

Minutes

The Chailey Annual Parish Meeting was held on Monday 27th April 2009 at Chailey Parish Hall, commencing at 7.30pm.

Present - 46 in total:

Parish Council: Cllrs M Evans (Chairman); P. Carpenter, D. Cowan, M Downey, J-P Ellis, K. Gould, J Millam, P. Olbrich, J. Tillard & L Waller and Parish Clerk, Mrs R Seccombe.

Speakers:

CPSO Julie Whittaker-Jones * (Sussex Police); Trudi Hamer * (Chailey School Development Worker); Ms G. Kybert * (Chailey Youth Group); Mrs Myra Vidgen * – Chailey Evening WI; District Cllr Sharon Davy; Co Cllr Meg Stroude - see items 1 and 6 re election restrictions.

(* denotes also an exhibitor at the meeting)

Exhibitors (lead exhibitor's name supplied): Mrs C Oliver (Chailey & Newick Painting Group; Mr W Coleman (Chailey Commons Society); Mr J Smith (Chailey Heritage Enterprise Centre); Mr D Taylor (Bluebell Railway Preservation Society); Mrs E Rider (St Peter and St James Hospice & Continuing Care Centre); Windmill Rangers (Mrs D Phillips).

Sussex Police was also represented by CPSO S Knowles.

Others in attendance: 22 (of which 16 were in attendance for the preliminary displays by community groups).

1. Welcome from Chairman of Chailey Parish Council, Cllr Mark Evans

Apologies and Matters Arising from the Minutes of the 2008 Parish Meeting

Cllr Evans opened the meeting by welcoming the speakers, exhibitors and members of the public and noted that Norman Baker MP had been obliged to send his apologies due to last minute commitments at Westminster. There were no matters arising from the annual parish meeting held on 2008. It was noted that Cllr Stroude would attend following a visit to the East Chiltington annual parish meeting. Those present were informed that due to regulations set by Electoral Services, County Councillor Stroude would not be delivering her customary annual report due to restrictions over campaigning in the lead up to the county council elections. Apologies had previously been received from Cllr Hampton. Cllr Evas welcomed Father Warhurst to the meeting and gave thanks to Pastor Biggs for his service to the community and wished him well with his retirement.

2. Annual Report from Parish Council Chairman, Cllr Mark Evans

Cllr Evans read out the following Chairman's report for April 2008 to March 2009 (copies of which had been circulated):

At this difficult time, I think it important to make two points:

- *The Parish Council took the decision to freeze our Precept (the money we request from the ratepayer) at £43,000 for the coming year. I thank Cllr Carpenter and the Parish Clerk for exercising good financial discipline.*
- *Parish Councillors are unpaid and my colleagues rarely claim expenses; on the contrary, each of them renders voluntary services to our community, repairing, advising, installing – in short, offering their special skills for free. I should like to thank them for this.*

Set against this, I should like to comment on, and draw to the attention of our elected representatives, the increasing burden (and so expense) of complying with regulations, many of which are a hammer to crack a nut. In the year under review, the Parish Council has spent £4,500 on surveying each tree on its land and treating them – [clarification added by Cllr Evans that trees inspected were those adjacent to the Highway] and that cost, 10% of our income, is only a beginning. Other, lesser costs, are associated with freedom of information, data protection, discrimination, human resource legislation... What! will the line stretch out to the crack of doom? (dixit Macbeth). And our accounts must by law be audited by two separate accountancy firms; not much chance of smuggling even a bathplug past their eagle eye!

So what are the positives in our year? The Council continued to be guided by its Action Plan and worked to improve communications with residents through the rejuvenated website, regularly updated by the Clerk, and through our notice boards, also regularly maintained.

We also worked to improve residents' perceptions of security in our area, and here I must thank our Police Community Support Officers and their superiors who are always ready to discuss their projects and who have developed a good relationship with many different parts of our widespread village.

We have at last seen concrete results from our regular and fruitful discussions with Highways Department and our County Councillor in the form of reduced speed limits along the A272 and at the King's Head crossroads; we must also be grateful to the District Councillor and to the developer of the New Heritage for the installation of a Puffin crossing at St Peter's School. Finally, we are grateful to the Chailey Common Management Committee: the landowners, the Officers from East Sussex County Council and the Chief Executive of Lewes District Council for the time and care with which they have constructed a bid for funds to fence Chailey Common to permit extensive grazing. The Parish Council supports this bid.

