

# BRAISHFIELD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting held at the Village Hall, Braishfield  
on Tuesday 3rd April 2007 at 7.30pm

## 1. PRESENT

Parish Councillors - Andrew Lalonde (Chairman) Mike Prince Sue Ransom Jean Lowe Kate Marshall

Borough Councillor - Martin Hatley

About 13 Parishioners

## 2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 25th April 2006 were agreed.

## 3. PRESENTATION BY JOHN COOPER FROM THE CPRE

The guest speaker, John Cooper of the CPRE, was introduced by Andrew Lalonde. John Cooper has been involved for 10 years in the Hampshire branch of the CPRE which has about 2000 members. He is Chairman of the Test Valley area which itself has about 300 members.

One of the missions of the CPRE is to preserve tranquility and there is a worry about the loss of it. The environment is now becoming noisier with, for example, Southampton Airport. There is also light pollution and there has been concern about the use of lasers over Southampton. The CPRE has been working with the British Astronomical Society over the problem of light pollution.

'Green' issues have been making their way up the agenda and it appears that political parties are trying to 'out-green' each other.

The CPRE policy on development includes the building on brownfield sites but the worry is where to build and what to build. Government policy appears to want to speed up the rate of building. There is a new driving force for development from the Regional tier of government and as Hampshire is an attractive and prosperous area the threats of development will remain. The CPRE believes it is influential at regional level and is listened to, but it will not know by how much until later.

The CPRE is concerned about the use of the countryside. One might ask where do vegetables come from - not necessarily from our own countryside. The CPRE supports Farmers' markets but there is concern at the long term prospect for farming.

Test Valley Borough Council has adopted a new Borough Local Plan after several years of consultation, and much of this meets the CPRE's approval. However, this will be overtaken by the Local Development Framework. Where development does take place, the CPRE wants to see good infrastructure installed, with good transport and employment.

There is concern at the viability of villages, partly as a result of the decline in the number of people in each household. There is a shortage of affordable housing in rural villages.

After his talk, John Cooper answered questions about development on greenfield sites, wildlife & fishing, development, industrial traffic at old farms, wind farms, speed limits and the size of vehicles on country lanes.

Andrew Lalonde thanked John Cooper very much for addressing the Meeting.

## 4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The following is the written report given to the Meeting by Andrew Lalonde, Chairman of the Parish Council:

At the Annual General Meeting held in May 2006, 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 now meets at 7pm on the first Tuesday of each month except August. Part way through the year this changed from the fourth Tuesday in the month. Residents of the village are very welcome and encouraged to attend. There is an open discussion period at the end of each meeting when any relevant matter may be aired. 2007 is an election year and it is hoped that willing villagers will put themselves forward for nomination to be Councillors. The election is on 3rd May but nominations have to be with TVBC by noon tomorrow. There have been notices on the boards about this.

### Planning

The Parish Council monitors all planning applications in the village and comments on them where it thinks fit. There have been 35 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 considerable increase on the 19 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.

This year there have been two applications involving the whole of the village. The first was the gasification plant submitted by BKP for its site in Bunny Lane. This produced a considerable objection from many quarters causing BKP to withdraw it. However BKP intends to resubmit an application, albeit using a different supplier of equipment and it held a public meeting here in the village hall on 7th September 2006. BKP is currently going through pre-application discussions with Hampshire County Council and a new application can be expected at any time.

The village shop was the other major application. This assumed major planning significance because it was proposed to use the site of the old telephone exchange. This site is in a field specially designated in the Planning Policy documents as an open area not to be built on. The TVBC planning committee accepted it but this was later rejected by the higher level Scrutiny Committee. There were quite a number of letters to TVBC from objectors and supporters in the village but not the necessary overwhelming support which might have tipped the decision in favour of the application.

A planning application which has just arrived is one for significant development at Fairbournes Farm which also involves the restoration of the deteriorating listed buildings on the site. The Parish Council has called a Parish Meeting to discuss the application on Tuesday 17th April. Everyone is invited to attend.

### Highways and Road Safety

The Parish Council has continued to report defects in the highway to the Assistant Chief Engineer. The Council has again pressed for a footpath at Crook Hill without success. Money may not be made available for infrastructure improvements without developers' contributions from developments such as those at Fairbournes Farm and Abbotswood. The Council supports the School with its submission of a travel plan application for grant assistance.

Hampshire County Council has been completely silent on the matter of traffic calming through the village.

### Recreation Ground

As usual, the Recreation Ground has required maintenance, some of which is done by willing villagers and the Football Club, and there have been further commitments of expenditure on the trees overhanging the School and on repairs to the fence where it is habitually used as a climbing frame along Common Hill Road.

The Pavilion continues to look rather sad and the Football Club is exploring ways of obtaining a grant to replace it. The Club has asked the Parish Council for advice on how this may be done in a way which complies with both the grant rules and the Recreation Ground Trust Deed.

The parking issue on the Recreation Ground car park, a matter mentioned in last year's report, has improved but the Council is monitoring the situation closely.

