mr P Montyn (CDC,WSCC – until 7.40pm)

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm

1/13C Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2/13C Questions/comments from members of the public.

There were no questions raised.

3/13C District and County Councillors Reports.

Mr Montyn reported that the County Council has made £8.5 million of reserves available to help alleviate problems caused by the extreme weather conditions. This may include contributing to schemes with other agencies to help reduce risk of flooding, helping Communities or individuals where in need and also to deal with road damage. There are now 15 road gangs out repairing all the pot holes across the county.

The Chairman expressed concern about the repair of the pot holes and asked if there was funding to fully dress surface or mend a larger areas.

Mr Montyn explained that the priority was to have pot holes repaired quickly rather than worrying about the aesthetics and he highlighted the ongoing programme of road dressing which was very much cheaper than resurfacing roads and was internationally recognised. If pot holes are not repaired correctly they are redone at Balfour Beatty's cost. Safety is the main issue.

The Chairman expressed concern about sewage rising into resident's gardens, in addition the plant at the top of the village has tankers running at all hours. It was also known that some of the sewerage pipes were cracked.

Mr Montyn advised that Southern Water was aware of these issues and had long term programs to seek permission to upgrade and repair pipes. A new pipe from East Wittering to Sidlesham was due to be installed as the current pipe is breaking up. Tankers are brought in to remove sewerage whilst the pipe work is being undertaken. The Itchenor system feeds separately into Sidlesham.

The Chairman highlighted the fact that Itchenor had experienced problems with sewerage for 40 years and there as concern that this had been left for too long.

Mr Montyn explained that although the County Council was the lead agency for local flooding it was not necessarily responsible for fixing problems but for expediting solutions. He added that it was unlawful to pump sewage into ditches.

Cllr Colbourne commented that when it rains sewerage runs into the rife and this has been happening for several years. He also commented on a private discussion with Southern Water.

DRAFT

Mr Montyn explained that Southern Water had constraints in that it was not allowed to spend money unless approved by Offwat.
It was noted that the problems of sewerage in Itchenor occurred all year round and Mr Montyn was requested to put forward the case to Southern Water on behalf of the residents.

Mr Montyn reported that the draft Local Plan had been recently circulated to District Councillors and he expected this to come out for consultation very shortly.
The Chairman reinforced concerns on the Peninsula about the influx of housing without sustainability. He also highlighted the uniqueness of the harbour and tourism value. The Chairman asked if any MP's were attending the Planning Conference in Tangmere.

Mr Montyn acknowledged the concerns and highlighted the recent application for 50 houses in East Wittering which had prompted a flood of objections. The Development Control Committee had refused the application but as this had gone against Officer Recommendations it had now been passed on to the Applications Referral Committee. Mr Montyn explained that this was to ensure that the grounds for refusing the application were appropriate and that the District Council wanted to try and avoid the application going to appeal. Mr Montyn highlighted that Councillors were becoming more at odds with the Planning Officers with regard to development on the Peninsula.

The Chairman acknowledged the importance of the Planning Regulations but reiterated the special nature of the Peninsula. He commented that consideration could be given to putting another road in that would relieve the traffic issue but he felt this was approaching the problem from the wrong end. The Chairman questioned whether there was any strength in protecting the unique environment of the manhood. It is the only section of green space along a good stretch of the coastline. He suggested that putting in additional housing may block the road system, damage the environment and tourists could stay away because access to the area may be compromised. Additionally the harbour is a European Protected Habitat. He questioned whether these arguments had any credibility.

Mr Montyn commented that alongside the harbour, the coastal strip was subject to different planning rules which were more stringent as it is AONB. Mr Montyn added that although the recent ICZM carried a lot of weight the NPPF presumption in favour of development has overriding priority. There is a planning application for 46 houses in Church Lane, Birdham which lies within the AONB. Developers here have to demonstrate how they are going to alleviate the pressure on recreation by creating open spaces etc. Mr Montyn commented that the District Councillors were constantly trying to impress on Officers the constraints on the peninsula. He finished by highlighting the need to complete the Local Plan completed although there were still having to deal with the numbers issue and suggested that planning should be concentrated on the A27 corridor where there was better access to transport.