Two major items of expenditure drew on the Council's reserves: a bus-shelter at the junction of Mill Lane for passengers travelling North; and rebuilding the walkway on Chailey Windmill.

A third significant item is our annual programme of Small Grants to aid Chailey's societies and voluntary organisations with administrative or project costs. This gives me an opportunity to thank all those who are responsible for our societies. I am always amazed by the number of different activities present in our village and I was delighted by two awards made in the last year: the Richmond Award to Gemma Kybert who leads the Chailey Youth Group, and the Sportsmanship Award made to Chailey Colts. Which leads me finally to the elegant postcard being printed as a souvenir of our Windmill; it marks four notable anniversaries – Chailey School's Fiftieth; Chailey Cricket Club's 250th, St Peter's Church's 750th and the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Bluebell Railway, where Chailey Parish Councillor Madge Bessemer played a key role in establishing the Railway.

3. Report from Norman Baker MP

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

4. Reports from local organisations including Sussex Police.

4.1 CPSO Julie Whittaker-Jones, Sussex Police

CPSO Whittaker Jones commented that she had been serving as Chailey's CPSO for four years but had not been in the parish for eight months during 2008 whilst recovering from operations. PCSO coverage of Chailey had been restricted during the summer of 2008 however the parish was now served jointly by CPSO Whittaker- Jones and PCSO Steven Knowles. Police 'high visibility hours' are anticipated to be higher in 2009/10.

A copy of the Sussex Police Crime Report for Chailey 2008/9 had previously been circulated and was available on the community website. The following points were highlighted:

- Crime incident numbers have been static with 124 crimes in the year to 31st March 2009 (vs. 123 in the year to 31st March 2008);
- The parish has been affected by district wide spates in crime such as shed and garage break-ins and thefts of tools from vans;
- There are some 'hot spots' for criminal damage in South Chailey.

Tables were circulated at the meeting showing the breakdown of incidents in Chailey by type and by month. The analysis by type was as follows:

Type	Year to 31 st March 2008	Year to 31 st March 2008
Burglary Dwelling	2	6
Criminal Damage	46	28
Vehicle Crime	27	19
Public place violent crime	10	12
Other categories of incident	38	59
Total	123	124

Residents were encouraged to use the Community Intelligence Box at South Chailey Stores. This enables anonymous reporting of a range of issues and incidents such as drink driving, anti-social behaviour and criminal damage. 'Operation Crackdown' has been in progress to identify drivers guilty of persistent misdemeanours. Roadside checks have been carried out on the A275 near

South Chailey Stores and reports are passed to the Road Policing Unit for investigation. CPSO Whittaker Jones paid tribute to the contribution of Gemma Kybert and the Chailey Youth Group in providing rewarding opportunities for the youth of Chailey.

CPSO Whittaker-Jones was pleased to report that many people have signed up as subscribers to the regular blogs on the neighbourhood policing section of the Sussex Police website (www.sussex.police.uk). The blogs provide details of recent crimes and requests for information on crimes; warnings about bogus callers and the need to be vigilant and crime prevention advice. The 'blog' information service complements information distributed via Neighbourhood Watch. People attending the meeting were encouraged to collect a Crime Prevention Pack from the Sussex Police display –the pack includes leaflets and a UV marker pen. Residents were advised to take digital photos of valuable items and to follow crime prevention advice on the 'blogs'.

Residents raised the following matters:

Accidents at Plumtree crossroads (junction N. Common Rd & Beggars Wood Rd)

The CPSO explained that the police receive details of RTAs involving serious injury but not all accidents and that sometimes other Emergency Services such as Sussex Fire & Rescue and Sussex Ambulance will be in attendance. The CPSO was aware that there had been a number of serious accidents at the crossroads.

Vandalism on Chailey Common.

Users of the Common complained about incidents involving damage to bridges and pathways and interference with watercourses. The CPSO emphasised the need to report incidents so that Police can investigate fly tipping, littering, damage and other incidents. The Police work in close liaison with the Ranger, Adam Buzak.

