

MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

HELD 16/05/2017

AT ST JAMES CHURCH WEST HANNEY at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs: Chris Surman (Chairman), Trevor Brettell, Graham Garner & Eddie Wilkinson

Dawn Hutcheon (Clerk) + 5 parishioners

Apologies: Cllr. Kay Sayers

Chairman's Report

Last year I began my report with the comment 'we have had yet another busy year', well I think you will agree that comment could be used yet again. We have spent many hours at meetings with planning officers, applicants and other interested parties including the most important of course our village residents.

Although we lost the battle to prevent development of the field north of School Road I feel particularly pleased at the outcome of The Old Orchard site where after discussions with the directors of Sweetcroft we gained their agreement to go for just 8 houses on the site rather than the higher number they originally wanted. Sweetcroft actually submitted the two applications to cover itself and the Vale planners wanted the higher density with affordable housing included but with Matt Barbers backing we went along to the Vale Planning Team offices for a full and frank discussion in an attempt to win their support. We did not succeed but in the end the planning committee listened to our case, rejected the application for 11 and supported the application for only 8 houses on the site with the developers agreeing to pay a substantial amount to fund affordable housing elsewhere.

We were also successful in negotiating with Sweetcroft for the transfer of the seven and a half acre field to the parish council for the benefit of the village, and last week received the actual Land Registry Title Document from our solicitor. As this field adjoins the Community Woodland it really is a wonderful fit. New signs are now in place hailing 'Church Farm Meadow', which we intend to leave/develop as a wildlife/wildflower area. Alan Cottrell has recently agreed to keep the field cut for us at the appropriate time in exchange for the hay crop.

Graham Garner did a sterling job as Chairman of the Woodland Committee, organising working volunteer parties for maintenance work on the rides and on the stiles and gates etc. With Graham's increasing responsibilities elsewhere, he asked to stand down earlier this year and I would like to pay tribute to all his efforts and endeavours. Thank you Graham on behalf of us all.

Paul Sayers subsequently agreed to take over the role of Chairman of the group and has already overseen several working parties. A new Kissing Gate has been installed to form a walk through from the Woodland to our new meadow and another will follow shortly. A new field gate has also been installed into the meadow and a new stile constructed. Once we have met representatives from Sweetcroft on site we will be in a position to decide what type of boundary fencing we want

to the southern boundary of the field. Sweetcroft are also obligated to plant a number of trees in our field to replace those removed from the Old Orchard site, and we want to discuss the actual planting area with them.

We owe thanks to all the residents from both villages who turn out for a few hours on the working party days, but especially to Des Thomas who continues to keep the rides cut with his tractor and equipment

Thank you Paul for your continuing planning and hard work.

I think that as a small parish council we should take pride in the fact that we have been able to negotiate the transfer of well over thirty acres of land to our village over the past few years. Hopefully our neighbours in East Hanney also appreciate our success.

The local Vale Plan was adopted just a few months ago and this should hopefully take some of the pressure off our small village in terms of planning applications. Eddie Wilkinson continues to coordinate all our responses to incoming applications and we owe him thanks for all his efforts. We held an extra special meeting in the church in June last year, which was attended by around 40 villagers, to allow residents to give their views on 3 major applications, namely 15 houses north of school road, the development in The Old Orchard and the application for 20 houses behind Priors Court. I have personally also met and discussed with many residents their concerns over numerous planning matters during the past year.

Graham and Eddie have been working with East Hanney Parish Council representatives but also on their own to form the basis of our new Neighbourhood Plan, and we should not underestimate the number of hours that they have put in on this role. Thank you both, again on behalf of us all. The latest meeting was held in the village hall only last evening and Eddie and Graham will be giving us an update shortly.

The problem with ownership of common land throughout the village continues with no answer in sight. It seems totally wrong that we as a parish council have to spend money on mowing, clearing, and tree stewardship of many of the areas when we are told we cannot prove ownership. In one particular instance this year a property owner was unable to sell her house as nobody could prove who owned the land fronting the property. This year alone we have spent thousands on making trees safe on Headings Pond, along Church Street and behind the school.

West Hanney Parish Council website is now up and running after work from Graham . Thank you for that Graham and for your continued work in keeping the site updated with our minutes etc

So, another busy years I keep getting told that the current parish council team have been very unlucky over the past few years due to the large number of contentious planning applications that have been submitted for our small villages I think that is probably true, although our sister parish council in East Hanney have had a much bigger nightmare, but I would like to finish by thanking each and every one of you, as councillors for the hard work you have put in, and continue to put in, on behalf of our village and for the support you have given me as chairman over the past few years.

Neighbourhood Plan

Graham Garner updated the meeting on its progress.

Signed **(Chairman)**

Date