West Itchenor Parish Council

Minutes of a Meeting of West Itchenor Parish Council held on Monday 10 March 2014 in Itchenor Memorial Hall.

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

In attendance: Mrs C Smith (Clerk), Mr P Montyn (CDC/WSCC – until 9.00pm)
3 Members of the Public

The meeting commenced at 7pm

20/14C Chairman's Welcome
The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

21/14C Questions/comments from members of the public.
There were no comments raised.

22/14C District and County Councillors Reports on matters affecting the Parish.
Mr Montyn had noted the response from the Planning Officer on Upper House. Once a red card has been issued it remains until the District Councillor withdraws it. Mr Montyn noted that the Clerk had not received notification of the changes to the application because this had been issued to an incorrect email address.

Contact had been made with Southern Water regarding the infiltration of groundwater into the sewerage system. Mr Montyn, Graeme Barrett, Peter Clementson and County Council Officers. met with three senior Southern Water representatives. The County Councillors and Officers had been very frank with Southern Water over continuing issues.
System overcharges and surcharges in Birdham, Itchenor, West and East Wittering and along were highlighted. Southern Water claims that surface water was not their responsibility. When this infiltrates into Southern Water pipes it is. Many residents have complained. Southern Water has been given a map of network on which is marked on all the problem areas.
Mr Montyn was asked "what are plans for lining the pipes". There is a need to have surface water management plan. Halcrow and West Sussex County Council have signed a contract to produce surface water plan for whole of the manhood.
Southern Water has 17 priority places in their area from Hampshire to Kent.
It was noted that Southern Water could not claim that the sewerage issues were a rare event as this happens every year. They have been pushed for information on when they are going to reline the pipes. It was reassuring to note that the Senior Management Team at Southern Water were now fully aware of the problems and the complaints.
The Chairman highlighted problem areas within the village and that there had been no investment for a very long period. The existing pipe work is not suitable for the present system of the village. He suggested it will be interesting to see when this moves forward.
Cllr Colbourne commented that three people from Southern Water had inspected his property recently and had been amazed at the amount of water there. A survey was due to be undertaken to establish where the problems lay.

The issue of surface water in relation to insurance claims was raised.
Mr Montyn advised that records indicate that groundwater levels don't rise until 3 days into persistent rainfall, but then takes a long time to subside.

Cllr Watson asked for contact at Southern Water for obtaining water quality information. Organisations share data but don't use the same sampling sites. There is a group that undertakes this, consisting of representatives from the Environment Agency, Natural England the Conservancy and Chichester District Council.
This group is looking at a surface water management plan that covers a wide range of water issues. This is being piloted in six areas of West Sussex including the Manhood Peninsula. In due course there will be a call for evidence of water issues.

West Sussex County Council has budgeted for expected reductions from Government funding. The budget will have to be reduced by a further £110/£120 million over the next four years. Consideration is being given to outsourcing some activities and working in conjunction with other councils. Adult services will not be seeing a reduction in funding. However there will be further cuts to Youth centres and youth services.
The County Council portion of the Council tax will remain static.

Chichester District Council has agreed a small increase as has Sussex Police.
The roads budget is £15 million over the next 2 years, to be spent on unclassified roads. Pot holes are being repaired. The County Council's intention is to move from reacting to issues to a proper asset management approach
Cllr Watson expressed concern about the quality of the work done to repair potholes. The volume and weight of vehicles will mean patched areas will start to break up soon. He also expressed concern about the top dressing being swept up and wasted.
Mr Montyn suggested that it was very difficult to make suitable repairs in these weather conditions and patching is carried out to make the road safe. When roads are properly sealed then water cannot get into the cracks.

The County Council's Education budget comes from Government and is ring fenced and outside the main spend. Cllr Watson highlighted the spending on schools in Worthing that might well become an Academy in due course. Mr Montyn confirmed that £30 million was being spent in Worthing.

The Chairman highlighted the fact that some larger Town Councils were now bigger than some of the small Borough Councils. The Secretary of State was watching performance closely to see whether to cap them or not. He highlighted the importance of being able to precept in light of need within the local community.
The Chairman thanked Mr Montyn for his report.

23/14C Apologies for absence.
Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Boadle.

24/14C Declarations of Interest.
The Chairman declared an interest in Agenda Item 17 as a resident on the Common.

25/14C Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 13 January 2014
The Chairman called for the approval of the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 13 January 2014. The Minutes were **AGREED** and the Chairman duly signed them as being a true record of that meeting.

26/14C Matters arising from the minutes of 13 January 2014.
No progress had been made on the Council's banking arrangements.

