

# HALSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 24 MAY 2010 AT 19.30 IN THE PARISH ROOM CHURCH ROAD, HALSTEAD

**PRESENT:** Cllr. David Taylor, Chairman of Halstead Parish Council  
Cllrs. Jeff Baldwin, Tony Bent, Barrie Blundell, Terry Brooker.  
PCSO Supervisor Dennis Glasspool, PCSO Nick Barker, Mr Geoffrey Kitchener,  
Rev. Hugh Thomas, 16 parishioners, the Clerk.  
Guest speakers: Chief Inspector Adrian Futers; Mrs Joanna Overton-Fox, Halstead Tree Warden  
Mr Geoffrey Kitchener, representative of the Knockholt and Halstead Sick Poor Fund

The meeting commenced at 19.30

- 1 **APOLOGIES** were received from Parish Cllrs. Karen Grosvenor and Christine Halliday; County Cllr. Richard Parry and District Cllr. John Grint.  
The Chairman welcomed CI Adrian Futers and the other representatives of West Kent Police, Mr Geoffrey Kitchener, Mrs Joanna Overton-Fox and all parishioners.
- 2 **RESOLVED: THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 5 MAY 2009 WERE APPROVED AND SIGNED AS A TRUE RECORD**
- 3 **CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW OF THE YEAR – CLLR.TAYLOR**

The year 2009-10 has been another busy one for the Parish Council.

**Planning** issues continue to occupy a lot of the Council's time. Although work is well under way on the development of Halstead Place, there have been frequent additional planning applications throughout the year regarding various issues on the site. Cllr. Bent will provide more detail on those matters as part of his planning report.

A planning application for Fort Halstead has still not been received, although discussions with the developer, Hines, began over 2 years ago. Hopefully, Cllr. Bent will also provide more detail on the background issues relating to Fort Halstead, and the work that the council has been doing as members of the Fort Halstead Working Group.

As far as **Highways** issues are concerned, the Parish Council has made it clear to Kent Highways that we are extremely dissatisfied with the level of service we received from them during the snows of last December and January. Roads were left ungritted, which resulted in bus services being diverted, and passengers being asked to leave buses at Park Corner and walk into the village. We have tried extremely hard to get a representative of Kent Highways to attend this evening's meeting to answer questions about highways policy, particularly regarding the gritting of roads, and more particularly bus routes, but, unfortunately, they are no longer prepared to attend evening meetings. As an alternative, we asked County Councillor Richard Parry to attend, if he was able to answer policy questions, (as he is also a member of the Transportation Board), but he recently went into hospital, and so was also unavailable.

We also asked Transport for London to consider re-routing the R5 and R10 buses down Watercroft Road along Old London Road, and back along Shoreham Lane. Inevitably, they would not consider implementing this change, although they were strangely reluctant to say why. The Parish Council has agreed to invite a TfL representative to a local meeting, to explain why they are not in favour of the change.

We were also involved in a major consultation about the introduction of parking charges for commuters at Knockholt Station. Cllr. Baldwin will no doubt provide further detail about this issue in his report.

We have also had a busy year, either refurbishing parish property, or introducing new facilities. During the year this Parish Room has been repaired and redecorated outside, at considerable cost; the fabric of the bus stop at the crossroads has also been repaired and repainted; and we have also introduced new lighting at the entrance to the Recreation Ground; this last item is due to the prompting of our 2 lady councillors, Cllr. Halliday and Cllr. Grosvenor. I would like to thank County Cllr. Richard Parry for the Member's Grant that he made available for the purchase and installation of the new lighting.

We have also had a request from a parishioner, to reinstate the old entrance to the Recreation Ground. Council has decided to seek advice from safety experts before a final decision is taken about this.

The Council agreed to fund the Bulk Freighter Service, and we have agreed to do the same again this coming year. We also have agreement in principle from SDC to hand over the land opposite the houses in Beldam Haw to the Council for use as allotments. However, tying up the paperwork is taking an extremely long time, and the Council would like SDC to display a greater urgency than they have in the past to resolve this matter as swiftly as possible.

