

PULBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

The Annual Parish Meeting was held at the Village Hall (Pulborough Social Centre) on Thursday 6 May 2004 at 7.30 pm

Present: Mrs J Botting (Chairman)
Mrs H Black
Mrs N Hompstead
Mr N Bransden
Mr N Ryan
Mrs C Barnett
Mr L Ampstead
Mr I Kiverstein
Mr B Vincent

District Councillors

Mr B Donnelly
Mr R Paterson

In Attendance: Mr Paul Rowley, Horsham District Council
37 members of the public

1 INTRODUCTION BY CHAIRMAN

Mrs Botting welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Mr Rowley, Head of Strategic and Community Planning for Horsham District Council, for attending to speak about the Local Plan Review.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mrs P Arculus (County Councillor)

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2003 were approved and signed as a correct record.

3.1 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT ON ACTIVITIES 2002/03

Mrs Botting said that she had provided a written report on activities to allow plenty of time for discussion of the Local Plan Review. She hoped that people would take time to read the report and to ask questions later.

Mrs Botting said that her first year as Chairman of the Parish Council had been exhilarating. There had been a number of new Councillors who were working hard to improve the quality of life in Pulborough. There was an equally exciting year ahead with the recent agreement of plans for a new medical centre and Tesco foodstore.

The Parish Council would be publishing a Newsletter four times a year – at no cost to Pulborough – to keep everyone in touch with developments. The first edition should have been available for this meeting but had been delayed by the printers and should be posted out the following week. Mrs Botting said that the Clerk would welcome items for future editions.

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Mrs Botting drew attention to the proposal to install a skateboard/BMX ramp on the Cousins Way recreation field. Skateboard equipment had long been a priority for young people in Pulborough and the Parish Council had been fortunate to acquire the ramp from Christ's Hospital at very little cost. Sussex Tractors had heavily sponsored the move to Pulborough and an excellent carpenter would refurbish the ramp. It was hoped that local contractors would assist in installing the base and the Millennium Society had kindly agreed to purchase another piece of equipment for the same site.

Mrs Botting said that she did not intend to read her report but she would like to thank the Parish Council's staff, without whom everything would grind to a halt.

5 RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER'S REPORT

The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) said that she had provided a written report on income and expenditure during 2003/04 and a summary of the main activities for 2004/05. The Parish Council very much regretted the need to increase the Precept for 2004/05 but the budget was still small in relation to planned activities.

The draft full accounts for 2003/04 would be available by 4 June. A summary would be displayed on the Parish Council's noticeboards and the accounts would be available for inspection in the Parish Council office. She would be happy to answer any questions.

The RFO said that she had been asked immediately before the meeting about the £5,000 for new play equipment. The Parish Council aimed to maintain a reserve each year for play equipment. During 2003/04 the reserve had been spent on a new slide and repairs to other playground equipment. The budget for 2004/05 had been earmarked for the proposed skateboard facility.

6 PLANNING FOR PULBOROUGH

Mr Rowley said that this was an important period in planning terms both locally and nationally.

At national level, major changes in the planning system could be confirmed as early as the following week. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill provided for a greater focus on planning at regional level with an important role for the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) in defining activities at regional and subregional levels. SEERA would publish a draft plan for the South East early the following year indicating the levels of development which could take place in each area up to 2026. This would have a significant influence on what the District Council could do. The County Council's involvement in planning would disappear.

In the meantime, Horsham District Council would consider the first Local Development Framework for the period up to 2016 the following week. If

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agreed, the document would be published as a consultation document on 11 June for response by the end of July.

The Local Development Framework was an issues and options document intended for constructive debate. It contained a number of District wide issues including the major growth of Crawley, the future of Gatwick Airport, the growth of Horsham town, the rural economy, transport and housing development. The most significant change for Pulborough in the current document was the proposed development of some 115 dwellings on the Riverside Concrete site. However, landowners and developers might wish to bring forward other proposals, including a development on the land north of Glebelands.

Mr Rowley said that the Parish Council's involvement in the drafting process for the Framework had been helpful. The Parish Council had raised a number of issues based on local views and the results of the Healthcheck project. Mr Rowley undertook to work with the Parish Council to ensure a good understanding of what Pulborough wanted to achieve. He also offered to help in the development of a Village Design Statement to articulate Pulborough's aspirations in planning terms.