4.2 Trudi Hamer, Community Development Worker, Chailey School

Trudi Hamer explained that she had been appointed as the school's Community Development Worker in September 2008 to reach out to form partnerships with local groups and organisations. Due to a debilitating sore throat Trudi was unable to speak for long but encouraged all those present to visit the Chailey School display to obtain information about the school's links with Chailey Heritage's secondary school PE department, the students' work in the Community for their Citizenship GCSE, and also to learn about the school's Waste & Resources Efficiency Project in partnership with ESCC. Miss Hamer was wished a speedy recovery.

4.3 Gemma Kybert, Chailey Youth Group

Gemma Kybert gave apologies on behalf of two group members. Gemma explained that the group had opened on 30th March 2007 with 6 members and had grown to 36 members. Starting off with limited resources and minimal equipment the group had expanded and now offers a wide range of sporting and creative activities with outings in the school holidays. The wide range of opportunities on offer includes 'DJ' practice, graffiti art, dry skiing, soap making and wrap writing. The group's aim is to offer people 'responsibility and respect' whilst providing boundaries and to let people be 'who they are'. Members are encouraged to respect staff and fellow group members and also to respect the environment and so will be carrying out litter picking. Gemma thanked the various providers of funding including Southern FM, Chailey Parish Council and Lewes District Council and appealed for volunteers to offer their services to the group.

4.4 Myra Vidgen, Chailey Evening WI

Mrs Vidgen reported that the Evening WI had been in operation in Chailey since 1963 and that contrary to expectations the members were not all 'jam-making silver tops' but they did join in renditions of Jerusalem! Myra explained that the movement started in 1915 as an educational movement and has a training college at Denham. The WI operates across the county and the local group is represented at national assemblies to discuss wide ranging issues such as red telephone boxes, provision of public toilets and the threat to the nation's bee population. The aim of the movement is to improve the national life for all. Mrs Vidgen stated that she would be pleased to answer any question when visitors attended the WI display.

Cllr Evans thanked the voluntary organisers of local clubs and societies and also the 'employed' officials of local public sector support services. It was noted that the parish council, is keen to encourage local groups by the provision of grants and donations.

5. Report from Lewes District Councillor, Sharon Davy

Cllr Davy introduced her report by thanking the council for the opportunity to address residents and noted her appreciation of the displays by local organizations. As District Councillor for Chailey she re-avowed her role to champion the cause of Chailey's residents and commented on the following parish and district-wide topics:

5.1 Housing The new system of allocation of social housing, known as 'Choice Based Lettings' was explained with reference to the new banding system replacing the former points based system. Those seeking social housing put in bids for houses publicized in the district council's 'Home Move' catalogue (available on www.homemove.org.uk). Banding is based on defined 'needs' and district councils have limited scope for discretion in allocation of social housing. Cllr Davy regretted that local connections to a particular area do not play a more significant part in the allocation process.

5.2 New Heritage Developer Contributions Cllr Davy outlined the S106 'sugar cube' contributions associated with the New Heritage development in North Chailey:

- with interest, a sum of £48,596 was provided for the new puffin crossing at St Peter's Primary School;
- with interest, a sum of £68,107 is now available for ecological projects including employment of a part time ranger and provision of ecological education to residents;
- a sum of £72,200 is receivable for improvements to accessibility to the site;
- a sum of £121,811 is receivable for the provision of or improvement of secondary education in the area of the development.

Cllr Davy noted that planning permission required a minimum of 25% social housing, however following the acquisition of a further 14 additional units of social housing by the housing association in December 2008 the development's current mix of units is approximately 50% privately owned and 50% social housing. As a result of the down-turn in the property market the developer is now only building to order. Cllr Davy reported her intervention to protect orchids and ecologically sensitive areas at the site and her encouragement of improved drainage measures to protect local residents from flooding.

