

Warbleton Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held at 7.00 pm in the Dunn village hall
Rushlake Green

The chairman of the Parish Council, Councillor Bryan Whitton, presided at the meeting.

The following members of the Parish Council were present: Councillors Mrs S Ralph, Mr C Wells, Mr N Richards, Mrs K Cook, Mr D Turton and Mr A Long. East Sussex County Councillors Mr R Simmons, Mr R Thomas and Mr W Bentley were present. There were five members of the public present.

The clerk to the Parish Council, Mr J Leeves was in attendance.

Apologies for Absence

1. Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mr J Glass, Mr C Harding, Mr J Trunkfield and Mr M Sibbering.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

2. Councillor Mrs Ralph proposed and Councillor Wells seconded that the minutes of the meeting on 17 April 2008 be approved and signed as a correct record.

Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting on 17 April 2008

3. There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting on 17 April 2008.

Chairman's annual report

4. The chairman of the Parish Council, Councillor Bryan Whitton reported that the Council again had had a successful year. Most notably a 30 mph speed restriction had been introduced in Rushlake Green after many years of campaigning. Similarly in Bodle Street Green, the speed limit had been reduced from 40 mph to 30 mph in the centre of the village and the existing limit of 40 mph extended to Attwood nursery. The Council had hoped that the limit would be reduced to 30 mph throughout but had been unable to persuade East Sussex Highways Department of the case. It was expected that the speed limit at Three Cups would be reduced to 40 mph shortly.

5. The first time sewerage system covering the centre of Rushlake Green had just started. The road diversions were unfortunately causing difficulties for local residents and businesses as the Council had predicted and this would only stop when the work was complete.

6. Wealden District Council was in the process of naming unnamed roads in the parish. For a great part of the year the Parish Council had been involved in consultation with residents and had put proposals to Wealden District Council in early September. Wealden had accepted the Parish Council's suggestions and prepared draft naming orders for one further consultation. There had been some objections to a few of these orders and further consultations were now in process.

7. Following problems in the previous year with the use of Peartree Lane (a bye way open to all traffic) by off road vehicles destroying the surface of the lane, East Sussex County Council had placed a temporary closure order on it and carried out repairs. The use of the lane was still prohibited to off road vehicles. Tin Kettle Lane was now experiencing a similar problem and the County Council had also placed a temporary closure order on this lane. The users of off road vehicles had however, attempted to circumnavigate or remove gates installed to prevent them from using the lane. Action would be necessary by the police.

8. The winter of 2008-09 had been the most severe for twenty years and Rushlake Green and Warbleton village had experienced problems. The Parish Council felt that inadequate efforts had been made by the County Council to deal with snow and ice. As with many other roads in the county there were a very large number of potholes caused by the severe weather and the Parish Council had asked County Councillors to help in encouraging the Highways Department to undertake maintenance.

9. The village shop had come up for sale during the year and a local businessman had bought it. He was running it as a going concern. This was an outcome that the Parish Council had wished for.

10. Finally, there had been problems with the use of lanes by very large lorries whose drivers were following their satellite navigation systems. In consequence some accidents had occurred and lorries had become stuck on narrow roads for which they were unsuitable.

11. Problems had recently occurred with diversions as a result of road works on the B3096 Heathfield to Battle road. These had included directing traffic down Furnace Lane which was narrow and unsuitable. There had been several accidents and the County Council had had to be asked to take emergency action to prevent diverted traffic from using Furnace Lane.

Presentation of Parish Council Accounts for the year to 31 March 2009

12. The clerk to the Parish Council outlined the Parish Council accounts to 31 March 2009. There had been an underspend of about £1,400 in relation to the precept. This had been caused by lower expenditure on discretionary grants. The main reduction had been of £1,000 to the Dunn village hall. A further £360 was owed to the Bodle Street Green village hall. They were expected to make a claim in the new financial

year. In consequence of the underspend, the precept had again been frozen at £14,350. There were no questions on the accounts which were accepted by the meeting.

Warbleton Charity report

13. The chairman of the Warbleton charity, Councillor Wells, explained that the purpose of the charity was to provide relief to the poor of the Parish. It was a small charity with limited financial resources. Last year it had again provided about 40 food parcels to mainly elderly residents at Christmas and had made two small welfare grants. Unfortunately since then four elderly residents had died and it was expected that the numbers in receipt of Christmas hampers would continue to decline.

14. The charity owned land at Vines Cross which had a long term farmer tenant. The land outside of Maidstone remained untenanted and the option agreement on it with a house builder had now effectively expired. The charity was hopeful that in the long term it would be able to sell the land for housing.

East Sussex County Council

15. East Sussex County Councillor Mr W Bentley circulated a written report. The County Council elections were due to be held on 4 June when a new Council would be elected.

16. Overall there had been a significant improvement in the performance of the County Council since 2000 and it was now categorised by the Audit Commission as a four star authority. This reflected a significant improvement in financial performance as at the beginning of the period the County Council had been in a serious financial situation. The Council was still a floor authority in terms of the amount of grant received from central government, but the situation would improve if there was a change of administration next year at the general election.

17. For Adult Social Care the County Council was categorised as a two star authority and it was the best children's authority in the UK. There had been much improvement in GCSE examination results with the biggest improvement in the South East..

18. The County Council now intended to put more resources and effort into Transport and the Environment. Road maintenance would become a priority and efforts would be made to carry out repairs to roads damaged by the severe winter that had just gone. The Bexhill link road was planned to be completed in 2010.

19. The County Council had put aside financial resources to deal with the effects of the recession as a large number of high streets had seen shops close and remain vacant. There would shortly be an announcement on how this fund could be accessed by business.

Wealden District Council

20. District Councillor, Mr A Long, reported that the Crown recycling scheme would be extended to the whole Wealden District, including Warbleton, by the end of 2010. The Local Development Framework was continuing to be developed. A recent decision by the Planning Inspectorate in relation to two developments in Uckfield had resulted in some major changes. These developments had been turned down and as a result it appeared that developments would be likely to occur in villages throughout the district.

21. The Council was predicting a shortfall of £1.3 million by the end of the year and consequently it was engaged on a transformational programme to find savings. This was difficult as demand for service remained high and income from investments was reduced. Consequently, difficult decisions on streamlining services to effect cost reductions would be required.

22. Finally, on the single site headquarters issue, work was continuing on the size of building required at Hailsham where it had been decided the Council would have its headquarters.

Police report

23. There was no representative from the police to give a report. However, Councillor Simmons commented that there was now a full police team in Heathfield under a sergeant. This comprised a police constable and 5 PCSO's. There was also a civilian administrator. Warbleton had a designated PCSO.

24. The chairman commented that there had in fact been little crime in the Parish during the year.

Any other business

25. There being no other business the meeting was closed at 7.50 pm.

Chairman.....

Date.....