

# **BRAISHFIELD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

Minutes of the Meeting held at the Village Hall, Braishfield  
on Tuesday 17th May 2011 at 8.00pm

## **1. PRESENT**

Parish Councillors - Mike Prince (Chairman)  
Mike Edwards  
Camilla Horton  
Nick Virgo  
Carole Renvoize

County Councillor - Alan Dowden  
6 Parishioners

Apologies for absence were received from Clive John, Dorothy Ross and Martin Hatley

## **2 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 4th May 2010 were agreed.

## **3. PRESENTATION BY JIM WILSON - Hampshire Fire & Rescue**

The guest speaker was Jim Wilson of Hampshire Fire & Rescue. He described the sensible domestic fire precautions everyone should take. There should be a night time routine in which any heating fires are checked and fireguards put in place before going to bed. A torch should be kept by the bed. Smoke detectors at strategic points throughout a house are essential, though heat sensors are more appropriate in kitchens. Alarms with strobe lights are useful in some circumstances and a vibrating system is available for people with hearing difficulties. CO sensors are available and these can be obtained from gas companies and not Fire & Rescue.

He said that if a chimney catches fire, water should be put on the fire to create steam. Thatched properties gave concern if the flue gases are at a very high temperature, as is the case with wood-burning stoves. He handed out some thatched property booklets on fire precautions.

Romsey Fire Station is a retained station, rather than staffed round the clock. It takes staff four minutes to get to the station.

Jim Wilson then showed videos of room fires demonstrating how quickly a fire can get out of control. He finished by saying that Fire & Rescue would visit properties and several of those present filled in the appropriate form to book a visit.

Jim Wilson was thanked very much for his talk by Mike Prince.

## **4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

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

At the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council on 4th May 2010 Mike Prince and Mike Edwards were re-elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively. 2011 has been an election year but with seven

nominations for the seven positions on the Council, all candidates were elected unopposed. Kate Marshall decided not to continue being a Councillor and I would like to thank her for all the work she has done on the Council since joining in 2006. Her place has been filled by Clive John who I would like to welcome onto the Council. Unfortunately he is unable to be with us today.

The Parish Council has met regularly throughout the year and meets at 7pm on the first Tuesday of each month except August. This month has been an exception to this rule owing to the election on 5th May. 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. Villagers may also make presentations about matters such as planning applications at the start of the meeting.

A note for diary is that the Parish Council Meeting on 3rd January next year will be attended by Caroline Nokes MP.

## **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 34 planning applications considered in the past year, together with quite a number to do with tree works in the Conservation Area. This number of planning applications was significantly higher than the 21 of last year and the 15 of the year before that. The Council has no objection to most applications but as usual there are a few with which it did not agree. These included applications at 14 Hill View, Merriemeade Farm, Meadow View in Newport Lane, Hall Place and Fairbourne Bungalow.

Bunny Lane is outside the Parish but the Council keeps a close eye on events there as they are so close to the village. RFSF Recycling has put in a large planning application and the Council has objected to it on numerous grounds, not least of which Hampshire County Council itself has declared on several occasions that the site is not suitable for the activity.

There have been moves to construct affordable housing in the village and a site for this opposite the School has been suggested. If this looks to be feasible then there will be a public meeting held to seek the views of the villagers before it goes any further. However, there has been very little news of late about it from Community Action Hampshire, probably due to financial cutbacks.

## **HIGHWAYS AND ROAD SAFETY**

The Parish Council has continued to report numerous defects in the highway to Hampshire Highways. A significant deterioration of the highways occurred during the winter, as was the case last year, and since then HCC has been inundated with requests from many Parish Councils to deal with the problem. Two extra grit bins have been installed, one at the top of Crook Hill and the other at the end of Newport Lane. Requests to move these nearer to where the grit is actually required have not been successful.