5.3 Travellers' sites Cllr Davy explained that the district council is obliged to identify 11 sites for travelers to accommodate both vehicles and residential units. Other neighbouring district councils have been asked to provide more sites. A confidential short list of sites has been identified by consultants provided by a local firm of estate agents and this will be submitted to the district council's Cabinet prior to public consultation. Cllr Davy urged that the settled community should be accorded the same respect that Travellers and Gypsies receive. Cllr Davy expressed strong support for Lewes District Council in acknowledging its responsibility to remove any unauthorized encampments on Chailey Common, a site of special scientific interest and a nature reserve. This role has the backing of residents.

5.4 Road and ROW maintenance issues Cllr Davy reported that the section of Green Lane adjacent to Markstakes Lane had been re-surfaced thanks to the co-operation of ESCC Highways. As an ancient highway the issues of responsibility for maintenance are complex, however Green Lane is now subject to the same maintenance and inspection standards as any other part of the adopted public Highway. Cllr Davy also reported on recent repairs to the right of way which gives residents from Green Lane and Setfords Field access to the shops, post office pub and bus services on South Street. Residents were encouraged to support these local services.

5.5 A272 Haywards Heath Road Following serious accidents on the stretch of the A272 alongside Chailey Heritage School residents have sought traffic calming signage near the access points to the school site. Cllr Davy was pleased to report that warning signs would be in place by the end of June 2009.

5.6 Drains at Markstakes, S. Chailey Cllr Davy has assisted residents by putting pressure on the district council to resolve drainage problems and urged that nappies, masonry, cutlery and toys and the like should not be put into the drainage system!

5.7 Deposits with Icelandic banks Lewes District Council placed £1 million with Landsbanki on 12th August 2008 when the bank had a strong Fitch credit rating. The bank went into receivership on 7th October 2008 and £30,000 has been lost in interest foregone. The Local Government

Association acting on behalf of all councils affected in this way is optimistic that funds will be recouped, but after considerable delay. The Director of Finance has advised the district councilors that these events will put pressure on the district council's budget and services over the next couple of years.

5.8 South Downs National Park Cllr Davy noted that whilst 55% of the district will be within the National Park, with 20% of the population, the villages of Chailey and its neighbours Wivelsfield, Newick and Barcombe are not. Lewes district has to find sites for 4,400 new homes of which 1,000 are to be found in rural areas. Lewes is the favoured location for new homes and its location within a national park will restrict availability of sites and so there will be pressure on the northern rural villages and on the southern coastal towns, especially Seaford.

5.9 The Princess Royal, Haywards Heath Tribute was paid to the volunteers who worked tirelessly for the Support the PRH Campaign and to the steadfast support of the public. Without their support the campaign would not have been successful. Cllr Davy reported that one retired man had put up every campaign banner in East and West Sussex.

5.10 St Peter's Primary School, Chailey. Parents have expressed their relief that a new safe crossing is in place at St Peter's School. Munch Morrow and the school staff were praised for their hard work and Cllr Davy stressed the adage 'Keeping our village schools alive, keeps our villages alive'.

5.11 The Sustainable Communities Act Cllr Davy urged residents to get involved with the Sustainable Communities panel to ensure that the panel is truly representative of the whole district. Residents can submit e-mails or write to the district council with wide-ranging ideas about what can be done locally to improve the lives of residents. The panel will not be subject to councillor interference and it is hoped that the panel will attract those who have not previously been involved in pressure groups and committees. Cllr Davy urged residents to attend the forthcoming 'Have your say' meeting at Chailey School on 20th May.

Cllr Davy expressed thanks to County Councillor Meg Stroude, to the parish council Chairman Mark Evans and all the parish councilors and gave a special vote of thanks to the Clerk for her administrative work behind the scenes keeping the paperwork on track. She said that having to dot the 'i's and cross the 't's can sometimes be a thankless task and that no one does it better.

Questions were invited and the following matters arose:

Planning application – renewal of temporary permission for a lorry park at Wivelsden Farm Residents objected to the fact that the decision on the lorry park application had been made under delegation rather than by referral to the planning committee when there had been a significant number of representations in objection from residents.

Cllr Evans explained that the recent high volume of heavy lorry traffic along North Common Road has been related to removal of spoil from works at the farm – these works are not connected to the lorry park application. The application is to provide weekend lorry parking for a Wivelsfield based firm. Cllr Stroude confirmed that lorries of over 7.5 tonnes may use North Common Road for access and deliveries.

