

EASEBOURNE PARISH COUNCIL

Draft Notes of the Annual Village Meeting held on Thursday 24th May 2018 at 7.30pm in the Refectory, Easebourne

Councillors Present:

A Guyatt (AG), A Keeling (AK), D King (DK), J Hines (JH), J Galego (JG), M Noble (MN), I Milne (IM),
D Pack (DP)

In attendance:

District Councillor F Hobbs (FH), Parish Clerk S Hurr (SH) and 22 members of the public

Apologies:

Parish Councillor T Baker, County Councillor D Bradford, Boltini Trust, Mr and Mrs Trueman, H Grantham

1) MN welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave the following report:

We've decided to do things a little differently this evening to give you more opportunity to talk to Councillors on a one-2-one basis about the projects we have been working on and the topics that are of particular interest to you. So I will start with a quick summary of the last year to give you an idea of what's been happening before giving you the chance to ask questions, grab a coffee and chat at the information points around the room.

I took over as Chairman in January this year, and it's been a steep learning curve so far! This is certainly something I never thought I would have to do when I joined the Parish Council, I'm actually more used to talking to myself than in front of a crowd of people so please bear with me!

I want to start with a huge thank you to our previous Chair, Holly Grantham for all her hard work on the Council, in particular in negotiating the lease on Wheelbarrow Castle Field and leading the beginning the design process.

We've been doing a lot of Highways related work this year, resulting in the long awaited installation of the signalised pedestrian crossing on Dodsley Lane near the junction with Wheelbarrow Castle which finally provides a safe way of crossing a very busy road, especially for parents and children of the school.

After almost 2 years of work, two 'Vehicle Activated Signs' have been installed to encourage drivers to reduce their speed through the village and the 30mph speed limit was extended along Hollist Lane. Our Highways Panel also worked with representatives from the school including the Head teacher, parents and governors to develop a comprehensive proposal for a number of traffic calming and pedestrian safety measures in Wheelbarrow Castle. Whilst this is not yet an approved project by West Sussex County Council, we intend to continue to explore ways of calming traffic on this and other roads in the village and earlier this month have involved our MP to help us gather support for our proposals.

Another project has involved the adoption of a disused telephone box in Henley, followed by a programme of refurbishment and the subsequent installation of a new defibrillator. We have also run a number of training sessions in the use of this life saving equipment and are now applying for a grant for a 3rd defibrillator to be installed at a suitable location close to Easebourne Street. Two of the three Parish Council noticeboards which were becoming rotten and unsightly, have also been replaced with smart new noticeboards and we hope to do the 3rd during the course of this year.

By far the biggest project ever undertaken by the council, the Wheelbarrow Castle Field project, has also moved on significantly since this meeting last year, and as you may have heard recently, after planning permission was granted by Chichester District Council we are finally in a position to start work within the next few weeks.

Not only has this project involved every councillor and we've also been fortunate enough to co-opt 2 additional volunteers onto the project team to help spread the workload, which has included further rounds of consultations, fine tuning the design, researching contractors, obtaining multiple quotes, commissioning site surveys, gaining planning permission and applying for numerous grants.

On the subject of grants, with the help of one of our extra volunteers, Frank Davies, we have successfully gained almost £30,000 towards this project in the last couple of months and with hopefully more to come, so we owe a big thank you to Frank. Thanks also to our other volunteer on this project, Andy Thomas whose advice during the planning application process was invaluable.

Thanks as well to Ian, our lead councillor on the project. Ian took over this rather daunting task around 8 months ago and has spent a huge amount of time getting us to where we are today.

Regular updates on the progress of Easebourne Park as it will be known, will be posted on our website, Facebook page, in United Magazine, on noticeboards, in school newsletters and through your doors. You can also contact us direct at anytime if you have any questions about its progress.

If you weren't able to make it along to one of our public consultations then there's a chance to view the final design just over there...

As well as us receiving grants, throughout the year we also receive requests for grants from local organizations and this year have given funds to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal and Silent Soldier Appeal, The Samaritans, MADhurst Festival, Citizens Advice Arun & Chichester, local Scouts and Guides, and Easebourne Primary School allowing them to create a larger fenced outdoor play space. We were also present at the village fete and have had more frequent communication with Midhurst Town Council, to share knowledge and talk about how we might be able to work smarter and more closely together.

On a communications front, the Parish Council has recently 'won' free support from Hooli Boost, a design and marketing company in Midhurst who are going to help us to develop a new welcome pack for residents and new people moving into the parish. We've also redesigned the website to provide more user-friendly information to residents, and our Facebook page continues to gain new followers and act as a useful tool in communicating with residents. Regular updates have also been provided via the United Magazine.

On the subject of planning, we engaged the services of a professional planning consultant to advise the parish council in its response to the proposed South Downs Local Plan and we are currently in the early stages of developing a Parish Design Statement, which would help us influence future planning and development within the parish. For this project to be a success we need a team of volunteers to help with all aspects of its creation, in fact it cannot just be led by the Parish Council if it is to become a recognized planning document and adopted by the SDNPA. So I should stress that we need residents to come forward and be part of this process. If you think you could help then please take a minute to have a chat with John, Astrid or myself after the meeting to see how you can get involved.