Cllr Colbourne questioned whether the other consulting bodies had not objected to development applications on the Peninsula. Mr Montyn confirmed that they had not. This is because Developers are required to provide funding to help with such issues as sewerage and drainage including the provision of modern sealed pipes.
Cllr Spencer asked how many recent developments still had properties that remained 'unsold' and how many sites had been granted planning permission but work had not yet commenced and are these included in the housing figures. Mr Montyn responded that only developments where planning permission was granted after 1 April 2011

come into the equation. Government insist that all housing on a development will get sold eventually. The District Council had tried very hard to use that approach without success.
Cllr Spencer asked how many new school places will be needed for all these planned developments and what was the plan to produce a new school. Mr Montyn responded that developers have to put funds into a schools pot which the County Council uses to help with school funding.
Cllr Taylor expressed concern that although funds were provided that did not mean the local authority would allocate this correctly. Mr Montyn advised that all funding from developers is earmarked, there is a set formula for the amount of contribution payable. He added that once the Local Plan is approved then funding would be replaced by a community infrastructure levy which is less defined.
The Chairman thanked Mr Montyn for his contribution and that hoped he had a sense of the concerns of the Parish Council.

4/13C Apologies for absence.
Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Varvill.

5/13C Declarations of Interest by Members and dispensation requests.
There were no declarations of interest.
Cllr Boadle duly completed a request for dispensation to discuss and set the Precept. It was noted that all other Councillors had completed dispensation requests at the November meeting.

6/13C The Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 12 November 2012
The Chairman called for the approval of the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 12 November 2012. The Minutes were then **AGREED** and the Chairman duly signed them as being a true record of that meeting.

7/13C Matters arising from the minutes of 12 November 2012.
Minute 103.1/12C
Cllr Colbourne reported that he had hoped to have costings but he was still awaiting quotes from Southern Electric. He hoped these would be forthcoming shortly and hoped to have a proposal to put to the Parish Council in March.

.

8/13C Members Reports.

8.1 <u>Meetings of Local Government Associations, AiRS/SALC, SERCAF, National/sub regional developments, Manhood issues and Birdham School – Cllr Chater</u>
The Chairman circulated a copy of his last Chairman's Report for NALC.
The Chairman had attended meetings of the United Benefice. Church funds are very tight and the Church of England is under strain to keep buildings safe and useable.
Church attendance over Christmas was excellent but it was acknowledged that this was seasonal and there was concern that the fabric of the building was under strain.
The Chairman had attended School Governors meetings. The new Head Teacher, Mr McCadden had previously been a School Inspector and had a good background in performance targets. The School was settling well under his leadership.

The Chairman recently attended a WSALC Executive meeting and highlighted the drawing up of draft articles of association changing the organisation to a company limited by guarantee. Some other country associations have already taken this route. Elected members to the Executive Committee have the right to vote on this issue.
The Chairman highlighted working with AiRS was still very important. The Police Commissioner had now been elected and the Chairs of East and West County

Associations had met wither her and Trevor Leggo (Director of SALC). It was noted that the Police Commissioner had been out on patrol with Officers to get an understanding of the demands on the Police.

The Chairman highlighted ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) as one of a number of voluntary bodies looking at how to promote their services.
The Chairman also spoke at a conference for County Councils. This was a first for first tier local government and demonstrated a move to closer liaisons between both Parish Councils and County Councils.

Problems with taxation changes may mean there is pressure on precepts and the Chairman commented on the need to keep informed on developments. Precepting has historically been independent but was now affected by outside factors.
The Chairman finished by highlighting the National Training Strategy and the need for Councillors as well as the Clerk to undergo training on an ongoing basis.

