



BRAMSHOTT & LIPHOOK PARISH COUNCIL

www.bramshottandliphook-pc.gov.uk

Mr P J Stanley
LOCUM CLERK

Tel: 01428 722988

Fax: 01428 727335

e-mail: council@bramshottandliphook-pc.gov.uk

THE PARISH OFFICE
HASKELL CENTRE
MIDHURST ROAD
LIPHOOK *LIPHOOK*
HAMPSHIRE GU30 7TN

**THESE ARE DRAFT MINUTES AND ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE
NEXT MEETING ON 23RD APRIL 2012**

**THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING FOR THE PARISH OF BRAMSHOTT &
LIPHOOK TOOK PLACE AT 7.30 PM IN THE LIPHOOK MILLENNIUM
HALL, ONTARIO WAY, LIPHOOK, ON MONDAY 26 MARCH 2012**

PRESENT: Cllr B Easton (Chairman), Cllr M Croucher, Cllr R Evans, Cllr E Hope, Cllr D Hoskins, Cllr A James, Cllr D Jerrard, Cllr P Jordan, Cllr B Mouland, Cllr J Poole, Cllr P Robinson, Cllr J Tough, Mr P Stanley (Locum Clerk). Twenty Four members of the public and one member of the press were present.

56/12 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed all present and thanked everyone for attending the Annual Parish Meeting for 2012. She asked that mobile phones be switched off, pointed out the emergency exits, the loop system, the locations of toilets, and a tape machine was being used.

57/12 SHORT TALKS

The Chairman introduced each of the speakers in turn.

Local Police Information - Sargent Paul Brommell.

Sargent Brommell gave an update on policing in the area, including crime statistics and access to police services.

Joint Core Strategy - Steve Proctor, Principal Policy Officer, EHDC.

Mr Proctor gave the audience an update on the purpose, process and outcomes of the Joint Core Strategy.

Following question and answer sessions, the Chairman thanked the speakers on behalf of those present.

Finance and Policy Committee – Finance & Policy Committee

Cllr Croucher gave an update. It was anticipated that the budget for 2011/12 year should be a few thousand pounds overspent. The reasons for this were firstly the parish contribution to the Play park Scheme was more than anticipated due to a shortfall from external funding. Secondly, the income at the Millennium Centre was lower than budgeted due to the general economic conditions. It was planned for the Deputy Parish clerk to become the manager of the centre to help generate funds to make it self sustaining next year.

The annual Precept increase was £2.78 per Band D household for 2012/13. This represents a below inflation increase when taken over the past two years.

A question was raised about whether the increase reflected costs associated with the clerks suspension. It was confirmed that this was not the case as any costs would be met from the general reserve.

REPORT OF THE ACCOUNTS AND ANNUAL RETURN WORKING PARTY FOR THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING ON MONDAY 26 MARCH 2012 (Cllr Jerrard)

At its Annual Meeting on 16 May 2011 the Parish Council set up an Accounts and Annual Return Working Party to investigate the legality of various payments made to the Clerk over a period of years.

Following an initial enquiry the Council was also asked by the Audit Commission to investigate the payments to any Solicitors made by the Council since 2006 and whether those payments had been properly authorised. This report is limited to the details of those payments and the reasons why they were made.

In order to carry out the investigation the Working Party first sought to identify all the relevant Solicitor's files. Two firms of Solicitors had advised the Council in relation to its dispute with the Clerk, Hedley's of East Horsley and Mackarness & Lunt of Petersfield. Mackarness & Lunt had some difficulty in locating the files because the Partner who had been dealing with the matter retired in late 2010. However, the Partner's secretary was eventually able to find the files and immediately provided them to the Council once they were available.

Hedley's were asked to provide the original files to the Council, but refused to do so. Instead Hedley's sent copies of some of the papers to the Parish Office, saying that these were the only files in their possession. This related to work done in late 2009 and 2010. A few weeks ago the Council found two invoices from Hedleys for work done during the period from October 2007 until March 2009. The Council then demanded that Hedleys should provide those files to the Council which they did only by a letter dated 19 March 2012 which was received in the Parish Council Office on Wednesday 21 March 2012. The Working Party has therefore only had a few days to consider these previously undisclosed files.

