

Lingfield Parish Council

FIFTEENTH ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

**Minutes of the fifteenth Annual Parish Assembly of Lingfield Parish held on
Monday 14th April 2014
at the Lingfield and Dormansland Community Centre at 7pm**

Present:

In the chair – Mr C. D’Avray, Chairman, Lingfield Parish Council

Speaker:

Faustina Bayo, Community Development Officer, Action in Rural Sussex

Members of the public:

Valerie Bravingon, Patricia Sweeney, Michael Beavis, Chris Vasey, Liz Lockwood, G. Dickerson, Felicity Jones, Anne Morley, Derek Pocock, Jacqui Smith, Caroline Dyer, Paula Cox, Marilla Stevens, Michael Sydney, Valerie Millar, Anne Hardwick, Ian Quaiffe, Stewart Robertshaw, Judy Mendell, R. Brooke, Sally Cole, Eve Thompson, Peter Becker, Rita Russell, Mary Ayers, Paul Dyer, Maureen Young, Peter Francis, Simon Cox, Kate Matthews, Colin Coates, Graham Taylor, Gilbert Reed, Alan Tyrrell, Susan Tyrrell, Clive Kaiser-Davies, Rody Kaiser-Davies, David Orringe, Ian Jones, Deanne Parry Jones, Mark Dyer, Andrea Watson, Trevor Crowhurst, K. Dimond, Keith Smith, Peter Goodbody, Pat Dobson, Ian Dobson, Rita Snow, Jeanine Searle, Jeremy Bishop

Members of the Parish Council:

Valerie Millar, John Cole, Sonia Perkins, Vivien Hepworth

Surrey County Councillor – Michael Sydney

Tandridge District Councillors - Brian Perkins and Lesley Steeds

Police - PC Paul Baker

In attendance: Fay Elwood, Parish Clerk

1. Chairman’s Report

The Chairman thanked people for coming and passed on apologies from Cllrs Lisa Bangs and Graham Marks. He thanked all members of the parish council for their contributions during the past 12 months. He referred to the meeting which was held last week to discuss the proposed footbridge at Lingfield Station and asked for volunteers to come forward to be part of a working party to come up with alternative solutions. The first Lingfield Parish Council community awards were presented to Trevor Crowhurst and Ian Blackford in recognition of their voluntary contributions in the community. The Chairman's report is attached to these minutes.

2. Speaker – Faustina Bayo, Action in Rural Sussex (AiRS)

The Chairman introduced Faustina Bayo from AiRS to give a presentation on Neighbourhood Plans (NP). The presentation started with a quiz to highlight how much people already know about NPs. The following facts emerged:-

A Neighbourhood Plan can cross district boundaries; Two NP areas cannot overlap; people living outside the designated area can vote at the referendum at the discretion of the examiner; 51% of votes are required at the referendum for the plan to succeed; if 50% of those voting are in favour, the final decision is taken by the district council.

Faustina went on to explain the areas that can be addressed by NPs:- Economy; schools; footpaths; bridleways; recreation; housing development; parking; allotments; open spaces; woodlands; wildlife buffer zones. The content of the NP for a particular area depends on what the steering group decides to include. These decisions must be informed by extensive community consultation. Some people think that NPs are all about housing development but this is just one aspect of the plan and site allocations are not always included. The NP should contain policies against which applications are assessed.

One advantage to having a Neighbourhood Plan is that 25% of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is automatically directed to the community. The remaining 75% may also be spent in the community. CIL money is only applicable to market housing.

Examples of what Sussex parishes have aimed for are:- A new Community Centre in a better location; a supply of smaller bungalows to allow people to downsize; green space allocations. A Community Right to Build can be allocated to a specific site so that development can go ahead without planning permission if it complies with the criteria set out in the order.

The process of a Neighbourhood Plan starts with designating the area and this is done by the Parish Council notifying Tandridge District Council. A steering group is then set up and waits for District Council approval. The next step is extensive community consultation in the form of open days and drop in sessions. The steering group should consult with all members of the community:- land owners; businesses; young people; older people etc. If site allocation is to be included, the steering group should formulate criteria by which the sites will be assessed and selected. They should be aware that if a site meets the criteria but is not selected, it is likely the site owner will challenge the decision. It is important to be open and transparent and to receive feedback from the community through the open days. Once a plan has passed the examination it still has to be accepted by the community. If you have ignored anyone at the consultation stage, they are likely to make their voices heard at the referendum stage. Community consultation should be part of the process from inception to submission and evidence of this should be available. Take photos, keep flyers and posters as these all prove the community engagement. There is a six week consultation period by the parish and another six week consultation by the district council. The examination is not usually undertaken in public but the examiner will visit the sites before deciding whether a plan can proceed to a referendum. A typical timescale from start to finish is two and half years. It is important not to rush the process. NPs can carry weight before they are finalised (once it has gone through the first consultation). It is likely to be 12 to

18 months before a plan reaches this point. Experience in other areas has shown that once a Neighbourhood Plan area is designated, developers may 'get in quick' if they think it will be harder to get permission on their site once a Neighbourhood Plan is in place.

