

BRAISHFIELD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting held at the Village Hall, Braishfield
on Tuesday 4th May 2010 at 8.00pm

1. PRESENT

Parish Councillors - Mike Prince (Chairman)
Dorothy Ross
Mike Edwards
Simon Palmer
Camilla Horton
Nick Virgo

County Councillor - Alan Dowden
Borough Councillor - Martin Hatley
3 Parishioners

Apologies for absence were received from Carole Renvoize and Kate Marshall

2 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 5th May 2009 were agreed.

3. PRESENTATION BY ROBERT GRIME _ ROMSEY & DISTRICT SOCIETY

The guest speaker was Robert Grime of the Romsey and District Society. He described how the Romsey & District Society was formed in 1974 and now has 900 members. The Society tries to influence development particularly that of the town centre which dates from the 17th century. It set up the Romsey Building Preservation Trust and took a lead in the financing of the restoration of the King John's House complex. More recently, the Society was involved in the erection of the Charter Stone which was unveiled by the Queen in 2007. The stone commemorated the 400th anniversary of the granting of Romsey's Charter.

The Society has several Committees, one of which is the Planning Committee which meets every three or four weeks and comments on significant planning applications, such as those for Abbotswood and Whitenap. The Chairman writes to the Planning Authority with any comments.

It also has an Environment Committee which has examined, for example, the Timsbury Lakes plan. It considers serious environmental issues, looking at the preservation of the green winged orchid by Romsey Hospital and being involved in Fishlake. The Society has pressed for the barge canal and its footpath to be improved. The Public Services Committees deals with matters of infrastructure such as sewers and drains.

There are also Special Projects, one of which has been a survey of shop fronts in Romsey and also the matter of street clutter. In particular, the Society has been pushing for the refurbishment of what has been described as the Romsey Eyesore, ie the abominable, ugly crumbling margin of Abbey Water.

Mike Prince thanked Robert Grime for addressing the Meeting.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

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

This year, the Chairman's report cannot start without first mentioning the sad loss of Andrew Lalonde. He was Clerk of the Council in the 1970's, during which time he was also Clerk to Michelmersh Parish Council. He became a Councillor in 1993 before taking up the position of Chairman in 1995. He was re-elected Chairman unanimously each year until he stepped down in 2007 for health reasons, though remaining a Councillor. He had lived in the village for many years, initially at Apple Cottage and later at Long Barn. He seemed to know everything and everybody in the village and his contribution to Parish Council work is sorely missed.

At the Annual General Meeting on 5th May 2009 Mike Prince and Mike Edwards were re-elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively. During the year, Simon Palmer resigned from the Council and was replaced by Camilla Horton who I welcome to the Council. I also welcome Nick Virgo to the Council, filling the Andrew Lalonde vacancy.

The Parish Council has met regularly throughout the year and meets at 7pm on the first Tuesday of each month except August. 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.

PLANNING

The Parish Council monitors all planning applications in the village, as well as in nearby industrial areas such as Bunny Lane and Yokesford Hill, and comments on them where it thinks fit. 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.

There have been 21 planning applications in the past year, together with quite a number to do with tree works in the Conservation Area. This number of planning applications was higher than the 15 of the previous year, but still much lower than the norm for the past few years. One application which drew strong objections from the Parish Council, the Braishfield Village Association and some residents was the demolition and replacement of Hillside, 4 Lower Street, which was Millie Dunford's bungalow. Many people felt that the proposed dwelling was out of keeping with the surroundings and contrary to several aspects of the Village Design Statement. Nevertheless, TVBC approved the application and have been asked for an explanation.

The Parish Council has responded to consultation on the review of rural settlement boundaries by TVBC. Within these boundaries in rural villages, infill development may take place subject to various planning constraints. The Council has suggested where the boundary lines might lie. The boundaries encompass areas, whereas previously infill policy was defined by lines on a map along the frontage of properties. Outside these boundaries, development is not permitted.

Hampshire County Council carried out a housing survey on the need for affordable housing in 2007. As a result of this, there is an ongoing search for a suitable location in the village and this Council has suggested the site opposite the School. Community Action Hampshire, the body responsible for affordable housing in rural villages, is in contact with the landowner.

HIGHWAYS AND ROAD SAFETY

The 30mph limit has now been implemented in Braishfield as part of a Countywide plan to reduce speed in villages. Much to the Council's surprise, the 30mph signs were augmented by camera signs, some of which have been removed although the Council asked for all except one at the entrance to the village to be removed.

The Parish Council has continued to report numerous defects in the highway to the Assistant Chief Engineer. A significant deterioration of the highways occurred during the winter and since then HCC has been inundated with requests from many Parish Councils to deal with the problem. Emergency work has been carried out in Lower Street and Kiln Lane but many areas have just been 'patched' and will doubtless fail next winter.

