

BRAISHFIELD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held at the Braishfield Village Hall on Monday 3 May 2016

Present

Members of Braishfield Parish Council:

Chairman John Bevan

Vice-chairman Mike Edwards

Cllr Richard Brazier

Cllr Carole Renvoize

Cllr Peter White

Others:

County Councillor Alan Dowden

Borough Councillor Martin Hatley

23 electors

Clerk to Braishfield Parish Council Kate
Orange

15. Apologies

Braishfield Parish Councillor Clive John was unable to attend.

16. Welcome and Introduction by Chairman

Chairman John Bevan welcomed attendees to the meeting; and he informed the meeting that former Chairman of Braishfield Parish Council Mike Prince had resigned after more than 20 years of service, during which he had made a great contribution to the community.

17. Presentation by Sam Jones of Hampshire County Council Countryside Service

Sam Jones runs the Southern Area Team of Hampshire County Council Countryside (HCC) Service. The department's roles include maintenance of the rights of way network and open access areas: there are approximately 980 miles of rights of way in the Southern Area, which extends from Havant to Stockbridge. Maintenance and protection of public rights of way entails partnership with other local authorities (including funding through community grants); providing support to landowners (including through grant funding); consultation with user groups.

Sam Jones answered questions from the meeting as follows:

“How can the Parish Council nominate footpath 12 for inclusion on the priority cutting list (of vegetation management for footpaths)?” The department has to prioritise its work, as it does not have the resources to maintain all footpaths.

The Parish Council will be emailed at some point during the year, and will have the opportunity to suggest amendments to the list of footpaths included. HCC Highways department fund a parish lengthsman scheme and parish can apply to use it to assist with additional vegetation clearance on footpaths. County Councillor Alan Dowden noted that approximately 130 parishes use the scheme.

“How can the Parish Council alert HCC if a path needs to be added to the cutting list?” HCC has a map called the Countryside Access Management System (CAMS). It enables HCC to record and manage reports and issues. The public can report problems using this system on HCC's website.

“In the scenario where there are tree roots causing heave under a driveway, which is also a public right of way; but the tree is on neighbouring land. What advice can be offered?” The standard of condition necessary depends on the location of the path (whether it is urban or rural). In principal, HCC are responsible for the condition of the surface. If it were deemed to be hazardous, HCC would act, in co-operation with both landowners. Stiles, however, are the responsibility of the landowner because their purpose is to control livestock (rather than to enhance the right of way).

“A footpath in the parish is being ridden over by horses. What advice can be offered?” This depends on who is riding horses on the footpath: if it is a member of the public, then they are committing trespass against the landowner and a breach of the Road Traffic Act too; but the landowner is entitled to use the path for horse riding, as it is on their land. Use of signage to indicate the proper purpose of the path would be preferable to erecting a barrier (as barriers can reduce accessibility). Any structures built on the land in order to control access would have to be maintained by the landowner (with some exceptions).

Sam Jones discussed the Small Grants Scheme. HCC issue grants each year to encourage access into the countryside. There are three rounds of funding each year. Possible projects include enhancing the surface of a path, changing a stile to a gate, new notices and signs. The grant money needs to be match funded, although voluntary labour can be allowed for in the match funding.

18. Minutes of Meeting of 18 May 2015

The Minutes of the Meeting of 18 May 2015 were agreed.

19. Chair's Report on Braishfield Parish Council

Vice-chairman of Braishfield Parish Council read a report from former Chairman of Braishfield Parish Council, Mike Prince. Mike Prince had passed on his regret that he was unable to attend the meeting.

Mike Prince retired from the Parish Council after 9 years as Chairman and 21 years on the Council in total.

The past year in the Parish has seen the completion of Oak Close, a scheme proposed for a footway on Crook Hill and funding in place, and the opening of the Village Pantry.

At the Parish Council, the Clerk has become qualified. The Council continues to monitor the position with roads and traffic and communicate with Hampshire County Council and Test Valley Borough Council. At the Annual Meeting of Braishfield Parish Council, John Bevan was elected as the Chairman, following the resignation of Mike Prince. Mike Edwards was re-elected as Vice-Chairman.

20. Report from County Councillor Alan Dowden

County Councillor Alan Dowden presented his report. A copy is attached to these minutes.

21. Report from Borough Councillor Martin Hatley

Borough Councillor Martin Hatley presented his report. He answered some questions from the electors:

Concerning the planning application at Abbotsford, Romsey: Due to the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) the presumption is in favour of sustainable development; so if a project is deemed to be sustainable, even where the borough has a five year land supply, it will not be refused permission on land supply grounds alone. The Test Valley Borough Council constraint map and local gaps have been re-drawn in the current Local Plan. If the community has concerns about the adequacy of protection afforded by the Village Design Statement, Test Valley Borough Council can offer advice on updating it.

Cllr Hatley is making enquiries as to progress of construction of traffic lights at the Romsey end of Braishfield Road.

There are some reserved matters to be agreed at Ganger Farm.

“What is the point of the Local Plan if it is overridden by other legislation?”: It shows where the borough prefers development to occur and allows for a minimum number of houses; it provides local gaps.