27/14C Members Reports.
27.1 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.
The Chairman highlighted a recent meeting with Mrs Alex Webb, recently appointed Chair of Itchenor Society. This was the first of proposed joint meetings to maintain dialogue and keep community developments under periodic review.

The Chairman was also a guest at the 'Facing the Future Conference' at Cowes Yacht Haven, Isle of Wight. It was a full programme with attendance from every parish in the Island and over one hundred attendees; there was a strong programme of speakers.
A Department for Communities and Local Government, Senior Civil Servant, Mick Duggan, gave a talk on the importance of Neighbourhood Planning and provided an overview of national developments.

27.2 Planning – Cllr Taylor

Since the last Parish Council Meeting there have been three planning meetings. The Planning Committee recommended permit, for one application, refusal, for two others and made no objection to three applications. The Parish Council has asked Roger Marshall (District Councillor) to red card one of the applications recommended for refusal.
The District Council has refused two applications and as a result the owner of Greenleas has appealed against the decision.
The Planning Inspector has allowed the appeal for the Boat Store in Chandlers Reach to be converted into a single dwelling flat
A letter was sent to Ms. Eels at WSCC regarding the fence extending over part of the footpath by the Oast. It has been noted that a small portion of the fence has now been removed. It was understood that the owner of the land by the Oast had submitted an appeal however it has not yet appeared on the website.

It was noted that at the entrance to Greenleas large pieces of wood have appeared on the Common. A number of residents have commented on their appearance.
RESOLVED that the Parish Council writes to the owner and asks for them to be removed.

27.3 20mph speed limit – Cllr Spencer

Cllr Spencer reported that the further speed data gathered had been favourable and that the next stage would involve the County Council solicitors drawing up a Traffic Regulation Order to change the speed limit. Cllr Spencer hoped this would be concluded before the summer.
It was noted that there may be information available through Neighbourhood Watch that may assist with funding.

27.4 Flooding issues – Cllr Spencer/ Cllr Watson

Cllr Watson and Cllr Spencer had met with Sebastian Anstruther, Chair of the Rother and Arun Rivers Trust. Sarah Denton from Environment Agency has been seconded to the Trust.
On a combined walk round the village they were sympathetic to the issues highlighted. It was noted that the Operation Watershed funding would be available shortly.
Any information on surface water and foul water draining would be made available to everyone. There was no indication that any houses in the village had experience flooding problems this winter. The new sluice gate on sea wall has made a difference. Once the survey has been done, phase two would involve deciding what action to take. Houses with driveways over the ditches will be asked to clear and keep the ditches and culverts free flowing. It was agreed it would be important to have a complete picture and not move the problem from one area to another.

This ties in with the pond and what may or may not happen. The Pond is a useful resource and its holding capacity is important. Once a full drainage map is available then the Parish Council can be more efficient in planning for the future. Historical maps will also help to identify if ditches have been filled in.

Referring to the noted changes in colour of the water, Cllr Watson confirmed he had carried out some sampling for high nitrate levels which had not been found. In hindsight this may be due to chemicals used having gone off. Now the water has subsided a lot of ditches in the centre of village have been covered in an algae, which could be evidence of possible high nitrate levels. By taking core sediments Cllr Watson suggested he could establish if this is the case. Cllr Watson agreed to attend an appropriate training course offered by the Environment Agency. If there is still an absence of nitrates then the changes may be due to sewerage overflow.

Cllr Watson reported that he had hoped to plant more trees but the Conservancy supply had been used. The Woodland Trust has extended an invitation to apply for more saplings that would be planted in the autumn.

27.5 <u>WSCC Better Broadband - Cllr Spencer</u>

Cllr Spencer reported that the latest update is that a Survey will be done in Birdham exchange areas towards the end of June, beginning of July. The survey would identify what is involved for the installation of the required fibre optic cables. The plan is that exchange would be enabled by the end of 2015/16.

28/14C Neighbourhood Plan:

28.1 <u>Terms of Reference for the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group</u>

Draft Terms of Reference had previously been circulated to Councillors for approval.

Cllr Taylor reported that proposals had been circulated to the Steering Group in relation to the 'Terms of Reference'. Whilst acknowledging the initiative taken it was noted that it was the responsibility of the Parish Council to set the 'Terms of Reference' (ToR).

A number of minor changes to the circulated draft were agreed. It was also agreed that the Parish Council should be open to comments on the ToR from the Steering Group. It was agreed that all Council documents should have a date and version recorded on them. The ToR would be dated 10 March, version 1.

