

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on Wednesday, 16th April 2009 in the Town Hall, Fordingbridge

PRESENT:

Cllr. Mrs J. Willis (Town Mayor)

Councillors Adams, Anstey, Mrs Coley, Connolly, Dennis, Mrs Fulford, Lewendon, Mrs Paton, Perkins, Price & Ms Wilson

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs H. Tague, Town Clerk

Deborah Gordon, Finance Officer

Cllr. Miranda Whitehead, District Councillor

Cllr. Mrs Kathy Heron, County Councillor

Chief Inspector Gary Cooper, Hampshire Constabulary

Inspector Ian Smith, Safer Neighbourhood Team

Peter Kirby, Clerk to Whitsbury Parish Council

Cllr. Ann Shand, Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley Parish Council

9 members of the public and 1 member of the press

1. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr. Mike Shand, District Councillor and Dr. Edgar Moss, Chairman of Fordingbridge Society.

2. TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY – 17th APRIL 2008

Cllr. Adams proposed the minutes are a true record after the names of Cllrs. Mrs Paton, Perkins and Price had been added to those in attendance and this was seconded by Cllr. Mrs Coley. Carried

3. TO REPORT ANY MATTERS ARISING:-

a. Witts Way

Two signs have been erected on the footpath that the late Billy Witt walked to Fordingbridge Hospital

4. TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE TOWN MAYOR

Cllr. Mrs Willis began her report with reference to the considerable amount of hours that councillors spend in the Council Chamber to discuss the work of the Planning, Amenities, General Purposes and Finance & Policy Committees.

She spoke of the upgrading of the Town Hall which has attracted more bookings and the hope of improving the acoustics in the Council Chamber which is rather slow. A very important feature, the Town Hall clock is no longer reminding citizens of the passage of time because it needs some serious and expensive work to make the housing and tower safe.

Improvements have been proposed for sport facilities in the Recreation Ground.

The summer playscheme was as usual a great success and well patronised.

Matters which came under scrutiny included the suggestion of closing the entrance to the car park at Roundhill. An experimental period is under consideration. The concern over heavy traffic continues to be on the agenda.

The Town Council were delighted to see Ford Ward operative once again.

Cllr. Mrs Willis mentioned events such as the successful visit of the Moto Guzzi Club who made a most generous donation to the Mayor's Charity - the Minibus Replacement fund.

The summer hanging baskets continue to give great pleasure with thanks to the Fordingbridge Business Forum.

The Christmas street lights also with thanks to Ian Newman and the Rotary Club.

Cllr. Mrs Willis stated that she had fulfilled many engagements including a visit with the Clerk, her husband and Mr. Willis to Vimoutiers for the Foire de la Pomme, and civic services in neighbouring parishes and towns.

She opened the new Children's' Centre in Penny's Lane and was present at the inauguration of the Smarter Working Centre at the Glasshouse Studios. An unusual duty was the opening of the new Indian restaurant, latterly The Hour Glass.

Also a very successful joint venture initiated by NFDC for the refurbished public toilets in the car park which were officially opened on the 2nd April. The work started on time, finished ditto and within budget – In the words of Shakespeare from Hamlet – “For this relief, much thanks”.

Cllr. Mrs Willis explained that the new children's centre will provide facilities for pre-school children and their parents. There are many services on offer including the baby clinic.

Cllr. Mrs Willis went on to speak of this year being a memorable and momentous one because the Town Clerk is to retire. Born in the town she knows and is known by nearly everybody. Discreet and diplomatic she draws on her vast experience to help members of the public in so many fields. She will be missed, no doubt about that, by us all. Together we attended many functions, the most memorable being the trip to Buckingham Palace- Rolls Royce and all. We were both proud to represent Fordingbridge. Cllr. Mrs Willis wished Helen a satisfying and rewarding retirement and welcomed the new Clerk, Kate Mason, present this evening. She is sure she will enjoy her time with the Council and assured her of the Council's support.

She went on to thank all the staff, Deborah Gordon, who keeps the accounts in order. Derek and Andy who looks after the Recreation Ground and Open Spaces, and Anne, the Town Hall care taker. Lastly, but no means least, she thanked her fellow councillors for their diligence in attending the weekly meetings and other extra curricular meetings involving a variety of local matters.

She concluded that as she comes to the end of her final year in office, she wishes her successor every joy in the role of Mayor of Fordingbridge and hopes he or she will take pleasure in representing the town as she has.

5. CHIEF INSPECTOR GARY COOPER – HAMPSHIRE CONSTABULARY

The Chief Inspector reported that he was born in Lymington and during the force worked in London for 15 years before returning to the New Forest as Commander two years ago.