8.2 Planning – Cllr Taylor

Cllr Taylor reported that there had been 3 planning committee meetings since November and she thanked Cllr Colbourne for standing is for her as Chairman whilst she was away. The Planning Committee had reviewed 12 applications and had recommended 'No objection' to 9 applications and 'Refusal' for the remaining 3 applications.
The District Council has permitted 3 applications since November 2012.
It has been noted that Mr. Smith has been carrying out work to the plot of land adjacent to The Oast. Ostensibly in compliance with the Enforcement Notice which he lost on appeal and has to comply with by the 13th February 2013.
It has been noted with concern that he has filled in the ditch fronting the property. This ditch forms part of the run off from the farm at the rear and the blockage of the exit has possible implications for the barn conversions which were flooded in June.
It has also been noted that he has enclosed what is in effect land owned by WSCC and highway land which he is claiming as his own especially as the plans that he has submitted are based on the inclusion of this land. He has also narrowed the footpath so that in parts it is only just over a metre.
Letters have been written to the County Council informing them of the enclosure of their land and the reductions of the footpath. The Planning Committee is not aware of any response to this correspondence. Cllr Taylor reported that she had seen an email addressed to a resident concerning the filling in of the ditch in which an official from the County Council has been told by Mr. Smith that the ditch will be reinstated. However details are sparse and no indication has been given as to when the ditch will be reinstated. Cllr Taylor expressed concern that the County Council land had been enclosed and included in a planning application and yet no action has yet been taken.
Cllr Colbourne expressed concern that the filling in of the ditch was also a potential flooding issue and Officers had missed this point. Cllr Taylor also commented that neighbours had also expressed concerns but were reluctant to take action having been in receipt of threatening correspondence.

The Chairman suspended the meeting to allow Mr Mead-Briggs to Comment.
Mr Mead-Briggs pointed out that the plot of land had been identified in the Village Design Statement as an important rural gap. The revised VDS had now been approved by the District Council and therefore was material in the consideration of planning applications. The Itchenor Society has written to the Planning Inspectorate confirming the inclusion of this in planning consideration.
The Chairman thanked Mr Mead-Briggs for his comments and resumed the meeting.

Cllr Spencer added that he had also looked at the Bramber Nursery application and Southern Water had suggested that there was not a problem. However it was widely acknowledged locally that there was a major issue with surface water drainage and sewerage in the area. The developer's solution was to dig a soak away. He suggested that Parish Councils had to be much more forceful in getting Planning Officers to undertake site visits.

8.3 20mph speed limit – Cllr Spencer

Cllr Spencer confirmed that he had emailed Greg Ockwell (WSCC) asking for an update on speed testing in the village. It transpired that the original request had not been auctioned. Cllr Spencer suggested that the speed in areas of village were very close to 20mph which may aid the request for 20mph limit. It was noted that the last speed monitoring carried out was over two years ago and the working party had identified a different location for revised speed monitoring. Hence the requested for revised speed monitoring. Cllr Spencer agreed to report back once he had met with Mr Ockwell.

9/13C Review of flooding issues.

Cllr Colbourne commented that in the previous week there was another serious amount of rain. Areas of concern were flowing reasonably well. Outside the Memorial Hall water arrived and disappeared very quickly and it was assumed there may be a temporary blockage.

Cllr Taylor reported that a nearby resident had done a lot of drainage work, although it floods it does drain quite quickly.

Cllr Colbourne commented that everywhere else water levels were very high, water could be heard roaring through the ditches around Chalkdock Lane. The Spinney Management Committee met recently and considered the letters written by the Parish Council. One suggestion it had was to get rid of the pipes and to reinstate the ditches locally. Cllr Colbourne added that levels not been taken yet but will be done see if any conclusions can be drawn.

It was noted that lots of water comes from Itchenor Park Farm, which flooded on the corner of the field which had resulted in debris being deposited on the road. There was a need to understand where the water is coming from to be able to take action.

Cllr Colbourne suggested that the Memorial Hall and Patrick Green have a look at the possibility of putting in a trench. It may not help the flooding issue but should make the footpath more accessible. It was agreed to write to Patrick Green about the issue.

Cllr Colbourne reported that Southern Water was investigating sewerage problems in his own garden and would report back once investigations were complete. Other residents have also written with complaints. Southern Water has tested the water in the rife but there was no evidence of sewerage infection. It was agreed that residents should be encouraged to complain when affected by sewerage problems.