Kiln Lane has been re-surfaced along its whole length almost to 'motorway' standards. Unfortunately a side effect of this is that speeding 'trades people' rushing to and from work are posing a danger to other users.

## **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.

The fitness trail around the Recreation Ground has now been installed and was opened in an almost party-like atmosphere with all the Schoolchildren in attendance. Our thanks go to the Braishfield Village Association and to George Elliott in particular.

The new playground is proving successful and the Council has embarked on tidying up the shrubbery and fencing at its rear. Ben Kington is doing the work for the Council.

A suggestion received by the Council was to plant snowdrops around the Recreation Ground and the Pond. Some 2000 snowdrops were purchased by the Council and planted by an army of willing volunteers.

Fundraising for a replacement football pavilion has started but the Parish Council needs to turn its attention to the legality of having one on the Recreation Ground at all. The fact is that the governing trust deed for the Recreation Ground forbids the construction of buildings which means that the construction of the current pavilion in the 1970s was very questionable. However, that is history now but looking to the future the Parish Council needs to get the trust deed altered so as to permit such development. The Charity Commission is not averse to a change like this, but there is a process to be followed to get its approval.

## **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 2011/12 Council Tax for a Band D property in Braishfield is as follows, with 2010/11 figures in brackets:

	2011/12	2010/11	change
Hampshire County Council	1037.88	(1037.88)	0.0%
Hampshire Police Authority	146.25	(146.25)	0.0%
Hampshire Fire & Rescue	61.38	(61.38)	0.0%
Test Valley Borough Council	121.41	(121.41)	0.0%
Braishfield Parish Council	28.99	(29.07)	-0.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1395.91</b>	<b>(1395.99)</b>	<b>0.0%</b>

For comparison purposes, the Band D Council Tax has risen 65% in the ten years since 2001/2002, when it was £845.01. 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:

The last government left the new coalition government a huge national deficit.

The County Council faces a £55 million funding gap this year from, Government funding reductions, the cost of new responsibilities and additional service demands.

The proposed budget requirement for 2011/12 is £715.6 million, which is £26.3 million (3.5%) below the adjusted 2010/11 budget. The Leader told the Council we are in tough times that require tough decisions. Departments have needed to make 8% reductions in their budgets for next year through efficiencies and a reduction in staff. The Council will though be able to claim a 13.2 million coalition government grant, as an incentive not to increase its Council Tax. Therefore, a Band 'D' Council Tax will remain the same as this year £1037.88p

As the Adult Social Services Spokesperson I am pleased to have played my part in working with the Executive Member to produce a balanced budget this year. It was achieved by a much improved monitoring process and better procurement processes, coupled with an additional £12.6 million of health funding to assist with the needs of Hampshire's vulnerable residents.

Next year will be very difficult, with numerous proposed changes to services and the additional risk around demography and complexity. This will be dealt with through a central risk contingency of £13.793 million which the department can call down.

The funding for the Hampshire Action Teams (HAT's) has been withdrawn, therefore the Test Valley (HAT) will cease to operate.

Following the heavy snow in December 2010, the Environment Department have provided new grit/bins to help residents with extreme winter weather conditions and to keep Hampshire's highways free from ice & heavy snow. £2.2 million of extra expenditure was necessary to meet those demands.

I welcome the proposed cut to the Communication's budget of £1 million next year.

However, I first proposed such a reduction in 2004 and also advised further savings could be made through adopting better Corporate Procurement practices, which the council are now implementing.

Children's Services have reduced the Children's Centre budget by £6 million, a 35% cut and the Youth Service budget has been cut by 40%. Two young mothers addressed the annual budget making council and pleaded for the retention of the full service, at least until the consultation process was completed.