In summary the position regarding the payments to the Clerk and to Solicitors is as follows:-

1. Between September 2004 and February 2007 the Clerk brought a total of 26 separate grievances against Councillors. No Solicitors were instructed at this stage. Following an internal and secret grievance procedure one of the retiring Councillors, Mr Alan Jordan agreed on 1 May 2007 to make a payment of £2,500.00 without deduction of tax to Mr Groves in order to settle the grievances. It was paid by an addition to the monthly payroll. That was arranged by Mr Groves who then prepared a Settlement Agreement which provided that the existence of the Agreement and its terms would remain confidential. The Agreement was prepared by the Clerk and presented to the new Chairman, Dr Tough, on 18 May 2007. It was signed by Dr Tough on behalf of the Council on 25 June 2007, some eight weeks after the payment had been agreed, and without the knowledge or authorisation of the Council.
2. Apart from Mr Alan Jordan, only two other Councillors, were told about the payment to Mr Groves, namely Dr Tough and Mr Croucher. However, it appears that Mrs James, as Vice-Chairman of the Council, was told later in the year. By that time Mr Barry Hope who had retired as Chairman of the Council in May 2007, had made a Request for Disclosure of the payment under the Freedom of Information Act. Hedleys were then instructed either by Mr Groves or Dr Tough to resist the Application for Disclosure. That was the work done by Hedleys between October 2007 and March 2009 for which Hedleys were paid a total of £1,230.50.
3. In February 2009 Mr Hope complained to the Council about comments made about him to the Local Press by Mr Groves. Mr Groves instructed Mackarness & Lunt to resist this complaint and Mackarness & Lunt sent two invoices totalling £1,730.75 for this work in March and June 2009.
4. In July 2009, Mr Groves instructed Mackarness & Lunt in relation to the accusations made against him that he had been behaving inappropriately towards a young lady Councillor, Miss Nikki Young. Mackarness & Lunt sent a bill for that work in January 2010 for a total of £931.50.
5. In September 2009 one of the Councillors raised questions to Mr Groves about allegations made against him. That precipitated instructions from Mr Newman, who was by then the Chairman of the Council, to Mackarness & Lunt to threaten defamation proceedings against that Councillor. Following the withdrawal of Mackarness & Lunt Mr Newman instructed Hedleys instead. For work done between November 2009 and December 2010, Hedleys charged the Council a total of £3,055.00.
6. Following advice from Hedleys Mr Newman signed a Compromise Agreement with Mr Groves on 25 November 2010 and a payment of £8,500.00, free of tax was made to Mr Groves on 26 November 2010. A payment of £411.25 was also made to Mr Groves' Solicitors following their invoice dated 23 November 2010. The cheques were signed by Mr Newman as Chairman of the Council and by Mr Austin-Olsen, as Vice Chairman of the Council on 26 November 2010. The agreed Public Statement and the payment to Mr Groves were then reported to the Council in open session at its meeting on 29 November 2010.

The overall position, therefore, is that a total of **£7,359.00** was paid to Solicitors instructed at various times by Mr Groves, Dr Tough or Mr Newman during the period from 2006 until February 2011. A total of **£11,000.00**, free of tax was paid to Mr Groves.

None of the payments made to Solicitors or the payments to Mr Groves were authorised by the full Council, and this will be reported to the Audit Commission in due course.

There remains an on-going dispute with the Clerk which has been exacerbated by the revelation that there have been complaints of bullying and intimidation by the Clerk over a number of years and that these have not been acted upon by the Finance and Policy Committee. The complaints of bullying and intimidation go back to 2004, and were the subject of a “whistleblowing disclosure letter” in December 2009, which was repeated in August 2011.

That led to the suspension of the Clerk in September 2011, pending a full investigation which is on-going. Since this remains sub judice I can make no further comment about that at this time, other than to give you my assurance that the Finance & Policy Committee is taking all necessary steps to deal with this very serious situation, and to keep the inevitable legal costs to a minimum.

End of Report

A number of questions were raised. It was questioned how payments were made to the clerk if not correctly authorised. The first payment was signed by the then chairman & vice chairman but this was not done in a proper manner. The second payment was by payroll. It was also questioned what new system is in place. It was reported that there are now four signatories to cheque payment and no office staff are authorised to sign cheques.

A question was made about the suspended clerk and concern raised on the need to have two clerks being paid and that the decision was not made by the full council. It was reported that the Finance & Policy committee had full delegated authority to make the decision. It was accepted that the process had taken far too long but this had been caused mostly as a result of the difficulty in obtaining papers from solicitors. It was reported that the position would be discussed at the Parish meeting to be held on the following evening.

A question was raised about the decisions not being made by the committee. It was confirmed that Finance & Policy Committee was composed of 7 councillors all of whom were present when decisions were taken. The minimum number to form a quorum is 4.

Highways, Byways, and Transport Committee – Cllr R Evans.

