

Annual Parish Meeting 14th May 2013

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in the Old Meeting House, The Twitten on Tuesday 14th May 2013

Present R. Burman in the Chair, 9 Councillors, 6 parishioners, County Councillor Jim Sheppard, and the Clerk.

1. **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting** held on 8th March 2011 having been circulated were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
2. **Report of Parochial Charities** The Chairman of the Dame Isabella Sprotts Eleemosynary Charity, Richard Allen reported that the present Trustees of Sprott's Charity were Richard Allen (Chairman), Revd David Wallis, Dr Martin Toynbee, Mrs Agnes Sellens, Mrs Angela Earwicker and Mrs Mary Holman who is Clerk to the Charity. During this current year Mrs Maureen Maguire resigned as a Trustee and thanks are due to her for her unfailing interest and concern for the Charity and for her major contribution over recent years to the distribution of awards. The Trustees continued their policy agreed in the preceding year that the purposes of the Charity should be more widely advertised with the aim of distributing the monies available to include families and all people in need. At their meeting on October 18th 2012, the Trustees made an allocation of £720. Substantial grants were made to three families in considerable need. A grant was also made to St Margaret's School to be used by the Headmaster to support children whose parents would not be able to afford to finance a school trip. All the families concerned and the Headmaster have written to the Trustees to thank them for the timely and helpful grants. In accordance with the rule of the Charity, a small grant was made to St Margaret's Church. Thanks are due to the Clerk, Mary Holman for all her work in ensuring the smooth running of the Charity during the past year.
3. **Parish Council Chairman's Report** Roy Burman reported that during the year Emma Pruen and Ashley Knowles both resigned as councillors after serving for many years on our council due to moving out of the Parish. Their departure left vacancies on the council and although we advertised them several times to the end of the year we had only been able to co-opt one new councillor Mark Madden, although recently we have had another application, Nikki Banfield, and she was co-opted at our meeting earlier this evening. I want to express my thanks to all the councillors and to our longstanding Clerk Mary Holman for the good work they all give to help make sure our village remains a wonderful place to live. I would like to encourage more residents to think it is worthwhile for them to put their name forward when our Parish Council is seeking new councillors. Don't forget in May 2015 there will be an election for a new council so will be seeking many candidates then. Although we could not erect a barrier at the Lewes Rd end of the Twitten we have been working to get the puddle there removed and the work is now scheduled for completion the next two weeks. Last year I reported we were considering the future of meetings under the Strengthening Local Relationships program with officers from the East Sussex County Council. We held one more during this year and then decided to discontinue them. We always had good relations with the County Council and its officers by direct contact, sometimes with the support of our now retired County Councillor Meg Stroud. Due to a change in legislation during the year the Code of Conduct for all councils at all levels had to be revised and strengthened to better protect the public. We decided to adopt the Code that was also adopted by the County Council and the District Council as it was acceptable in content, not too complex to read and understand and easier to monitor for compliance as the Lewes District Council Standards officer could manage that for us if there ever is a need. It does mean more details of our Councillors and their family affairs is reported and displayed on the website. We hope to be able to provide Affordable Housing for the people who need it who have valid connections to Ditchling. We want to create small development of between 7 and 11 affordable homes in our village. We have a group working on this but so far no suitable site has been identified. Last year I told you that the new Localism Act was making Neighbourhood Plans available to Parishes and communities. It is an exciting way to extend more democracy to our level of government and to the residents of the Parish. We have decided to sponsor a Neighbourhood Plan for Ditchling and to start this program we are holding a public meeting on the Saturday 8th of June in the