I mentioned in last year's report that we had increased the **parish precept** by only £14 across the board, which was an increase of .0025%. This year the precept has increased by £527, mainly because Council agreed to put money back into our reserves to cover some of the expenditure on the Parish Room. This amounts to a 1.3% increase compared with last year. Since we are told that inflation is currently running at more than 3%, I hope that parishioners will agree that we have again been successful in limiting expenditure as far as possible. I would like to thank all the parishioners and councillors who took part in this year's parish clean up day at the end of April. We collected 15 black sacks full of rubbish. I think it is perhaps worth the Council considering whether we should have a second clean up day during the autumn, given the vast amount of rubbish we find discarded around the parish.

I would like to offer the council's thanks to the Rose & Crown for their continuing financial support for the flowerbeds around the parish, either through a direct donation or via one of their monthly quizzes. The money is greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank those residents in Southdene and Parkside who have provided additional flower boxes along the verge of Knockholt Road, and who continue to mow the verge and other grass areas so regularly. It does both them and the village proud.

Again, I would like to record the Council's thanks to our County and District Councillors for their assistance throughout the year.

Thanks also to the Clerk for the work she has undertaken on our behalf during the year, and for the assistance she has given me. The report and accounts for 2009/10 have already been passed by the Internal Auditor; and this is mainly due to the diligence of our Clerk.

It is likely that issues connected with the development of Fort Halstead will come to a head during the next council year, so our final year of office, before the parish council elections in May next year, is also likely to be an extremely busy one.

#### **4 PRESENTATION OF THE END OF YEAR ACCOUNTS**

The receipts and payments sheet for the end of year 31 March 2010 had been circulated. The accounts have been internally audited and are presently with the External Auditor in Plymouth. The accounts are available for inspection by parishioners on application and the dates for this will be advertised after the external audit has been completed.

The receipts and payments sheet can be viewed on the Parish Council website [www.halsteadparish.org.uk](http://www.halsteadparish.org.uk)

#### **5. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES**

##### **5.1 AMENITIES & HIGHWAYS – CLLR. JEFF BALDWIN**

###### **Parish Room**

This has been redecorated and renovated during the last year and looks superb. To book this hall and the Pavilion contact the Clerk. The hourly hire charges are very reasonable.

###### **Allotments**

This matter is moving very slowly. The District Council has written to every householder in Beldam Haw to advise them that the land is being transferred to the Parish Council. In the near future a letter will be written by the District Council to all those on the land advising that they must vacate within a given period.

###### **Flower Beds**

These are much admired and appreciated by parishioners. Council thanks Mr Bob Baker of the Rose & Crown for his monthly sponsorship plus donations that he makes through the year. Kent Xtra (West Kent Housing Association) also sponsored the flower beds in 2009/10 and an application has been made to this organisation for support in 2010/11.

Thanks must also be given to Mr John Trevor who maintains and pays for many of the flower boxes on the grass verges in Knockholt Road; parishioners have expressed their enjoyment in these.

### **Dog Fouling**

This is still a problem and, even with the introduction of another dog waste bin, the situation appears to have worsened. Complaints are frequently made by users of the Recreation Ground about the amount of dog waste on the grass.

PCSO Barker will issue spot penalties to a dog owner or walker who does not clear up the dog's excrement.

### **Knockholt Station**

Parking charges will not be introduced for those people parking on the highway. Safety yellow lineage will be introduced on the corner of roads and in the bus stop area. This is the responsibility of Kent Highway Services and there has been no indication of timescale for this work to be undertaken.

### **Snow and Gritting**

Halstead Village had experienced considerable problems during the last winter. Letters of complaint had been written to Kent Highway Services and the bus service providers.

KHS are reviewing its Winter Policy in the light of 2009/10 in preparation winter 2010/11.

### **Highways**

Most the village potholes have been repaired. The policy following the bad winter was to relay stretches of damaged roadway rather than just make spot repairs.

### **Speed Watch**

This is operating in the Village. Volunteers to join the team would be much appreciated. Please contact either the Clerk or Cllr. Baldwin for information.

