

RUDGWICK ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held on Monday 13th March 2017 at the Rudgwick Hall, Bucks Green at 7.30pm

The meeting was chaired by Cllr Richard Landeryou, Chairman of the Parish Council.

90 electors were present.

1. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. Apologies had been received from District Councillor John Bailey, Parish Councillors Joanne Dove and Katie Gilmour and Mr Trevor Nash
3. The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 14th March 2016 had been circulated and were proposed by Mr Ralph Brown seconded by Mr Mark Ellis and agreed.

4. Chairman's Report

The Parish Council vacancy had been filled with the co-option of Joanne Dove and the Council was up to full strength.

The Chairman then reported on the Committees of the Parish Council.

Planning and Footpaths – chaired by Cllr David Buckley. During 2016 68 planning applications had been received against 72 the previous year. Most planning applications for extensions are straight forward but the Parish Council were mindful of comments from neighbours on the HDC website. Applications for tree works were expected to be submitted with professionally drawn plans.. Applications of particular interest during the year included land adjacent to Woodfalls Manor in Loxwood Road which had been dismissed on appeal and land adjacent to Fairlee in Bucks Green for which there had been strong local objection as the site is outside the village built up area boundary and the development would be contrary to countryside policy. A new application for Windacres had recently been approved. The Chairman thanked the members of the Planning Committee for all their views and considered opinions.

Finance Policy and Human Resources – chaired by Cllr Rob Wild. As well as preparing the budget and precept for 2017/18, which has increased to take account of rising costs and expenses arising from the undertaking of a Neighbourhood Plan, the Committee recommend slight increases to the hall hire charges. Financial assistance during the year had been given to Age UK Horsham, West Sussex Mediation Service, St Catherine's Hospice, Ellens Green and Rudgwick Gardening Association and Rudgwick Village Day and Firework Display. A contribution had also been made towards the purchase of a defibrillator for Rudgwick Primary School and the cost of replacement battery packs for the five defibrillators in the village had also been met. The telephone box at Tismans Common had been purchased and housed a further defibrillator.

Halls and Recreation Committee – chaired by Cllr Landeryou. The main task of the Committee was to ensure that both of the village halls are kept in good order and to maintain the playing field, play areas and open spaces in the village.

During the year the car park had been relined and signage around the hall and the entrance to the playing fields had been renewed. Refurbishment of the toilets at the Rudgwick Hall would commence shortly and it was then planned to upgrade the kitchen and heating system with funding supported by Section 106 monies. Dog fouling was a perennial problem for most parishes, with Rudgwick being no exception, and an additional dog bin had been installed on the Downslink.

Community Safety and Emergency Planning – chaired by Cllr David Buckley. The Committee had not had to swing into action for some time due to a couple of mild winters.

In addition to the Committees a Working Party for traffic calming was set up last year and battles on with WSCC Highways to make our roads safer. It is the intention to have the 40mph signs currently sited adjacent to the Downslink crossing moved further east. WSCC has advised that this will cost in the region of the £7,000 and the parish may have to contribute. The Parish Council has also asked for the crossing sign to be renewed and re-sited. Works to improve the Downslink crossing points either side of the A281 had been agreed and was due to start shortly following repairs to the bridge over the River Arun WSCC had advised that, following the retirement of the school crossing patrol person, it will no longer fund the position and the Parish Council is looking into the possibility of a permanent crossing in Church Street.

The working group were also discussing improved signage and traffic calming measures in Loxwood Road, The Haven and Lynwick Street. Wheelie bin speed safety stickers were available at the meeting for collection by residents within the 30mph zones of Church Street, Loxwood Road and the A281 at Bucks Green.

The Chairman concluded his report by announcing the retirement of the Parish Clerk, Barbara Kenward, after 21 years service. He thanked her for her hard work and wished her a long and happy retirement. The appointment of a new Clerk was in hand and would be recommended for approval at an extraordinary meeting in the next week.

5. Questions on Parish matters from electors.

There had been no questions received prior to the meeting..

Two residents suggested how the speed stickers could be distributed.

The speed of traffic in Loxwood Road was raised by a concerned resident who was advised that the Parish Council traffic calming working group was looking into this.

6. Rudgwick Neighbourhood Plan update.

Parish Councillor Ian Maclachlan, Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group gave an update on the past year's activities.

Four public meetings had been held and been quite well supported. The Steering Group and six focus groups looking had been set up and a number of meetings held. From the investigations that were being made it was discovered that the primary school was nearly full and that a proportion of the pupils did not live in the parish. The governors of the school had been made aware of this and it was agreed that places would be for local children. New development would require extra capacity at the school. The Medical Centre has the capacity for further patients and can meet the demand.

Cllr Maclachlan thanked all the volunteers who were trying their best to represent the village and its views. The Neighbourhood Plan will help to achieve sustainable development of the type and in the places that it is wanted. Pressure from central government for more and more housing in the end comes down to the people who are impacted locally and the aim is to try to make sure that the impact is as acceptable as possible.

The current position with Neighbourhood Plans had been complicated by the challenge in court, and rejection, of the Henfield Neighbourhood Plan as the evidence was not judged to be acceptable. Plans will have to be more vigorous and new rules are being introduced.

There is a lot of new input from HDC and a need for them to be much more involved.

Currently 23 parishes, with different levels of sustainability and detail, were putting Neighbourhood Plans together. HDC were not currently giving out numbers of housing but it could be in Rudgwick's interest to complete their Neighbourhood Plan before the Local Development Plan adopted in November 2015 is reviewed.

The next step is to revisit and assess the parish housing requirements. Housing needs surveys

tend to focus on social housing but there is also a need for downsizing market housing. HDC state that this can easily be met within the district but people want to stay where they have always lived.

Sites for development need to be put forward and then there is a vigorous assessment process backed up by professional consultants.

Cllr Maclachlan said that the Neighbourhood Plan team would do their best and residents were invited to ask questions.

Questions

Definition of sustainability – a strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal was an obligatory part of a Neighbourhood Plan.

Development at Rudgwick Metals - how was the new application approved with more houses than the previous application. The previous provision for a community facility had been removed and the housing increased. The site had been specifically allocated for development. The approval was contrary to the views of the HDC Conservation Officer and both the Parish Council and Preservation Society. Cllr Maclachlan suggested setting up a group of councillors and residents to try and work with the developers to mitigate the urbanisation of the site.

Distribution of 1600 new homes throughout the villages of Horsham District – of the 23 parishes carrying out Neighbourhood Plans a number would be unsustainable and unlikely to have any development. If Rudgwick can complete its Neighbourhood Plan with a sustainable number of houses, before HDC review the Local Plan, it stands a better chance of being accepted. Interim development can be taken into consideration in terms of its impact on the sustainability of future development but not to reduce the numbers.

Continuing viability of the focus groups – should they carry on if there is no impact on the land. Assurance was given that more facilities would be needed and the work of the focus groups should continue.

Rural Housing Alliance - was it worth looking at a specifically managed housing scheme where the Parish Council can take the lead in certain types of development. The schemes were for affordable housing and there was also a need for a mix of market housing.

Mrs Jo Bowen proposed a vote of thanks to Cllr Maclachlan and all those working so hard on our behalf and this was unanimously agreed.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

The meeting ended at 8.45pm.

Refreshments were then served.

.....
Chairman

.....
Date