

## **KEMSING ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

### **Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2004 at 8.00 pm in the St Edith hall, Kemsing**

**Present:** Mr A C Andrews (in the Chair)  
Parish Councillors D V Bennett, P Burfield, B D Buttifant, M Cole, G R Croughton, A M Davies, R J Dawes, P Kendall, W Ross, A V Waters, M Williams.

**In Attendance:** Sevenoaks District Councillor Mrs J B Course  
County Councillor R S Norman  
Clerk to the Council V Pearson  
Deputy Clerk S Palmer  
Approx. 60 members of the public

**Apologies:** Police Constable J Allen

#### **1. Introduction by Chairman**

Mr Andrews welcomed everyone to the meeting and commented upon the good turnout and went on to explain the new format for the meeting. He thanked Councillors for their efforts and support over the past year and reminded the meeting that none of the councillors are paid and all work under extremely restrictive and constricting regulations. There are, he said, even tribunals to hand out sanctions and punishments. I think we are in that difficult situation where it is true to say that no state is such that government regulation and interference cannot make it worse

#### **2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2003**

Two minor amendments to the minutes of the previous meeting were noted after which they were approved by the meeting as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **3. Matters Arising**

##### **(a) Highways**

Mrs B Watson commented upon the fact that the road immediately north of the railway bridge in Childsbridge Lane had been resurfaced and thanked the Council for its efforts in bringing this about and commented upon the fact that the road surface at the entrance to St Edith Hall had been repaired however it was still not entirely satisfactory.

She also commented asked about the possibility of a mini round-a-bout at the Dynes Road crossroads and was advised that, given all the priorities, the possibility of this being provided was next to nil. She also said the automatic warning light was not working and asked that this be looked into.

(b) CCTV Cameras

The question of the use of CCTV cameras was raised by Mrs D Farrow and Mrs J Eaton commented on vandalism, which she saw as an increasing problem. Nigel Ashworth also expressed concern with regard to the safety of shopkeepers especially the postmaster. The Chairman drew attention to the cost not only of providing cameras but also their monitoring. Parish Councillor Godfrey Croughton pointed out that in the November 2003 Newsletter parishioners had been asked to inform the Council if they were in favour of the installation of CCTV cameras. He went on to inform the meeting that there had been no response. District Councillor Mrs J Course enlightened the Meeting with some recent crime statistics which showed that overall crime had increased but only very slightly. Burglary and theft, especially theft from motor vehicles, showed substantial decreases whereas violence, particularly violence against the person, appeared to be on the increase.

The Chairman at this stage read out the report of PC Jackie Allen the Community Police Officer and drew the attention of the meeting to the section of the report dealing with the Town Centre Shop Safe Radio Scheme. This scheme provides shopkeepers with a hand held radio monitored by the CCTV Control Centre at Sevenoaks District Council and provides a direct link to the Community Officer and other police patrols.

**4. Consideration of matters raised by Parishioners**

(a) Concessionary Fares

The matter of the withdrawal of the 20p concessionary fare was raised by Mrs B Watson and adversely commented upon by several other parishioners. District Councillor J Course explained her position with regard to attempting to promote concessionary fares for those in need, i.e. those in receipt of benefit, however another retired parishioner stated that this seemed like means testing.

Parish Councillor Godfrey Croughton gave some instances of the very high fares charged by the bus company in relation to distances travelled and which adversely affected people living in Kemsing. The Chairman said that the Parish Council would take this matter up with the bus operating company

After more discussion Mr Watson read out the following proposal:

*'On behalf of OAPs in Kemsing, we urge the Parish Council to approach Sevenoaks District Council to reconsider their abolition of the 20p concessionary bus fare.*

*Having already paid £25 for this privilege, pensioners have made full use of the 20p fare to go to Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells and Bromley, particularly for hospital visits.*

*It should be noted that 550 people have written to Mr Fallon to retain vital bus routes. Unless the 20p is retained after June, there will be fewer people using the buses anyway.'*

The meeting wholeheartedly supported this proposal which was carried without being put to a vote.

(b) Policing in the Village

In a letter, Mrs Harrington outlined the problems she and her husband were experiencing with several break-ins at their horticultural business, MDH, and commented upon the lack of policing in the village. Various parishioners pointed out that burglars, intent on breaking in, had only to observe the police patrol and take the obvious evading action. This was so, it was said, even when Kemsing had a village 'bobby' who patrolled on a bicycle.

County Councillor R Norman, who had had a recent meeting with the Chief Constable, outlined the strategies of 'high profile policing' and/or 'catching the criminal' and said that more money was being invested in the training of more Police Officers who would soon be fully trained and be 'out with the community'.

(c) St Edith Hall - Future Use

The Chairman read out a letter received from Mr D Eley which asked if the matter would justify holding a special Parish Meeting where various options could be discussed. The Chairman commented that the Parish Council were not aware until the last minute that the lease of the old billiard room was to be surrendered by the Club who were now occupying that part of the premises under a licence which initially runs until 17<sup>th</sup> April 2004. The Chairman explained to the parishioners that the Parish Council was the Trustee of the building and that the management of the Hall was the responsibility of the Hall Management Committee (HMC) whose members included a number of Parish Councillors. Nigel Ashworth, a HMC member, said that any suggestions for the use of the building should be put in writing to Marie Cole the Secretary of the HMC. Terry Steely, Vice Chairman HMC, wished also to express an interest in considering any suggestions. Finally Don Eley said he hoped the matter could be looked at again in six months time.

(d) Education in the Village

The allocation of grammar school places and the effect on schooling in the village was raised by Mr Ross Cartwright. He said that by the Local Education Authority allocating places to successful Kemsing pupils at Invicta Grammar School, which was to the east of Maidstone, parents may in the future reconsider sending their children to Kemsing School. This could eventually affect the quality of education available in the village.

The Chairman instanced the case of a pupil at Edenbridge being allocated a place at Invicta GS and commented upon the

travelling time this pupil would be faced with at beginning and end of each day. The general feeling of the meeting was that the allocation system operated by the LEA was a shambles with many parents now writing the their MP in the hope of some common sense being brought to bear on the matter. County Councillor Ronnie Norman told the meeting that there was a new allocation system in place and that the Appeals Committee would take into account what was regarded as an 'acceptable travelling time' for each pupil and urged parents to wait another week to allow the re-allocation exercise to be completed. Mr Norman undertook to speak to affected parents after the end of the meeting.

**5. Vote of Confidence**

As the meeting was ending Mr Nigel Ashworth proposed a vote a thanks to all of the Parish Councillors for their unstinting efforts on behalf of the village over the past twelve months. The parishioners joined in this sentiment with a round of applause.

Mr Andrews thanked everyone for attending and said that tea and biscuits were now available and encouraged parishioners to speak to the elected representatives about any matters which concerned them

The meeting closed at 21.17hrs