

BRAISHFIELD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting held at the Village Hall, Braishfield
on Tuesday 25th April 2006 at 7.30pm

1. PRESENT

Parish Councillors - Andrew Lalonde (Chairman) Mike Prince Alan Light
Mandy Payne Sue Ransom Jean Lowe

Borough Councillor - Martin Hatley

About 50 Parishioners

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 26th April 2005 were agreed.

3. PRESENTATION BY JEM MUSSELWHITE ON THE VILLAGE SHOP

Jem Musselwhite started by thanking the village for the invitation to speak on the village shop. He explained that the village used to have three shops and now the last one has closed. A village shop is the hub of a village.

He had considered various options for a new shop, including the former Gardiner's Corner in Hill View. However, the only pursuable option was the development of the old telephone exchange site. This would involve the demolition of the exchange building and the construction of a new one which would combine the functions of a shop, post office and tearoom. There would be a car park alongside with access just by the existing layby.

The existing site was owned privately and the car park would need to go on land leased from the owners of Elm Grove Farm. Public opinion on a new shop was tested a year or two ago but he was not sure what that opinion might be today in view of the use of the old telephone site. He accepted that this site would not please everyone, but the proposal would only work if there was very significant support for it. Ventures like this one have worked in places such as Lockerley, Broughton and West Tytherley. Villagers of course would need to use it, otherwise they would lose it.

As far as the financing of it was concerned, this was a private matter for him. In answer to questions about what would happen if the shop were to fail, there could be an extension of the tearoom. There could be an application for change of use but he said that change to residential was totally against planning policy.

The Village Design Statement wants to preserve the view over the fields but the existing old telephone exchange detracts from that view and what does the village want? - an unaltered view of the old telephone exchange or a hub of the community?

After Jem's presentation there were a number of questions raised and points made. Jem said that he was financing this himself and that five years ago there was general support to such a project given by the village. He said that the tearoom was aimed at 100s of people who travel through the village. Residents of Blackthorn Close did not want to look at a carpark but this would be set lower than the existing building.

Concern was expressed by nearby residents about car door slamming, attraction of crime and noise from early morning deliveries. There was also concern at the possibility of infill between the site and Blackthorn Close, but this was strongly denied by the owners of Elm Grove Farm.

About using the existing building, Jem said that it was totally unsuitable and would not accommodate the tearoom which was essential for the viability of the project.

Martin Hatley, having said that in his position as Borough Councillor, he could not express a view on the application, said that Ampfield had lost a shop and that not everyone had a car. Those eager to see the re-instatement of a shop should write to the Borough Council expressing support.

At the end of discussions Andrew Lalonde thanked Jem Musselwhite and said that the Parish Council will be giving support to the application.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

At the Annual General Meeting held in May 2005, Mr Andrew Lalonde and Mr Mike Prince were re-elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively of the Parish Council.

The Parish Council has met regularly throughout the year and meets at 7pm on the fourth Tuesday of each month except August and on an earlier Tuesday in December. Residents of the village are welcome and encouraged to attend. There is an open discussion period at the end of each meeting when any relevant matter may be aired.

PLANNING

The Parish Council monitors all planning applications in the village and comments on them where it thinks fit. There have been 19 planning applications in the past year, together with several notifications to do tree works in the Conservation Area. The number of planning applications was a slight reduction on the 23 of the previous year. The Parish Council takes into account the effects that the proposals may have on the adjoining properties and on the village as a whole both in the short and long terms. It also takes into account the Borough Local Plan, the Braishfield Village Design Statement and the Conservation Area status.

Compared to last year there seemed to be fewer applications where there was a significant 'difference of opinion' within the village. However the rear access to Forge Cottage via Church Lane caused a certain amount of heat, partly because this was over a piece of land described in the Conservation Area plan as an open area of special importance. Nevertheless, the planning authority approved the application at the second attempt and the access has been constructed. More than one attempt was required because TVBC failed to take the Village Design Statement into account first time round.

A fruit cage on the allotments was the subject of some debate at the TVBC planning committee which eventually approved the application albeit with a number of conditions. For the most part, the Parish Council viewed this as a matter between neighbours.

An application for a waste management site in Bunny Lane was submitted by RFS Farms last year and was approved by Hampshire County Council, as was a waste electrical storage site requested by BKP in Bunny Lane. BKP has recently submitted an application for a 'Gasification' plant, involving the roasting of waste material to produce a combustible gas which may be used to power an electricity generator.

Consultation by Hampshire County Council on planning applications along Bunny Lane has not run smoothly as Braishfield appeared to have been left off the list of consultees agreed by HCC. The Council made a strong complaint about this but it turned out that there was no list at all.

Braishfield was only consulted if the planning officer happened to remember the Parish. This revelation was followed by an even stronger complaint to HCC.

