

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on Tuesday, 17th February 2015

**Present:** Mr A Revill (Chairman), Mrs J Macdonald-Lawson (Vice-chairman), Mrs H Grantham, Dr A Guyatt, Mr I Heustice, Mr F Martin, Mr D Pack, and the Clerk.

**14/15**

**92. Apologies for Absence:** Mr J Galego, Mr M Taylor and Mrs E Hamilton (CDC).

**93. Wheelbarrow Castle Playing Field:** discussion regarding the lease for the field and its implications for the Council in terms of engaging with the community through the village meeting and the Council's website.

The Chairman introduced the item and gave some background information as to how the Council had arrived at the situation it now found itself in, as follows:

- In 1970, Midhurst intermediate school opened;
- In September 2011, the Parish Council (EPC) started discussions with West Sussex County Council (WSCC);
- In November 2011, Easebourne Liaison Group was set up by County Councillor Michael Brown, EPC, Midhurst Town Council, Cowdray Estate and Easebourne Primary School;
- In the Summer of 2012, Midhurst Rother College vacated its site;
- In October 2012, Easebourne Primary School announced it would move from Easebourne Street, to the Midhurst Rother College Site;
- In 2012, the EPC Steering Group conducted a feasibility study into the implications of taking on the management of the Wheelbarrow Castle Field and potentially developing community facilities;
- In November 2012, EPC agreed to ask WSCC to grant a lease on the field;
- In March 2013, The EPC Steering Group reported *Sport in Easebourne*. Sports clubs did not wish to move to the site;
- In April 2013, WSCC agrees, in principle, to grant a lease and the possible community use of the field was discussed at the Easebourne Village Meeting;
- In June 2013, EPC gives WSCC its detailed proposals for the use of the field;
- In September 2013, Easebourne Primary School opened after extensive refurbishment of its buildings. A survey also showed that Easebourne Primary School parents fully supported the suggestion of moving the children's playground;
- In January 2014, a draft lease was examined by Solicitors and negotiations with WSCC continued throughout 2014; and
- The Parish Council had had an input into the [National Park Local Plan](#) and the [Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment \(SHLAA\)](#) and had asked the Local Planning Authority to register the field as an open green space.

Mrs Grantham advised that Council of the following issues relating to the lease:

- The lease term was for 25 years, initially with an option to increase to 50 years;

- There was a clause in the lease to say that it could be terminated if a petition was received by the community. However, Mrs Grantham advised that there would need to be a minimum of 50 signatures to trigger this;
- A petition could be submitted at any time;
- The location of the field was close to the Primary school and should the school decide it wanted the field for itself, then it could launch a petition;
- The short term use – proposals for the future had not been finalised;
- The above needed to be borne in mind when deciding whether to sign the lease and it was important to have the support of the local community when the Parish Council discussed the future use of the field;
- There were cost implications for the Parish Council as there was a shared access with the primary school;
- WSCC would be responsible for maintaining shared areas;
- The lease allowed WSCC to impose service charge costs if the school wished to have security gates for example and the Parish Council may have to share those costs under the terms of the lease;
- A Joint management Committee would need to be set up to manage the field and this would need to consist of Members of the Parish Council and representatives of the primary school to consider ongoing costs for the future;
- There were shared rights to connect to services, access but WSCC could impose reasonable uses on the common parts;
- WSCC could also limit vehicular access at certain times but it was likely that the pinch points would be at the start and end of the school day;
- If the Parish Council wished to transfer the lease to a charitable or community association, then it would require permission from WSCC, however, the Council was advised that it should be aware that it could only transfer the whole ownership of the site and not just a part of it;
- No overnight stays would be allowed on the site;
- The field could be used for indoor / outdoor sporting activities;
- It was possible that if the primary school became an academy, it could take over the freehold interest and this would have implications for the Parish Council;
- There were no guarantees about what the position would be in a few years' time so the Parish Council needed to consider the lease for a maximum of 50 years and make its decision based on that;
- The Parish Council was essentially considering signing up to the lease and taking on responsibility for the maintenance of the field, hedges, footpaths and a small brick building on the site.

The Clerk advised Mrs Grantham that as she had been giving professional advice to the Council regarding the lease, she should declare a personal interest in the item and not take part in any voting for or against the signing of the lease.

Mrs Grantham declared a personal interest in the Wheelbarrow Castle Playing Field and agreed to take not part any voting on any decision made this evening.

Mr Heustice proposed, and it was duly seconded, that Mrs Grantham be thanked for all of her hard work, expertise and patience with this project.

The Chairman asked if the Council was happy to sign the lease for the field as it was. Acceptance was proposed by **Dr Guyatt** and seconded by **Mrs Macdonald-Lawson** – with **6 of the 7 Members present and voting in Favour**.

*Mrs Grantham abstained from voting on this item.*

**The meeting closed at 8:25pm**

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