village hall. There we will have the help of the officers from the South Downs Park Authority and from Lewes District Council who have been appointed to help Neighbourhood Plans become properly formed. I went to the planning meeting to decide the outcome of the Kingsway development off Folders Lane in Burgess Hill and spoke on behalf of the village about the threat this development presents to Ditchling in particular regarding the extra traffic and the stress on the country park. The plan was approved but part of the conditions was a section 106 agreement which means the developers have to provide certain amounts of money to mitigate the impact the development may have. The Lewes District Council Core Strategy is progressing toward adoption; we have no difficulties with the proposals as far as they affect Ditchling. Lewes District Council consulted us about bringing the village Car Park up to standard and manageable. As a result they have put up new signage to make clearer when users are within the controlled parking area it provides. More recently they proposed to change the period a vehicle could be parked to just 10 hours so it conforms to the parking restriction throughout the district and so makes it simpler to manage. We made strong representations that we did not want any reduction from the existing 72 hours. As a result they modified their operational methods and eventually agreed that 24 hours would be the maximum period. Ditchling Parish Council took part in the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations with three activities in the village: Lighting the Ditchling Beacon as one of 4 thousand beacons in several chains lit all across the country; Planting a Jubilee Oak on the recreation ground near the tennis courts which was blessed by the vicar; and installing a new commemorative seat at the Fieldway. After managing a reduction last year in the precept as I forecast then it was not possible to arrange a further reduction this year but we succeeded in keeping the increase down to just 2.4%. For both your council and our residents Traffic and Parking continue to be major concerns. We have not been able to make any progress with the LATS as there is so little money available at the County Council but it is possible the section 106 money from the Kingsway development can help with this. Furthermore we are joining with our neighbours the Westmeston Parish Council to make representations to have speed limits set in Spatham Lane using recent changes in the legislation, we are considering using the same changes to get the speed limits reduced or taken further out from the centre of the village in other parts of Ditchling. We are actively looking for a site for additional off road parking. The additional yellow lines in West Street were not welcomed by your council and we made strong objection to them which succeeded to reduce the extent of them. We are working with Lewes District Council to arrange for the recycling of cardboard to be carried out throughout the whole village. This year the Parish Council has considered 63 planning applications. As the South Downs National Park is now fully up and running it is the planning authority for most of our parish area. It is acting in conjunction with the Lewes District Council. I know some residents have been concerned to see the disused greenhouses on Beacon Road are listed as a potential site for some traveller's pitches, and apparently with a high score. I want to tell you this is misleading as I think the score has not been correctly calculated, the cost of decontamination has not been properly taken into account, nor the distance from assured that the owner has no intention at all of permitting his land be used for such a purpose.

4. **Reports by Committee Chairmen.**

Lighting Committee Darren Carpenter reported that the Council had kept the energy and maintenance costs low. The maintenance team had been working well and there had been fewer complaints. The Council had been asked if it wishes to revert to part night lighting but it had been agreed to keep the status quo.

Footpaths Committee Chairman Mrs Catharine Robinson reported that the Monday Club has worked hard keeping the stiles and bridges in good condition, we are very grateful for their very professional work. It has been a winter that I think we hope will not be repeated, incredibly wet and cold. Several people have complained about the state of footpaths that pass across farm land and whilst I understand that it can make ones walk rather tiring I am not sure what they expect the farmers to do. They do have a responsibility to keep the paths free from over hanging branches, nettles and brambles but to ask them about mud caused by farm stock would be taking it too far. The paths have started to dry out and now doubt we will soon be

complaining about the drought! I would like to thank the Committee for its tireless efforts in walking the footpaths to ensure that we can walk through this wonderful area of Sussex.

Burial Committee Chairman Tom Jones reported the Burial Ground had been well maintained during the year and that 9 Interments had taken place during the year. The grave stones were regularly inspected in the interest of safety.

Grounds Committee Phil Smith reported that the annual inspection of the Ditchling play area was carried out by Lewes District Council. The play area was found to be generally satisfactory although there were a few low or very low risk items which will need monitoring and may require attention in the future. During the year, a new artificial surface was installed in the climbing frame area and new bearings were fitted to the roundabout. The Council agreed to re-instate the floodlighting at the War Memorial. The entrance to the play area and recreation ground had become seriously rutted and waterlogged. New honeycomb matting, allowing new grass seed to grow through, was installed and this has largely solved the water logging problem. We will need to monitor progress to ensure that the grass takes root and the entrance fully recovers. A number of games were affected by an abnormally wet area by the Football Pitch touchline. The drainage was finally sorted out by the County Council's Engineer who had to clear the drain by jetting the obstructions. A tree inspection was carried out on the recreation ground (& burial ground) for safety and tree welfare reasons. Tree surgeons carried out the work in March which included the removal of faulty stems/limbs and branches and the felling of 2 birch trees. ESCC contractors repaired the pot holes and surface of the recreation ground car park. The home fixture lists of the Rugby and Football Clubs were severely curtailed by the awful weather conditions – many games had to be cancelled. In spite of the conditions, both clubs had very successful seasons with the Rugby Club lifting the Sussex Plate with a famous 13-12 victory over their illustrious opponents Crawley. A review of the Rugby Club's and Football Club's use of the recreation ground has recently taken place and the Council agreed that the two clubs should swap grounds for the forthcoming season. However, particular issues such as the protection of the car park and Lewes Road from loose rugby balls will have to be urgently fully dealt with before the swap can take place. The archery club continues to prosper and in the summer, the Sussex Junior School Shoot took place and the Club hosted a match against St Dunstons. In spite of the inclement summer weather, a number of matches went ahead. One of the highlights was a match between Ditchling CC and Sussex CCC. Matches of the traditional Sussex game of Stoolball was also played by the Ditchling Women's Team. The hire of the grounds for all these activities provides a very useful source of income for the Parish Council – nearly £2,500 – but the amount of work involved in maintaining the grounds should not be underestimated.