Mr Rowley's presentation was followed by a lengthy and lively discussion which included the following:

SEERA

SEERA would be an elected body eventually but currently comprised 40% community partners and more than 50% locally elected District Councillors. It would have an important role in the planning process but had limited powers at present.

West Sussex County Council

The West Sussex Structure Plan up to 2016 was being finalised. The Plan would have a role for a period of time but would be replaced by the South East Regional Plan in due course.

South East Region

Mr Paterson said that the Government's aim was to remove a layer of Government – the Counties. Districts would be combined as unitary authorities – possibly Horsham, Crawley and Mid Sussex. He thought that this made sense in principle: unitary authorities would be closer to the public they served and responsibilities would be rationalised.

South Downs National Park

Mr Rowley said that the Enquiry was proceeding but that the Park Authority would probably not be in place until 2007. It was likely to take some responsibility away from Horsham District Council but HDC would plan for the whole District during the transitional period.

Planning for Manufacturing

Mr Rowley said that he was keen to engage as many individual businesses as possible in future planning. The District Council worked closely with business organisations such as Sussex Enterprise and Sussex Business Link but he would welcome ideas on how to engage more individual

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businesses. Mr Paterson said that there was a think tank on business planning and that the District Council had undertaken research into home based businesses. Mr Donnelly said that the District Council had been active in providing sites for businesses and small scale manufacturing.

7 UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPIRO GILLS SITE

Mr Paterson said that a legal agreement would be drawn up with Tesco over the next week or two, after which Tesco could start work on the site. There would need to be a site survey which would provide information on how long it would take to clean the site.

The proposed medical centre, 60 bed nursing home, retirement flats and residential development had only been approved in outline. There would need to be a full planning application, which could take months. Tesco's parking would be fully available to visitors to the medical centre.

A number of questions were raised about traffic management and the Chairman invited Mrs Hompstead to report.

Mrs Hompstead said that the Parish Council had spent an enormous amount of time and energy in considering traffic on the A29. Councillors had examined the total traffic management problem on the A29, taking account of other possible developments and the effects of additional traffic on other parts of Pulborough and on safe routes to school.

Members of the public expressed concern about the volume and size of heavy goods vehicles using the A29. Mrs Hompstead said that Pulborough suffered the consequences of congestion on other trunk roads such as the A27 and the A24 but there was no easy solution. It was suggested that there should be restrictions on the size of vehicles using the A29.

In response to other questions, Mrs Botting said that the Parish Council 'wish list' included a footbridge over the railway and funding for public conveniences. Mr Donnelly said that there was no statutory obligation to provide public conveniences and that usage in Pulborough was low and the costs excessive.

Concern was also expressed about the loss of the pharmacy in Lower Street. Mr Paterson said that he had been working with local businesses to try to secure a balance of shops in Lower Street.

8 PULBOROUGH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Mr Ampstead said he was the Project Officer for a Government sponsored project involving five towns. He was addressing the meeting in the absence of the Partnership's Chairman, Mr Rob Aylott.

Mr Ampstead said that the Partnership had been formed as part of a Government sponsored 'Healthcheck' initiative. The 'Healthcheck' had involved the collection and analysis of a mass of data about Pulborough

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and consultations with many individuals and community groups. The results had been translated into an action plan which was being implemented by a group of local people who had formed Pulborough Community Partnership.

Mr Ampstead said that the Partnership was working closely with the County Council, the District Council, the Parish Council and as many local people as possible to address issues raised by the 'Healthcheck'. The Partnership's Action Plan contained more than 40 projects and there was plenty of Government funding available. Current projects included:

Litter

The Partnership had organised a competition for local schools to design a poster.

Old Swan Bridge

The Partnership had already achieved a lot in the area south of the bridge. The area had been cleared, new tarmac had been laid and new trees would be planted. A plan for the whole development was on display in the tearoom and the Old Corn Store.

Village Design Statement

The Partnership was in the process of developing a Village Design Statement for Pulborough.

Footpaths

Mrs Hompstead was working on a walking bus scheme for the local schools.

There were other current projects on Local Walks, Sports Facilities and Child Care.

Mr Ampstead said that the Partnership's next meeting was on 5 July and everyone would be welcome.

Mr Paterson proposed a vote of thanks to Mr Ampstead who had done an excellent job in driving the project forward in five towns.

9 CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

Mrs Botting thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting closed at 9.30 pm. Those present were invited to join the Parish Council for refreshments. Mr Donnelly thanked Mrs Botting for being an excellent Parish Council Chairman.

..... Chairman

..... Date