West Itchenor Parish Council

Minutes of a Meeting of West Itchenor Parish Council held on Monday 13 January 2014 in Itchenor Memorial Hall.

Present: Mrs J Boadle, Mr M Chater OBE (Chairman), Mr G Colborne, Mr J Hartley, Mr A Spencer, Mr C Watson

In attendance: Mrs C Smith (Clerk), Mr P Montyn (CDC/WSCC – until 7.20pm)
3 Members of the Public

1/14C Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2/14C Questions/comments from members of the public.

The Chairman reminded the public that councillors were available to comment between meetings.

Mr Mead-Briggs requested that under Minute 112/13C the comment "for political reasons" be struck out as that was not what he said. The Council clarified that he did make the comment but that he was relaying information from Mr Montyn and they were not his personal comments.

Mr Arnold commented that the reports that had been made available in advance of the meeting were very helpful. Mr Arnold commented that within the Planning Report the comments about the Itchenor Society requesting support from the Parish Council regarding Old Haven were not correct. The Itchenor Society was awaiting a report from the Conservancy and should that be positive then at that stage the Itchenor Society would seek support from the Parish Council.
Mr Arnold queried why there was no written report for the Pond.

The Chairman clarified that Parish Council business was conducted through the agenda, not so that the public will raise issues in relation to the Agenda. Publishing the reports provides an opportunity for consultation and comments which the Parish Council take into account when in Council meetings.
The Chairman explained that he has tried to give some latitude in allowance of time for public participation but that intervention during the meetings deliberations by Council Members was not helpful and not the way Councils conduct business within the law. He acknowledged this was a dilemma for those who attended with the preconception that they could intervene throughout Council business.
He highlighted the opportunity for residents to have contact with councillors outside meetings and the publication of information. The Parish Council would continue to provide newsletters and additional information/updates on the website which it hoped will alleviate the gap between meetings.

Mr Arnold acknowledged the comments adding that now Cllr Spencer was on the Itchenor Society Committee he would be able to feed information back to the Parish Council. This was welcomed by the Chairman.

3/14C District and County Councillor reports.

Mr Montyn reported on the following.
He highlighted recent problems with sewage coming up through manhole covers and into resident's gardens. Mr Montyn together with Graeme Barrett via the District Council has been working hard to get all instances reported to the Consumer Council for Water. The Chairman observed that the Parish Council was in contact with Mr Barrett with the concerns it was monitoring in the village and full support was given to Mr Montyn.

The Tawny Nurseries (Birdham) appeal was allowed by the Inspector, the lack of a five year housing supply does not help. The next appeal is for 50 houses in Church Lane, Birdham. Birdham residents are raising money for a Planning Barrister to contest the appeal.
High speed Broadband is being introduced in 8 phases across the county. The second phase will help parishes' dependant on the Birdham exchange. Although there was some geographical surveys to be completed further information should be available around June 2014. The Chairman welcomed this as an improved position promising relief to residents and small businesses dispersed in the local community.

Support was expressed the upgrade for the Birdham exchange and also the difficulties they were facing over the saturation of housing developments without assurance of a flooding resolution. Mr Montyn explained that issues raised are deemed to be solvable and so the Inspector is allowing appeals.

Mr Montyn reported that many of the County's unclassified roads are deteriorating and these roads accounted for over half of the network by mileage. These roads are deteriorating faster than they can be fixed. There is about two years work to complete the work and the costs are likely to be in the region of £20 million. A and B roads are well above the national standards set. This work is awaiting formal ratification from the County Council in February. The County Council is moving from reactive maintenance to effective management of the roads. About half the funding will come from reserves the rest from prudent borrowing. It is expected that this will reduce maintenance costs in the longer term.

The Chief Executive of the County Council is taking redundancy at the end of January. A consultant will be taken on for a temporary period to help streamline the organisation.

Funding from Government has been set for the year and it was likely that government funding will eventually cease. Business rates will become more important. The County Council is aiming to keep its portion of the Council Tax static for the coming year.

In response to a question Mr Montyn confirmed that under Minute 93/13C the £141million of savings over four years was relative to an annual budget of £550 million. The Chairman welcomed the report especially the road investment and expressed appreciation for the work of the County Council Chief Executive.
Mr Montyn then left the meeting.

4/14C Apologies for absence.
Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Taylor.

5/14C Declarations of Interest.
The Chairman declared an interest in Agenda Item 18 as a resident on the Common.
Cllr Spencer declared an interest in Agenda Item 16 as a recipient of one of the payments.

6/14C Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 11 November 2013
Minute 93/13C – the word annual was inserted before revenue budget in the first sentence of paragraph 2.
The Chairman called for the approval of the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 11 November 2013. The Minutes were **AGREED** and the Chairman duly signed them as being a true record of that meeting.

7/14C Matters arising from the minutes of 11 November 2013.
There were no matters arising.

8/14C Minutes of the extra Parish Council Meeting, 16 December 2013

It was noted that although the plan was not clear, the last resolution was not necessary. The issue of Primary education provision was being looked at by the District Council in conjunction with the County Council and therefore no additional comment was needed as this was adequately served..

