

Minutes of the Annual Assembly of Framfield Parish held at the Village Hall, Blackboys, on Tuesday, 26 May 2009 at 8 pm

Present

Parish Councillors:-
Eryl Thomas - Chairman
Rob Newton (Vice Chair)
David Andrews

Myran Eade
Peter Friend
Brian Hodge
Fred Thurston

In attendance

Ann Newton - Clerk

Members of the public - 3

1. Apologies for Absence

Mark Moore, Maria Naylor, Ian Paisley and Rita Redman. Councillor Chris Dowling (ESCC).

2. Minutes of the Annual Assembly held on 15 May 2008

It was agreed that the minutes from the Annual Assembly held on 15 May 2008 having been circulated, be approved, adopted and signed as a correct record.

3. Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council

The Chairman's Report was published in the Parish Magazine earlier in the year but he commented on some of the items as follows:-

Eryl thanked all Parish Councillors for their efforts and noted that they are unpaid. There are monthly meetings of the Full Council with the exception of August and December. Additionally, there are four committees covering Finance, Recreation Grounds including allotments, Planning and Environment (everything that is not included in the other committees). Thanks should also go to the Chairmen of these committees and the members who give their time. There will be separate reports from each committee during the meeting. Also to our Responsible Financial Officer, Jan Riddle, Internal Auditor, Arthur Makepeace, our Handyman and Clerk.

Planning: Eryl commented on one major planning item – the dismissal of the Bird in Eye appeals. This came just before the publication of the South East Plan which confirmed that it has increased the amount of houses to be built in Wealden from 8,000 to 11,000 putting Uckfield in the limelight to receive a larger portion of housing.

The Government has introduced a new Permitted Development Rights scheme of planning whereby residents can usually do more without planning permission. This was done to in theory simplify and speed up the planning process. In fact it has complicated it as people are now unsure of what they can and can't do and end up having to take advice in any case!

Environment: The newly implemented Speedwatch campaign has produced some interesting figures particularly for the Blackboys Road area of Framfield. Not only has the amount of people speeding been high but also the volume of traffic. The Police are writing to ESCC with the figures for this area.

The Environment Committee has been very busy not only on traffic-related issues, but also an attempt is being made to rationalise the huge number of streetlights that we have in the Parish. Fred Thurston has also carried out a footpath survey of all the paths in the Parish producing a 'to do' list for ESCC. They are delighted with the report and we will be kept informed of their progress.

Dog Mess – this still seems to be an irritating problem in parts of the Parish. Even though the Parish pays over a thousand pounds a year for bins, people are still unwilling to clear up after their dogs. The WDC Dog Warden is happy and willing to visit any areas where there is a problem.

Pavilions: the project is ongoing and there will be a report later in the meeting.

Framfield Allotments: this is also ongoing and the PC is in the process of endeavouring to make some of the land available to more parishioners.

Crime: we have to thank our PCSO for the closure of a local cannabis factory. Without his local knowledge and communication with residents this would not have happened.

Workload: this never seems to stop going up for the Parish Council. Central Government pass functions down the ranks with the PC at the bottom. We receive and are consulted on the same amount of paperwork as large authorities with an office of staff. Having dipped into reserves for several years this year the precept had to be increased to help top these reserves back up as they are lower than recommended. The same will probably need to happen next year. An article has been placed in the latest Parish Magazine with an explanation of the increase, which in monetary terms is only 50p per month to a Band D household.

Village Markets: they are held on the fourth Saturday in every month and have become a social gathering and community event.

Summer Show: although the primary role is that taken by the Horticultural Society the Show is for everyone.

Parish Magazine: a joint effort between the PC and the Church.

4. Matters arising from those Minutes

Everything was covered during the rest of the meeting.