The opposition amendment budget summary was to:

- Invest in **Hampshire's young people and families** by cancelling the administration's cuts to Children's Centres, the Youth Service and Mobile Children's Library;
- Invest in Hampshire's communities and support the Big Society, with **support for voluntary organisations**, promoting volunteering and reducing cuts to vulnerable groups;
- Promote localism by retaining existing locally developed **Concessionary fares arrangements**, devolving the **New Homes Bonus** to local communities and protecting local grant budgets; and
- Tackle **Climate Change** by capturing renewable energy through Solar PV on the council's estate and generate £500,000 of extra income by exporting energy to the National Grid.

**This could have been achieved without any increase to council tax.**

During the last year, through my County Councillor's Community Allowance I have supported the following organisations :

- Chandlers Ford Street Pastors
- Hollytree Community Pre-School
- Knightwood Youth Club
- North Baddesley Baptist Church
- North Baddesley Silver Surfers
- North Baddesley Over 60's Club
- Mencap

- Romsey Carers Forum
- Valley Park Friends of the Park
- Baddesley Park Football Club

### **This Community Allowance will be reduced by 20% for 2011/12**

This and the following years will bring some testing times for many of Hampshire's residents. My role will be to monitor, and see that help and assistance is given to those people who need the support the most.

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

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

The saying 'time flies' has never seemed truer to me than now. It does not seem possible that this May will see me complete my 16<sup>th</sup> year as your Borough Councillor – and even more amazing is that November will see me complete my 30<sup>th</sup> year as a local Parish Councillor.

Many things have changed but many subjects still regularly appear on various agendas and in letters, now more commonly emails, to me. The threat of excessive housing or, conversely, the lack of suitable housing for our younger and older residents, in many of our villages, are still common current topics throughout Test Valley and indeed the whole of S.E. England. As Deputy Leader of Test Valley Borough Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport, during the last year I have met with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles MP., both in Andover and Romsey. On each occasion, many issues were discussed, but the major topic was housing numbers and how his Localism Bill would allow us to decide more locally our total housing requirement for the next 20 years, as long as this could be demonstrated as being evidence based.

I carefully studied various pieces of work commissioned by PUSH (Partnership for Urban Southern Hampshire), concerning the reduction in housing requirements due to the world wide economic recession. The evidence clearly suggested a probable 7% reduction in housing demand in Southern Hampshire. Consequently, as Portfolio Holder, I successfully presented a report to Council recommending a reduced interim housing requirement of 3,600 houses for Southern Test Valley (3,920 were originally imposed upon us by the previous government). This average of 180 dwellings per annum is now actually lower than that required in previous Borough Local Plans dating back to 1996, although it is still clearly a large number. The exact locations for this future housing are still being carefully investigated. However, the withdrawing last year of our Core Strategy (the new name for the Borough Local Plan), has enabled us to reduce to this more realistic figure, land required for housing. The withdrawn plan did not include any major housing for either Ampfield or Braishfield and I am not aware of any changes in circumstances that would alter this situation.

Still of great concern to me is the failure of other local Councils, such as neighbouring Eastleigh, to honour their original agreements to provide the required amount of housing in their own areas. This puts our area under even more pressure and will only increase the number of attempts to locate the majority of the shortfall of between 6,000 to 9,000 houses within Southern Test Valley. You will remember that I successfully and robustly defended Southern Test Valley's corner against attempts from other local councils for there to be a major development of between 6,000 to 9,000 houses on a Greenfield site in the Romsey Area (in addition to the already imposed 3,920 houses). Now I have been re-elected, I remain determined that no such major development will happen within the south of the Borough 'on my watch'!

Another regular subject of discontent, both from the public and fellow councillors, concerns retrospective planning applications and perceived lack of planning enforcement. The vast majority of such applications

are quite minor and normally due to an understandable lack of knowledge by the public of increasingly complex and confusing planning laws, regarding what requires planning permission and what is permitted development. In some areas a small Wendy House or a metre high fence might require permission whereas in a similar sized garden elsewhere, a very large and dominant shed or a 2 metre high fence might not. In most cases it is not illegal to carry out such development and the Council can not therefore penalise residents nor can it treat the application in any different way to what it would do if the development had not taken place. If we refused a retrospective application just because it was retrospectively applied for, then costs would probably be awarded against the Council and we, the Council Tax payers, would have to pick up the bill. To demonstrate our commitment to effective compliance and enforcement I have just sanctioned the transfer of a very experienced and able senior planning officer to this team.

The Borough continues to closely monitor the local Abbotswood development and strives to minimise the impact on the existing communities, although clearly there will be an impact with development of this scale. Litter and fly tipping are always near the top of local concerns. The Borough's adoption of a zero tolerance policy has been welcomed by all except the litter bugs and fly tippers.

My role as Chairman of the Sustainability and Community Infrastructure Delivery Panel (SCIDPAN) for PUSH and its success in bringing about more sustainable and eco-friendly homes and a better general environment has been nationally recognised. I was requested by DEFRA to join a Ministerial Advisory Panel of 10 experts for the forthcoming Natural Environment White Paper. We regularly meet with and report directly to the Minister in Whitehall. I have led a high ranking delegation visiting various parts of the country, and as diverse as Manchester and Suffolk, to discover best practice and more importantly hurdles currently in the way of best practice. For more information please visit the DEFRA website. I also gave the keynote speech on Localism and the Natural Environment to the AGM of ALGE (Association of Local Government Ecologists) in London. I have never been in a hall with so many bearded folk!

The recent investment by Test Valley in the freehold commercial premises, Bourne House, just over the border in Sandy Lane, Romsey Extra, has secured a permanent sustainable location for our refuse collection trucks and other maintenance vehicles operating within the south of the Borough. It is conveniently located just a few 100yds. from the currently rented depot at Yokesford Hill.

Finally, turning to Council Tax, work began last summer to bridge a budget gap of some predicted £1.6m. A sizeable amount of money to find but I am pleased to report that we have achieved a balanced budget – a budget for today's economic climate. You will not see wholesale redundancies, raiding of balances or knee jerk reactions to reduce budgets as you will have seen other councils do in the news media. What you will see is a freeze in the Council Tax and, to help our local businesses, there is no increase in car parking charges and a continuation of free after 4pm parking, even though we have had to absorb £37,000 of additional VAT,. There is also a commitment to our major voluntary sector partners that they will not see a reduction in their grant funding next year. We have managed to do this through a combination of planned process improvements and efficiency savings including joint working with other Councils, and making considered judgements about how we can make best use of our scarce resources. It can be the easy option to cut front line services and much more difficult to hit the costs behind those services, but we have achieved just that, and continue to enjoy one of the lowest Council Taxes in both the County and Country.

My apologies for not being able to attend Braishfield's Annual Parish Assembly, but as always, I remain readily contactable by phone or e mail. Tel. 07970 501050 or e mail [cllrmhatley@testvalley.gov.uk](mailto:cllrmhatley@testvalley.gov.uk).

## **7. OPEN PERIOD**

In the open period, the planning approval at 4 Lower Street was discussed. This was an application which most people thought received a significant level of objection, such that it should go to the Planning Committee. The Head of Planning felt differently, so David Teagle made a complaint to the Local

Government Ombudsman who ruled in his favour. David Teagle said he would provide the written ruling to the Parish Council for information.

Alan Dowden reported that he had made a donation to Relate, a charity which provides counselling for individuals and couples, family counselling and counselling for children and young people. The community allowance available to County Councillors had been reduced to £8000. He also said that reduced anti-social behaviour had been a HAT project (Hampshire Action Team). There will be no more Test Valley HAT meetings as funding for this has been withdrawn.

There was discussion about the activity at the gas station at the top of Bunny Lane. It was explained that the site is a distribution point where high pressure gas is reduced for onward transmission to various places and this pressure reduction requires the gas to be heated to maintain its temperature. The upgrading of the site has involved replacement of the gas metering system and most of the heating boilers.

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