The Chairman called for the approval of the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 16 December 2013. The Minutes were **AGREED** and the Chairman duly signed them as being a true record of that meeting.

9/14C Members Reports.

9.1 Meetings of Local Government Associations, AiRS/SALC, SERCAF, National/sub regional developments, Manhood issues and Birdham School – Cllr Chater

The Chairman's written report previously circulated to members is appended to these minutes. It was noted that it had been helpful to have the report in advance of the meeting.

The Chairman has been invited to address the Isle of Wight conference in February.

The Chairman commented that although Councils may face big opportunities this was tempered by massive constraints. Local authorities will undoubtedly shed some services and this presented a dilemma for local councils who might wish to take up these services but would need funding. He highlighted the parishing of urban areas. In the future there will likely be a gap between communities and their needs. It may then fall to local councils to meet the needs of local communities and Parish Councils need to cooperate to get over the requirement for resources to deal with this.

9.2 Planning/Neighbourhood Plan – Cllr Taylor

In the absence of Cllr Taylor the Chairman read out reports on Planning matters and the Neighbourhood Plan. These reports are appended to the Minutes.

It was noted that Cllr Taylor had sent out information on the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 215 which sets out broad guidelines which should be noted when a request received from the Itchenor Society about supporting action on Old Haven.

Cllr Colbourne reported that Mr Lansdale has now appealed against the decision on the boatshed. He explained the problems around the Parish Council comments when the application was being considered and suggested that the Parish Council should support the appeal.

Cllr Colbourne also reported that the appeal to turn a boat shed in Chandlers Reach into accommodation appears to have been allowed although no information as to the reasons why was available. It was noted that this was going to create problems for residents in Chandlers Reach.

The issue of the land at south end of the village by the main road in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan was raised. Concern was raised that Neighbouring Parishes might include this area for development and the Parish Council should try harder to have the boundaries changed. It was noted that Cllr Taylor had held detailed discussions with both neighbouring parishes and it appeared that all parishes were thinking along the same lines. It was noted that parishes had a duty to co-operate with neighbouring parishes and so far all the signs were positive that this was happening.

The Chairman suspended the meeting.

Mr Arnold advised that the Itchenor Society had written to both Parish Councils requesting that Itchenor be able to include the area in its Neighbourhood Plan. He confirmed that replies had been received.

The Chairman resumed the meeting.

9.3 Road issues – Cllr Spencer

Cllr Spencer reported that further speed loop tests had taken place at the end of November and the information should be available towards the end of the month. It would then be possible to start drawing up the necessary paperwork.
It was noted that it would be helpful for the Parish Council to spend some money on this before the end of this financial year.

10/14C The Pond.

The working party has now replaced the posts along the edge of the grass, these have been concreted in so should be more secure. The footpath sign has also been reinstated. The drain pipe in the ditch on the north side of Blackhouse Lane has been replaced. There remained some minor tidying up in this section as well as the removal of a small tree that had fallen over.
The tree saplings have now been planted and further saplings would be available from the Conservancy in the spring. Water quality issues have been of concern. The flow of water has been monitored and most ditches are coping well. Some concern had been expressed about sediment coming off the land as the colour of the water had been very orange. It was noted that this had now cleared. Flow rates by the Pond and Chalkdock Lane had been monitored and were in excess of 1.7m per second. Nitrate levels were also checked but had proved to be very low alleviating the concerns about pollution.

In terms of the sludge Cllr Watson had discovered this would be dealt with by a part of Operation Watershed so it was agreed to tie this in with the existing application.

As part of the Parish Emergency Committee Cllr Hartley and Ric Dukoff-Gordon have flood warning signs which have been put out a couple of times. It was noted that the village was coping very well at the moment. Some temporary flooding caused by a pressure lock had occurred where the ditch does right hand turn underground, turning into the open ditch between 'Maple Cottage' and 'Pembroke', where the flow is unimpeded. However this had cleared quickly once the pressure is released. This was simply down to the volume of water. The work done in encouraging residents to keep ditches clear has worked. Water appears to be getting out through the rife ok.
It was noted that there remained some problems with sewage.
Cllr Watson reported that further flood signs and sand bags should be made available as a result of the Community Resilience workshop last year. Cllr Hartley will review this. The Chairman welcomed the expertise that the Council and community gained from this Councillors expert contributions and the work of his colleagues.

11/14C Flooding issues.

Cllr Spencer reported on the application to Operation Watershed. The plans available from the online mapping service for waterways are inaccurate. There are no details of the drains in the road or direction of flow. No definitive record of drainage in parish appeared to be available. Alastair Tyler of Ground Management Services has provided a quotation to undertake the task of mapping the waterways. Once a master plan of drainage within the village was available then it would be easier to agree what action may be necessary. Although much of the work would be the responsibility of householder, local farmers of the County Council.
There has been no news of any additional house flooding in the village with the last spell of weather. This backs up the assumption that there was a blockage that has been cleared. Sewage is a different problem and foul water drains will also come into the investigations.