There is slightly bad news for the Village Design Statement because it will have to be revised by the end of the decade in order to convert it from 'Supplementary Planning Guidance' into what the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 calls a 'Supplementary Planning Document'. The Head of Planning said recently that this would not require too much change. However, in addition to the effort involved, the cost of printing the existing VDS was quite significant.

HIGHWAYS AND ROAD SAFETY

The Parish Council has continued to report defects in the highway to the Assistant Chief Engineer. The Council is still pressing for a footpath at Crook Hill. However, there is no money available and the 'powers that be' don't seem interested in encouraging or allowing anyone to walk anywhere.

RECREATION GROUND

As usual, the Recreation Ground has required maintenance, some of which is done by willing villagers and the Football Club, and there has been further expenditure on the trees and playground which required a new layer of bark.

One issue which is causing some irritation is the view of some villagers that the car park can be used as an extension to their domestic parking because there is insufficient parking at their own houses. The issue of parking and proximity of the Village Hall were matters discussed at length during the planning application stage for Blackthorn Close.

The Recreation Ground was given to the village for 'recreation' only and this is enshrined in the Trust Deed. The car park is clearly not there for overflow domestic parking. If the situation gets out of hand, the Parish Council, as Trustee of the Recreation Ground Charity, may have to consider measures stronger than polite requests to refrain from parking.

GENERALLY

The Parish Council has continued to be supported by the Braishfield Village Association and this is much appreciated.

PARISH COUNCIL

As Chairman for the past year I would like to thank the Councillors and Clerk for the work they put into the successful running of the Council and to Councillors Dowden and Hatley for their contributions and help.

PRECEPT

The Parish Council precept for the coming year is £9000 for the sixth year running. The make-up of the 2006/7 Council Tax for a Band D property in Braishfield is as follows, with 2005/6 figures in brackets:

	2006/7	(2005/6)	change
Hampshire County Council	910.62	(869.40)	4.74%
Hampshire Police Authority	119.43	(113.76)	4.98%
Hampshire Fire & Rescue	53.64	(52.11)	2.93%
Test Valley Borough Council	103.77	(99.00)	4.82%
Braishfield Parish Council	27.19	(26.79)	1.49%
TOTAL	1214.65	(1161.06)	4.62%

For comparison purposes, the Band D Council Tax in 1999/2000 was £753.29. Small variations in the proportion of occupied houses in the various bands is the probable explanation for the increase of 1.49% in the Parish Council element, even though the total sum of £9000 was unchanged from last year.

Additionally, Andrew Lalonde announced that Mandy Payne was leaving the village and also the Parish Council. She had been great fun and a great Councillor and he thanked her very much for this. He said that applications for the resulting vacancy would be most welcome.

After Andrew Lalonde's report, Meryl Balchin reminded the meeting how a team of people fought the BKP application in 1998 for toxic chemicals and she hoped that this would again be the case over the proposed gasification plant. There were several people in the village who could help.

The Clerk presented a draft Receipts and Payments account for the year 2005/6 and invited comments, answering one question about the expenditure on fencing running the whole length of the eastern boundary of the Recreation ground and behind the village hall.

5. COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Hampshire County Council has set its council tax rise at 4.7% just within the Government's capping level of 5%. This will set a band "D" rate for County Council services at £910.62p. The precept charges for fire and police authorities and with Test Valley charges will amount to £1,211.80p. Local parish council rates will be added to make up the final Council Tax figure.

Providing quality services and value for money are the County Council's key objectives. But financial pressures exist, particularly in social care mainly due to rising numbers in Hampshire needing care and the increasing cost of the private sector provision.

Hampshire spends less per head of population on social care than any other authority in the country. Whilst I accept that the Government grant to the County is below inflation, I am concerned that the administration is under funding Adult Social Care Services to a damaging level.

The lack of monitoring of Adult Social Care Service budgets has resulted in a £11million over spend which will be carried forward into next year's budget. The County Council are proposing to close 45% of day care services and have raised the eligibility criteria to only provide services for those with critical needs. People needing such services will be means tested and those who have been thrifty and with savings over a certain sum will pay the full cost of their care.

The government's Independence Well Being & Choice agenda states that we should provide services with an emphasis on preventing problems. How can continually raising eligibility criteria, by only offering services to those in dire need be conforming to those principles.

I believe that the County Council should not be spending over £4 million annually on public relations and glossy magazines when vulnerable people will be denied services. Until now, the Government has contributed to the funding of schools, as with other services, through general grant. However, from 15th April 2006 it will provide a Dedicated Schools Grant to cover the full cost of running Hampshire's schools. The funding change does not affect the services delivered, the level of investment or the amount of council tax an individual pays. It means council tax will fund a greater proportion of non - school spending than before.

On a local parish level, Braishfield Road from the Dog & Crook Braishfield to the A31 at Woodley and Common Hill Road will be surface dressed in Hampshire's 2006/07 works

programme.