He explained that the purpose of his presence was the Home Office directive for policing and local authorities. His team of local officers and PCSO will be looking for help from councillors to be part of a team for neighbourhood management. At the moment there is 60% confidence in local police but in Hampshire this is only 49% so by 2012 it needs to rise. The Home Secretary commented on antisocial behaviour, prostitution and lap dancing clubs.

The Neighbourhood Team in Fordingbridge is Inspector Ian Smith, Sgt Brian Goodall, and the PCSO. The directive is that they need to be visible on “your patch”. There is a Beat Report. There is a local radio station in the New Forest. There is a need to send emails and letters. The response team is in Ringwood and the objective is to respond to every message within 24 hours. Normal response time to an incident is 20 minutes because it is very difficult to get to places

across the Forest in safety. 999 should be dialled in an emergency only e.g. when someone's life is in danger. 101 for everything else not just antisocial behaviour.

He spoke of good partnership working and mentioned the Friday Night project at Belinda's as a good example. Victims of crime should be contacted by telephone or email. Anyone making a complaint should receive an acknowledgement within 24 hours. However solving it make take a little longer! An important objective is to make the New Forest a safe place to work and visit.

Questions

Peter Kirby of Whitsbury Parish Council asked about the statistics on CADDIE and for what period are they. C.I. Cooper was not sure but thought it was for twelve months.

Cllr. Brian Perkins stated that Tony Hatcher has not been replaced yet. C.I. Cooper said no he hadn't but we have PC Paula Symes so we are half short!

Cllr. Miranda Whitehead wondered if there could be anymore funding for the Belinda's project. Inspector Smith said perhaps Hampshire Police Authority could help and an approach could be made to the Joint Action Group (JAG) at NFDC.

Cllr. Mrs Kathy Heron said she has £10,000 to devolve over her entire patch but cannot give something to a County Council run project.

Cllr. Mrs Fulford asked if significant issues of crime and disorder in Fordingbridge have been tackled. C.I. Cooper stated that the JAG meet every month to discuss issues such as tack theft, burglaries, motor vehicle crime and damage to properties. Inspector Smith said it was very important for everyone to report anything- no matter how trivial. The information may slot in to a bigger picture. Cllr. Mrs Fulford hoped that by this time next year we can see a big improvement in the problems in the High Street.

Cllr. Adams spoke very highly of police response times.

Peter Kirby of Whitsbury PC mentioned the minutes of the Crime and Disorder Review Panel where there is a list of the top 10 offenders. He asked if any were in this area. C. I. Cooper believed that there was no one.

The Chief Inspector showed everyone the Hampshire Constabulary webpage as a very useful tool for information. Cllr. Perkins asked about the Police Support Volunteers. C. I. Cooper hoped that this scheme could be extended to Fordingbridge in the near future.

Cllr. Mrs Willis thanked Chief Inspector Cooper and Inspector Smith for a very informative presentation.

6. TO PRESENT THE AUDITED ACCOUNTS FOR 2007/2008

Deborah Gordon presented the audited accounts and invited those in attendance to view them at the end of the meeting.

7. TO REPORT ON FINANCES FOR 2009/2010

Deborah Gordon reviewed the budgets of the three committees, Amenities, General Purposes and Finance & Policy. The precept for the current financial year is £163, 170 which is an increase of 3.7%.

Cllr. Mrs Willis thanked Deborah for all her work as Finance Officer.

8. TO RECEIVE ANY MATTERS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

a. Locking system in the new public toilets

Cllr. Miranda Whitehead explained the recent problems where the toilets have been locking automatically if the flushing of the toilets is not good enough. The water tank that was installed was not big enough and the water is now coming off the mains. Cllr. Mrs Willis confirmed that no one will get locked in!!

9. TO RECEIVE ANY OTHER RELEVANT PARISH BUSINESS

a. Town Manager

Bill Bray asked the Town Council about the role of the Town Manager.

Cllr. Miranda Whitehead, Secretary of the Fordingbridge Community Forum explained that the Town Manager was employed by them for one year on a part-time basis to see if she can help the Town Council and the businesses. Nicola Wilson has been in post since November and her main role is to bring in grant money.

b. Britain in Bloom

Fordingbridge is to enter again and the judging day will be 14th July.

c. Footpath signs for Witts Way

Bill Bray thanked the Town Council for their co-operation in making this happen.

d. New Forest Radio Station

Cllr. Ms Wilson asked for the frequency of this new radio station. Cllr. Whitehead said she would enquire.

Bill Bray concluded the meeting by thanking the councillors for all their work on behalf of the Town Council and said this was very much appreciated.

The meeting closed at 8.45 p.m.