5. Parish Reports

- **Planning.** In the absence of Maria Naylor, Chair, David Andrews, Vice Chair, read out her report, a copy of which is attached to the minutes.
- **Environment Committee.** David Andrews as Chair read out his report, a copy of which is attached to the minutes.
- **Recreation Grounds/Allotments.** Myran Eade, the Chair, read out his report, a copy of which is attached to the minutes.
 - **Update on the proposals to place a Pavilion on both Framfield and Blackboys recreation grounds.** Rob Newton, the Chairman of the Committee detailed the decisions made at the last meeting.
 - **Blackboys:** Downland Housing was still being consulted on the options for the positioning of the pavilion. The Cricket Club have now raised a total of £20,000 and feels that they have done almost as much as they can. As the recreation ground comes under the auspices of the PC, there are grants available that can be applied for in the Council's name.
 - **Framfield:** If a grant were obtained from the Football Foundation, this would be for 50% of the total build cost. However, the building would be to their specification and costs – more than double the estimate the PC has obtained. This would mean having to raise more than the current amount of funds to reach the other 50%! Mark More is investigating the possibility of obtaining a grant from Sport England
 - **General:**
 - A Project Manager would be needed for each site – this should be a member of the Parish Council in both cases.
 - As it seemed as though Blackboys had completed the first hurdle, in that the Cricket Club had carried out significant fundraising, they could now move on to the second stage. Framfield had not reached that level. It was therefore agreed that Blackboys would be moved forward as phase one of the overall project with Framfield as phase two.
- **Finance Committee represented by the Chairman of the Parish Council, Eryl Thomas.** The Committee consists of five Councillors (Chair, Vice Chair and the Chairmen of the three committees) plus Jan Riddle (book keeper) and Arthur Makepeace (Internal Auditor) who randomly checks the books and carries out an audit trail every quarter. External auditors Mazars audit the books each year.

Eryl Thomas reported that the budget for 2009/10 is £41,000. It appears that the Council spends slightly less than average than other parishes per elector. For the last two to three years funds have been taken out of reserves and these need replenishing, hence one of the reasons for the higher than average increase of

17% this year. Our general reserves should be between a half and two thirds of the precept – there is currently only £18,000 in the account.

The 2008/09 budget was £37,000 and the Council came within a few hundred pounds of the target. It is difficult to smooth out the expenditure from year to year as some items only come up every few years such as the topping up of woodchipping in the play areas or the need to replace a set of swings (some £11,000!).

Our Standing Orders dictate that we obtain three quotes for any item above a few hundred pounds.

The grass/hedge cutting maintenance contracts will be up for renewal next year. They are for a three-year contract at a fixed price.

- **Village Hall, Blackboys, represented by Eryl Thomas, Chairman of the Management Committee.** Following a few years of building activities the Committee has achieved what it set out to do and in doing so has increased the usage and encouraged a wider spread. The Council contributed £5,000 for a new, extended car park for Hall and allotment users alike, which has proved very popular.
- **Memorial Hall, Framfield, represented by Eryl Thomas, Chairman of the Management Committee.** Following the recent change in administration, the Hall is feeling a bit shaky; bookings are low, particularly with the restricted usage due to the School bookings. However a new contract has been negotiated for the use by the School with ESCC. The facilities need improving and the Management Committee is to come up with a list of particular items for improvement.

The Halls are not in competition with each other and sensible pricing structures show this to encourage a wider use.

6. Any Other Parish Business/Questions

There were three questions from the floor.

- Where are the bridle paths in the Parish and are they marked as such on the footpath map? It was thought that there were very few and that they were not marked. However, the Clerk could contact ESCC for the full details.
- Could the streetlights be run by solar power? Fred Thurston detailed that basically the cost to do anything to the lights, remove or change them, is huge, and is something that the PC is currently debating.
- What areas are designated dog mess free zones? The Clerk replied that under the Dog Fouling Designation Act the Council had earmarked various areas such as the recreation grounds and churchyard whereby letting your dog foul and not clearing it up was enforceable by a fine. However, the general opinion seemed to be where there is a pavement and often with a speed zone, ie not in the rural country lanes where the speed limit is derestricted.

Eryl Thomas thanked everyone for attending. *The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.*

Chairman.....

Date