The Avenue parking situation was still a problem with severe congestion at peak periods. A number of solutions were currently being explored with the help of the school headteacher. These include designated satellite parking, walking buses (groups of children), cycle and scooter racks & the development of drop off areas.

It was also reported that the Parish had purchased a speed monitor and this was being deployed at agreed sites in the Parish area. A scheme to use volunteers to undertake speed watch duties and note number plates was also being explored.

Finally, a bid had been sent to EHDC for the provision of southbound access to the station.

A number of questions were raised. It was stated that promises about the Avenue had been made for many years but nothing ever happens. It was suggested that yellow line may help but needs to go through a long approval process. It was stated by a member of the public that the problem is getting worse but that a drop-off zone was a good idea. Concern over emergency access was also raised.

Councillor Cowper confirmed that the County Council is the Highway's Authority. They will be looking to see whether a voluntary scheme works. If not, other interventions would be considered including yellow lines, one way system etc. Cllr Cowper asked that time be given for voluntary options to be tried. He promised that within a year he would ensure that the problem had a permanent solution.

Recreation Committee – Cllr Poole

Cllr Poole gave an outline of the years work on the committee. Groundstaff were thanked for all their hard work which had been rewarded with a 1st place in the Hampshire FA Groundsman of the year award. They were also now entered in the national competition.

Thanks were expressed to Tony Rudgard for the regular update about clubs in the area. There were 300-400 young people involved in youth schemes. There were 70-80 involved in the tennis club.

The play park was revamped during the year. Although this had cost more than anticipated it was regarded as money well spent. Children had been involved in fine tuning the project. Phase 2 of the revamp was currently being planned and would involve a zip wire and a revamp of the area on the other side of the park. At present the Recreation Committee was looking to raise funds towards the costs.

The allotments were still popular and more had been made available by the splitting of individual plots into two. This also reduced the costs for plot holders. There were some works to be undertaken at the site, particularly drainage. Alternative site were also being considered to increase the number of allotments available.

A question was raised about the danger from footballs being over hit and landing in the play area. Consideration would be given to moving the pitches or erecting a higher fence.

A question was raised about when more allotments would be available for those on the waiting list. Cllr Robinson stated that a possible site had been identified but this would require a lot of work.

Liphook Millennium Centre Management Committee - Cllr E Hope.

Cllr Hope outlined the work of the LMC Management Committee. It had been a busy year for the centre. The theatre lighting had been serviced and cleaned. The gantry had been serviced and cleaned and the tower had been inspected and passed. PAT testing had been completed and the tiered seating serviced. The curtains in the hall had been smartened, tables had been replaced and a Blu-Ray player was to be purchased.

Thanks were express to Ray for all his work improving the centre. It was important that the centre worked hard to ensure it was self-sustaining financially in the near future. The storage working party had made some useful recommendations that will be implemented shortly.

Planning Committee – Cllr Jerrard

REPORT OF CHAIRMAN OF PLANNING COMMITTEE TO THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING ON 26 MARCH 2012

The last year has been an eventful one for the Planning Committee. The year started with the commencement of the South Downs National Park and Bramshott & Liphook had the honour of having the first application to be heard by the South Downs National Park Planning Committee. That application was for the Gospel Hall at Bohunt Manor and the Committee meeting took place on 9 May 2011. While the votes were being counted in the May Elections, Michael Croucher bravely and successfully represented the Parish Council at the meeting.

Later in the year there was another significant development in the planning process. East Hampshire District Council decided that it would only have one relatively small Planning Committee instead of the North and South Planning Committees, upon which all District Councillors sat. Once again Bramshott & Liphook had the distinction of having the first applications heard by the new Planning Committee. There were two applications in relation to adjoining houses in Chitley Lane. Councillor Barbara Easton represented the Parish Council at this meeting and did a really good job. I was there to observe it and to wish that I could have done half as well.

Bramshott & Liphook now only has one of its three District Councillors on the Planning Committee and then only as a reserve. That is Councillor Mrs Glass and she was a member of the Committee on this occasion. Mrs Glass also did a very good job indeed, but unfortunately both applications were given permission by a large majority. Only two of the members of the Committee felt able to support Mrs Glass' objections, namely Councillor Ferris Cowper and Councillor Adam Carew, but frankly the planning laws were in the Applicant's favour.

What happened with the Chitley Lane applications does show only too clearly the limitations that are imposed on a Parish Council in the planning process. As the present law stands the Parish Council is only a statutory consultee and while the Planning Authority must take account of the views of a Parish Council it can ignore them altogether and make its own decision. That is why it is so important that the Parish Council works closely with its three District Councillors, Bill Moulard, Angela Glass and Lynn Ashton. One of the alleged advantages of the new system is that most District Councillors are not on the Planning Committee and will have more scope to express the views of their electors.