RECREATION GROUND and WAR MEMORIAL

As usual, the Recreation Ground has required maintenance, some of which is done by willing villagers and the Football Club. Our thanks go to Norman Fielder who is retiring from carrying out work around the Recreation Ground and Village Hall.

The new playground was installed last October/November and was opened by Father Christmas at the School Christmas Fayre. I would like to thank all those who contributed to the design and grant application work. The whole cost was funded by money from TVBC, SITA and Viridor.

The Braishfield Village Association is working on a plan in conjunction with the Parish Council to install a fitness trail on the Recreation Ground, similar to but smaller than the one on the Kings Somborne Recreation Ground.

The drains across the Recreation Ground have caused a problem, or rather the individual who placed foreign objects down the manholes caused it. The covers have now been replaced with lockable ones at not inconsiderable expense.

PARISH COUNCIL

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

PRECEPT

The Parish Council precept for the coming year remains at £10,000. The make-up of the 2010/11 Council Tax for a Band D property in Braishfield is as follows, with 2009/10 figures in brackets:

	20010/11	(2009/10)	change
Hampshire County Council	1037.88	(1018.17)	1.9%
Hampshire Police Authority	146.25	(142.11)	2.9%
Hampshire Fire & Rescue	61.38	(60.30)	1.8%
Test Valley Borough Council	121.41	(118.44)	2.5%
Braishfield Parish Council	29.07	(29.67)	-2.0%
TOTAL	1395.99	(1368.69)	2.0%

For comparison purposes, the Band D Council Tax has risen 76% in the ten years since 2000/2001, when it was £794.25. The apparent fall in Parish Precept for a Band D property is due to a change in the number of occupied properties.

5. COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

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

I was first elected to represent the people of the Baddesley division in January 1992 and on June 4th last year I was particularly pleased to retain my position with over 60% of the votes cast. It is always encouraging to any Councillor to know they have a large majority of the support of their electorate.

I am the Spokesperson for the opposition for Adult Social Care and a lead member of the Safe & Healthy People Select Committee. I am also a member of the Hampshire Pension Fund Panel. In July 2009 I was appointed to the New Forest Family Placement Panel. Each of these posts demands responsibility and dedication, but I enjoy the work and always seek to achieve the best possible outcomes for people.

The Hampshire Commission, of whom I was a Member, completed its work last year making final recommendations to the Government on the Green Paper on the Future of Adult Social Care. Many of the recommendations within the Green Paper were in fact in line with the Hampshire Commission's recommendations. This was to be followed with a Government White Paper which was to address how the growing demand from an ageing population is to be funded. Instead, the Government obviously found it would be too expensive and is now pushing the Personal Care at Home Bill through Parliament. This will inevitably increase the financial burdens of local authorities. The Government, if re-elected, hopes to implement this bill in October 2010. It would entitle some people with the highest needs to an element of free personal care. Presently many are denied by the eligibility criteria set by most authorities, including Hampshire.

The County are in the process of rolling out from April one of their key priorities of 'SDS', self directed support, after its successful pilot in the Basingstoke area. At the same time they are continuing their transformation programme in other key areas of the Hampshire Model - This will offer a universal offer of six weeks crisis care, free advice and preventative measures in order to continue independent living where possible. I have strongly supported all of these measures.

Hampshire County Council have set a council tax that will rise by 1.9 per cent and that means another £20 annually for Band "D" council taxpayers. You may wonder where the money comes from in order to provide the services. The Government will be providing £146.8 million out of the £672 million needed and the remainder is financed by Council Tax and other charges. Central Government separately provides the huge amount of funding for schools.

The County precept is the major share of Council Tax rising to a Band "D" precept of £1037.88p. Other authorities funding needs are added. Test Valley Borough Council, Police Authority, Fire Authority and your local Parish Council are added to the overall cost of Council Tax.

The County Council are hoping to improve its resilience to extreme weather conditions. It is the intention of the County to provide additional salt barns, at a cost of £1 million pounds, in order to be able to store an additional 6000 tonnes of salt. It is also committed to providing salt/grit bins should parish councils request them.

The County will also need to deal with considerable damage to Hampshire's roads, from the winter

months. Everyone has witnessed the huge numbers of potholes and cracks in highways, which will need expensive repairs. Much of this has been caused by insufficient finances being allocated to highway maintenance, over the last three years. "A stitch in time saves nine" comes to mind.

I was delighted to be able to assist individuals and organisations, within my division with grant aid from my annual Community Grant Allocation Fund. As a County Councillor my aim is to try to improve the quality of life for residents within my division and across the County of Hampshire.