Our thanks go out to our groundsman Darren, who does such a sterling job in all conditions and who maintains the grounds so well.

5. **County Council Report** Mrs Meg Stroude had sent a written report which was circulated covering Adult Social care which accounted for over half the budget. Children's services which had undergone considerable change with schools taking responsibility for their own staff finance etc. Economy, Transport and Environment which had had £19.5m in resurfacing A & B roads. Highway Stewards were making a real difference to helping residents with problems on the roads. Corporate, Governance and Communitality Services which covered seven local government authorities predicts savings of nearly £90 by joint purchasing, joint procurement etc. Jim Sheppard the new County Councillor who was also a District Councillor outlined the programme for recycling other materials such as food waste.
6. **District Council Report.** Tom Jones updated the meeting on the LDC Local Plan Part 1 (also known as the Core Strategy). Importance was placed on meeting the projected housing need. The speed of traffic along the B2112, B2213, B2116 Beacon Road, Spatham lane and Underhill Lane all compound to make the two parishes dangerous for everyone. This was further aggravated by the proposed building regime for

Burgess Hill and Haywards Heath. Ditchling and Westmeston PCs were working with E.S.C.C. on these matters. Parking restrictions in the Village Hall car park had been imposed following the introduction of the Civil Parking Enforcement. Cardboard recycling was soon to be introduced to the entire Parish and would remove the need for the compound in the Village Hall Car Park. The current LDC administration's policy called Programme NEXUS was introduced to cut out waste of resources, improve re-generation and ensure that the workforce is second to none and their work place is fit for purpose. The aims of the SDNP would play an important part when dealing with planning applications.

7. **Sussex Police Report.** Edward Hall advised people to use some form of security on oil tanks as there was an increasing number of thefts of oil. Burglaries have decreased over the past twelve months but there is still a need to install alarms and notify neighbours when going on holiday, leave lights on timers etc. Anti Social behaviour was not being dealt with through Operation Crackdown at www.operationcrackdown.org.

8. **Any other business**

Travellers Site – Beacon Road Concern was expressed about the possibilities of this and the methodology used by LDC in giving it high priority. The Chairman replied that we need not be alarmed as it was not accurate; however the criterion was still on file, it would be on the next PC agenda. Tom Jones replied that it has not been mentioned in the Local Plan as no sites were identified but it was just on the Register.

106 money for traffic Scheme The question was raised as to where this money would be spent. The Chairman replied we would hope that the money would be used to implement part of the LATS. Tom Jones hoped that the money would be spent after consultation with local residents.

Budgets The Council was asked to publish the budget on the website specifically. This would be done.

Rugby Pitch/ Football Pitch The questions were raised about the use of the pitch by the Pavilion by the Rugby Club. Phil Smith replied that the commitment had been made but there were still issues re the risk assessment etc to be addressed, it may need netting etc to protect Lewes Road, these matters are still to be finalised to satisfy risk assessment. A new license would be drawn up taking account of the issues and as it would be a legal document sanctions would be imposed if the conditions were broken.

Lodge Hill Lane Museum will attract more visitors; will there be adequate parking when it is opened? The Chairman replied that there were no specific arrangements made when planning permission was granted; new car parking was being sought. The Museum said that there would be some parking on fields near by from time to time. Tom Jones was having a meeting this week regarding the concern that Lodge Hill Lane was being used as a car park, this was not acceptable as it would spoil the ambiance of the Village. The Museum needed to address the problem.

The meeting closed at 9.25pm.