The position will, however, in theory change again as a result of the Localism Act. This will introduce the concept of Neighbourhood Development Plans which, unlike Parish plans, will have a binding effect by statute on the Local Planning Authority. That means that it is very important that the Parish Council's Planning Committee should assist in the preparation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan for Bramshott & Liphook and be involved in the development and understanding of the Joint Core Strategy currently being produced by EHDC and the South Downs National Park Authority.

The Parish Council Planning Committee has had to deal with the usual quite heavy load of Planning Applications during the past year. However, more specifically it will have to continue to work hard in relation to the three major potential developments in Liphook,

namely those at Lowsley Farm, the old OSU site and at Bohunt Manor. We are expecting an application shortly in relation to the remainder of the old OSU site where the Parish Council's policy remains to enhance employment opportunities as much as possible. There is, of course, already outline permission for houses on the Lowsley Farm site and more detailed applications can be expected in due course. Finally, the Parish Council will have to deal with the very tricky position of the Bohunt Manor Estate, which is within the National Park.

The Parish Council is fortunate in having an experienced and dedicated group of members on its Planning Committee which has been enhanced by the recent addition of two experienced Councillors, Phil Jordan and Dr Tough. I would personally like to thank all members of the Committee for the support they have given me as Chairman of the Committee during the last year, and for their hard work and efforts on behalf of the Parish.

Finally I would particularly like to thank Mrs Gina Spencer, who must be quite the best Planning Clerk in East Hampshire, if not the whole of Hampshire.

A question was raised about the Alderwood Cottage site. It was reported that the Council were aware and that planning application was still awaited.

Parish Council - Cllr B Easton.

You have heard now reports from all of the various committees about the work which has been undertaken during the previous year, and we have many projects lined up for the coming year including a Queens Jubilee project, and also we intend, subject to public approval, to bring in a dog fouling order for the little rec and the millennium green.

Last year in May 2011, there was an election for the Parish Council, District Council and County Council, which resulted in several councillors being elected who had not served on a Parish Council before, it will have been a steep learning process. Towards the end of last year, 2 councillors resigned, which resulted in a by election and we welcomed back two experienced councillors. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each councillor for their input into the running of the council, and for the hard work they do on behalf of the council. Most Councillors serve on at least one subcommittee and some councillors as many as three subcommittees, a big time commitment.

I would also like to thank all the staff, the office staff, the Millennium Hall staff, and the groundstaff for their continued hard work during the year, without whose help we could not achieve anything at all. Lastly before you go, please join myself and the other councillors for refreshments after the meeting, the councillors will stay to mingle as well. Thank you.

59/12 ANNUAL REPORT – EAST HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILLOR – Cllr Angela Glass

The year 2011 to 2012 has been a busy and eventful year for East Hants District Council, and the sad loss of Sam James last summer, and Anna's understandable resignation, has meant that Bramshott and Liphook have been represented at District, by three new Councillors, myself, Bill Moulard and Lynn Ashton, and we all acknowledge that we had a hard act to follow.

We joined a District Council which was already a long way down the process of making savings, by combining forces with Havant Borough Council, in some areas of common expertise. The joint Chief Executive Sandy Hopkins, was joined by an amalgamation of many Officers' jobs, throughout the departments, and the process continues, although East Hants will continue to retain it's own unique identity in the future.

In October, as you all know, Waste Collection services were transferred to Winchester City Council. I would be the first to acknowledge that all did not run smoothly as hoped for, and I know that areas of the Parish were without collections for up to six weeks. However, missed rubbish was collected eventually, and Biffa now appear to be running an efficient service throughout the Parish. I think the rural nature of some parts of the parish proved a bit of a challenge to some of the crews, who were probably more used to areas where the numbers ran in sequence, and the lane were not sunken!

With the publication of the Localism Bill, there was discussion around the role of Planning Committees, in future planning decisions. Liphook already has three prospective sites for future development, and there is a recognised need for further affordable housing locally. The next twelve months will, hopefully, see progress, and decisions made on these sites, one way or another, and we are always keen to receive the views of local residents, at all stages of planning.

In the last few days, the District Council has been told that the Development of the OSU site will not now go forward, and that the developer has withdrawn from the proposed scheme.

The introduction of Developers' Forums, at Penns Place, has been particularly useful, both for the Parishes, and the Developers. Residents have been able to express their wishes and concerns, and Developers have been able to hear, first hand, the reaction to their plans, and hopefully, where necessary, adapt them, or address these concerns.