6. BOROUGH COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

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

This month marks my completion of 15 years as your Borough Councillor. The last 15 years have been very interesting and some topics which were topical then remain so today. These include lack of smaller homes in many of our villages for the 'first and last time' buyers, speed limits, ducks on the village pond and planning matters in general.

During the last year I continued as Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport. It is in these two roles that I represent Test Valley Borough Council on PUSH (Partnership for Urban Southern Hampshire), which includes Ampfield but strangely not Braishfield. Last year I reported my concerns, that having successfully and robustly defended Southern Test Valley's corner against suggestions from other Councils that there should be a major development of between 6,000 and 10,000 houses on a Greenfield site in the Romsey area. Eastleigh Borough Council appeared to be trying to renege on their agreement to accommodate about 6,000 dwellings at Hedge End. I remain fearful that if they were to be deleted from Hedge End, then Central Government would require them to be built elsewhere in the PUSH area, which clearly threatens our own area. I am still sure they would not go eastwards because Fareham were allocated 10,000 houses and the infrastructure could not cope with such a large number of extra homes. The latest news is even more alarming for us in Test Valley. Initial work has revealed that due to various physical constraints, Fareham can only accommodate 7,000 houses on its chosen site ie this is a shortfall of 3,000 houses. This puts our area under even more pressure and will only increase the number of attempts to locate them in Southern Test Valley. I am still determined that this will not happen 'on my watch'!

Although in Central Government planning terms, Braishfield is not in Southern Test Valley or the PUSH area, I can reassure you that it is not being looked at as a location for any of the 6,100 houses we have to allocate in the north of the Borough. However, I do fully appreciate that the Southern Test Valley allocation is likely to have an impact on the residents of Braishfield.

I am supporting the attempt by PUSH to get the Central Government to take on board that, because of one of the worst recessions in living memory, the 3920 houses that were originally, and still are, imposed upon us to be built in Southern Test Valley over 20 years up to 2026 will now not be required until the 25 year period up to 2031. The level of economic growth that the current housing numbers are based on is far from current predictions. There is clear evidence that this is the case and whichever way you look at it, this means that the realistic number of houses required over each 5 year period is considerably less than the number we are still required to provide. Our evidence is being presented to a Government Select Panel which is looking at housing numbers in the South East. The 3920 imposed houses would have an extremely negative impact on the character of Southern Test Valley and is totally unrealistic given the current economic situation. Even if it were achievable, the current Government, (at the time of writing prior to the General Election), has cut infrastructure funding for our area, so the roads, schools and healthcare facilities would not necessarily follow.

One good piece of news is that I now chair the Sustainability and Community Infrastructure Delivery Panel (SCIDPAN) for PUSH. Members include the Environment Agency, water companies, English Nature, NHS (Hampshire), GOSE, Nature Trusts etc. Our work will bring about more eco friendly homes and a better general environment by targeting resources better and avoiding duplication of effort. Usage of water in new homes is expected to be 30% less than current homes.

Amongst the many local issues during the last year, probably the most enjoyable one was to support your Parish Council's grant application from the Borough towards the provision of a new children's play area near the hall. The icing on the cake was to assist Father Christmas with the official opening and then to see the joy of all the children using the new equipment.

During the periods of snow we experienced, various staff eg. grounds maintenance and refuse collecting teams, who could not carry out their normal duties due to the adverse conditions, were redeployed to gritting and snow clearing duties within the town, some village schools and Mountbatten School so that pupils could take their exams.

Finally, turning to the Council Tax, the Borough's 2.5% increase is below the RPI for January which showed an increase of 3.7%. The Borough's increase amounts to an increase of just 6p per week for a Band D property. This 2.5% extra will give the Council an extra £162,5500 whereas inflationary pressures alone account for £442,000. By January, the total budget gap had risen to £700,000, largely due to a decrease in planning fees because of the recession. However a balanced budget has been obtained with the help of carrying out service efficiencies of over £614,000 and the Councillors taking a cut in their allowances and continuing to be paid only the Inland Revenue approved mileage allowance. However there is a limit to how much can be trimmed from budgets before front line services become adversely affected. Having said that, Test Valley remains one of the lowest Council Taxes in both the county and country.

7. OPEN PERIOD

The main topic in the open period was planning policy, particularly in respect of Hillside, 4 Lower Street, with the inevitable question of whether the Village Design Statement was a waste of time. Martin Hatley explained the position, saying that the planning officer has re-visited the site. He also explained the workings of the Section 106 monies made available by new developments.

At the close of the meeting, Mike Prince thanked everyone for attending.