The Chairman suspended the meeting to allow comments from the public.

Mr Mead-Briggs asked for clarification on the amendments agreed and whether the ToR had actually been adopted.

The Chairman confirmed that the document presented to the Parish Council had been amended and adopted acknowledging the value of document in general. The ToR have been tidied to reflect the legality of the situation.

Mr Mead-Briggs suggested that the ToR approved by the Parish Council were not the same as those posted on the website earlier in the day.

It was acknowledged that it was unfortunate that the wrong version of the draft TOR may have been posted on the website.

Mr Arnold asked if the Parish Council was implying that the ToR proposed by a member of the Steering Group had illegal irregularities. He expressed surprise as this document had been copied from the Lavant Parish Council website.

The Chairman advised that the Parish Council under its proper duty had identified a small number of changes that were important for legality.

The Chairman thanked the public for their comments and resumed the meeting.

It was agreed that the agreed version duly dated would be put on the website. The ToR would be a 'living document' and it was agreed that there may be cause to make changes to it as the process progressed.

28.2 Update on the Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Taylor provided a report on the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan which is appendix to the minutes.

29/14C Contribution to the Birdham Village Residents Association Fund.

Birdham Village Residents Association has set up a fund to support the costs of engaging a Barrister/Planning Consultant to help fight an appeal by Developers for a further 46 houses in Birdham. The Parish Council has received a request to contribute to the appeal.

It was suggested that consideration be given to contributing as the village shared the AONB with Birdham which was making legal representation.

It was noted that much of groundwater that comes into Itchenor comes from Birdham. Substantial developments in Birdham will likely affect the village. A contribution would signal the Parish Council's concerns for Birdham's issues and brings clustering into focus. The costs were not known but were expected be in the region of thousands of pounds.

There was some concern about spending residents' money and it was suggested that the Parish Council should have a Policy for such events which could cater for whether any development affects Itchenor directly or indirectly. It was suggested that the Parish Council may be more useful by writing in and helping with the appeal. There was concern that this may lead to further similar requests.

It was suggested that a fair number of residents locally thought that this was a lost cause and that Birdham did not have a robust enough defence.

It was agreed that Cllr Colbourne and Cllr Hartley would work together to put forward a proposition for consideration that would cover the concerns relating to contributions, correspondence and viability. Cllr Colbourne will also speak to the Chairman of the Birdham Village Residents Association.

One member of public left the meeting.

30/14C Internal Drainage District.

A letter explaining the Environment Agency's proposed future of the South West Sussex Internal Drainage District (IDD) had been circulated to Councillors.

Cllr Spencer reported that he had received some further information from Sarah Denton (Environment Agency). The funding for the IDD currently comes from the County Council and this funding was being stopped. It seemed that there was nothing that could be done to influence this and the IDD will be abolished 31 March 2015.

The County Council is likely to take over the responsibility for the work done by the IDD. There was an opportunity now for the Parish Council to approach the County Council and negotiate taking on the role with the necessary funding in place.

There was concern that Itchenor was the last point before water drained into the harbour and that as such the parish Council could end up dealing with other parishes' water as well.

The proposal was highlighted as another example of Localism and the costs involved. The Parish Council was unsure if there would be increased costs in maintaining the water courses and there was concern over rising sea levels and rising temperatures.

The Chairman suspended the meeting to allow Mr Montyn to comment.

Mr Montyn advised that many County Councils were writing to Government asking them to delay this decision. The Government was passing on responsibility without any additional

funding and West Sussex County Council was looking at around £180 million of work with no additional funds to deal with this. The County Council was exploring partnerships with other District and Borough Councils. The Coastal Committee covering the south coast from Hampshire to London was also looking at options. Funds from the Environment Agency were being prioritised for larger schemes. Funds will have to come from many sources.
The Chairman suggested that there was a need to know what action the County Council is going to take place to enable the Parish Council to decide how to react. The Parish Council was worried about money and the loss of expertise on maintaining the areas. Mr Montyn advised that the District Council budget for department that currently looks after waterways was £160,000 for the area.
The Chairman thanked Mr Montyn for his comments and resumed the meeting.

The Parish Council asked Mr Montyn to monitor the situation and agreed to write a letter directly to Richard Hammond, Chair of the West Sussex IDD Steering Group expressing the concerns raised.

31/14C Appointment of the Internal Auditor.

The Clerk proposed the re-appointment of Mark Mulberry as the Parish Council's Internal Auditor for this year.
RESOLVED that Mark Mulberry be appointed as Internal Auditor for the year ended 31 March 2014.