## **5.2 PLANNING – CLLR. TONY BENT**

May I start by thanking the other three members of the Planning Committee for their support and their regular attendance at Planning Committee meetings over the past twelve months: in particular the Vice Chairman of the Committee Cllr. Terry Brooker for standing in when I have been unable to attend. The other committee members are Cllrs. Mrs Karen Grosvenor and Christine Halliday.

Well over three years ago (in January 2007), representatives of the USA based developer Hines UK held their first meeting with officers and councillors of the District Council to present Hines' vision for the re-development of Fort Halstead. It was way back on 26 April 2008 that many of us present here this evening attended one of the three public meetings held at the Fort to view Hines' proposals.

Over the past two years your Parish Council has done it's best to keep abreast of each twist and turn on the run up to the planning application. Most of you will be aware that until a planning application is received your Parish Council is legally prevented from taking any vote to either support or oppose the redevelopment proposals put forward by Hines. However that does not mean that Parish Councillors have been sitting back waiting for an application to materialise (as it surely will).

The Parish Council has been working hard on your behalf in the following ways:

1. By attending meeting held by the District Council which relate to the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) which will replace the existing planning regulation for Sevenoaks District. At the heart of these new planning rules is the so called 'Core Strategy' which is defined as, '*the special vision of what a local authority wants to achieve*'. A cynic might just say it is more what a Local Authority is required to achieve by Central Government dictate to meet the perceived national interest;
2. Your Parish Council has been communicating with the representatives of the surrounding Parish Councils to research and share knowledge. This will help each Parish Council to respond effectively and promptly when a planning application does arrive. Meetings of this Inter-Parish Council Working Group have continued over the past twelve months and are on going. We report progress at monthly Parish Council meetings when the public are welcome to ask us questions. In August last year four Parish Councillors made a very useful visit to Kings Hill Parish Council. Many of you will be aware that the major re-development of the Old West Malling airfield there is well established and still growing. Anyone wishing to know what Fort Halstead might grow to look like should certainly find time to explore Kings Hill.;
3. Your Parish Council has a duty to negotiate with SDC and the developer (Hines UK) before a planning application is received to establish what Section 106 Planning Obligations may be justified to benefit your community. A 'reasonable' planning obligation is defined thus: *a payment or action which will seek to restore facilities, resources and amenities to a quality equivalent to that existing before the development*, (source para. B6 ODPM circ 05/2005).  
To meet this duty your Parish Council has held a series of Extraordinary Parish Council meetings with representatives of village organisations which are solely devoted to Section 106 agreements. These

meetings are public and all are welcome. Not all village organisations have responded in detail. This is a matter of regret to me personally: if it is of concern to you too then why not come along to the next meeting and ask questions.

The Parish Council cannot by itself arrive at conclusions. We can only listen, advise and encourage the village organisations to come, ask questions and to go away and do the necessary 'home work'. So far just two village organisations have come forward with needs which may be quantifiable and reasonable. These are St Margaret's Church in whose parochial boundary the entire Fort Halstead redevelopment will sit and the Halstead Scouts Group. The needs of the village Primary School have been hijacked by KCC which retains the right to spend any Section 106 payments as and where it wishes. The Parish Council has more work to do before the Section 106 progress can be moved on.

4. Representatives of your Parish Council hope to attend this coming August/September the 'Examination in Public of the Core Strategy', to which I referred earlier. This so called 'Examination' will be undertaken by a government appointed inspector and will be held in the Council Chamber at Sevenoaks District Council. This Core Strategy is highly significant to the outcome of Hines' planning application. Hines UK has serious objections to the Core Strategy as it stands now. This is because the Fort Halstead site is not at present designated for mixed use redevelopment (that means that the right to replace employment buildings with housing is not enshrined in the Core Strategy).

Those who have time and interest to attend the hearing (which may last for a full week or so) will certainly learn much of interest. You will hear Hines UK representatives or their legal argue the case for up to 1000 homes to be built on the site. You will be able to judge for yourself whether it is the public or corporate interest which is being served! I hope that some of you will attend and then feed your thoughts back to the Parish Council. That way we can get a proper debate going within our community. I hope to meet some of you at that hearing.

