

# **Minutes of the Annual Assembly of Framfield Parish held at the Village Hall, Blackboys, on Tuesday, 25 May 2010 at 8 pm**

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Present :                     Cllrs   Rob Newton (Chair)                     Brian Hodge  
                                      Selina Allen                                 Maria Naylor (Vice Chair)  
                                      Myran Eade                                 Ian Paisley  
                                      Peter Friend                                Fred Thurston  
                                      Felicity Groves  
  Councillor Chris Dowling (ESCC).  
  PCSO Simon French

## **In attendance**

Ann Newton - Clerk

Members of the public - 10

**PCSO Simon French** introduced himself and stated that coming from Eastbourne where the crime was relatively higher, Framfield Parish was a good place to be. Most of his work seemed to be on speeding and suspect vehicles. He also spent a lot of time talking to residents and now had a base in Framfield Church Hall as well as street meetings and the quarterly Police Panel meetings. Simon further reported that a new inspector has put in place a new neighbourhood policing team of four officers who will go around the Wealden district dealing with specific issues. Hot-spots for speeding have been targeted in the Parish and drivers have been given fines and cautions. Rob Newton thanked him for all his hard work.

## **1. Apologies for Absence**

David Andrews.

## **2. Minutes of the Annual Assembly held on 26 May 2009**

It was agreed that the minutes from the Annual Assembly held on 26 May 2009 having been circulated, be approved, adopted and signed as a correct record.

## **3. Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council**

Rob thanked all Parish Councillors for their efforts for which they take no remuneration.

This past year has seen the departure of Mark Moore and Eryl Thomas – both of whom should be thanked for all their efforts on behalf of the Council, particularly Eryl who served for some seven years and was Chairman for five. The meeting must also record the death of Rita Redman who had served as a councillor for 14 years. A mention should also be made of Anne Stanley who served as Clerk a considerable time ago – she died earlier in the year.

We must also welcome three new councillors, namely Richard Brocklebank from Blackboys, Selina Allen from Framfield and Felicity Groves from Palehouse Common.

There are monthly meetings of the Full Council with the exception of August and December. Additionally, there are four committees covering Finance & General Purposes, Recreation Grounds including allotments, Planning and Environment (everything that is not included in the other committees). Thanks should also go to the Chairmen of these committees and the members who give their time. There will be separate reports from each committee during the meeting. Also to our Responsible Financial Officer, Jan Riddle, Internal Auditor, Arthur Makepeace, our Handyman and Clerk. None of whom we could function without.

Planning: We await with baited breath the latest news on WDC's Core Strategy for development. This will confirm strategically where Wealden proposes to build the 11,000 houses as specified by the South East Plan. The SHLAA results have already given us an idea of where development could occur but nothing more. It is hoped that none of the Parish villages will have many houses allocated as we do not have the infrastructure.

Environment: The Speedwatch campaign is still up and running in both villages.

The proposals for traffic calming in Blackboys to back up the new revised lower speed limit were welcomed at the recent public meeting – this will be reported on in more detail later.

Streetlighting also falls under the Environment heading and I will hand over to Fred Thurston later in the meeting. Fred has worked tirelessly in trying to find a solution to reduce our costs and carbon footprint.

Dog Mess – this still seems to be an irritating problem in parts of the Parish. Even though the Parish pays over a thousand pounds a year for bins, people are still unwilling to clear up after their dogs. The WDC Dog Warden is happy and willing to visit any areas where there is a problem.

Pavilions: the project is ongoing and there will be a report later in the meeting.

Framfield Allotments: this is also ongoing and the PC is in the process of endeavouring to make some of the land available to more parishioners.

Crime: Simon French, our PCSO, now spends 80% of his time in our villages. We are very lucky to have him.

Website: something we propose to introduce this year to enable those happy with a keyboard to obtain all the latest Parish information.

#### **4. Matters arising from those Minutes**

Everything was covered during the rest of the meeting.

#### **5. Parish Reports**

- **Planning.** Maria Naylor reported that there is a Planning Committee scheduled every three weeks to coincide with the timescales set for consultation by Wealden District Council. Applications still seemed to be down on previous times, no doubt due to the economic climate.
- **Environment Committee.** Fred Thurston in the absence of David Andrews briefly highlighted some minor elements of the year's work – some bulb planting and fencing. He then went on to report on the first of the two major items, namely, streetlighting.

