

## **BUXTED PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of the Property and Recreation Grounds Committee held at Buxted Pavilion, Buxted Recreation Ground at 7.30p.m. on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2009**

**Present:** Cllrs. Rose (Chairman), Crowe, Downing, and Treacher  
Also present: Miss B Macklen Clerk

**Public:** 3, Mr Derek McDougall and Mr Dave Butcher of Buxted Football Club and Mr Nigel Hodgson of the Buxted Allotment Pig Syndicate

#### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors Chalmers and Warner.

#### **2. Declarations of Members Interests.**

Cllr Crowe declared a prejudicial interest in respect of item 5 on the agenda by virtue of being a member of the pig syndicate and left the meeting during consideration of this item.

Cllr Crowe declared a personal interest in respect of item 5 on the agenda by virtue of another member of the household having a plot at the site.

Cllr Rose declared a personal interest in respect of item 4 on the agenda by virtue of being the Parish Council's representative on the Buxted Pavilion Charity Management Committee

#### **3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2009 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record of the meeting.

Before considering the agenda items, Members requested that their recognition of the excellent improvements made to the pavilion by the Football Club be minuted.

#### **4. Buxted Football Club**

*The Chairman suspended standing orders in order for the Chairman of the Football Club, Mr Derek McDougall to address the Committee.*

Mr McDougall outlined works that the football club would like to undertake in and around the pavilion:

1. Install new windows to front elevation to enable viewing of matches from inside the pavilion which would be lockable from the inside with outside shutters to comply with the building's insurance
2. As advised at previous meetings, the laying of a hard standing area to the front of the pavilion on part of which will be a covered terrace attached to the front elevation of the pavilion in order that spectators can view a game from a covered area. Mr McDougall advised that he would be visiting WDC planning department on 6<sup>th</sup> October to discuss these plans in detail.
3. Installation of replacement storage shed (previous shed removed following fire)
4. A length of hard standing running parallel to the pitch for spectators

Members discussed these matters outside of the pavilion whilst viewing the areas in question. Mr McDougall showed Members where each aspect of the proposed developments would be, explaining that with regards to the viewing strip along the side of the pitch, the exact proximity to the pitch would be determined by the Football Association's health and safety regulations.

Members referred back to previous Parish Council and Properties Committee meetings at which it was agreed that the Parish Council would pay for half of the cost of a planning application for the proposed terraced area. The Committee provisionally agreed with the outline plans for the reinstatement of the storage shed and installation of new windows, hard standing and terraced area subject to any comments by Wealden District Council however, concerns were raised at the proposed length and positioning of a hard standing next to the pitch. Members requested that materials other than concrete, such as type 1 road planes or woodchip are considered more appropriate as these would not be permanent and could be easily moved if required.

Mr McDougall also raised a query regarding in the installation of poles and nets at one end of the pitch which would be to stop footballs entering into neighbouring gardens during football practice and matches. The installation of the posts had previously been approved by the Committee in November 2008 subject to the nets being removed when not in use. Mr McDougall now advised that the poles would be 9m high. Members **resolved** that before the installation of the posts, the football club should write to all immediate neighbours advising of the plans and to get confirmation that no strong objections are raised and, for the Parish Council to be advised of the result of this consultation. The football club is also encouraged to investigate the possibility of temporary netting as used by archery clubs which may be a better alternative to permanent poles.

Finally Mr McDougall reported that the roof to the pavilion has now been fully repaired and is watertight ready for the winter months and that there are ongoing discussions with the neighbouring landowner in connection with the football club extending onto this land. He would endeavor to update the Clerk if any further progress is made.

Following detailed discussions, Members **resolved**:

1. To recommend to the Parish Council that it continues to support the football club's aspirations for the hard standing, terrace extension and replacement shed subject to Wealden District Council comments on the scheme and viewing of any plans before formal submission
2. Request that the football club consult with the Football Association to ascertain health and safety requirements for a proposed pitch side standing area before approaching the Parish Council with a proposal

The Committee thanked Mr McDougall for attending the meeting.

## **5 Buxted Allotment Site**

### Update on regeneration of the site

Members reviewed the regeneration of the Buxted allotment site and reported that the internal fences have now been removed which has opened up the site and the rubbish pile has been collected by WDC. Members agreed that the site is much improved.

### Pig Syndicate Update and Proposal to Continue

Prior to the meeting, the Clerk had circulated a document submitted by Mr Nigel Hodgson which reviews the progress of the pig syndicate to date and proposes the further continuation of the scheme (copy attached).