On the volunteering front, we recently carried out a Spring litter-pick and a small group of volunteers, many from the wider Sussex area, planted around 220 small trees on Wheelbarrow Castle Field. We'd really like to form a larger group of volunteers within the village who are willing to help with small projects at various times of the year, particularly with Easebourne Park about to become a reality. If you would like to be part of a team of local volunteers then please do have a chat and leave us your details later this evening.

And talking of volunteering, as a council we have spent much of the last year running on fewer councillors than we should have which makes the whole task even more challenging, but as I've already mentioned we have been successful in attracting several extra volunteers to help on specific projects and we hope to do more of that in the future. If you'd like to be involved in any of our projects, or indeed would think about joining the Council, please come and have a chat afterwards.

You might be able to see a theme developing here.. we need more volunteers!

As for the year ahead, I don't expect things will be much quieter! As well as the day to day business of the council, we are already discussing how phase 2 and even phase 3 of Easebourne Park may look, the Parish Design Statement will be a significant amount of work as will our ongoing Highways activity. We have also just begun a project to investigate options for the refurbishment or replacement of bus shelters around the village.

Finally, I wanted to say a huge thank you to Sharon, our clerk, who as well as keeping us all in check over the last year has also been studying long and hard for her Society of Local Council Clerks qualification which she's just passed with distinction, something which the assessors say is a very rare occurrence! So thank you Sharon, we really couldn't do all this without you!

2) MN invited questions.

- Will Easebourne Park be for a specific age group?

MN explained that much of the play equipment will be for younger children, but the park as a whole is for all ages to enjoy.

- Will the park only be opened at specific times?

MN confirmed that the park will be permanently 'open'.

- Will the park have any lighting?

MN and IM confirmed that there are no current plans to have lighting in the park.

- Will the park be wheelchair friendly?

IM explained that the perimeter path will be accessible to people using wheelchairs, and that in phrase two, the Parish Council will look to add fully wheelchair accessible pieces of play equipment.

- The new traffic lights with crossing on Dodsley Lane, seem 'extreme' for the location with sets of double-height lights, are these necessary?

MN explained that the Parish Council have lobbied West Sussex County Council for a long time to install a safe crossing and that the design and installation was the County Council's decision, but the Parish Council can ask why this decision was made. JG further explained that it is usual to have double-height lights on roads used by larger vehicles to ensure that those drivers had good vision of the lights.

- What further actions are being taken to reduce the speed of traffic through Easebourne?

MN explained that the Parish Council had been talking to WSCC for a long time about traffic speeds in the Parish. The village gateways had been installed denoting where the 30 miles per hour speed limit begins, and Vehicle Activated Signs have been installed but this subject is very much 'on the list' for the Parish Council. JG further explained that there were limitations with what could be done as the Dodsley Lane (A286) is a 'Class A' class road. It is a wide straight road, so drivers tend to drive above the speed limit. The highways project in Rogate is proving successful with the appearance of the road being narrower than previously and without lines, which seems to encourage a 'slowing down', but this is likely to have been very costly. Having more volunteers for SpeedWatch would be very helpful to encouraging traffic to slow, and those drivers recorded over the speed limit do receive an official letter reminding them of the importance of obeying speed limits. Ideally a SpeedWatch session should be held once or twice per week for an hour and that would really make a difference. To become a SpeedWatch volunteer there is a short training session and on-line test, which can be repeated until passed.

- Would more signs help? Could a camera help? This seems to have been very successful in Fernhurst. Are Cameras 'Revenue Neutral' (*due to revenue gained in fines covering cost of installation and maintenance*)?

JG explained that there is a limit as to how many signs can be erected with specific gaps between them. MN further explained that where cameras can be sited is very specific so there may not be a suitable location for one. They are also a significant amount of money, but it's something that when the time and resources are available the Parish Council intend to explore.

- Where does the Parish end?

IM responded half way across the bridge to Midhurst.

- Could we ask the police to be present?

MN explained that the police service has limited resources, but the Parish Council does ask if a mobile camera from the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership can hold sessions in the parish and this can be done by any resident who is concerned. MN further confirmed that site locations for SpeedWatch must be approved and cannot be anywhere within the parish.

- Have we heard anything further about new houses being built?

MN explained that the 'Local Plan' had now been submitted to Government for examination and that this process would take many months for all the documents and their contents to be reviewed.

- Where can the Local Plan be viewed?

SH confirmed that this is on the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) website. JH confirmed that you can visit the SDNPA offices in Midhurst for further information.

- What standing or authority does a Village Design Statement hold?

MN explained a Village Design Statement includes all aspects of the parish and makes recommendations for the future, it becomes an official document and is adopted by SDNPA who would then use as a supplementary planning document. It is a long process and one that has been recently completed by Lodsworth Parish Council. AK explained that this must be a community-led process and ideally be progressed by five to six residents and three Parish Councillors.

3) With no further questions, MN explained that there were four subject tables around the room (Easebourne Park, Highways, Village Design Statement and General Information) providing further details about the current Parish Council's work and projects and invited all attendees to stay for refreshments and have informal conversations with Parish Councillors.

Signed as notes by the Chairman:

_____ Date _____

M Noble