Cllr Hartley reported that the procedure for putting out flood warning signs was working well and these had been deployed three times recently.

Cllr Colbourne commented on depth of the water by Little Court suggesting that the Parish Council should write to WSCC highlighting the deep holes adjacent to the highway. It was agreed that a gill should be placed over the ditches to prevent anyone falling in.

DRAFT

Cllr Spencer suggested that most of the water comes off the farms from the east and west and this is all being funnelled into the pond. Itchenor Park Farm appears to drain through to the rife. He suggested that the Farmers should be asked to put in ditches at certain points to aid a better flow of water.
Cllr Taylor added that the floodwater was just mud. She had been told by people living on the farm that about 4 years ago Patrick Green undertook major drainage work and this has created problems elsewhere. She asked whether it was possible to communicate with farmers to consider actions that would not have a knock on effect with others in the community and to ask them how they can help the village combat flooding problems.

The Chairman commended the work that has been done the ditch clearance has helped. There has been no further news from the Environment Agency about the Sluice Gate and the need for an overflow. He suggested a report should go in the newsletter explaining that there is an issue with flooding. Although no one is to blame there is a good deal of water running off farmland. He suggested a copy of the newsletter go to the local farmers to see if it prompts a response in the first instance.

The Chairman suspended the meeting to allow Mr Arnold to comment.
Mr Arnold explained the flow of water through the village adding that they all used to be open ditches to drain water away. He expressed concern about the possible development of the farmer's fields for housing. He added that the farmer was very conscientious about maintaining his ditches. Mr Arnold commented that he was concerned that it was the ditches on the highway causing the problems. Following the line of water many of the open ditches had now been filled in.
The Chairman thanked Mr Arnold for his comments and resumed the meeting.

There followed some further discussion on the flow of water through the ditches, off the farm land the need for general co-operation between all parties to help resolve the difficulties within the village. The impact of the saturation of the land because of the unprecedented amount of rainfall was also acknowledged. It was suggested that a further survey was undertaken and the information shared.

Cllr Spencer suggested talking to Chris Watson and getting him on board to look at the problem. It was agreed that Cllr Taylor would approach him.

Cllr Hartley commented that he had seen nothing like the current flooding in 40 years of living in the village.

10/13C Review of maintenance issues at the Pond.

The Clerk reported that last year the Woodger Trust changed its Managing Agents to Cranes Chartered Surveyors in Chichester. The contact Richard Stephens has been down to inspect the site as the Woodger Trust is still responsible for an area to the right of the lane adjacent to the pond. A number of trees on both sides had either already fallen or were in serious danger of falling. Henry Whitby (CDC Tree Officer) has been down to the site and approved the immediate felling or pruning of a number of trees along the lane. Some of the affected trees fall to the Woodger Trust's responsibility but some come under the responsibility of the Parish Council. The Woodger Trust engaged the services of a local Tree Surgeon (Stephen Bacon) and because of the immediate need to remove some trees on the Parish Council side it was agreed that Mr Bacon would also undertake the work for the Parish Council thereby reducing the costs. The work has now been completed.

The Parish Council should now look at formulating a proper maintenance plan for the Pond for future years.
Cllr Colbourne commented that there was vagueness over responsibility suggesting a need to ascertain exact areas of land ownership and if appropriate consider registering the land. Cllr Spencer expressed concern over liabilities that go along with maintaining the pond.
The Chairman agreed that the Parish Council needed to look at both remedial work and any future responsibility.
Cllr Colbourne also commented on the general level of reserves and that the parish Council had a bill for work that equated to nearly 10% of its income.

It was acknowledged that the Itchenor Society volunteers did a valuable job in maintaining the pond on a regular basis and that the current work had arisen partly due to the uncertainty over the extent of the Parish Council's responsibilities.

11/13C Budget for 2013/2014 and setting of the Precept.