Plumtree crossroads, North Chailey (junction of North Common Road and Beggars Wood Road) A resident commented that the Plumtree crossroads are a well known accident hot spot and additional measures are required to improve road safety. In addition the accident statistics that are available are very out of date.

Cllr Davy informed the attendees that she had met with police and ESCC Highways for a site visit to discuss safety aspects of the crossroads and agreed that there had been numerous RTAs at the scene in recent years. ESCC Highways have modified signage in the area to deter use of Beggars Wood Road by traffic going between Lewes and Haywards Heath and to direct traffic along the 'A' roads instead. The ESCC Rangers have been tasked to cut back roadside vegetation at each of the four corners of the junction.

Residents stated that the main problem was the speed and volume of traffic and that local drivers ignored the signage. Additional speed calming, especially on the area of the proposed cattle grids was requested.

Councillors explained that ESCC Highways was unwilling to make major changes now when the Chailey Common grazing and fencing scheme was about to be introduced (subject to consultation)

and would be monitoring speed and movement of traffic in the area. Drivers approaching up the hill along Beggars Wood Road often approach the junction at considerable speed. Residents complained that ESCC Highways had only responded to queries when put under pressure by the local MP. Speed measurements along North Common Road are reported to indicate an average speed of 55 mph.

Cllr Davy commented that in the long term additional housing sites in Wivelsfield would result in additional pressure on North Common Road.

Planning application consultations Councillors encouraged residents to copy in the parish council on representations made to the district council. The parish council acts as a statutory consultee and it is helpful if residents' views are known. It was noted that changes in regulations have resulted in less publicity for applications. Applications are advertised on the LDC website but there is reduced use of the local press and neighbourhood notifications.

6. Commentary by East Sussex County Councillor, Meg Stroude

Cllr Stroude explained that due to the forthcoming county council elections she was not permitted to deliver a formal report to the meeting while in election purdah. She thanked Cllr Evans and the parish councillors for all their work and careful consideration of issues. She praised councillors for giving up their time for the planning and monthly meetings. She thanked the Clerk for her work on behalf of the council and thanked the council for its support over the past eight years.

Cllr Stroude drew residents' attention to the help lines and advisory and support services listed in the ESCC magazine 'Your County'. With regard to the previous debate on road safety matters, Cllr Stroude confirmed that ESCC Highways work with great dedication to improve the safety of rural roads and noted with interest that the neighbouring village Wivelsfield had rejected many aspects of the recent proposed traffic calming scheme.

7. Question and Answer Session

Cllr Evans thanked the speakers for their contributions and invited questions to the panel of speakers.

7.1 St Mary's Church, N. Chailey. The future of St Mary's Church was raised and it was explained that progress in marketing the church as a residential property had initially been slow but that the Church Commissioners were now handling arrangements and it was confirmed that a buyer with previous experience of church conversions had made an offer which had been accepted. It was noted that the parish council has a vested interest in any sale since it will benefit from the sale of rights of access across its land. In view of the listed building status of the church, pre-application discussions have been held with the district's Conservation Officer and a local architect has been appointed to take due note of conservation requirements in the conversion proposals. The sale of the church was likely to be a time-consuming process. The disposal related to the church itself and a small area of land. The churchyard will continue to operate as a functioning graveyard and memorial garden, separated from the new residential property and its garden. Some memorials may be re-located to St Peter's Church, Chailey.

7.2 Newick Village Hall A representative of Newick Village Hall explained that the deed of trust creating the hall stated that it should serve the residents of Newick parish and residents of Chailey parish living east of the route of the former railway line. Since many residents of North Chailey make considerable use of the hall the parish council was asked to consider provision of an annual grant. Cllr Evans said that the matter would be referred to councillors for a decision. The Chairman noted the anomaly that Chailey parish is linked to Wivelsfield in terms of electoral boundaries but had strong links to its sister village Newick. These close links have been demonstrated recently with regard to the South Chailey dispensary debate.

8. Close of Meeting

Cllr Evans brought the meeting to a close and Cllr Olbrich thanked the Chairman for his work over the past year. Residents were encouraged to take a further look at the displays. The Chairman closed the formal proceedings at 9.18pm.

Signed:

Chairman

Date:

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