Streetlighting. Until only a month ago Fred intended to report to the Annual Assembly a Parish Council approved approach to drastically reducing the number of streetlights over the next five to six years on financial and environmental grounds. An EU directive means that all the mercury-based lamps have to be replaced by 2012. On first investigations this was deemed expensive to change 76 lamps, some £18/20,000. EDF, our energy supplier, had also increased their standing charges significantly. A change of supplier was then made to ESCC who offered much cheaper energy for a slightly more expensive maintenance cost – making the overall package slightly cheaper than previously. The approved phase-out of some of the lights as mentioned above was at that point still in the pipeline subject to the opinions of local residents. However a month or so ago, ESCC came up with a much better solution to the mercury light-fitting issue – they could swap out the 80 watt mercury bulb for a non-mercury 23 watt fluorescent lamp for a much cheaper price. The overall effect would be softer and the cost of energy cheaper. Two lights have been swapped out as a trial in Mount Pleasant, Blackboys, to see what residents think of the lower light levels. The reaction so far is positive. Fred's intention is to do the same in Becketts Way, Framfield, and then the PC can gauge residents' opinions on whether to stick with the first plan of phasing most of the lights or the second option of keeping the lights with the lower, cheaper lamp. Rob thanked Fred for his tireless efforts on the streetlighting front.

Speedwatch. Brian Hodge firstly updated everyone on the Speedwatch campaign, which has been running for some 15/16 months. Initially Framfield High Street was set up with Speedwatch but then it was realised that the speed of traffic entering Framfield from the Pump Lane end was travelling at much more inappropriate speeds so a position was found at the end of the tarmac on Blackboys Road. In Blackboys from a position in the High Street speeds were clocked at close to 70 mph with an average speed of 45 mph. When the shop was in operation, the parking acted as

an inadvertent traffic-calming mechanism. Speedwatch is currently in abeyance in Blackboys due to a drop in the number of people involved and once the new speed limit is imposed Speedwatch will not be permitted for one year.

Speed Limit reduction in Blackboys. Brian Hodge reported that following on from the public meeting held on 20 April 2010 there was general consensus of agreement that everyone was happy with the re-alignment of the junction of the B2102 and B2192. There were some concerns over the positioning of the two build-outs and the suggestion of alternatives, such as rumble strips or 'tables', both of which are deemed unsuitable by the emergency services. Everyone wanted a form of traffic calming as opposed to just signage. The majority were not in favour of the extra lamps. Michael Higgs was to take these comments back to ESCC, copy the PC in on any written comments and return to the next Environment Committee meeting on 9 June 2010.

However, as reported in the previous meeting, an email had been received from Michael on 24 May 2010 asking how he should proceed and he felt that although the public supported the introduction of the 30 mph speed limit, they did not support the traffic calming measures suggested. The County Council's policy on setting speed limits requires them to reduce the speeds in accordance with the proposed limit if a lower limit is to be introduced and they are not able to introduce a limit with signs and lines alone. He therefore proposes to write to all the appropriate residents clarifying this and asking them to indicate their preference to either a 30 mph speed limit with traffic calming or stay with the existing 40 mph speed limit.

Brian commented that he felt the minutes portrayed what the residents at the public meeting said in that they would agree to the measures of traffic calming in order to proceed with the speed limit reduction on the understanding that an exemption was made to prevent the additional streetlighting be introduced. The PC agreed that a letter should be written to Michael stating these facts and asking him to proceed along those lines. Councillor Chris Dowling agreed with everything that had been said and commented that ESCC needed to get on with the work.

- **Recreation Grounds/Allotments.** Myran Eade, the Chair, asked the Clerk to read out his report, a copy of which is attached to the minutes. Myran asked that thanks be given to other members of the Committee for their efforts over the last year with special thanks to Peter Friend for his work on the allotments.
- **Update on the proposals to place a Pavilion on both Framfield and Blackboys recreation grounds.** Fred Thurston reported that last October the PC agreed to set up a review team to see where we were on both fronts. The Cricket Club had been particularly successful in raising funds and the football clubs had not. The project was therefore split into two parts, namely Framfield and Blackboys. It initially seemed as though Blackboys would arrive at their target funding quicker although the total expenditure from original estimates in 2007 of £40/50,000 had risen to over £120,000. Framfield were not keeping pace with the rising costs, which therefore needed to be looked at by the review team to find a way forward. The results of the review were six recommendations to the PC.
  - RECOMMENDATION 1. *The community at large should be informed of the changed circumstances at the next Annual Assembly and via the Parish Magazine.*
  - RECOMMENDATION 2. *The project group be restructured to report directly to the Parish Council and must contain adequate Fund raising expertise appropriate to the options decided upon by the Parish Council.*
  - RECOMMENDATION 3. *Framfield Pavilion be cancelled and an extensive refurbishment of the current facilities be undertaken. It is further recommended that this exercise be undertaken by representatives of the Parish Council, the Memorial Hall management team and the Football club (who would wish to have priority in the use of the new facilities).*
  - RECOMMENDATION 4. *The Parish Council urgently investigates the disposal of Parish Assets with a view to using the proceeds to augment fund raising elements and possible Sharecom investments towards the Capital costs of erecting a new Community Centre with changing facilities (prioritised in favour of the Cricket club) on the proposed site of the Pavilion.*

- RECOMMENDATION 5. *The Parish Council and Cricket club investigate the possible refurbishment/extension of the existing facility and restrict its use to the Cricket club and school.*
- RECOMMENDATION 6. *The current segment of the project be continued in the hope that the previously recommended structural changes bring about a sea change in the Parish Council's fundraising capability.*

Option 3 regarding the Framfield option seemed to please all parties and a small team has been put together to look at the possibilities with representatives from the football teams, PC and Memorial Hall. Details drawings and costings are now awaited.