The question of what happens if the grant application was unsuccessful was raised. It was generally felt that the Parish Council should still get the work done. Phase two may involve conducting a full heights survey and to establish areas of drainage rectification. Phase 3 will fall to land owners to action any work found to be necessary.

The costs of the survey comes to £3500 plus Vat with additional costs of up to £2000 for third party costs such as producing maps. The report was welcomed and due note taken of the estimates.

12/14C Risk Assessments.

The updated risk assessments had previously been circulated to Councillors.
As a result of the risk assessment it was agreed that Office 365 should be purchased and it was noted that this had been provided for within the budget.
Additionally there remained concern about protecting valuable documents such as title deeds or leases. The Clerk was requested to establish which documents were held.

13/14C Precept and the budget for 2014/2015.

A revised budget had 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 has this year decreased by 1%. Details of how these figures affected the Band D rate were highlighted. 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 remains possible that this may be imposed in the future.

General expenditure has been reviewed and increased where necessary. It is apparent that as the Parish Council takes on more then costs increase. There had been no negative views from last year's Precept increase. Because the Precept is comparatively small this has little impact on residents. There will be some surplus from this year's budget. There was some concern that only £1500 had been budgeted for the Neighbourhood Plan. There may be some costs in printing surveys, hall hire and production of visual aid as the Steering Group is expecting to have more communications with residents. It was hoped that a draft Neighbourhood Plan would be available for consultation towards end of this year.
It was agreed to move the budget for the Neighbourhood Plan out of reserves into the general expenditure. It was also noted that there was no budget for work should the Operation Watershed application be unsuccessful. It was agreed that this would be taken from reserves.

RESOLVED that the amended budget be approved.
RESOLVED that the Precept for 2014/2015 be set at £15720

14/14C Banking arrangements.

The Clerk reminded Councillors that concern had been raised about the existing banking arrangements and that alternative options had been requested. Details of Unity Bank had previously been circulated to Councillors as they specialise in accounts for Town and Parish Councils.
There was some discussion on a number of banks and problems with bank charges.
It was suggested that the Parish Council opens a Deposit Account for a substantial portion of the parish Council funds and wait and see how things develop.
It was agreed that Cllr Colbourne and the Clerk would review all the options and information would be presented at an additional meeting.

15/14C Clerks Report.

The Clerk had contacted Greg Ockwell regarding the culverts at Little Court. The County Council has offered to install black and white hazard markers to indicate the fact the culvert is there. The Clerk had responded that this was likely to be unacceptable requesting again that grating be used to prevent anyone inadvertently falling in. A further response was awaited.
Cllr Spencer advised that he had a contact who was the Goodwood archivist and he had agreed to a meeting to see if he could help with the Common issues.

A request from has been received from a resident to have reports available on the website prior to the meeting. It was agreed that this would be actioned.

The Clerk requested permission to attend the Practitioners Conference. A £100 bursary from the National Association of Local Councils had been applied for. **RESOLVED** that the Clerk be allowed to attend the Practitioners Conference.

The Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group are running a workshop on Saturday 8th February on Ditch Assessment at Sidlesham Church Hall. Pete King of the Rivers Trust will be giving a presentation on how to assess ditches and waterways for their biodiversity potential, specifically for water voles, and how this can be measured. This will be followed by a practical session looking at a ditch in Church Farm Lane where participants can ask questions in the field and get experience. Cllr Watson to attend.

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) 2014 Update. The District Council is now undertaking a further update of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and wants to update information on employment land availability to input to work on a Site Allocations Development Plan Document. This includes updating and obtaining data that is currently held about potential sites and ensuring details are held of all possible opportunities for housing or employment development within the area, over the next 15 – 20 years.

A number of training events were highlighted.
25 February 2014, Planning Training. Cllr Colbourne and Cllr Hartley to attend.
13 March 2014, New councillor/refresher training. Cllr Boadle to attend

16/14C Finance.

16.1 Schedule of Payments and Receipts
RESOLVED that the payments listed in the schedule of payments and receipts totalling £1834.19 be made. See appendix 1 (January 2014)

16.2 The Statement of Accounts
The Statement of Accounts up to 31 December 2013 was **APPROVED.**
See appendix 2 (November 2013).
Noted that Cllr Colbourne was due to review the accounts after the meeting.

RESOLVED that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.
The members of the public and the Clerk left the meeting.

17/14C Staff Matters.
Councillors discussed the Clerk's salary review and pension.
The Clerk was invited back to the meeting.
The Chairman thanked the Clerk on behalf of the Council for her continued good work.

18/14C Legal Matters relating to the Common.
Discussion took place on the matter of access over the Common.
RESOLVED that the Clerk be authorised to seek legal advice through the Sussex Association of Local Councils/National Association of Local Councils.

19/14C Items for referral to the Parish Council Meeting on Monday 10 March 2014.
No additional items were raised.

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.45pm.

Signed_____ Date_____
Chairman