

**Minutes of the meeting of the Property and Recreation Grounds Committee held in The Reading Room, Buxted at 4.00 p.m. on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2012**

**Present:** Cllrs. Rose (Chairman), Blandford, Warner and Arabizadeah (from 4.35 pm)

Also present: Cllrs Manchester, Sheard and Malcolm Wilson, Clerk

**Public:** 3 – Paul and Alison Scanlon and Kim Woodley

1. **Apologies for Absence:**

None had been received although one was subsequently received from Cllr Treacher who had been away

2. **Declarations of Members Interests:**

None were declared

3. **Littlewood Lane hedge:**

Mr Scanlon, who lives in Oaklands, had provided detailed papers, plans and photographs to the clerk before the meeting – these had been circulated in advance.

The Chairman suspended Standing Orders and allowed Mr Scanlon to address the meeting. He explained the background, including his plans to build a new house in his back garden and how investigations had revealed that the hedge to the western side of the parish council owned land in Littlewood Lane is actually largely owned by the parish council (one small section at the northern end belongs to Persimmon Homes). He has maintained the hedge at his own cost for a number of years. He would like to acquire a length of hedge approximately 14 feet in length to provide access to the new dwelling and in exchange has offered to covenant that the all current and future owners of his property are obligated to maintain the hedge, thus saving the parish council future maintenance costs. In addition he would meet any legal costs.

The Chairman then reconvened the formal meeting. He pointed out that the parish council was obligated to achieve the best value whenever it disposed of assets and it was typical in such cases that the value of a strip of land such as this would equate to one third of the increased value of the land to which the strip provides access. After discussion **it was agreed to recommend to the full council that in principle it would be happy with the proposed sale subject to an independent professional valuation being obtained.** The Clerk will arrange. Account should be taken of any maintenance costs incurred by Mr Scanlon since the parish council took ownership. It was noted that the strip of hedge owned by Persimmon Homes also provided access to the site, but it is not as attractive in terms of the design for the proposed new property.

4. **High Hurstwood Recreation Ground – proposal from the High Hurstwood Village Hall Committee (HHVC) to take over ownership or management of the site:**

The Chairman suspended Standing Orders to allow Mr Woodley to speak. He said he had lived in the village all his life and did not feel the HHVC would do a better job than the parish council. He cited the Bonfire as an example of poor management locally and brought in a large collection of nails and other pieces of metal left on the site – he estimated the collection to be only about 5% of the total! These made it impossible for the contractor to mow the grass resulting in an unsightly area of nettles and docks. He also did not see any need to provide additional formal parking which would largely be used by customers of the pub. He had been a member of the fundraising committee for the new hall and he had been very disappointed when the football club was virtually excluded from using the site because of lack of access to the changing facilities as they were used as store rooms.

The Chairman then reconvened the meeting.

During a discussion the following key points were made:

- there is no evidence that the HHVC would do a better job than the parish council in maintaining the site
- the public advertisement of a public meeting to discuss this on 1<sup>st</sup> February was felt to be one-sided and also premature as the HHVC had said it would wait until the parish council had a policy before publicizing the meeting
- the parish council had invested considerable monies on the site in recent years – playground improvements, goal nets, basketball hoop and contributions to the cctv system and benches
- given the hall already existed why was there a need to build “pavilion facilities” when these existed in the hall itself (unless the hall will be so booked with weddings and other events that the facilities will not be available for those playing village sport at the weekends)
- High Hurstwood school is most welcome to use the recreation ground now
- unlike the parish council, the HHVC will not be able to reclaim VAT on its expenditure which will mean running costs increased by 20%.
- the issue of nails etc after the Bonfire had not been considered before but the current practice was unacceptable. Other villages, like Newick, coped much better and lessons could be learned from them

**It was agreed to recommend the following to the full parish council:**

- i) **The request to take over ownership or management control should be rejected**
- ii) **Full repairs of the damaged bonfire area will be undertaken by the parish council (this may**

involve taking of the top few inches of soils with a digger to remove buried nails) and the area will be re-turfed.

- iii) **Permission for future bonfires is likely only to be given if the turf in the area of the fire is carefully cut and rolled up and replaced within a reasonable period of time (as happens in Newick)**
- iv) **Members of the HHVC are asked to join a joint working party under the remit of the Property Committee to provide input into the management and maintenance of the area.**

It was noted that there are still vacancies for co-option to the parish council for anyone interested in making a difference to their community

5. **Announcements:**

None this meeting.

The meeting closed at 4.40 p.m.

Signed:

Chairman

Date: