

CAPEL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held on **Monday the 12th March 2012** at the **Beare Green Village Hall, Merebank, Beare Green** at 7.30pm.

PRESENT: Mrs A Schryver (Chair), Mr Dale, Mrs J Pearson, Mr Garber, Mr K Salter, Mr S McLachlan and Mrs Coke the Clerk.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Cllr Clack, Cllr. Valerie Homewood and one member of the public Mr John Roche.

1. APOLOGIES: Mr Cox, Cllr. Mir, Cllr. Osborn-Paterson

2. MINUTES of the meeting held on Monday 7th March 2011 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS: None

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – Cllr. A Schryver

Localism

The government's Localism Bill has been on the Council's monthly agenda for most of 2011 and now that Royal Assent has been granted the final published details are awaited. The Parish has to decide how it wants to proceed, and if it is to produce a Neighbourhood Development Plan the views of all the wards must be sought, a time consuming and lengthy process requiring effort from all concerned. There is particular concern in Beare Green ward where two new Parish Councillors are required to bring it up to the full complement of 4.

Parking in Old Horsham Road.

Commuters using Holmwood station have been causing problems by parking inconsiderately and obscuring access to driveways, actions of the Police and Highways have however eased this.

Maintenance and Road Works

There was a flooding problem outside the Weald School which was swiftly dealt with but flooding in Temple Lane due to blocked field and road ditches, will not be quite so easily overcome, not helped by the two collapsed road bridges there. It is hoped that the Parish Council, the two land owners and Highways can work together to find a solution in the near future.

Cable laying in Capel

Cheetham Hill Construction has been subcontracted by Biffa to lay a cable to take electricity from the Warnham landfill site into the National Grid at the Capel electricity substation. This has been work in progress since the end of 2011 and hopefully will be completed shortly.

Grit bins in Capel

Two Grit Bins were purchased for Capel this winter, one for Bakers Way and one sited at the intersection of Vicarage Lane, Temple Lane and Misbrooks Green Road. The Council is very grateful to Cllr. Helyn Clack who contributed £1,000 from Local Committee funds.

Priority salting routes

Following two consecutive winters of snow and ice Old Horsham Road in Beare Green was raised to Priority 1 status and Anstie Lane to Priority 2. It was also good news that the Depot at Beare Green was to be held in reserve and not closed as previously thought.

The Parish's own programme of maintenance always accounts for a large proportion of the Precept and 2011 was no exception with hedging and ditching projects in both Capel and Beare Green.

The bridlepath leading to Misbrooks Green Cottages was resurfaced – a joint project between the residents and the Parish Council although the contractor has recently agreed to re scarify part of work.

Dog Fouling on Capel Rec. and Bennetts Green

Following complaints from sports clubs and residents about dog fouling, an additional dog bin has been placed on the southern approach to Capel Recreation Ground and further prominent notices erected requesting that owners clear up after their dogs and keep them under control. So far these measures seem to be having the desired effect.

Playground Maintenance

With three play areas to maintain the Parish Council has employed the services of a local man experienced in playground maintenance to undertake quarterly inspections, identify and report to the Council any problems and keep the equipment in safe working order. Both repair work and some refurbishment has been carried at each site.

Aircraft Noise

The Parish Council hosted a Gatwick Master Plan Road Show meeting at the end of 2011. Although we were listened to sympathetically in reality it is doubtful that alteration of preferred routes will transpire.

Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations

The Council is hoping to plant 5 Disease Resistant Elm trees in the Parish, three on Misbrooks Green, one west of the Beare Green Sports Pavilion and one in Coldharbour opposite the Plough Inn. These will be planted in the autumn to hopefully establish them when the draught conditions may have eased.

The Council's gratitude was expressed to the Police who have managed to send a representative to almost every one of the Council's meetings, keeping Councillors abreast of what is going on and listening to any concerns raised.

The Chairman thanked County and District Councillors for their help and support during the year and Members of the Parish Council were thanked for giving their time and expertise so freely in order to help the community.

5. HENRY SMITH CHARITY, (WARBLETON ESTATE, PARISH OF CAPEL)

Report for 2011/12 by Jenny Richards. Chair of Trustees

The Charity

Henry Smith was born in Wandsworth, South London, in May 1548. He was a successful Salter by trade and purchased estates in various parts of England. During his life he created a number of charitable trusts for the relief of the poor and he died in 1628 leaving his Trustees the sum of £2,000 which has grown to over £600 million now!

