

KEMSING ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 16 March 2005
at 8.00 p.m. 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 R Cole, G R Croughton, R J Dawes,
W Ross, A V Waters

In Attendance: County Councillor R S Norman
Sevenoaks District Councillor Mrs J B Course
Parish Clerk Mrs Y Tredoux
Deputy Parish Clerk Mrs S Palmer
Approx. 70 Members of the Public

Apologies: District Councillor Mr S R Reay
Parish Councillors P Kendall, M Williams
Mr R Willmore, Mrs D Farrow, Mr J Farrow

1. **Introduction by Chairman**

Mr Andrews welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the Councillors present, together with the Clerk and Deputy Clerk. He explained the format for the evening and requested the agreement of those present to consider a number of proposals that had been received after the Agenda had been printed and were therefore not listed. Agreement was received.

2. **Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 March 2004**

The Minutes were approved as a true record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

3. **Consideration of Proposals**

A number of proposals had been submitted prior to the meeting and the Vicar, Nigel Ashworth, was invited by the Chairman to pick which one should go first.

(a) **Affordable Housing**

Mr Eley was invited to present his proposal. Mr Eley responded that he wished Mr Ian Heddle to present the motion on this occasion.

Mr Heddle pointed out that in May 2004 The Rural Housing Trust had visited three sites within the village at Fairfield, Childsbridge Lane and Nightingale Road. In July 2004 a letter had been received advising that the only suitable site for affordable housing was that at Nightingale Road. Mr Heddle asked why there was no mention of the proposed site in the Newsletter issued in March 2005 and why residents in Cleves Road and Nightingale Road had not been approached by the Parish Council to inform them of this proposal.

Residents were concerned at this perceived lack of communication. They were also concerned about retaining the Green Belt and the increase in traffic such a proposal would have on a single track road leading to an old people's home which requires 24 hours per day access. The loss of views from the existing properties was also a concern.

Mr Andrews responded that Minutes of Parish Council Meetings have shown and recorded the interest that the Parish Council has had in finding a suitable site for affordable housing in the village. The Nightingale Road site is the least preferred option by the Parish Council but when the sites were discussed at a meeting between The Rural Housing Trust and Sevenoaks District Council Planning Department, it emerged that the Nightingale Road site was the only one likely to gain planning permission as the other two sites were within areas of high air pollution, due to their proximity to the M26, and could therefore no longer be considered.

Consideration could also only be given to land owned by the Parish Council and no local landowners had come forward as being willing to give land for this purpose. The sole landowner who had done so was the owner of the site in Childsbridge Lane. He was particularly keen for his land to be used for this purpose, as was the Parish Council, and it was a particular blow that the land had been deemed as unsuitable.

Mr Andrews explained that the need for affordable housing within the village had arisen as a result of the Village Survey with a need for housing in the village that young people can afford. He explained that there had not been any direct communication with parishioners at this time because so many aspects of such a project were still undetermined. It is the wish of the Parish Council to have a large controlling interest in who lives in the properties. If this is not forthcoming, then the whole project will be abandoned. The idea of the housing is for village people, or those who benefit the village. Mr John Allen emphasised this point with the loss of Kemsing School teachers due to housing costs. Until a drawing has been produced by The Rural Housing Trust of what they envisage on the site, it was felt that it would not be constructive to present an idea without a prospective plan to comment upon. This drawing is currently being prepared and as soon as it has been received a Village Information Day will be held.

Nigel Ashworth explained the role of The Rural Housing Trust and their relationship with Parish Councils to build affordable housing.

Mr Eley proposed that the Parish Council hold a meeting in April to explain to residents the decisions that have already been made, together with a map showing the exact location of the proposed site to be sold to The Rural Housing Trust.

Carried by a majority vote.

(b) **Heritage Centre**

Mr Bob Banister, a member of the Heritage Centre Management Committee, presented a history of the Heritage Centre in Kemsing together with an outline of the work it carries out today in the village.

Mr Banister pointed out that when the Heritage Centre was first formed the Parish Council was the body with overall responsibility for the Heritage Centre although subsequently the Parish Council changed from having overall responsibility to that of being the enabling body to set up the Heritage Centre.

The Heritage Centre first occupied premises in 1999 in the Barn at the Wheatsheaf Public House and then, after the Wheatsheaf changed hands and the Barn was converted to a restaurant in 2001, at the Youth Hostel. The Youth Hostel is now to be sold due to a decline in occupancy and after September 2005 the Heritage Centre will be homeless again.

Mr Banister proposed: That the Meeting supports that Heritage Centre Association in its search for a new home in the centre of the village.
Seconded by Mrs Erica Cole.

Mr Andrews asked Mr Banister what he wanted the Parish Council to do to help.

The possible use of the recently vacated room in St Edith Hall was raised.

Mr Andrews replied that when St Edith Hall was given to the Parish Council for use by the village it was presented under a 'Deed of Gift'. This meant that although the Parish Council own the building, they cannot interfere with its running as this is handled by a Management Committee.

Mr Eley asked that a message be sent from the Meeting to the St Edith Hall Management Committee supporting the use of the vacant room by the Heritage Centre Association.

Mr Burfield said that it was not a simple matter to just hand a room over. It would require a new entrance to be built as St Edith Hall is not open to the public at weekends. The Hall is often booked as a block for private wedding receptions and parties which would prevent visitors gaining access to the Heritage Centre through the Hall or from using the conveniences within the Hall.

