

MINUTES OF THE WELLOW ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD AT WELLOW VILLAGE HALL ON WEDNESDAY 21 APRIL 2004

The meeting was attended by approximately 60 persons

An apology for absence was received from Mr Bloore

MRS VERONICA PERRY IN THE CHAIR

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2003 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2. THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK

Ted Johnson, Chairman of the New Forest Committee, outlined the draft proposals for the National Park. A revised boundary was proposed which would be the subject of a public inquiry. If formal designation followed, the New Forest would be a standard National Park although undoubtedly it would evolve and take on its own identity. Naturally, there were concerns about the threat to the New Forest's special character and the effect on local communities. There was also a need to avoid more bureaucracy. The new National Park Authority would be the planning authority, albeit some functions might be delegated. Membership would comprise representatives of County, District and Parish Councils, together with Secretary of State appointments. On the current proposals, the majority of Wellow was within the National Park. Both TVBC and the Parish Council were seeking a boundary extension to the north east.

3. TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS

Andrew Douglas, an Arboricultural Officer for TVBC, outlined his role as a "consultant" to the Environmental Health and Planning Departments and to elected members. Mr Douglas explained the purposes of tree preservation orders and the administrative procedures involved. Consideration of a TPO involved an assessment of the amenity in terms of setting, position, size and form etc. Fruit trees could now be included albeit consent was not needed for pruning. Contrary to general belief, the best time for tree work was during July and August when trees could better deal with the rigours of cutting. Householders should ensure that contractors were adequately insured. A list of approved contractors was available but TVBC could not recommend individual firms.

The following matters were discussed in response to questions from the hall:

- implications for wildlife in the context of summer tree work
- the new high hedges legislation
- the perception that, on occasions, TVBC had failed to provide adequate tree protection

4. TEST VALLEY REPORT

Councillor John Lewis reported on various local topics, with particular reference to the following:
A36: Further safety measures were being pursued, including extra speed cameras, "hidden dip" signs, light-controlled pedestrian crossings at Canada roundabout and The Shoe public house, and an extension of the 40 mph speed limit through Plaitford.

Planning: The need for planning rules to be applied uniformly to all applicants. Opposed to further 500 houses in southern Test Valley

Council tax: Opposed to further increase

Green waste: Not in favour of the new sack scheme; preference for burning waste on a non-emission basis

The following matters were raised during contributions from the hall:

- the dangers of the vegetation on Canada roundabout (highway authority were reviewing this)
- the need to avoid further Council tax increases
- the shortcomings of the green waste sack scheme (Councillor Lewis agreed to research questions relating to the permitted weight of filled sacks, responsibility for “stray” sacks and any insurance implications)
- the use on the Continent of traffic lights that turn red if speed limit exceeded (Councillor Lewis agreed to make enquiries)

Councillor Tony Gentle addressed the meeting on the following:

- enjoyment of his Mayoral year
- support for the New Forest National Park, together with his work on the New Forest Panel and the New Forest Transport Panel
- his support for an affordable housing scheme in Wellow

The following matters were raised in questions from the hall:

- Canada Road nameplate still not replaced (Parish Council to pursue further)
- issues relating to the green waste scheme (TVBC presentation arranged for 21 June)

5. COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

County Councillor Michael Woodhall reported on County Council matters, with particular reference to the following:

- the task of managing a £1.3 billion budget, with particular pressures in education and services for the elderly, vulnerable and disabled
- the changed driving pattern on the A36 since introduction of the speed camera
- support for the Dibden Bay decision and the outcome of the Steplake Lane application
- the high levels of household waste with the consequent pressure to recycle
- the availability of grants for local projects
- support for affordable housing, albeit avoiding large increases in general housing

The following issues were also raised by residents:

- large increase in tipping activity at Woodington Farm (Councillor Woodhall to pursue)
- increases in Council tax by HCC and the Police and Fire services

6. PARISH COUNCIL REPORTS

(a) 2003 Review: The Chairman provided a summary of Parish events during the past year, with particular reference to the following:

- the election of Gordon Bailey, Ashley Browning, Jane Eddlestone and Brian Pointer
- thanks to Jane Wright for providing temporary cover during the Clerk’s sickness absence
- the recent open meeting concerning the A36 and the ongoing pressure to secure further road safety measures
- the planning decisions concerning proposed landfill sites at Pilgrims Farm and The Triangle and the outcome of the Planning Inquiry into Dibden Bay
- proposals for a replacement pavilion at Lower Common Road recreation ground, with an undertaking to consult local residents on the detailed plans in due course
- congratulations to the three main sports clubs on their achievements and, in particular, the facilities provided for young people
- the treatment of gorse and bracken on the Common (funded by the European Life Fund)
- extensions to the Council’s grass-cutting programme (with thanks to Jeff Benham)
- action by the County Council to improve the condition of Hackleys Lane
- the contentious issue of the new green waste scheme (parishioners invited to the presentation arranged for 21 June)
- the challenge of how to improve the environment and services without impacting adversely on Council tax levels

(b) Committee Reports: The meeting received written reports from the Chairmen of Parish Council Committees, namely Jeff Bloore (Policy & Finance), Maurice Austin (Sport & Leisure) and Wendy Simpson (Environment)

7. OPEN FORUM

The following matters were discussed during this session:

Shootash car boot sale: concern that the site was now a large scale commercial operation, with traffic congestion a regular feature. There was a need to avoid any expansion and for the cleared area to be re-planted. It was noted that the present permission was only temporary and that residents would have the opportunity to comment when an application for renewal was received.

Parish Council finances: query as to the absence of savings now that the Hatches Farm loan had been repaid. The Chairman indicated that funds were required for projects such as a replacement pavilion at Lower Common Road and tennis courts maintenance at Hatches Farm.

Football Club: reference to the Club's league successes and the improvement of facilities in partnership with the Parish Council.