One of the Charities was for the relief of the poor in 202 specific Parishes, where he had been made welcome during his travels. Capel was one of these, and funds are distributed through The Henry Smith Charity (Warbleton Estate) Capel, which has three Trustees: John Dale, Elizabeth Green and Jenny Richards - a representative for each of the three wards within the civil parish.

The Henry Smith Charity continues to make grants to the Parishes, providing funds "for the relief of poor, aged and infirm persons".

Under a scheme registered with the Charity Commissioners on 1 January 2001, an Estates Fund, consisting of property and stock market investments, was created. The Trustees of this Fund distribute, at their discretion, funds to the Parishes.

Capel Funds

Since the main Henry Smith Estate funds are largely invested in property and the stock market, the Capel Trustees were very grateful that our grant for 2011 was increased by £90 to £2,400. This enabled us to keep the Christmas vouchers at the same value as 2010. 105 vouchers were cashed, 32 at £20 for couples and 73 at £15 for single folk. The Vouchers are accepted by Beare Green Stores, Capel Newsagents, Carter's Capel and Ockley Post Office, whose cooperation is greatly appreciated by both the Trustees and the recipients of the Vouchers. The Chair of the Trustees is very grateful to Elizabeth Green and Jean Pearson who deliver the vouchers by hand in Beare Green and Capel, respectively.

In addition, gratuities were paid to Parish Helpers and donations were made to Merebank Over 60's Club and Capel Evergreens.

The total expenditure, to date, is £1,937, leaving a surplus of £463 to be added to the Charity's reserves.

6. PROJECT OVERHALL PROGRESS (Refurbishment of Beare Green Village Hall) - Cllr. Jean Pearson

An explanatory brochure had been circulated to members, architects had been appointed and a marketing professional is looking at the needs of Beare Green. Cllr. Helyn Clack, Mole Valley District Council and Capel Parish Council had granted funds. Additional funds have been applied for, some of which will be available from April.

The project will be managed over several stages, the first of which will be to bring the existing toilets up to standard and to install a toilet for the Disabled. Care is being taken to ensure that the hall can continue to be available to the existing clientele during alterations so maintaining income and client base.

Regular meetings are taking place between the different sub committees and the project is now moving forward well.

The second stage will be to develop a Café, entrance and Kitchen, the Café to overlook the existing Children's Playground. Phase 3 will provide a first-floor Meeting Room.

The Committee has also drawn up a Newsletter which will go to every Beare Green resident about what needs doing and which puts emphasis on the lack of facilities for teenagers.

7. ACTIVITIES IN COLDHARBOUR WARD

a) **HIGH SPEED BROADBAND** In September 2010 BT announced their 'Race to Infinity' competition where all rural exchanges with over 1000 subscribers in size could compete to be upgraded to fibre-optic high-speed broadband. The top 5 in the country by percentage of residents who indicated their interest to BT would be declared the winners. A Capel exchange working group (initiated by Coldharbour residents) was set up and individuals were given responsibility for every post code within the exchange area, which covers Capel, Beare Green, Coldharbour and parts of Ockley, Broadmoor and Westcott Parish. By the closing date on December 31st 2011 a magnificent 77% had been achieved and we were lying 8th in the country. The top 6 exchanges had all achieved 100%, which we believed to be impossible if the votes had been lodged according to the rules of the competition. We lobbied BT with this issue and they finally decided that the top 10 exchanges would all be declared winners so we qualified.

By February of this year the fibre-optic cables had been laid and the green street cabinets upgraded. It is hoped that residents will be online between now and June. ADSL2 has already been installed at the exchange so some speed increase will already be noticed. BT is also optimising the copper cables in the area to improve

performance. This will make a huge difference to people, particularly those who work at home and it will no doubt add significant value to homes. It is not yet known how the more remote properties will be affected but BT are predicting that 80% of homes in the exchange will receive the maximum speed possible of 100mbs.

BT is offering extra prizes to the winners. These include £300 towards a party and 2 free Bt Infinity lines which have been proposed for Capel Youth Club and Beare Green Village Hall.

b) **Mountain Biking**

A working group managed by the Surrey Hills Board was set up 3 years ago to investigate the increasingly popular sport of mountain biking in the Surrey Hills and drawing many thousands of people to the area throughout the year, both day and night. Mountain bikers can legally cycle on bridleways and byways, some also ride illegally on footpaths and 'off-piste'. Even on bridleways conflict can occur as the bikers can travel very fast, particularly downhill, and unintentionally frighten other users such as horse-riders and hikers.

It was decided by the working group that the only way to manage this problem is to construct dedicated single-track trails for use by mountain bikers only. Schemes like this have already been implemented successfully all over the country, the nearest one to us being on Holmbury Hill by the Hurtwood Control. In their experience, the trails have to be designed by mountain bikers themselves in order to make them interesting and challenging to use. We know that we will not convince all riders to use these trails but over time word will spread amongst their community that these trails are good and can be used without any conflict with other visitors.

A trial route is being planned to run between Leith Hill Tower and Wotton. The majority of the land is owned by the National Trust and the Forestry Commission. The Trust have already given permission and detailed costs are being calculated. A LEADER grant will be applied for. We estimate that the trail, signage and publicity will cost in the region of £20,000.

Our intention is to use this route as an example to all local landowners as to how successful these schemes can be in order to build a trail throughout the Surrey Hills and to link it with transport hubs and other centres being planned for catering and bike washing facilities. We hope that another knock-on benefit of this scheme will be to reduce parking in village centres particularly Coldharbour, Peaslake and Westcott.

c) **Coldharbour Lane**

A number of the trees adjacent to Coldharbour Lane have been marked for felling or major pruning by the Forestry Commission because of evidence of damage caused by impact with large vehicles. The Parish Council and our County Councillor have written to the FC to express our displeasure with this proposed activity, as it is our primary concern to maintain the sunken lane character of the lane and believe that the removal of trees will cause the steep sandy banks to become unstable. Evidence of this happening can already be seen where trees have been felled in the past and the roots have now died off and the sandy bank is crumbling away. We are awaiting a response from letters written expressing our opposition to this activity.

As a separate exercise we have applied for 'Unsuitable for HGV' signs to be installed at the top and bottom of the lane. We are also applying for width restriction signs to be installed and to change the configuration of the white lines at the narrowest parts of the lane, this has been approved for consideration in the 2012/13 budget of the MVDC Local Committee.

All of these measures should reduce the use of the lane by large lorries and hence reduce the risk of trees being damaged any further with the ancient banks being preserved for all to enjoy.

d) **Police motorbike programme**

We have been working closely with the local rural police to catch illegal motorised users of the byways on our patch, namely Wolvens Lane and Coldharbour Common

Road. Byways or BOATS are part of the county highway network and users must have legal vehicles with insurance, tax and MOT's and be in possession of a valid driving license. A programme of stumping of the byways, funded by our Surrey County Council ROW officer, in order to prevent 4x4's from going off-piste has proven to be very successful and this problem is now diminishing but the problem of trail and scramble bikes remains.

To that end the local rural police in Mole Valley decided to launch a campaign to raise the funds to purchase 2 Husqvarna 300cc motorbikes and to train 3 officers to ride them. A local dealer agreed to sell them the bikes with a considerable discount and to maintain them. There were several meetings attended by the Parish Council in order to convince the police hierarchy of the need for the programme. The Parish Council donated £1500 to the fund of £12,000 and the scheme was successfully launched during the autumn with a big publicity splash. The bikes are marked with the Surrey Police crest and stickers acknowledging the sponsors.

Since November more than 10 prosecutions have occurred with 4 crushing's of illegal vehicles. There have been 20 – 30 warnings issued and over 100 other engagements with the public. The trial scheme runs for 12 months when all concerned expect the programme to be accepted. Guildford police are already showing interest in setting up a similar scheme.

This programme, in conjunction with the Country Watch scheme, is making considerable progress in local rural policing.

e) Grit Bins

The severe winters of the past 2 years resulted in many parts of Coldharbour being cut-off with residents being forced to abandon their homes because there was no access for essential deliveries. It was decided to launch a scheme to purchase 21 grit bins for the village and to give each group of residents the responsibility for gritting their own sections of the lanes. The project was costed at around £8k of which we are very grateful to our local county Councillor who donated half from her local allocation, the remainder of the money was raised through private donations. In conjunction with the bins, we have also organised for 2 local farmers to be equipped with ploughing equipment and they have been given responsibility for clearing particular lanes.

We have only had one bad spell of weather this winter and I am very pleased to report that all lanes were successfully kept open.

We will have to raise extra funds to replenish the grit but I am sure the residents will be happy to continue to fund this successful project.

f) Oil Exploration planning application

Europa Oil and Gas, lodged an appeal in the form of a public inquiry to attempt to overturn the decision reached by Surrey County Council to refuse planning permission for the exploratory drilling for oil or gas in Bury Hill Wood, Coldharbour. The inquiry has been set for July 10th for 8 – 10 days and will probably be held in Dorking Halls.

