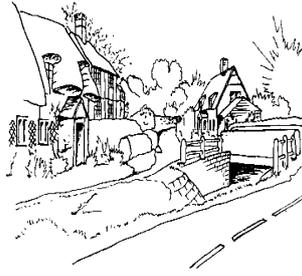


ARKESDEN PARISH COUNCIL



MINUTES of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held in Arkesden Village Hall on

Wednesday 25th April 2012

Those present: All 6 Parish Councillors, Clerk to the Parish Council, District Councillor Jan Menell and approx 38 residents.
Rod Higgins in the chair.

1. Apologies for Absence: Danni Forster, Aline Pariaux, John Forster

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 27th April 2011. These were agreed and signed

3. Matters Arising:

3.1 Neighbourhood Watch – There have been some volunteers come forward and a meeting would be called later in the year but the Parish Council had been swamped by the work from the proposed Gypsy Traveller site.

4. Affordable Housing

The Chairman outlined the procedures involved in the proposals for affordable housing:

a) Hastoe presented a preliminary plan to the PC and minor changes had been requested.

b) Plans presented to the village in July. This event had been well attended, but with rather a mixed response from the attendees.

c) The PC received a petition from the village with more than 100 signatures asking for the site to be withdrawn. The PC felt at this time that the village had not fully understood the process that had been followed to arrive at this plan for this site and therefore decided to publish a “Green Paper” outlining these procedures.

d) The PC meeting in September discussed the comments and suggestions arising from the Green Paper and put forward further amendments to Hastoe.

e) A new plan was discussed at the October meeting of the PC and this plan was presented to the village at a second open day in November. This again was well attended and the feedback was much more positive, although some residents still had misgivings.

f) A final plan was submitted to the PC for some minor amendments in December.

g) The final plan was unanimously approved by the PC in January.

h) The planning application was approved, with conditions, by the planning committee in February. The main concern of the PC was still the landscaping and screening of the development from Reeds Cottage and the PC were successful in obtaining a condition that specifically required consultation on the landscaping proposals between the developers and the PC and affected neighbours.

i) The land had now been purchased and approval of the 106 agreement was being processed.

5. Gypsy Traveller Site Consultation

In late January 2012 UDC had published its New Local Plan for consultation. The main thrust of this plan was to identify sites for housing and although UDC's preference is to spread the housing requirement over a few larger sites, there were still some smaller sites put forward – including one in Arkesden.

The shock inclusion in this draft plan was a proposal for a Gypsy Traveller site of eight pitches at 10 Acres on the Wicken Road. The PC immediately called a village meeting in early February to discuss this proposal and decided to invite a Phillip Kratz, a planning lawyer, to speak on the issue of Gypsy Traveller sites. This meeting was so well attended that it was standing room only in the porch with well over 100 people in the Village Hall. The overwhelming opinion of the meeting was to object to these proposals and that the PC should employ the services of Mr. Kratz to help the PC with this. Mr Kratz's opinion was that this proposal would not go ahead but it would need consultation with the planning dept. and objections from the residents.

The Chairman, clerk, Philip Kratz and John May had met with the planning dept. to question the inclusion of this site in the draft Local Plan. Further meetings took place at Wicken Bonhunt, Clavering and at the council offices in the North Area Forum. There were unanimous objections to the inclusion of this site at these meetings and the PC decided that it needed to get the village involved in the consultation process. A "Yellow Paper" was delivered to every household, which outlined the PC's objections to the proposals – based mainly on the lack of evidence of need for a Gypsy Traveller site in this area and the total unsuitability of this site when compared to the suitability criteria contained in UDC's policies.

The PC encouraged people to respond to the consultation in their own words either by letter, email or through UDC's website. The PC also wrote to all members of the working group that would be considering the responses to the consultation, to District Councillors, to John Mitchell, Roger Harborough, Jim Ketteridge, Robert Chambers and to Sir Alan Hazelhurst. In total the consultation had 686 responses on this single question of the allocation of a Gypsy Traveller site, of which over 400 were objections specifically related to the site at 10 Acres. The Chairman thanked everyone for their support of the PC's position by their response to the consultation.

The next step would be for the working group at UDC to discuss the replies to the consultation document. UDC is currently taking its own legal advice on the question of site allocations for Gypsy Travellers. UDC had recently announced that it would be separating the site allocation for Gypsy Travellers from the consultation on housing sites which means that the Gypsy Traveller situation would not be discussed until after June 2012. UDC had also announced that a new Gypsy Traveller needs survey would be commissioned, which would give a more up to date picture of the needs throughout the district.

The Parish Council would still be pressing UDC to adopt a criteria based policy rather than a site allocation policy and arguing that under UDC's suitability criteria, the site at 10 Acres remains totally unsuitable for such a development.

Questions from the floor emphasised the need for a *local* survey to assess the need for a Gypsy Traveller site, and to be pro active in looking for other possible sites. The question of the PC's offer to buy the site was also raised and the PC confirmed that the offer was still on the table from its side, but that it felt that now was not the right time to pursue this.