6. BOROUGH COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

The past year has been particularly busy for your Borough Councillor. As well as continuing to be Deputy Leader of the Council, I was appointed Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport. Then a few weeks later during the summer, the Leader of the Council, Ian Carr, had a serious heart attack resulting in a quadruple by-pass operation. Consequently over a 6 month period I was Acting Leader of the Council. I am very pleased to report that Ian is now fit and well and holding the reins again.

How time flies! I cannot believe it, but in September I will have served 25 years on the neighbouring Parish Council of Ampfield and in May I will have completed my 11th year as your Borough Councillor. During this time I have seen an increasing number of constraints being imposed on local councils by Central Government, effectively removing many local options in the way services are provided. Also many services now have to be paid all, or in part, out of our Borough and Parish taxes instead of County or Government taxes. eg. Parish Councils often have to part fund passing places, footways and traffic calming, etc. All these used to be the sole responsibility of the County Council.

At the Borough level one very topical subject is waste collection and I was requested at a recent Parish Council meeting to comment more fully on this in my annual report. We collect waste on behalf of the County Council. Test Valley were described by the Government as having the country's flagship service and being at the forefront when we collected green waste, dry recyclables (paper, plastic etc.) and household waste all in wheeled bins, using split bodied vehicles. Then along came the foot and mouth regulations that made it illegal (and it still is) to collect the green waste in the same split bodied vehicle as household waste because of the risk of cross contamination from meat products. At the same time, in Hampshire, there ceased to be an outlet for the type of green waste collected in wheelie bins (normally wet and 'mushy').

Separate new green waste vehicles had to be purchased and the green bag system implemented. Clearly this system is not so easy to use as the wheelie bins but at the moment, if we did go back to the wheeled bin method, all the green waste would have to go to landfill as there is no other local outlet. As well as having to pay landfill tax, the Government would not credit TVBC with recycling this.

TVBC has a current statutory recycling target of 30% set by DEFRA (Central Gvt). It also has an aspired 40% target by 2010. I am informed that some northern authorities have targets as low as 8% or less. DEFRA has warned the Borough that if it did not reach this target and reduce the cost of waste collection, it would withhold Government grants and they also threatened intervention ie. they would come in and run the waste collection (and set up alternate weekly collection themselves). Although Test Valley has one of the lowest council taxes in the Country, and many residents do not mind paying the extra cost of our previous weekly collection of waste, the government has clearly said this is no longer an option for us.

The compulsory introduction of the new green waste collection service created operational inefficiencies in the use of the split bodied freighters, which were also nearing the end of their useful life and becoming expensive to maintain. Although they collect up to two materials in one pass, this type of vehicle has now become disproportionately expensive to lease/purchase, too heavy on fuel and maintenance costs. The Council employed leading waste management consultants to see how our expensive (the most costly in Hampshire) and also low performing service, could be turned round. It was discovered only 57% of our households recycled anything which helped to explain why our recycling rate for 2004/2005 was a disappointing 19.45%. Various options were examined, but the experience gained by over 100 councils, inc. 7 in Hampshire, clearly demonstrated that only one option would deliver the results required by the

Government, and meet the challenge which is NOT to get the people who already recycle, to recycle more, but to get more people recycling.

Accordingly there was a general cross party acceptance, albeit in many cases with a great deal of reluctance, that the only way forward was to carefully roll out ABC (alternate bin collection) throughout the Borough. The Chandlers Ford end of this ward, in Ampfield, is already part of phase 1 and lessons learned from this will be incorporated in phases 2 and 3. The initial satisfaction surveys and percentage recycled are better than expected. In the first 4 weeks, in the phase 1 area, recycling participation has increased from 57% to 90% and the amount recycled is a very pleasing 40%. Along with other councillors, I took part in a 6 monthly voluntary trial beforehand, which demonstrated that in most cases the new system works best with having one large ordinary bin and one large recycling bin.

Very briefly to other matters. The Borough and I share the same wish as Braishfield Parish Council, that at least a bottle bank can be reinstated in Braishfield. These banks are always well supported by Braishfield residents !!

In planning terms, it might surprise you to learn that Braishfield is not in Southern Test Valley, but it is deemed as Northern Test Valley. This is good news in many ways because none of the approx. 2,500 houses provisionally allocated for southern Test Valley in the S.E. Plan, over the next 20 years, will be built in Braishfield. However, locally at Abbotswood, the Local Plan Inspector changed the Borough's initial allocation of 500 dwellings to 800, because this figure meets the Central Government's requirements for density of new housing. In fact it has just been increased from 30-50 dwellings per hectare to 35-55 per hectare (draft PPS 3 document). I am particularly concerned that all necessary road improvements will be carried out eg.the Jermyns Lane junctions.

Finally the Borough's Council tax remains the second lowest in Hampshire. The 4.82% increase (or 9p per week more for a band D property) has been achieved by a combination of budget savings, reduction in the number of employment posts and prudent management.

At the close of the meeting, Andrew Lalonde thanked everyone for attending.