### 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, John Rhodes, for the work they put into the successful running of the Council and to Councillors Dowden and Hatley for their contributions and help. In particular, I would like to thank and bid farewell to Sue Ransom, Jean Lowe and Alan Light who have served the Council very well but have decided not to stand for re-election.

### Precept

The Parish Council precept for the coming year is £9000 for the seventh year running. The make-up of the 2007/8 Council Tax for a Band D property in Braishfield is as follows, with 2006/7 figures in brackets:

	2007/8	(2006/7)	change
Hampshire County Council	955.62	(910.62)	4.94%
Hampshire Police Authority	125.37	(119.43)	4.97%
Hampshire Fire & Rescue	56.07	(53.64)	4.53%
Test Valley Borough Council	108.45	(103.77)	4.51%
Braishfield Parish Council	26.71	(27.19)	-1.76%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1272.22</b>	<b>(1214.65)</b>	<b>4.74%</b>

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 reduction of 1.76% in the Parish Council element, because the total sum of £9000 was unchanged from last year.

## **5. COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT**

The following is the written report submitted to the Meeting by Alan Dowden, County Councillor:

### Braishfield Crossroads Improvements

As part of the 2007/08 low cost programme of works, it is proposed to improve the signing on the approach to the junction at the crossroads, also to implement anti-skid on the east-west approaches.

### Braishfield Primary School-

The school has completed a draft (level 2) School Transport Plan but has yet to have a final Plan approved. In order to be considered for Safer Routes to School funding for highway safety improvements, the school will need to have a (level 3) plan approved. Although it has missed out on the 2007/08 programme of works, it could be a candidate for the 2008/09 allocation of funding.

### Braishfield Road

The County Council in partnership with the Braishfield Parish Council are still developing a phase 2\* traffic calming scheme to be implemented on the Braishfield Road.

Hampshire County Council provides services to over 1.25 million residents. During 2007/08 the authority will provide £1.6 billion of services

- to protect and develop the environment
- care for the vulnerable

- highways, transport and planning
- educational and other opportunities for all
- recreation, heritage services eg; country parks, library services
- Trades & Standards officers

As the opposition spokesperson for adult social care I am aware of the continuing pressure on this service and I am often frustrated by the lack of foresight from the administration.

The County Council have decided to change the way home care is delivered and provided across Hampshire. The Council will now only provide short term intensive home care, whilst the long term care will be contracted out to the independent private sector. The expectancy is that the cost of care will be reduced. The budget proposed for 2007/8 for Adult Social Care is reliant on the full support of partnership working with the NHS and voluntary organisations, so could potentially be at risk.

The Director of Social Care described the budget as challenging and may impact on client safety and satisfaction of its clients. It could prove to be a testing time for the service over the next year.

My political colleagues supported me and were prepared to add £4million to the Adult Social Care budget in order to provide low level services to prevent people deteriorating and therefore needing costly higher levels of care. Last year alone, the demands on high level care services increased by a further 1000 clients.

The extra £4million could be paid for by increased corporate procurement savings, and a reduction in the huge Corporate Communications and publication costs throughout the County Council. Our recommendation for this was rejected by the administration.

Hampshire County Council has set its council tax for 2007 at 4.9% just within the government's capping level of 5%. This will set a band 'D' council tax for the County Council services at £955.62 an increase of £45.

## **6. BOROUGH COUNCILLOR'S REPORT**

The following is the written report submitted to the Meeting by Martin Hatley:

How time flies! It does not seem a year ago that I was writing an annual report for Braishfield. It also does not seem possible that I have represented you as your Borough Councillor for the last 12 years and it is more amazing to me that my 25 years service as a local parish councillor was recognised in November of last year.

During the last year I continued to be Deputy Leader of the Councillor and the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport. In both these roles I have represented the Test Valley Borough Council at the PUSH (Partnership for Urban Southern Hampshire) meetings. I robustly defended Southern Test Valley and opposed the wishes of some other councils to impose somewhere between 7,000 and 10,000 extra houses over the next 20 years on our greenfield sites. I was successful in getting this reduced to 2,500. The TVBC allocated 500 of these to go at Abbotswood, but the Local Plan Inspector disagreed and said the number should be about 800 to meet Government guidance requirements. Whatever the number, and whenever these houses are built, I think it is imperative that the existing road network is carefully studied and effective safety measures are carried out at either end of Jermyns Lane and at other locations. There are likely to be local shops close to the Braishfield Road and Woodley Lane junction.

Your Parish Council has been very active studying all development applications and their comments have gained a reputation of being professional, sensible and useful. I have been pleased to support them in most, if not all, cases.

Flooding was a problem for many parts of Braishfield during the Winter. Nowhere was potentially more at risk than Megana Way when a culvert became blocked which then threatened to cause local dwellings to be flooded. As is often the case the problems occurred over a holiday period. The local residents contacted the County out of hours service, but they were not able to assist being already fully stretched. Neighbours also tried to use their own draining rods. I was then contacted. Clearly this situation could not wait for normal processes to take their course,

so I phoned the Borough's Head of Technical Services at his home. Together we arranged for the Borough's engineers to be mobilised and I am pleased to report they did their job.

