

Parish Council Minutes 19th Jan 2012

Apologies for absence received from three councillors.

Minutes of 1st Dec meeting approved.

Roger submitted a written report about the actions taken during the past month.

The discretionary grant was the same as last year.

Following an introduction by Roger, there was some considerable discussion about an issue of probity in government. This resulted from some information that arrived via Debbie and her connections with High Ongar rather than via Brentwood. It seems that as a result of the recent drive to eliminate all improper influences on decision making in government, there is a proposal to move considerably beyond current disclosure. The plan is to tighten up rules on disclosure to extend to spouses and civil partner and to have this published on a website. Although still under discussion with full details yet to emerge but with worrying privacy implications, some councils are already attempting to implement the proposals. There is major objection to putting details of family on web. It is contrary to European rules on human rights. Councillors in some areas would resign rather than put family (and relationship?) details in the public domain. Roger to continue exploring including writing to Eric Pickles.

The skatepark petitioners were invited to the 1st Dec meeting but Roger didn't meet any.

The new bus shelter cost £8000. Several councillors expressed surprise. Fortunately Doddinghurst didn't have to pay the bill

Footpath 3 and 19 are subject relocation requests.

There was discussion regarding a new Localism Committee Meeting on 28th Feb. Gerry volunteered provided that someone else takes on the Highways committee. Parish Councillors will have no voting rights and therefore limited influence.

Financial Reports. Reports accepted.

Planning committee meetings. No meetings were held during the previous period, but plans have been received regarding another major extension to 1 Barn Mead and for a rear extension to Millstone.

General Purposes Committee. There was no meeting in Dec/Jan.

Roger reported on a meeting of an informal group within Essex looking at an approach to developing local plans. Brentwood, Chelmsford and Maldon met. Central Govt are feeding in housing demands - around three times what was previously expected therefore green belt usage inevitable. The argument is that house occupancy is decreasing as population ages so many more houses needed otherwise communities will die for lack of younger people. This argument was regarded as very dubious, especially as the planners are reported to be working closely with Wimpey so perhaps the hugely increased numbers are not surprising. Equally dubious is the decision of the planners that there is no great problem with infrastructure such as water supplies, road, rail etc.

Public part of meeting.

Responding to the above discussion, Keith Parker said that Brentwood is already in advance regarding numbers of new houses, thanks to various recent developments, so things locally are not as bad as they might seem.

Bill Reid reported that he had met our local acting police sergeant, but Debbie Dicker was unhappy that it has been impossible to contact the police of late. For example Dan Tann has not responded to a request for a meeting to discuss police coverage. Keith said that there has been a lot of activity in Pilgrims Hatch, helped by Brentwood Council who have threatened some Council House tenants of loss of their tenancy if they don't keep children under control.

Finance.

It was reported that the Parish precept might be capped as well as main council's council tax. In future grants may only be available for capital expenditure and not for the sort of grants that we have given to the Scouts etc. Roger had also done some work on the unfavourable effects of inflation on Parish funding. He therefore recommends a 2% increase this year. This amounts to 6p per month for a Band D property. Due to the way that the capping works, it isn't practicable to have no increase some years and then a larger increase other years.

The current precept is around 35pounds a year and the increase around 70p.

Sunday Bus Service.

Colin reported that Tina has a meeting next week to finalise details. With the service running quite soon, she is hoping use this initial trial period to find out by the end of the summer whether it looks whether it might become viable. The Romford/Queens Hospital service is now well used but took the better part of two years to get fully viable.

Neighbourhood Planning exercise.

Roger reported that we now have some money to go ahead. Roger has been invited to 'Building Planning Camp' workshop 2.5 days at Eden project. It is aimed at giving all a good basis in many aspects of neighbourhood planning.

Jubilee Event.

A draft programme is now available. There was some discussion about the sequence of events at the start.

Resolution to plant a tree to commemorate the Queen's Jubilee.

It was suggested that this should be near the Scout hut. Roger McShane said that the planting must be done very soon if it is to survive. A plaque would then be added during the Jubilee celebrations.

Any Other Business

Problems with Utilities

Roger suggests that we have a web page detailing - with photos where possible - all the problems that we have had with utilities. We will then draw it to the attention of the management of the utilities. Agreed Roger to do this.

Kelvedon Hatch Tower

Grahame reported that the lights are out on the Kelvedon Hatch tower. Keith stated that there is an automated system to report this to its MOD owners or to CAA and hence reporting to all aircraft.

Footpath 10

Gerry reported that a new bridge has been built for footpath 10 and it will be installed soon. Keith reported on a new contractor for highway maintenance and that in future the administrative side of reporting potholes should be more responsive.