NPs are expensive. The cost of the full service from AiRS is between £12,500 and £24,000. However, much depends on the expertise within the community. Grants are available towards the cost. The district council will receive £30,000 to support the process but they are not obliged to pass any of this money to the parish. AiRS have negotiated that £5000 per NP area will be passed to the community from both Wealden and Horsham District Councils.

A Neighbourhood Plan is a legal document which sits alongside the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Local Plan. Once a Neighbourhood Plan has been 'made' it is the first document which is looked at by the district council when determining an application. If there are no policies relevant to the application, they will then look to the Local Plan.

Liz Lockwood emphasised that the Parish Council is only required to contact Tandridge District Council for the area designation. It is then up to the Steering Group to take the plan forward.

The Chairman thanked Faustina for her presentation and asked for a show of hands to gauge support for a Neighbourhood Plan. The majority of those present indicated their support. Liz Lockwood was asked to take on the task of setting up a steering group and she agreed to do this in conjunction with Andrea Watson. The clerk will contact Tandridge District Council to request the designation.

Action: Clerk

Geoff Duck, Chairman of the CR3 Plan, gave a short summary of their experiences. They have been working on a plan for 2 years and have so far spent between £20,000 and £24,000. Their area covers a population of 30,000.

3. What do residents want to achieve with a Neighbourhood Plan?

The chairman invited members of the public to identify what they would like to achieve from a Neighbourhood Plan

Although it wasn't what was asked, members of the public felt they should receive regular updates on planning matters. There was also concern that the topic of the parish assembly was not more widely advertised. It was suggested that with a subject of such importance, flyers should have been sent to each household. The parish council did publicise the event in the local press, website, notice boards and a banner in the centre of the village. Notifications to individual households is more appropriate for the next stage of the process.

The conclusion from this part of the evening was that the plan needs to address the capacity for housing, schools, doctors and traffic.

4. District and County Matters

Report from County Councillor, Michael Sydney

The Horizon project (resurfacing roads) continues and 10% of the budget has been spent in the Lingfield division. During the floods, Surrey was the worst affected county in the country with 1600 houses being flooded. This has put an enormous strain on the Highways budget. Pothole reporting should be done through the website when possible as this is the most efficient way to get the information to the engineers. Sometimes one pothole is repaired and a nearby one is left. This occurs because of reporting errors and is something the councillors are trying to address. Michael was asked why utility companies are allowed to dig up newly laid roads and he explained that there is now a new system which requires the utility companies to apply to SCC for a permit. Any failure of the road surface which follows must be repaired at their expense.

Referring to the issue of free transport to Oxted school, the cabinet is now recommending that SCC does not pay for pupils to attend schools outside the county. The recommendation is that pupils will receive free transport to the nearest Surrey school and this may mean it is necessary to vary the way transport is arranged. Simon Dawson has analysed the situation and believes that by using the train instead of buses, would save SCC £64,000 per year.

Report from District Councillor, Brian Perkins

Brian said that he believes Neighbourhood Plans are important because they give the community some teeth. They are expensive and difficult but well worth doing. He praised United Charities, and Marion Wardell in particular, for the successful renovation of Ho Chee Cottages. Finally, he encouraged people to get involved in local issues and the parish council in particular.

5. Lingfield Guest House (Library)

Ian Jones gave a verbal update on the situation with the Guest House Trust. The building was left to the community and the trust has previously been administered by Surrey County Council (SCC). SCC has decided to hand over the running of the trust to local people so that the building can be managed locally. Trustees have been appointed but there are still some problematic issues to resolve. The running of the library service is a separate issue and SCC is in favour of making Lingfield a Community Partnered Library run by volunteers with minimal help from trained staff. There is a difference of opinion as to how well this is working in other areas. SCC want to hold a public meeting in Lingfield to recruit volunteers. There is a fund attached to the Guest House and there is currently some debate about whether this money could be used to pay a librarian. Ian thanked Michael Sydney for his efforts concerning the Guest House and Library.

6. Issues raised by members of the public

Paula Cox asked what is being done to improve the situation regarding flooding on roads into Lingfield. She said that during the recent wet weather, there was only one safe route into the village. The chairman informed her that Jason Russell (SCC Highways) is convening a series of meetings across the county to find out which areas were badly affected. The forum is called 'Flood Alert'. It was noted that ditch responsibility is an on-going issue.

Meeting closed at 9pm