The publication of the Joint Core Strategy, recently, was a culmination of the considerable, extensive consultation, and deliberation, most of which took place before your three, new Councillors were elected. I am delighted therefore, and not a little grateful, that Steve Proctor has given you a short talk on this mammoth document, which will enable us to continue perusing it, more fully.

Also during the past year, a new form of Community Forum has been introduced. These Forums give local residents an opportunity to attend, and to raise matters with Councillors, and Officers, on a face to face basis. Also in attendance are representatives from the Police and Fire Services, It is also an opportunity for groups to apply for small grants, for local projects, and we would welcome better attendance at the Forums. They are advertised locally from about two weeks prior to the forum, and are held at different venues around the Parishes. The next Forum for Whitehall and this area will be on Tuesday 17th April, at a venue to be announced. Do come along.

As you probably know, Cllr Patrick Burridge, leader of the District Council for the last 18 months, has had to step down from the post, through ill-health. Last week, Councillor Ken Moon was elected as the new leader of East Hants District Council, with Cllr, Glynis Watts as his deputy. This may mean a slightly different approach to certain aspects of the Council, but the election was made with the full support of all of the Councillors, and we look forward to continuity in future years.

I know that your County Councillor Ferris Cowper, is waiting to give you his report, and I am sure that his report will contain an update on the problem of increased noise from the A3, following the opening of the Hindhead Tunnel. The problem is one which is shared by all the villages which abut the A3, down to Portsmouth, and I know that Councillors from all Parishes will be liaising over this problem, and taking advice from many quarters.

Finally, and very locally, following an exchange of a-mails with the Highways Authority before Christmas, in which I expressed my concern at the dangerous lack of markings on the southern slip-way from the A3, to Liphook, I was promised that the slip-way would be repainted in March. I was delighted to see this happened a couple of weeks ago, and this will help during the dark winter months, which are now thankfully, a dim, distant memory.

60/12 ANNUAL REPORT – HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLOR – Cllr Ferris Cowper

OUTLINE OF ADDRESS TO BRAMSHOTT AND LIPHOOK ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY 26TH MARCH 2012

Background Points

Elected in September.

Have been Grayshott's DC since May 1999 and also EHDC Leader.

Can assist parish through membership of EHDC Planning Committee and Chairman of EHDC Area Forum.

Businessman with other recreational interests.

Highways Agency

Signs on A3 to Haslemere via Liphook B2131.

Traffic Noise from A3 affecting Bramshott and Bramshott Chase.

Operation Resilience

Station Road Liphook (done).

Portsmouth Road long stretch from B2131 south to county boundary, (4th. April).

Portsmouth Road in village centre between the block work.

Tunbridge Lane from Church Lane to Burgh Hill Road, Bramshott.

Hampshire Highways East

20mph signs to be repaired/replaced for Liphook in Bloom.

Review of any other damaged signs to be carried out.

Extensive hedge cutting to improve access to Woolmer Lane, Bramshott.

Traffic Management

Extended 30mph speed limit Portsmouth Road further south towards The Links.

Possible improved traffic flows in The Avenue concerning the Primary School.

General review of speed limits, sight lines and signage in Bramshott, (incl. parts of Conford and Passfield).

Safety measures at the Skew Bridge, Portsmouth Road in connection with Liphook Golf Club.

Followed up query from Bohunt School at an EHDC Youth Council meeting with Cllrs. re traffic lights left on overnight.

Public Transport

18 'bus.

Devolved Grants 2011-12

Bordon and Liphook Charity,
The Community Support Laundry for Liphook,
The Peak Trust Day Centre
The Senior Citizens' Lunch Club.

Broadband

Up to 24mbps for 90%. Min of 2mbps for all other areas.

Police Liaison

Met CI James Fulton and other officers in December to discuss local crime "spike".

Community Speedwatch

Investigating local volunteer project with parishes sharing the capital cost.

Ways of Communication with the Village

- Supplied a report to every Full Council meeting since elected.
- Attended every other Full Council meeting in person.
- Frequent 'phone and email dialogue with Chairman and other Parish Councillors.
- Frequent liaison with all three District Councillors, (at least weekly).
- Extensive newsletters posted on the internet every quarter. Currently on www.grayshott.com until the new Parish website becomes available, but I always put a note on www.liphook.co.uk "talkback" to tell everyone.
- Publicly available 'phone number and email address. Most calls and emails replied to within 48 hours.
- My email address is ferris.cowper@hants.gov.uk and my 'phone number is 01428-609858.

Session ended 9.56 pm.