Options 4, 5 and 6 really concerned the Blackboys situation. Recommendation 4 which concerned the possibility of disposing of parish assets to enable funding to be used to build a new community centre cannot be progressed. If any land is sold it has to be replaced (or the profit from the sale) used to buy replacement land – ie like for like. This leaves option 5 (refurbishment of the current cricket pavilion) and option 6 to continue to fundraise with a view to the original proposal of a new building. Option 5 has in itself hit problems – the PC has applied for 3 grants – 1 has replied in the negative and two haven't replied. The Cricket Club on behalf of the PC have applied for two more for Option 6.

In conclusion there is the same problem with all three solutions (refurbishment of the Memorial Hall, new build or refurbishment at Blackboys) and that is funding.

Further information has now come to light that the Charity Commission have a say in what can or cannot be done on a recreation ground particularly if any proposals fall outside the objects of the charity. Further clarification is to be obtained from the Charity Commission on several points.

- **Finance Committee & General Purposes Committee.** Rob Newton reported that the budget for 2010/11 is £43,500. It appears that the Council still spends slightly less than average than other parishes per elector. For a small parish we have a huge number of assets or liabilities – recreation grounds, allotments and halls. We also need to increase our reserves which need replenishing after several years of dipping into them as they should be between a half and two thirds of the precept – there is currently only £18,000 in the account.
- **Village Hall, Blackboys, represented by Fred Thurston, Chairman of the Management Committee.** Fred Thurston reported that it had been a good year financially for the Hall with a £1,200 profit. However, this is the good year with only one top up of heating oil. Every other there are two, so there is a significant drop in profits! New sinks and taps have been fitted; the outside has been repainted; further disabled requirements have been met; a trip hazard in the playground is to be addressed and grit bins are to be installed before next winter.
- **Memorial Hall, Framfield, represented by Rob Newton, Chairman of the Management Committee.** The Hall seems to be on steady ground. Jan Riddle, our RFO, has recently taken over the position as Treasurer and Ann, our Clerk, formally as Secretary. This should help with the day to day administration. A new boiler will not be needed as anticipated which has saved expenditure and the curtain rails – a great source of irritation to some – are to be repaired. Sandy Rogers must be thanked for all her efforts with the Village Markets.

## 6. Any Other Parish Business/Questions

Several members of the Cricket Club were in attendance and asked for clarification on issues over the Pavilion particularly on the position of the Charity Commission.

They were reminded that the charity owns the recreation ground, which is for the inhabitants of the parish to part-take in recreation as stated in the objects of the charity. The Parish Councillors, are by default, Trustees, and have the responsibility of the maintenance of the ground and to make sure that it is used in line with those objects. The ground is not a sports ground. Clarification is being obtained from the Charity Commission on whether or not they deem the provision of a new cricket/sports pavilion to fall outside the remit of the charity. If they do the Trustees would have to consider whether they wish to proceed with a formal disposal of the land to enable the area on which the new pavilion

would sit, including car parking etc to be released for that purpose. A public referendum would be required and the decision would ultimately lie with the Secretary of State.

The Cricket Club members present voiced their dismay and disbelief that the Charity Commission could have any say and in their opinion would in any case support better facilities for general community use. They highlighted other recreation grounds that do appear to often have appropriate facilities. The Clerk responded by saying that this would depend largely on the objects of the Trusts which govern the grounds and secondly the size of the grounds. The Clerk stated that in East Hoathly the Charity Commission had eventually granted a half-hearted retrospective consent for tennis courts, formally leased and managed by the Tennis Club, as this physically took up a very small percentage of the overall size of the playing fields. The Charity Commission's issue is with exclusivity of use, when the grounds are for the enjoyment of the all the inhabitants of the Parish. The problem seemed to be at the moment the justification for a cricket/sports pavilion when no other regular users other than the Cricket Club were in evidence. Clarification was given by Fred Thurston on the size of the new proposals compared to what is currently in place and the figures were significantly higher.

Members of the Cricket Club stated that they felt that the PC was not being as supportive as they should be. This was disputed from the Chair and assurance given that this was not the case and detailed the amount of time and effort spent by many Trustees on this one issue alone.

Ann and Brian Turner raised several questions in relation to the proposals for Blackboys. In addition to what has been detailed above, confirmation was given that any new sports pavilion would have to be owned and managed by the Parish Council (Trustees).

Graham Pope was in attendance on behalf of the Football Club. He was given assurance that none of the potential problems with the Charity Commission would effect the revised proposals for Framfield.

A new resident of Framfield asked for further clarification on the streetlighting position and said that he would be in favour of also reducing the number of lights. He would wait to see the effect of the new fluorescent bulbs.

Rob Newton thanked everyone for attending. *The meeting closed at 9.35 pm.*

**Chairman**.....

**Date** .....