A revised budget had previously been circulated to Councillors. The Clerk briefly reminded Councillors of the changes to the Council Tax Benefit system and advised that the Parish Council would not be in receipt of a grant from the District Council. The Tax base had however gone up by 5.75%. Details of how these figures affected the Band D rate had also been circulated. The Clerk also advised that there was to be no capping of the Precept for Town and Parish Councils for the forthcoming year although it is very likely that this may be imposed for future years.
The Chairman began by reporting that there were deep concerns amongst many parishes at the current situation.
Cllr Spencer highlighted the problems of being faced with unexpected expenditure such as the tree removal costs.
The Chairman recognised the need to take more community responsibility adding there was also a need to indicate intensions for the use of taxpayers' money.
Cllr Colbourne explained that a few items had been included in the budget that have no recurring costs which could give a higher base for future years. He added that it could be possible that if capped Parishes may be forced to hold a referendum which may cost more than the additional amount the Parish is trying to raise.
It was agreed that a newsletter outlining the Parish Council budget and to explain what the Parish Council is doing for residents should be issued before the Council Tax bills are sent out.
Cllr Colbourne suggested that the Precept should not be set at anything less than £12680 and asked what increase Councillors felt happy to defend.
There followed some debate on the merits of budgeting effectively.
The Chairman suggested that there was a need to improve services and it was necessary to manage development of the budget now.
It was agreed that an additional £1000 should go into the budget for work on the Pond.
RESOLVED that the amended budget be approved.
RESOLVED that the Precept for 2013/2014 be set at £13680

12/13C Parish Councillor Email addresses.

The Clerk reminded Councillors that Cllr Spencer had raised concern about the profile of the Parish Council and had suggested that all Councillors should have a Parish Council email address for Council matters. Initially an email had been set up for Cllr Spencer to trial and this was now working.
Cllr Spencer commented that he felt that the Parish Council had a relatively low profile in the village and that Parish Council email address would add some credibility.

DRAFT

Cllr Colbourne agreed that it would promote a better image using Parish Council emails.
RESOLVED that the Clerk set up each Councillor with a @westitchenorparishcouncil.org.uk email address.
Cllr Spencer also suggested that Councillors set up signature that automatically concludes on every email sent.

13/13C Clerks Report.

Practitioners Conference

A request is made for the Clerk's attendance at The Practitioners Conference 1-2 March 2013. An application for a Bursary from NALC to help with the costs has been made and received. Cost of the conference is £210 – a bursary of £100 has been received reducing the cost to £110 which would be split between West Itchenor and Hunston Parish Councils (£55 each).
RESOLVED that the Clerk be authorised to attend the Practitioners Conference.

Planning Conference

Tangmere Parish Council has written an open letter to the local sitting MP's inviting them to a conference in Tangmere on Friday 25th January 2013 to hear the views of local Towns and Parishes on the rush of planning applications in the area and the associated problems. It was agreed that the Chairman, Cllr Colbourne and Cllr Taylor would attend.

SALC winter newsletter

The latest newsletters from SALC were circulated to Councillors. The Chairman highlighted the importance of the newsletters in keeping parishes abreast of national issues.

Planning Pilot

The Clerk explained that the District Council was running a Pilot to establish how effective it would be to stop distributing paper copies of the planning applications. The Pilot involved 6 Parishes, which includes Hunston, where plans would only be available online. The Parishes involved will by using a laptop, projector and screen be able to view applications at their meetings. There are a number of hurdles to get over including provision of equipment and access to broadband before this may be extended to all Parishes.

Village Design Statement

The second edition of the VDS had been approved by the District Council and a working copy had been circulated. The Itchenor Society is now working up a printed copy that will have pictures.

14/13C Finance.

14.1 The Schedule of Payments and Receipts

RESOLVED that the payments listed in the schedule of payments and receipts totalling £1845.56 be made. See appendix 1 (January 2013)

14.2 The Statement of Accounts

The Statement of Accounts up to 31 December 2012 was **APPROVED.**
See appendix 2 (January 2013).

15/13C Items for referral to the next Council Meeting on Monday 4 March 2013.

CCTV, water survey, farm issue, speed limits.

DRAFT

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.32pm

Signed_____Date_____
Chairman

DRAFT