6. Chairman's Report

The Chairman had already reported on the two main issues that had occupied the Parish Council over the past year and now presented a brief round-up of the other work of the Parish Council:

- a) Planning Applications – Only 8 this year with 1 going to committee.
- b) Litter pick – Over 30 volunteers collected 25 plus bags of litter from the roadside verges in the parish.
- c) A new notice board for Quicksie Hill had been delivered and would be installed soon.
- d) Welcome pack – This was now in use and had gone to three new residents already. Very good response to the pack from the recipients.
- e) Telephone Box – this had been refurbished into a book exchange and was being well used by the village.
- f) Highways – Very difficult to get any works done despite repeated phone calls and messages. We understand there will be a separate budget for pothole repairs and the PC will be pressing for some work to be done in and around the village.
- g) Green Waste – The PC agreed to join Clavering and Langley in paying for a Green Waste collection from the usual point beyond the mills at Stickling Green. This facility was now not being funded by UDC although it was subsidising the costs by 50% for the first year. The PC would review this at budget time.
- h) Oil Theft – Please be aware that an oil theft had recently taken place in the village by a tanker in broad daylight. Please report anything that you might think is strange.

The Parish Councillors and clerk had attended various meetings throughout the year and the Chairman thanked them for their support throughout the year and also for the support of the District Councillor, Jan Menell.

7. Clerk's Report on Finance.

The Clerk reported on yet another prudent year for the Parish Council with expenditure matching income almost exactly. As usual the main difference between the budgeted predicted spend and the actual spend is due to the non spend of the contingency and election costs – our election for Parish Councillors was uncontested and resulted in only minimal costs. The only appreciable increase to the budget for 2012/13 was for the contribution to the green waste collection, but since there is still a large carried forward balance, the PC agreed to absorb this extra cost and keep the precept fixed for another year. The Parish Council's finances remain in a healthy state with nearly £7000 as a carried forward total, and I see no reason why this should not continue in these times of tight economic spending controls.

8.0 Report of Village Activities.

The following group representatives gave brief accounts of their activities during the year:

8.1 Parochial Church Council – Peter Shefford

A significant change for the church this year with the appointment in September 2011 of Margaret Davis as the new vicar. Along with her fresh ideas and energy she has introduced a service of evening prayer on Wednesdays at 5.30pm and evening prayer twice a month on a Sunday.

The PCC would like to thank the army of volunteers who keep the church in good order, and for information a programme of minor works to the stonework and the roof of the church is due to start in May.

8.2 Friends of Arkesden Church – Marion Shave

The Friends raised over £1000 this year through a historical "play" performed to a packed church, and by sale of Christmas cards.

The Friends have contributed £5000 towards the repair of the damp in the north wall.

8.3 Arkesden Bell-Ringers – Anthea Boon

The Arkesden bell ringers have had another busy year, ringing on most Sundays and also for weddings and special events in the church's calendar. Each year there is an organised outing to other towers, just as Arkesden is popular with other visiting ringers. Newcomer Thomas Wilson is progressing well and anyone over the age of 12 is welcome to come along on a Wednesday evening and have a go.

8.4 Village Hall Committee – Natasha Carter

This year saw a successful Royal Wedding Garden Party held on the Millennium Field with plenty of fun activities and plenty of food. This type of event will be repeated this year for the Queen's Jubilee so let's hope for good weather and another afternoon of community spirit. The annual Christmas Bash was as popular as ever with special thanks to Father Christmas.

The hall is well used now and extra income together with a grant of £500 from Stansted Airport Community Fund allowed the purchase of new tables and cupboards.

8.5 Women's Institute – Chairman

Arkesden's WI is in its 63rd year and continues to flourish with meetings on the first Thursday of each month at 8pm in the village hall. Our programme this year included a wide variety of speakers, an outing in July, a garden lunch party in August and a Christmas dinner. In June we baked cakes for the patients of the Radwinter Road Hospital and throughout the year we knit baby hats, vests and blankets for the Rosie Maternity Hospital.

In 2013 the Arkesden WI will be hosting the Spring Group Meeting in April at Clavering Village Hall for around 120 ladies.

8.6 Millennium Field Committee – Charlotte Turner

The MFC has had another good year with the "Royal Garden Party" – jointly with the Village Hall committee – and the Sports Day and camp out. As always, many thanks to the Forster family for the continued use of the Millennium Field.

8.7 Village News – Melanie Wells

The Village News continues to be a great community magazine, but we are always looking for contributions from anyone – not just a select few!

8.8 Cricket Club – Jim Ludden

Last year's unbeaten season soon ended and we finished with more losses than wins. We had a spectacular defeat to Clavering, probably to be repeated at the Jubilee weekend. Individual achievements:

Luke Bailey – top of batting averages

Jamie Williams – Clubman of the year.

9.0 Any Other Business

9.1 Website

Arkesden is hoping to create its own website this year with funding help from the New Homes Bonus and the Community Project Grant Scheme.

Peter Finn proposed a vote of thanks to the Parish Council and to Jan Menell our District Councillor.

John Stewart said that his welcome to the village had been exceptional, having lived in sixteen different houses he had only ever been visited by a Parish Council twice, *ever!*

Steve Coltman (Clerk)

Rod Higgins (Chairman)