## **6. REPORT FROM THE KNOCKHOLT & HALSTEAD SICK POOR FUND – GEOFFREY KITCHENER**

This report is provided by me, Geoffrey Kitchener, as Halstead Parish Council's representative trustee, who undertakes the paperwork for the Fund, which is a charitable trust. The Fund's trustees include Knockholt residents; and the other trustees from Halstead are the Rector and Val Dennett – many thanks to them.

The charity's original asset was a house in Knockholt for the accommodation of a district nurse. Its main asset is now £1580 in a deposit account. In common with other bodies holding deposits, its income has shrunk. As a relatively small charity, it is seeking to wind itself up by applying its capital as well as income. It has reduced its capital by 30% in the last 3 years, a trend which continues.

We are open to suggestions for the application of funds to provide assistance or comforts in case of infirmity or ill health within the benefited areas of Halstead and Knockholt. In the Fund's distribution for the last accounting year the trustees worked with the Knockholt Christmas Goodwill Fund to provide benefits for 13 qualifying residents in both villages.

The Chairman thanked Mr Kitchener for his knowledge of and dedication to the work of the Sick Poor Fund. The Parish Council is delighted that Mr Kitchener is able to continue as its representative.

## **7 GUEST SPEAKERS**

### **7.1 CHIEF INSPECTOR ADRIAN FUTERS, SEVENOAKS COMMANDER**

CI Futers explained about the community policing system in Sevenoaks District reminding parishioners that Sevenoaks is deemed to be one of the safest places to live. The community unit consists of Chief Inspector, Inspector, 5 Sergeants, 1 PCSO Supervisor plus Police Constables and Police Community Support Officers. He encourages parishioners to report any incident that has affected them or any information they might have. He explained that domestic burglary is difficult to control as much is 'cross-border' crime.

Several groups had been 'cleared' only to re-group and start again. The annual crime figures for burglary in the district equates to one burglary per property per day.

The system of special tasking areas has been introduced to target problems, e.g. parking at schools.

CI Futers mentioned that one of the major problems at the moment which had increased crime figures was theft of metal as the price paid for scrap metal has increased plus theft of catalytic converters from 4 wheel drive vehicles as there was a ready market for the purchase of these.

PCSO Barker gave a breakdown of Halstead's crime figures for the last year and explained his work schedule and procedure.

A question was asked about response times to calls. This was provided by CI Futers.

A question was asked as to why the empty police house was not used for a serving officer. This matter would need to be addressed by the Police Estates Department. The Clerk had spoken with the office recently and there are no plans to re-use the house for police housing.

A question was asked as to whether a reported crime would be followed up by telephone or in person. CI Futers stated that the target is for all callers to have a personal visit.

A parishioner questioned a commitment made by CI David Cooper to respond to a query that had been made at the last APM.

PCSO Supervisor Dennis Glasspool was aware of the problem.

CI Futers pledged that he would respond with an answer to the parishioner's question of 2009 within a month.

The Chairman thanked CI Futers and PCSO Barker for their presentations.

## **7.2 MRS JOANNA OVERTON-FOX, HALSTEAD TREE WARDEN**

Mrs Overton-Fox outlined the work she undertakes as Tree Warden which include amongst other matters, minor tree maintenance, checking on trees that are covered by Tree Preservation Orders and recommending trees for TPOs.

The Chairman thanked Joanna for the help and support she provides to the Council throughout the year.

## **7.3 COUNCILLOR DAVID TAYLOR, CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

Community Led Plans (CLP) – previously known as Parish Plans.

The Chairman outlines the benefits of having such a plan. Each household will receive a form and letter concerning CLPs asking for opinions and requesting volunteers to become members of a Steering Group.

## **8 OPEN FORUM**

Questions had been asked by the parishioners during the presentations.

The Chairman closed the meeting with thanks to Mrs Norma Baldwin for providing the refreshments and invited everyone to partake of wine and cheese.

The meeting closed at 21.30