Before leaving the meeting due to a prejudicial interest, Cllr Crowe commented that after living in Buxted for 15 years this is the best initiative she has had the pleasure of being involved in. Not all syndicate members knew each other before the scheme started, but everyone has had an in-put, shared the load and learnt an enormous amount. A number of interested parties including vets have visited and been very impressed with the site and welfare of the animals and the allotment

holders have given a positive response. Local neighbours to the site have expressed no concerns or complaints. The pig syndicate has invested a lot into the scheme and run the site with no impact or issues on anyone and it is hoped that the committee and Parish Council will support its continuation.

*Cllr Crowe left the meeting for duration of this item. The Chairman then suspended Standing Orders in order that Mr Nigel Hodgson could address the committee.*

The Chairman thanked Mr Hodgson for a detailed resume of the syndicate's work to date with all Members agreeing that the scheme has clearly been very successful. Mr Hodgson was asked to then explain the future proposals.

Firstly Mr Hodgson advised that the scheme has attracted much interest and has recently been visited by residents of East Hoathly who are currently trying to set up a similar scheme and were very impressed by the Buxted site. The syndicate had also been approached, but has turned down an offer from Sky TV to take part in a rural television programme. It was considered that to put the site on national television could compromise the security of both the pigs and the allotment plots. Clearly though, word has got out on the success of the scheme.

Mr Hodgson continued to explain that the syndicate would like to continue with the scheme and have an option of up to 14 pigs on the existing site. The eight pigs raised over the past weeks did not by any means utilize the whole of the site (half was fenced off), so there is plenty of land to accommodate the extra six proposed pigs. If 14 pigs were allowed they would be moved further down the existing site to rest and reseed part of the land already used. The pigs would then be rotated around the site in subsequent years so that the site does not end up as bare earth.

There has been great interest in the scheme both locally as well as from other parishes, and the syndicate would now like to include other members of the parish by others becoming non working syndicate members. Each person/family unit would agree to buy half a pig for personal use (never for any form of commercial use which would be contrary to allotment regulations but to offset investment costs to create the site area and maintenance/husbandry costs ) and the syndicate would sign an agreement to assure this was the case. The new syndicate members would not be working members as the existing syndicate have formed a great working relationship all taking turns to cover all necessary feeding and husbandry requirements.

The original pig syndicate proposal also included an option to keep chickens on the site. This has not been undertaken to date, but Mr Hodgson requested that this option remain. It was reiterated that any chickens kept on the site would be for meat and not for laying purposes. Any additional fencing required for the chickens would replicate what has been installed for the pigs. Cockerels would be taken before crowing age and the chickens would all be included under Mr Hodgson's existing DEFRA farm holding number.

Mr Hodgson also commented that some allotment holders have requested whether the land to the north of the allotment site (an area covered in poplar trees and brambles) could be used to house some pigs, thus ensuring that the land is utilised and kept clear of scrub which would then ensure it was not occupied by any remaining rabbits in the site. It was advised that at the present time, this is not being requested by the pig syndicate but may be considered in the future if the Parish Council agreed to release it for use.

Having listened to Mr Hodgson's very clear and detailed proposal the Committee Members **resolved** to recommend the following to the Parish Council:

1. The pig syndicate are given permission to continue with the scheme on the same terms and to allow up to 14 pigs at the site
2. Chickens are also allowed on the site provided that cockerels are removed before crowing or as soon as possible thereafter

## 6 High Hurstwood Allotments

Members referred to discussions from the Parish Council meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> September at which residents of High Hurstwood were advised that for the next year the Parish Council would review the progress of the Buxted Allotment site before considering the opening up of the High Hurstwood site any further.

As required on a three yearly basis, Members discussed the rental charge for the High Hurstwood field currently rented by a neighbour of the site and occupied by horses. The rent is currently set at £250 per year which was considered by some members to be much lower than that usually charged either for livery or agricultural land. Members did however recognize that there is no water supply to the land and the current tenants keep the land in good order.

It was therefore **resolved** that this matter be referred to the Finance Committee in October for a final decision, but in the meantime Members and the Clerk would investigate current rental charges for both livery and agricultural land to use as a comparison.

## 7 High Hurstwood Recreation Ground and Play Area

Members reviewed the RoSPA play area safety inspection report noting that there were no high risk issues and therefore no immediate action required. It was noted that the new swing seats and chains are now in situ. Some attention may need to be given to the play space surface which is beginning to wear, but this will be dealt with when necessary.

## 13. Members Questions

None this meeting

## 14. Any Other Matters Properly Notified

The Chairman thanked the Dave Butcher and Derek McDougall for their hospitality at the pavilion.

The meeting closed at 8.50 p.m.