32/14C The Annual Parish Meeting.

The Clerk reminded the Parish Council of the requirement to hold an Annual Parish Meeting between 1 march and 1 June each year.
It was agreed that it was desirable to have an outside speaker who would be entertaining for parishioners. In addition the Parish Council could give short presentations on ongoing projects. This could include an update on the Neighbourhood Plan which could form part of the consultation audit trail.
Councillors were requested to channel suggestions through the Clerk within the next two weeks.
RESOLVED that the Annual parish Meeting would be held on Thursday 15 May 2014.

33/14C Clerks Report.

Annual Meeting with the Parishes

The next meeting between members of Chichester District Council and representatives of Parish Councils will be on Thursday 1 May 2014. All Parishes are invited to send up to two representatives to the meeting. It was agreed that Cllr Spencer and Cllr Boadle would attend.

Memorial Seat Request

A request to place a memorial seat/bench by the Pond has been received. The seat/bench would be provided by the persons making the request, there would be no cost to the Parish Council. Although the Council agreed that it would be good to promote the pond as a place for reflection it did raise other issues. The Conservancy has also stopped allowing memorial benches as it feels there is now too much furniture on the hard. Councillors were concerned about setting a precedent and the prospect of well meaning people leaving bunches of flowers wrapped in plastic as a memorial.
RESOLVED that the Clerk be requested to write back requesting more detail of what was being proposed.

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Report from Clerk's Training

The Clerk highlighted a presentation from the Chairman of a Parish Council who has worked very hard to build up an extraordinary working relationship with West Sussex

County Council (WSCC). Examples of the level of activities the Parish are now undertaking with the support of WSCC were relayed.

Correspondence

The Clerk provided Councillors with a copy of an email received from a resident earlier in the day relating to issues with reports being available on the website and the Terms of Reference for the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

Councillors discussed the use of verbal and written reports.

The Chairman commented that the key issue raised was that matters for consideration were published in order that the public could deliberate on issues. Clearly it is desirable for the Parish Council to do this. However, the Parish Council has authority invested through elections to carry out its business. It was acknowledged that there remained a need for community engagement. It was important that the Parish Council as a statutory body should be able to conduct its business as it saw fit. The difficulty was in how to get understanding of the duty of the Parish Council whilst maintaining goodwill amongst residents. The Chairman highlighted a previously communicated opportunity for engagement. That being the opportunity for engage with Councillors on matters of interest in between meetings and he regretted that this was not being taken up.

It was suggested that any response should explain how the Parish Council operates and highlight the elections in May 2015 when anyone could put themselves forward to stand for the Parish Council. A response should also highlight the extraordinary amount of work that the Councillors do on a voluntary basis.

It was agreed that the Clerk should respond accordingly.

One member of the public left the meeting.

34/14C Finance.

34.1 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 (March 2014)

It was noted that the costs for the legal work and advertising for the 20mph speed limit was going to cost £5300. It was queried whether the City Council had contributed towards their 20mph speed limits

A proposal to spend £5300 introducing a 20mph speed limit from the Barns to the Hard was put forward. It was additionally suggested that the Parish Council should pay £2000 before the end of the year and use reserves to pay the balance. It was agreed that there would then be a requirement to increase the Precept over next few years to cover the costs.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council spends £5300 introducing a 20mph speed limit from the Barns to the Hard

34.2 Statement of Accounts

The Statement of Accounts up to 28 February was **APPROVED.**

See appendix 2 (March 2014).

35/14C Staff Matters:

35.1 Enrolment of the Parish Clerk into the Local Government Pension Scheme administered by West Sussex County Council.

RESOLVED that West Itchenor Parish Council, as a precepting authority, would apply to join the Local Government Pension Scheme as a Designating Body Employer.

RESOLVED to enrol and make employer contributions into the Local Government Pension Scheme (managed by West Sussex County Council), in respect of the Parish Clerk, with effect from 1st April 2014

35.2 Clerk's Salary.

RESOLVED that following a satisfactory performance review the Clerk's salary be increased to Spinal Point 29 on the National Joint Council (NJC) terms and conditions.

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 member of the public left the meeting.

36/14C Legal Matters relating to the Common.

The Clerk reported on the advice given from Hedleys Solicitors regarding access over the Common. It was agreed that a holding letter should be written advising that the Parish Council has no objections in principle but that it was working on the details.

37/14C Items for referral to the Annual Parish Council Meeting on Monday 12 May 2014.

The Common, Neighbourhood Plan.

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.50pm

Signed_____Date_____
Chairman