The Leith Hill Action Group, which organised the successful defeat of the original application, has been accepted as a 'Rule-6' party for the hearing meaning that they can appoint their own barrister and experts to give evidence and be cross-examined during the hearing and also to cross-examine the opposition. This exercise of course comes at a huge cost and around £50,000 will need to be raised to fight this campaign.

LHAG has a fund-raising sub-committee who are planning many events to raise money such as a Summer Ball, Auction of Promises, poker nights and gourmet food nights. We are actively lobbying all of the 1600 people who wrote letters of objection, local Councillors, grant distributors and residents of Coldharbour and Knoll Road in Dorking. We are publishing frequent newsletters about the campaign and how much has been raised. A web-site, www.lhag.info contains reasons for objecting and how people can donate.

8. CAPEL PARISH COUNCIL PLANNING COMMITTEE – Cllr. Paul Garber

The PC set up its own Planning Committee at the Annual Meeting last May in order to make representations and respond to planning applications within the prescribed dates. The importance of dealing with responses in planning terms and within legislation was underlined.

The Localism Bill with the National Planning Policy Framework becomes law at the end of March 2012 and will supersede all other plans eg The South East Plan. There are very few alterations from the Draft Plan. The introduction of Neighbourhood Plans, if the Parish decided to draw up its own, would ensure that the PC response to planning applications would not fall on deaf ears. Support will be given by Mole Valley but any decision to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan will require the commitment of the whole community.

Development of the Godwin's site in Beare Green would provide good quality homes and considerable community benefit to Beare Green and the rest of the Parish. There would be commitment from the PC to the project and full consultation will take place with the community with exhibitions and a public meeting. The project will provide local opportunities with community benefits and any problems would be addressed in advance.

Cllr. Clack drew the meetings' attention to the North Horsham development and the possible effects it may have on the wider area.

There was general agreement that Neighbourhood Development Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders needed to be discussed with great care and be considered on an individual ward basis not balanced over all 3 wards. Anyone could produce a Neighbourhood Development Plan with the right backing so it might be in the PC's interest to produce its own.

9. SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL CHANGES – County Cllr Helyn Clack

Cllr Clack commented that PC Chairman Mandy Schryver, supported by Councillors, had worked hard and got things done over the year and that the BGCA was to be congratulated on the good progress being made on the re-furbishment of the Village Hall.

The SCC Public Value Review had resulted in major changes with £150m being saved so far in back and front room services, but that further savings of £330m were needed.

Migration of families is contributing to the need for extra school places and additional schools. Community Gangs were being reinstated to deal with vegetation problems along the highways. May Gurney, the new SCC Highway contractors, were proving a success. As from April 1st the new list of works would be drawn up so PC's could bid for vegetation control through the Highways Forums.

In the autumn of 2011 Andrew Povey had stepped down and David Hodge was the new Leader of the Council. Cllr Clack had been appointed Cabinet Member for Change and Efficiency, and more recently had taken over responsibility for the Olympics in Surrey. There had been an increase in the Local Allocation funding for Mole Valley and a new fund, the Community Infrastructure Fund, had been set up and could provide a possible source of funding for the Beare Green Village Hall. The development of the Eco Park in the north of Surrey, where it will be more accessible, should take the pressure off the local area regarding waste disposal.

10. LOCAL OLYMPIC AWARENESS- Cllr. Paul Garber

The Cycle Race is at the beginning of the games following on from the Official Opening. Access is difficult. There are laid down requirements which London has to follow. Large screens with crowd protection are being installed – 4 screens for Dorking, it is important that Mole Valley get it right. It is hoped that town centres,

villages and communities will get the spirit and hold mini festivals round the screens. There will be 10,500 competitors and 35,000 press. Every competitor will get 2 tickets for family members for every event they are in. The Olympics are coming in within budget. There is emergency planning for closed roads. It is important that people understand the implications in advance. Closed roads are unlikely to open for several hours after the event as they are all managed centrally in London. The Olympic torch will run through each village on the route starting on 10th July. The opening ceremony will take place on July 27th 2012. MVDC is allocating camp sites for visitors, camping toilets will be required. Local businesses and shops will need to be able to provide services for visitors.

The Chairman thanked all for attending the meeting.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: March 11th 2013 (date to be confirmed)
(copies of all reports held on file)