Signed:

Chairman

Date:

# **Buxted Community Pig Project**

## **Report to the Parish Council**

### **Summary**

Buxted Parish Council gave permission to a village syndicate to raise 8 pigs on rented parish council land for a pilot of once cycle of pig raising of about 6 – 7 months in 2009. This report gives the Parish Council an opportunity to review the project and determine its support for the future. The report outlines proposals for future years.

### **Pigs**

The pigs, Gloucester Old Spot/Landrace cross breeds, arrived in mid May aged about 7 weeks. The pigs were bred by an organic smallholder in Heathfield. The pigs have been fed on a diet of commercial pig food supplemented with fresh fruit, vegetables and acorns in line with DEFRA rules.

The pigs are raised for personal consumption only and are not to be sold for commercial gain.

6 pigs were sent to the abattoir at Broad Oak on 21<sup>st</sup> September. They will be butchered by a local butcher. The remaining pigs will be kept for approximately 4 weeks to permit a little more growth. One pig will be used for the hog roast at the Autumn Fair in October.

### **Pig Security and Housing**

Security of the area has been a priority for the syndicate both to prevent the pigs escaping and to deter intruders. 2 rows of stock and deer fencing and an electric fence have been installed by the syndicate. Gates are padlocked. Easy access for allotmenters to their allotments has been assured.

Appropriate housing has been provided. The piglets were given a small house and restricted field area initially. A larger arc was provided as the pigs grew and the foraging area increased to give them ample room.

### **Animal welfare**

The purpose of the syndicate is to promote the highest standards of animal welfare. Guidance offered by DEFRA, RSPCA and other animal welfare bodies and the local vet practice, with which we are registered, have been followed.

### **Environmental Issues**

Syndicate members collect pig waste twice daily which is offered to allotmenters to improve their soil and vegetable yield and to reduce any issues of smells and other issues. There was no discernible smell from the pigs at any time. Good animal husbandry was followed and this dictates that the pigs should clear their twice daily feed ration in 25 minutes so vermin are not attracted to the pig field. Feed is kept in a vermin proof, lidded, metal container. There has been no evidence of vermin.

Clean water is provided in a small trough with automatic top up from a standpipe. The trough is regularly cleaned. The water supply is metered and charged to the syndicate.

### **Legal considerations**

The syndicate leader has ensured that all DEFRA requirements are known, understood and followed by the syndicate.

### **Costs**

All costs, including the set up costs of fencing etc have been borne by the syndicate. To ensure longer term commitment to fund ongoing improvements, fencing repair and replacement, a not

inconsiderable investment, a longer term commitment by the Parish Council is sought. At no time will any costs for this project be borne by the Parish Council.

### **Community Response to the Project**

Some anxiety about possible noise and smell was expressed before the pigs arrived but these have been allayed by good animal husbandry and welfare standard. The syndicate members are unaware of any complaints.

Several positive comments have been made by allotmenters and local people who have visited the pigs eg. Plot 5 Mr & Mrs Busby – Plot 9 Mr Seldon – Plot 10 Mr & Mrs Bullock – Plot 13/14 Mr Bush – Plot 16 Graham Spencer – Plot 18/19 Mr & Mrs Fowler. The scheme has also been visited by small holders and a neighbouring parish wishing to learn from our experiences. All our visitors have expressed pleasure at seeing such healthy, contented and relaxed pigs.

Syndicate members too have found the experience positive making such comments as:

“its been one of the most positive things we have done since living here and the syndicate has worked well – we have all shared the work and there are not many things in life where there really is such co-operative working and sharing of load!!” and

“I’ve really enjoyed looking after the pigs and it’s been a real pleasure to work with our little band of piggy enthusiasts”.

### **Proposal for the Future**

1. The syndicate proposes that the project continues, subject to a notice to quit period by the Parish Council of 3 months. This will encourage continued investment by syndicate members.
2. The maximum number of pigs to be kept on the site is 14.
3. The land will be “rested” for at least 4 months each year during the winter.
4. Chickens may be kept on site subject to the arrangements specified in the allotment agreement and in the original proposal.

The syndicate will provide the Parish Council with an annual report on its work if this would be helpful and, of course, will be happy to discuss any issues the Parish Council wishes to raise.

The syndicate may, in future years, wish to adopt the area under the poplar trees as a second pig field, run in the same way as the existing field. This has been suggested by allotmenters to help to keep the area rabbit and scrub free. It would be helpful to have the Parish Council’s agreement in principle to the proposal although the syndicate would be happy to approach the Parish Council with more details prior to embarking on the project.

23 September 2009

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