22. Report from the Horticultural Society

Steve Renvoize reported on behalf of the Horticultural Society.

There are approximately 50 members of the society, which meets monthly for eight months of the year. The society hosts a flower show each year, and arranges visits to places of interest. The society has held two apple days.

There is speaker at each meeting, with the aim of providing an entertaining, informative and educational presentation. This year's presentations have included: vegetables, gardening with flair, Italian gardens, shady gardens, Corsica, planting containers for Autumn and Winter colour.

Events are advertised on noticeboards, by email and on the village association website. There are also reports in the Romsey Advertiser.

The society has a committee elected at the AGM in November each year. Membership costs £10 per year.

23. Report on Community Resilience

Peter Sidebotham reported on the Community Resilience project, which is a working party

of Braishfield Parish Council. Peter has been involved in emergency planning in his career and is now helping to write the emergency plan for the village.

Disasters happen so occasionally in our country that we may be less prepared for them than those who live in earthquake zones, for example.

The local emergency plan and the community are the lowest tier of action: they emergency services and county will handle any emergency but sometimes local people will need to act too. The village hall has been nominated to provide shelter in the event of an emergency, with the social club as a reserve. The community needs volunteers to be the contacts and to take action in the event of emergency. If people step forward, we can discuss the details and training.

24. Open Period and Questions

- Ian Knights, Chair of Braishfield Village Hall, thanked the County, Borough and Parish Councils for contributions to the shop. The shop team is very strong and represents all parts of the community. He thanked the councils and community in advance for help with the ongoing refurbishment of the hall.
- “Why has the cost of the Parish Council’s general administration gone up from £3,790 to £6,818?”: The parish Clerk noted that the figures will be analysed and explained during the audit process, which is yet to take place.

25. Views of electors on traffic matters

- A number of electors who live adjacent to the newly resurfaced part of Braishfield Road feel that the road noise is now excessively loud, and worse when cars are speeding. Braishfield Parish Council Chairman John Bevan feels that the answer lies with cost. Cllr Martin Hatley noted that the gravel in the road surface reduces skidding, and the noise tends to slow traffic down.
- An elector, who considers that the road from Braishfield to Kings Somborne is a rat-run, wants to see posts installed along the edges to restrict the width.
- The use of chicanes was discussed as a possibility for reducing vehicle speeds on Braishfield Road; although the need to allow passage to large agricultural vehicles was noted.
- Some villages have time restrictions on heavy lorries.
- An elector considers that there are already too many road signs in the village.
- Parish Council Chairman John Bevan concluded the meeting by saying that he is arranging a meeting with Ray Alborough of Test Valley Borough Council, to discuss traffic issues.

Baddesley division County Councillor's 2016 Annual Report

Hampshire County Council will need to find savings of £81.5 million by the end of the 2016/17 financial year. Most of these savings have already been achieved through the Transformation programme, by reducing the cost of back office services and functions, a strategy that was introduced to help to prevent cuts to frontline services. The Local Government Finance Settlement for Hampshire, announced on 17th December 2015, was a further cut of £48 million. This is a decrease of 37.4% and is £29 million more than the Council were anticipating. In February this year the government gave a one off amount of additional funding of £18.69 million to Hampshire, over the next two years, but there will be no more transitional grant funding for 2018/19 and 2019/20.

The significant reduction is because more money has been allocated to the authorities in the North of England at the expense of the Southern Shire Counties & District authorities. Over the next four years funding to Councils from central government will continue to be reduced, resulting in further Council Tax increase, above inflation increases on the cost of local authority services and at the same time frontline services will be cut or reduced. During the next financial year we will see increased charges of between 5% & 8% for the County Council's Nursing & Residential homes. The mobile library services will be phased out, and many of the Hampshire Waste & Recycling Centres will be closed down or opening hours reduced. There is no denying that this next phase of cuts is going to be much tougher and people will now start to notice the difference.

The County Council has sought devolution from Government, seeking more powers and funding devolved to elected local government at county, district and parish level in England. If agreed, it would mean the retention of business rates in order to help fund council's services. The shire areas of England are very important to the nation, contributing around £203 billion per annum in terms of Gross Value Added. The County are also seeking more powers back from unelected agencies.

The Chancellor will decide shortly whether to allow this devolution bid. It will then need to go back to all the Councils in Hampshire in order to scrutinise what the package contains.

During December 2015, Hampshire Highways team were busy responding to the heavy and intense rainfall, with emergency crews responding to 95 calls of flooding and removing 18 large trees blocking highways in the first weekend of 2016 alone.

The County Council have invested extensively in support of Superfast Broadband and now almost 97% of premises in the County have access to this facility. The County have been awarded £3.1 million to invest in a digital strategy to help transform, modernise and secure sustainable public services across Hampshire for the future. This investment will help to implement new ways of working digitally, to support the redesign and transformation of services so they try to match people's expectations for the 21st Century.

The County's capital programme, £563 million over the next three years, will build and improve long-term assets that will position Hampshire as a great place to live and to work now and in the future. Finance will be allocated to provide for more school places. For several years I have highlighted that this is urgently required. Many parents have been unable to gain access to their local schools. At last this situation may be improved.

In February, I placed a motion before the Full Council which urges the Government to introduce a sugar tax and clearer labelling of the sugar content in drinks and food products. These changes are essential for people to make more informed choices and counteract the impending damage to the public's health and resultant impact upon our health services. The Councillors voted unanimously to support this.

The allocation of Grant funding to councillors, has enabled me to help support various community organisations including Braishfield Bees Football club & the Braishfield Village shop. After attending one of Mountbatten School's concerts, I was pleased to offer them financial support to purchase more musical instruments.

In order to balance its budget for 2016/2017, Hampshire County Council will increase Council Tax by 3.99%. This will result in a Band D property increasing by £41.40p, resulting in a Band D Council Tax of £1079.28p. It will mean more tax for Hampshire residents to pay, and services cut or reduced. The cost in Council Care homes will rise well above inflation. I, like many other councillors, were unable to support the budget, as there was a lack of detail about the levels of cuts and where the cuts would come.

It seems every year there is something to vote on! This year we have a very important decision to make about **Britain and Europe**.

HCC Cllr Alan Dowden

Test Valley Borough Councillor's Annual Report May 2016 – Cllr. Martin Hatley

Key of the door achieved and farewell to Mike Prince!

It does not seem possible but I have been your Borough Councillor for the last 21 years and remain Deputy Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Planning Policy and Transportation. During this time Braishfield Parish Council has been chaired by two exceptionally excellent Chairmen, the Late Andrew Lalonde and your current retiring Chairman, Mike Prince. Braishfield's facilities and wellbeing are that much richer as a result of their tireless dedication and professionalism that Andrew and Mike invested in this special community. Both Chairmen were lucky to have supporting them, excellent Clerks, namely Len Shelton, John Rhodes and of course your current Clerk, Kate Orange. I attend many parish council meetings within Test Valley, but none can beat the continued dedicated team effort of Braishfield Parish Council. Like Andrew, Mike leaves behind big shoes to fill, and a legacy that I hope, and am certain, his successor will build upon. I look forward to working with him or her! I wish Mike and Hazel many happy years of extended holidays. It has been an absolute pleasure working with Mike, and I for one will miss his wise counsel but I think he now deserves a rest, although I am sure he will continue to support the Parish Council in any way he can. His skill for obtaining grants must be tapped.

TVBC Commended as Local Authority of the Year

As I write this report I have just been advised that Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) has received a commendation from the MJ Local Government Achievement Awards for the category of Local Authority of the Year. The Council's submission was based around the four elements of the Corporate Plan, *Investing in Test Valley*, and included robust examples of how we have supported residents, businesses and other stakeholders in the Borough to grow and develop. The submission also outlined our future ambitions to achieve the best possible results for our communities. TVBC was one two authorities in the whole country to be commended in this category.

Housing Land Supply – visit to House of Commons

As I previously reported last year, I have been very concerned about the apparent manipulation of the planning system by some developers and landowners. In November, accompanied by my fellow Portfolio Holder for Planning Control, Cllr. Phil Bundy, I went up to the House of Commons to attend a personal meeting, (facilitated by our MP, Caroline Nokes), with Brandon Lewis, the Minister of State for Housing and Planning. The meeting was to discuss the problems that communities face, created by the methodology used in calculating the 5 year housing land supply figures. Failure to meet the 5 year supply results in Local Plans being overridden by the National Planning Policy Framework. This has the effect of enabling planning decisions to be made in favour of developers, often on inappropriate sites. We were of the opinion that the rules need to be modified to create a fairer system to determine applications. We were able to make contact with the senior civil servants responsible for policy and it was agreed by the Minister that further dialogue was necessary as he fully appreciated the difficulties involved. We now have the mandate to continue this project, which if successful, will prevent inappropriate development in the future. TVBC does currently have a 5yr land supply.

Revised Borough Local Plan (2011-2029) Approved by Government Inspector and Adopted by TVBC

Having submitted the Local Plan to the Minister back in July 2014, and following a thorough public examination, the Planning Inspector eventually confirmed that our plan was sound and commended the council for the professional methodology used. The adopted BLP seeks to protect the environment of the Borough which we all value whilst recognising that we need to provide homes for our own local residents, support the local economy and provide new leisure and recreational facilities. Some difficult decisions had to be made. However, no major development is planned for either Ampfield or Braishfield.

Finally, there are two major issues I am far from convinced about. Firstly, academy schools may be a good solution for some schools, but it is not the only solution to a problem. However, in schools where there is no problem, why do you need a solution? Secondly, the recent last minute bid by Portsmouth and Southampton and some other Solent authorities (not TVBC) for a Solent Devolution Deal with its own elected mayor appears to be rushed and poorly budgeted for. At present I cannot see there being any net advantage for us in Test Valley to join them. Most funds will, I fear, be diverted to the new 'Solent City'.

In conclusion, I wish Braishfield Parish Council and its new Chairman, continued success.