It was pointed out that building within the Hall would be less expensive than building a new building within the village and where could it be built that was close enough for visitors to get to, many of whom are elderly. It was noted that the number of visitors to the Heritage Centre had reduced since the move to the Youth Hostel as many elderly people found it difficult to walk up the steep hill.

Mr Andrews made a motion that the Meeting supports the proposal put forward by Mr Banister.

The motion was carried by a majority.

(c) **CCTV**

This subject has recently been discussed at the Parish Council Meetings and although no proposal has been put forward for the Annual Parish Meeting, a total of five letters have been received referring to this matter and it was felt that a discussion on CCTV would be of benefit.

Mr Andrews advised the meeting that even though this matter had been discussed fully at Parish Council Meetings over a year ago, it had been brought up again in recent months.

Mr Burfield read a summary of the recently published Home Office Research Study 292 which assesses all aspects of CCTV. The report states that there is no evidence to suggest that CCTV has any effect on crime reduction. This is echoed by Sevenoaks District Council who run CCTV surveillance cameras but cannot give evidence that proves they have reduced the crime rates.

Mr Burfield pointed out that in order to be accepted as evidence in a Court of Law the camera equipment must be of a very high standard, which is very expensive. Without 24 hour monitoring, CCTV would be used mainly for the identification of offenders. This would be a very expensive system for little return in the solving of crimes and the Councillors felt the village would not benefit from any installation.

Mr Andrews cited figures from Bluewater that has had the experience of having 800 cameras manned 24 hours per day at a cost of 3.4 million a year to maintain with an estimate of £500 in crime saving.

Mrs Springall asked about the recently reported systems at Hadlow and Wrotham.

Mr Andrews had no specific information to offer with respect to the CCTV systems at Hadlow or Wrotham but in the case of the system in Seal Village, this was installed to monitor and discourage damage to property owned by the Parish Council and in particular the new pavilion in Seal Village. Other areas and businesses in the village were covered or monitored. The cost effectiveness of this system is not known.

Mrs Springall also asked about the psychological effect of CCTV, both as a deterrent to would be offenders and as a tool to make the residents feel safer.

It was responded that the government report quotes people having CCTV installed in their areas but that after a year, with no obvious reduction in offences, they felt no safer with CCTV than they did without it.

The result of this government report has not caused the Parish Council to alter its decision.

(d) **Village Facilities**

Mr Jim McIntyre spoke of his concerns about the hall facilities in the village and put forward the following proposal:

1. That a Working Group be set up to assess the long term requirements for hall facilities within the village.
2. The group to be chaired by a Member of the Parish Council. Suggested members of the Working Group should come from the following:
St Edith's Hall Management Committee

Kemsing Sports Association
 Parochial Church Council
 Scouts Group
 St Edith Club.

3. Additional members to be co-opted as required ensuring that all village groups are represented.
4. A report should be produced and submitted to the Parish Council in a time scale to be advised.

Mr McIntyre said that he had got the impression from talking to people that it was generally felt all the existing buildings were under-utilised and that it cost a lot of money to maintain them all. It was felt that a plan should be put in place, planning not only for the immediate future but also for several years beyond, that included not only the maintenance of the buildings but also potential activities that could be carried out within the halls to continue their viability.

Mr Andrews pointed out that the St Edith Hall Management Committee was already doing this in regard to St Edith Hall but work was expensive as it was a Grade II Listed Building. He also pointed out that the Scouts had been in touch with the Parish Council concerning their building that needed considerable repair work carried out and how funds could be raised to carry out the work.

Nigel Ashworth commented that unless a more constructive attitude was developed towards the buildings, they would end up falling into disrepair and end up being sold off. He felt that use of the buildings would increase if money was spent to bring them up to date as they were starting to look very shabby.

Nigel offered to invite representatives from the various clubs to a meeting if the Parish Council did not want to.

A vote followed on Mr McIntyre's motion that was seconded by Mr Ashworth. This was CARRIED by a majority.

4. **Any Other Business**

- (a) A letter was read by Mr Andrews from Mrs Babs Watson who, unfortunately, could not attend in person. Mrs Watson wrote concerning the School Control Lights at Childsbridge Lane which were working at last. She also mentioned the state of the roads which is a continuing problem. Mrs Watson's letter will be passed to Mr Buttifant, Chairman of the Highways Committee, to discuss further at the next Highways Committee Meeting.
- (b) Mr Andrews pointed out that there are currently two vacancies on the Parish Council. He invited parishioners to consider undertaking these roles if they have a wide interest in the village. The appointments would be initially for two years until the next elections.

Mr Basil Course offered a vote of thanks to members of the Parish Council who do a very good job on a volunteer basis.

- (c) District Councillor Mrs Joyce Course announced that due to family and health reasons she had chosen to retire. Her successor will be announced in the near future.

Mr Andrews gave a vote of thanks from the Chair to Mrs Course. He referred to her as a great lady whose hard work on behalf of the village will be missed.

The Chairman, Mr Tony Andrews, declared the meeting closed at 9.40 pm.

Following the closure, informal discussion continued over tea, coffee and biscuits.

Sharon Palmer
Deputy Parish Clerk