



WINCHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

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MINUTES OF THE WINCHFIELD ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY HELD ON THURSDAY 19 MAY 2022 AT 7.15 PM IN WINCHFIELD VILLAGE HALL

PRESENT Cllr A Renshaw (in the Chair),
Cllr L Hodgetts, Cllr R Milnes-James, Cllr K Stewart and Cllr M Williams
Cllr T Davies (Hampshire County Council - HCC)
8 members of the public
Mrs A Ball (Clerk)

1 APOLOGIES AND WELCOME

Apologies were received from Cllrs A Crampton, S Farmer and T Southern (Hart District Council - HDC) and members of the Neighbourhood Policing Team.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first Annual Parish Assembly for three years as two had been cancelled due to the pandemic.

2 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 20 May 2019 were accepted and signed as a correct record.

3 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman gave the following report:

In June 2019, just a month after our last Annual Parish Assembly, Hart announced that it had been successful in a bid to join the Government's Garden Communities programme, receiving £150,000 in the first year. The money was to help define a 'Shapley Heath Garden Community' for 5,000 and possibly up to 10,000 homes at Winchfield and Murrell Green.

Work on this controversial scheme has therefore been the focus of planning by Hart and studies have been prepared on a variety of topics. Hart subsequently applied for a further grant of £406,000 but was awarded only £130,000 in June of last year. It should be noted that Hart's own district-wide survey of all households received just 1,197 responses, the majority of them opposed to the idea.

The proposal has been driven by the coalition of the Liberal Democrats and Community Campaign Hart but is opposed by the minority Conservative party at Hart.

Winchfield Parish Council (WPC) has used various opportunities to voice its opposition and to introduce initiatives to demonstrate that it is not opposed to appropriate small-scale development.

The most important has been the decision to update our Neighbourhood Plan. This has seen four community engagement meetings and ten deliveries of publicity material by volunteers to each of the 302 properties in Winchfield. The steering group and working group of seven volunteers have met 18 times for formal meetings. A massive amount of work has been done by the team, led by Christine Strudwick, who have now produced a first draft of the plan. We are very grateful for all the work they have done and the commitment they have shown.

Another initiative which has emerged has been to find a small site for affordable homes. The main work on this has been carried out by Councillors Williams and Hodgetts who will provide an update on progress at the meeting which follows.

So where are we with Shapley Heath? Last November Hart said it had concluded all work on the project. It said the choice of delivering a new garden community to meet future growth needs will now be evaluated as an integral part of any future Local Plan process. It will be assessed against all other growth options, particularly those opportunities arising from regeneration, brownfield development, settlement intensification and proportionate urban extensions.

So it has not gone away.

Meanwhile, the parish council has been very busy on projects varying from the installation of defibrillators, a speed indicator device which is moved around various locations, improvements to footpaths and a constant watch on highway matters, as well as commenting on planning applications and monitoring enforcement issues.

The Chairman thanked every member of the council for all their hard work and diligence, and said how WPC was fortunate to have the support of such an efficient clerk in Alison. Thank you everyone.

4 REVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The First Winchfield Neighbourhood Plan Area was designated on 8 January 2015 by HDC. It covers the whole of the parish. The first Neighbourhood Plan succeeded at examination and was 'adopted' by HDC on 30 March 2017.

HDC was notified of the Parish Council's intention to review the 'made' Neighbourhood Plan in July 2020 and has provided guidance and support as the new Plan has progressed.

The former Plan was produced under the auspices of the National Planning Policy Framework, 2012 (which was replaced in 2019) and 'made' in 2017 prior to the adoption of the Hart Local Plan in 2020. It was therefore 'out of step' with national and local planning policies and as a matter of good practice the Parish Council determined that it would be appropriate to refresh the Plan.

The new Neighbourhood Plan focuses on four themes, namely the:

- Natural Environment,
- Historic Environment,
- Built Environment, and
- Parish and Community.

These themes form the foundation for the content of the Plan and distinct sections cover the aspirations and policies for each theme.

The Neighbourhood Plan Regulations require a Neighbourhood Plan to:

- Be appropriate, having regard to National Planning Policy,
- Contribute to achieving sustainable development,
- Be in general conformity with strategic policies in the development plan for the local area, and
- Be compatible with EU obligations and Human Rights requirements.

The WPC Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations and has involved extensive local community engagement to gather evidence for the content of the Plan. The Working Group has delivered, by hand, updates and notification of meetings to every private resident and commercial business in Winchfield (302 properties) on 10 occasions and have held four Community Engagement meetings, the fifth meeting will be the last public event on 19 June 2022. All comments and feedback received at these meetings is discussed, documented and incorporated into the draft Plan as appropriate reflecting the wishes, concerns and aspirations of Winchfield residents.

The Steering Group (SG) and Working Group (WG) of seven volunteers have met 18 times for formal meetings. The WG has also done an extensive amount of research to provide evidence for the baseline studies, specific to Winchfield, which support the proposed Policies. In addition to evidence produced by the WG, WPC commissioned two studies and surveys on Landscape Character and Key Views of Winchfield by expert landscape consultant Michelle Bolger.

A report has been made to WPC at each of their meetings, six each year, to update on progress. WPC continues to work with Neighbourhood Plan consultant Nick Ward from Carter Jonas and HDC Principal Planners. All documents relating to the Plan are in the public domain on the WPC website.

Following the public meeting on 19 June all comments received will be reviewed and the Plan will be amended where necessary. The next stage in the formal process is the Pre-Submission Draft stage (Reg.14) consultation. Ann Skipper, a highly respected independent Neighbourhood Plan Examiner, will undertake a 'health check' before the first public consultation takes places.

The WG hopes that they will be in a position to ask WPC to formally submit the draft Winchfield Neighbourhood Plan 2020 – 2037 to HDC for public consultation (Reg.16) in early autumn 2022.

The WG and WPC owe tremendous thanks to the commitment of the residents, who have been involved with the Plan Revision over the last two years, and to the volunteers on the WG.

Cllr Williams recommended that people have a look at the We Heart Hart website and particularly at the latest blog by BraveHart which set out the impact of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill on Hart. The Government had recently launched the long-awaited levelling up and regeneration Bill, all 338 pages which, in summary, set out the following:

- National Housing Target - the government seemed to be backing away from the target of 300,000 houses per annum, which meant that Hart's housing target could fall from the current 286 dpa.
- Five-Year Land Supply - the bill proposed to scrap the requirement for councils to maintain a five-year land supply so there would be no ability to push development late in the cycle if a plan is up to date every five years.
- Neighbourhood Plans - the proposals said that Neighbourhood Plans would be strengthened to have equal weight with other planning documents.
- Duty to Cooperate - the current duty to cooperate requirement would be repealed and replaced with a more flexible alignment test. The requirement to build houses for neighbouring authorities appeared to fall away.
- Enhanced Environment Protection - the bill sought to enhance environmental protections. These proposals would make it harder to build in such areas containing SSSIs, SINCs and other protected areas.
- Mandatory Infrastructure Contributions - the bill closed the loophole where developers converting office blocks under permitted development rights were able to avoid infrastructure contributions. This would help the Council adopt a positive approach to Brownfield development.
- Regeneration - new compulsory powers were proposed in the Bill. These should help Councils rejuvenate town centres and regenerate brownfield land.

On first examination, the proposals appeared positive for Hart, particularly in that they appeared to weaken the case the Shapley Heath. The proposal also strengthened powers to drive the regeneration of town centres.

More information could be found on <http://wehearthart.co.uk/home/braveharts-blog/>

The Winchfield NDP update was therefore a very important and relevant activity. Cllr Williams asked that residents help to have it adopted with a resounding turnout and a majority in favour at the referendum next year.

5 AFFORDABLE HOMES

Some 18 months ago the Parish Council engaged with Action Hampshire, a registered housing charity, and HDC to investigate the need for affordable homes in the parish. Under the leadership of Action

Hampshire a Housing Needs Survey was prepared, distributed to all households in the parish and resulted in an excellent 40% response rate. The report, which can be found on the WPC website, identified the need for 6 to 8 affordable homes.

The Parish Council accepted the report on 15 September 2021 and a Working Group was set up, chaired by Action Hampshire with representatives from HDC (planning and housing) and Councillors Hodgetts and Williams from WPC. The Parish Council confirmed that a project should be initiated to determine the viability of a Rural Exception Site in the parish which would provide socially rented properties, available in perpetuity, to those who have a direct connection with the parish.

Action Hampshire instituted a process to contact all landowners in the parish to determine the availability of any suitable land for the Rural Exception Site. A number of potential sites were put forward by the deadline of 31 December 2021.

The next stage in the process was to identify and appoint the Housing Provider. Three organisations, namely Sovereign, Hastoe and Rural England responded to the invitation. All three organisations were formally interviewed by the Working Group in late March followed by a final due diligence exercise to select the most appropriate partner for WPC. English Rural was duly appointed and is now represented on the Working Group.

The planning team at HDC in association with English Rural will now conduct a viability and sustainability assessment on the proposed sites and advise the Working Group on their suitability. The public are encouraged at this stage to nominate additional sites for consideration.

The next stage will be to present these findings at the first of a series of public engagement meetings so that feedback can be obtained on the proposed sites and the outline development plans. The dates of these meetings will be published with good advanced notice to ensure as many of the community can be involved.

It may well take up to a further three years for a site to be completed and the first residents to move in.

6 COMMUNITY BENEFIT SCHEMES

The Chairman advised that funding was available for Community Benefit Schemes and residents were encouraged to come forward with ideas for projects. This money had come from a one-off payment by one of the solar farms and an annual payment by the other solar farm.

In addition to these funds, at 18 May 2022, HDC was holding £47,264.84 of s.106 funds available to finance permitted projects within the parish of Winchfield.

To qualify for s106 funding projects must have “demonstrable leisure and community benefit”. Additionally, HDC encourages WPC to utilise its own funds to supplement investment in the projects. Supplemental funding could come from the Community Benefit Fund. At May 2022 WPC held £23,751 in Community Benefit Funds.

Three s.106 proposals have previously been considered and approved as eligible by HDC:

1. Installation of two defibrillators in the parish.
2. Improved access to the canal towpath that falls within the Parish boundary.
3. Improved broadband speed.

The cost of installing the two defibrillators within the parish has been met with s106 funds. Proposals prepared by the Basingstoke Canal Society to improve the canal footpaths or Barley Mow car park have now fallen under the wider review of the canal being conducted by the Basingstoke Canal Authority. The timing and conclusions of this review have been delayed and remain unclear.

Broadband speeds. Several proposals from Openreach engineers have been received but the latest iteration would improve broadband speed to only 17 properties within the parish (down from c.80 properties in a previous iteration). Discussions cannot be progressed until completion of HCCs re-procurement process for its broadband provider. The procurement process is scheduled to complete in January 2023. In its most recent update Openreach confirmed that Winchfield does fall under the government’s Project Gigabit

broadband improvements programme. This programme is scheduled to commence sometime between January and March 2023 so s.106 funding may not be required. A further update is expected from Openreach at the end of May 2022.

In light of the inability to progress the above projects, WPC recently submitted four outline proposals to HDC to consider their eligibility for s106 funding. At 18 May 2022, guidance from HDC is outstanding.

The projects recently submitted are:

1. Village Hall acoustic rafts. Installation of acoustic rafts in the village hall to improve the hall's acoustics. Expenditure likely to be in the region of £7k.
2. Community land purchase. Purchase of land within the Winchfield Parish boundary as a community asset for use by the community. Should this be supported by HDC, a process would commence to invite local landowners to submit a parcel of land for the community to purchase with funds raised from s106, local donations and potentially WPC funds.
3. Footpath construction. Installation of drainage and hardcore to make a permanent improvement to an existing footpath. This may qualify if HDC agrees that this work is capital (rather than repair and maintenance) by nature due to the work required to provide a better long-term engineered solution.
4. A programme of tree and hedgerow planting to support WPC's status as a Charter Branch of the National Tree Charter and the recent initiative to fund a tree and hedgerow planting scheme to provide environmental and aesthetic improvements, nesting sites and corridors for wildlife and further enhance the Parish's carbon offset credentials.

Any suggestions from WPC parishioners of projects that could be deemed to be "capital" in nature and have "demonstrable leisure and community benefit" for the parish, would be most welcome.

A member of the public suggested that consideration be given to extensions to the footpaths in the parish. She was aware that this could be very expensive but felt it should be explored.

7 FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

The main area of expenditure during 2021/22 was on the review of the Neighbourhood Plan.

In summary:

Balance brought forward from previous year	£58,982
Total receipts	£50,637
Total payments	(£35,059)
End of year balance	£74,560

The year's receipts of £50,637.00 had consisted, in addition to the Precept, of VAT rebates, Solar Farm funding and bank interest. There had also been a grant specifically for the NDP Review and s106 money to fund the purchase of the defibs.

The year's payments of £35,059 had consisted of the following:

NDP Review	£20,656
Running costs (inc Clerk's salary, admin costs and subscriptions)	£6,669
Grants: <i>upkeep of graveyard, Winchfield Festival, Basingstoke Canal</i>	£2,550
Community Benefit Fund	£822
VAT on payments	£4,362

WPC takes into the 2022-2023 year £74,560 together with a Precept of £31,510. The budget for 2022-2023 includes £55,000 for further work on the review of the NDP and other planning matters and £27,000 in the Community Benefit Fund – suggestions from residents as to how this can be spent would be welcome.

8 OPEN FORUM

No items were raised for discussion.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.51 pm.