The ABC collection of waste I know was not one of the most popular projects that the Borough was obliged to carry out by Central Government to increase recycling and reduce our collection costs, being one of the highest in the country due to various reasons. I am pleased to report that the consultants we employed were very accurate in their predictions. The amount of kerbside waste recycled has increased by 50% (from c.20% to c.30%). Also the number of residents who regularly recycle has increased from 35% to over 90%.

#### Turning to your Council Tax Bill

As ever, we have had to take account of a number of external influences and constraints:

- responding to Government requirements and the additional burdens placed on us,
- with often no corresponding increase in government grant
- the uncertainty and complexity around the calculation of the grant
- the limit on council tax increases, and the continuing threat of capping
- the timing of the grant announcement, coming as it does, so late in the process

We have again concentrated on setting a budget that is consistent with our medium term financial strategy, which was set to eliminate the use of balances to finance on-going expenditure by 2007/08. This we have achieved, except for the planned withdrawal of £104,000 to cover the forthcoming elections.

I am pleased to say that our Council Tax, at £108-45 for a Band D property remains the second lowest in Hampshire, where the range next year will be from £96.75 in Basingstoke to £192.47 in Gosport. The national league tables also show, we will continue to have one of the lowest district council tax rates in the whole of England. I have no doubt that our Council Tax continues to offer excellent value for money and that the increase of 4.5%, or just 9p per week, represents a significant achievement given the pressures that we have been facing.

So what were the challenges confronting us this year? Well, they included the following:

- An increase of £175,000 in short-term borrowing costs resulting from increases in bank base rate and the impact of capital schemes brought forward before capital receipts are realised

- Meeting the costs of inflation, which looked likely to be around half a million pounds more than the additional income we were anticipating from government grant and Council Tax increases.

- Meeting the substantial costs, some £288,000, relating to the preparation of our Local Development Framework (this is the process to replace Borough Local Plans).

- The extra £283,000 cost of accommodating the Government's new concessionary travel proposals within a scheme that was already one of the most generous in the County.

However, we take our budget responsibilities seriously and in order to help balance the budget, additional income, efficiency and savings measures have been introduced.

Examples of those efficiencies and savings include:

- Savings of £700,000 from the full implementation of the new Alternate Bin Collection scheme. Not only is this scheme more efficient, but it has undoubtedly encouraged recycling in the borough and recycling rates have already shown a significant improvement.

- We have kept increases in fees and charges broadly in line with the rate of inflation. However, in the case of car parking, we propose to maintain the status quo in two important areas - there will be no charge for parking in any of the Council's car parks after four o'clock, and there will be no increase at all in charges for

parking during the coming year. This measure is to help support our many small independent traders and to encourage residents to shop locally.

We have continued to challenge our Heads of Service to manage vacancies in their staff and to bring forward other service efficiencies.

Procurement savings are beginning to be realised, and the rationalisation of telephone usage will generate nearly £40,000 in savings next year.

We have reviewed our concessionary travel scheme, which was in danger of becoming unsustainable as a result of increasing costs. But we have done so in a way that protects the interests of those most in need, and free travel using Hampshire Farepass on community transport will be continued throughout 2007/08.

Taken together, these efficiencies have exceeded nationally set targets and helped to deliver our medium term financial strategy of achieving a balanced budget.

In 2007/08, the Council's budget will target key activities that will help to improve the quality of life of everyone in Test Valley. Our energies will be devoted to providing services in line with our revised SCHEME priorities:

We will continue to fund a team of neighbourhood wardens, working closely with the Police under the new Neighbourhood Policing arrangements. We will also support voluntary and community groups throughout the Borough and take part in community initiatives like the Turnaround Project in Andover.

We will develop our healthy lifestyle programme and continue to support successful initiatives such as the popular Health Walks programme and the Safe Warm and Well (SWELL) scheme. July 2007 sees the introduction of smoke-free public places across the country and the Council will have a major role to play in the implementation of this legislation.

Test Valley's environment is unique and we aim to protect and enhance it by continuing to improve cleanliness, increasing energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy, protecting and improving the diversity of our natural surroundings and landscape quality and reducing pollution and waste. I am very mindful of the proximity of Bunny Lane and I will continue to monitor all that goes on - or could go on there.

On a related matter, I found the two meetings I chaired regarding the BKP's proposed gasification plant very useful and informative. I genuinely have an open, albeit concerned, mind on this subject. I was very impressed by the quality of the questions that residents asked and they added immensely to the value of the meeting. Well done!

During the year I have continued to attend as many Parish Council meetings as I can as I find this invaluable to hear at first hand what the problems and concerns of Braishfield are.

After his address, Martin Hatley answered questions about Test Valley Borough Council 'ignoring' the Parish Council's views on planning matters, traffic calming, speeding on Braishfield Road, a footpath along Braishfield Road and the Abbotswood development.

Andrew Lalonde thanked Martin Hatley for addressing the Meeting and answering questions.

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