

HILDENBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

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The Annual Parish Meeting

***held in the Main Hall at the Village Hall, Riding Lane, on Wednesday 18
March 2009 at 8pm***

MINUTES

Mr T Barton, Chairman of the Parish Council, was in the chair.

There were displays by the Sunday Bowls Club, Hildenborough Village Preservation Association, the Church, Hildenborough Gardeners' Society and Hildenborough Farmer's Market. Approximately 80 people attended.

1. Chairman's Welcome

The chairman thanked everyone for coming. He said that Fidelity International had withdrawn their speaker late the previous evening and consequently their presentation for this evening. No alternative could be found in the time available. The audience were invited to send any questions they may have for Fidelity to the clerk would pass them on to the company.

2. Apologies for Absence

Rev. E. Toy, who was away, Borough Councillor Mike Dobson had a prior Borough Council meeting.

3. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 19 March 2008

A précis was read by the clerk and the Minutes were available in the Hall. It was proposed by Mrs A Scalley and seconded by Mrs J Shaw that the minutes be agreed and signed as a true record.

4. Matter arising

There were none.

5. Chairman's Address and Report

The chairman said that the Council was now two years into its four year term. This only change this year was that Mr Geoff Watts had been co-opted to replace Ms Cogley because of her non-attendance.

The Parish Council had been working quite hard this year on a number of projects.

The horse chestnut trees in the churchyard had needed to be replaced and careful consideration had been given to choosing their replacement. This had taken a long time and several problems had been encountered, particularly at the planting stage when the large roots of the old trees had prevented the normal planting process.

The new play area in West Wood had been updated and was almost ready to be used. This had been designed by local school children. Our County Councillor, Valerie Dagger had provided some of her Member's Grant to meet the cost of the picnic table and moving of the goal and The Big Lottery Fund had provided the rest of the funding.

It will be officially opened by The Mayor of Tonbridge and Malling, Councillor Chris Smith, on Friday 1 May at 3.30. Everyone was invited to attend.

The bus shelter opposite the church had needed re roofing and this had been completed. Other matters dealt with included clearing the pond and ditches in the Recreation Ground. The Recreation Ground was often wet which had lead to difficulties, particularly in connection with the scout's bonfire at the end of 2008.

Currently all street lights are looked after by the County Council, but at the end of March the responsibilities will change. The Parish Council will become responsible for a number of unadopted lights, including those along Noble Tree Road. Considerable effort had been taken to select a contractor to maintain the lights for which the Parish Council will become responsible.

The chairman urged everyone to report any malfunctioning street lights to the clerk who would report the fault to the relevant body.

The Parish Council had been obliged to adopt a number of different policies and conform to the updated guidance from the Information Commissioner. Information for the public was published on Parish Council notice boards, copies were in the Library and on the Parish Council website. www.thisishildenborough.co.uk in the near future.

The proposed car park in Mount Pleasant was still on hold, pending a decision by the housing association. They had put forward an alternative plan which had resulted in fewer parking bays than the scheme prepared for the Parish Council who would want to approve any scheme put forward before making a contribution.

It had been hoped to coppice the strip of land in West Wood between the service road and the B245. Quotations were taken but the cost proved much too high but subsequently a total of three trees had fallen or needed to be felled due to their condition. Mr Paul Lane has organized a group of volunteers to undertake some of the work and the chairman invited any further volunteers to contact the clerk.

6. Questions from the Floor

6.1 The first question concerned the scout's bonfire in 2008. The questioner felt that the scouts have been a vital part of the community and gave their members a sense of community of the village. The questioner had been taken aback at the cancellation of the event at huge financial loss to the scouts, £2,200, which meant that money was not available for investment. In addition one of the scout's agents had driven a van on to the Recreation

Ground causing damage. He understood that the reaction of the Council was to withhold the deposit. It was important that the scouts should be supported. The questioner wondered whether the Council could help with their severe financial situation following that evening. It would be a good investment for their money as little return was possible currently from other sources.

The chairman replied that the scouts were a community resource and they use the field for free but had been asked for a deposit against damage because in the past they had not been very diligent in repairing the site of the bonfire on the field. They had been given a route across the ground which they had chosen to not always observe. In one case a vehicle had become stranded and a tractor had been used to get it out.

The questioner replied that the weather was absolutely awful and the damage was caused by an agent. The Scouts were desperate to put on the event and this was an unfortunate incident. The scouts are an important organisation for the community, it is one thing everyone can join in. Their financial strength is most important and he felt the majority of the community would be willing to give financial support. He emphasized that the scouts were very important to the village and argued support must be given.

The chairman replied that the cost of the damage to the field was in addition to the lost profit sum of £2,200. He reiterated that the route had been quite clear – namely along the side behind the play area. He would ensure that the question of support would be discussed at the next meeting.

6.2 Outside the village hall in the lay-by there is a dropped kerb for buggies, pushchairs etc but it is frequently blocked by parked cars. It is possible to park and leave enough space to enter and exit via the dropped kerb. Many drivers are unaware of the dropped kerb. Would it be possible to draw attention to this with a plaque on the wall or similar?

It was said that this would be looked into.

6.3 Did the Parish Council have any idea when rebuilding the Old Barn would be finished?

The Chairman replied they did not.

6.4 The chairman invited County Councillor Valerie Dagger to speak.

She thanked the chairman and told the meeting that she had a number of jobs on the County Council, which included being chairman of the Schools Organising Advisory Board, and a member of the Planning Application Committee, Communities Policy Overview Committee and Children's Champion Board. She had supported an expansion of youth work in the borough. She was also County Heritage Champion.

On financial matters she said that Nick Chard, the Finance Cabinet Member, was very optimistic at getting investments in Icelandic Banks returned to the County as they were a preferred creditor.

The KCC budget for 2009/10 had resulted in a council tax which meant an increase of 2.44%, the lowest ever.

KCC had obtained four stars as a result of a great deal of hard work and had obtained the top spot across the country for a number of years.

Councillor Dagger said she was proud of the close contacts with Hildenborough. She had set up a new website and encouraged all to view it at www.valeriedagger.org.uk.

6.5 P.C. Andy Sargeant was then invited to speak.

He introduced himself as our local police officer. He reported on the crime figures for this year. He said that crime had fallen slightly with the exception of theft from motor vehicles, mainly in the vicinity of the station. There had been four counts of criminal damage in Stocks Green Road, two in Riding Lane and a minor shop lifting offence at the local shop. The good news was there had been no burglaries to date this year although quite a lot last year. Information leaflets had been posted through front doors but he was not sure if this had been effective.

There was a question from the floor:

How effective are the cctv cameras in the station?

Response: Yes there are difficulties in getting hold of the footage due to the camera looking the other way or being out of action.

Items 7 and 8 had been cancelled after the action of Fidelity International.

9. The question was raised from the floor as to whether it would be beneficial for members of the audience to put their questions forward for Fidelity verbally now as the rest of the audience might be interested in the issues raised?

As a result the following questions will be passed to Fidelity International:

9.1 Was there any special reason why Fidelity had not come to the meeting?

9.2 Are Fidelity maintaining progress according to the timetable? Do we have any idea of the time scale, it seems to have been growing like Topsy for ever?

10. A member of the audience wanted to express a vote of thanks to PC Andy Sargeant and PCSO Toni Matthew for their work in the community and especially as they had made a real difference to the youngsters.

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm