

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF  
**THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING, SWALLOWFIELD PARISH**  
HELD ON 18<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2017  
IN SWALLOWFIELD PARISH HALL AT 7.30 P.M.

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Present: Cllr. P. Sampson (Chairman), Cllr. J. Anderson (Vice-Chair), Cllr. G. Collender, Cllr. M. McDonald, Cllr. Morrissey, Cllr. R. Norris, Cllr. Sant, Cllr. J. Wheelwright, E. Halson (Clerk), S. Howorth (RFO)

Guest Speakers: 4                      Members of the public: 50                      Apologies for absence: 1

**NB:** *This is not a verbatim account, but is provided to give a flavour of what was said.*

**1 Welcome, Introduction to Speakers and format of meeting**

Cllr. Sampson welcomed everyone. He explained that the Annual Parish Meeting differed from the more formal monthly Parish Council meetings that had to adhere to stricter format as laid down by law. After the positive feedback received for the last three years, it had been decided to again have presenters that would be of interest to the local community.

Cllr. Sampson also welcomed Mrs. Sue Howorth who would be taking up the position of Responsible Finance Officer for the council, her duties also include managing all hall bookings.

In addition, an Annual Report detailing some of the work and activities that the Council had been involved with over the past 12 months is available to take away, can be downloaded from the website or collected by request from the Parish Office.

He introduced the speakers.

**2 Mr. Andy Couldrick, Chief Executive Officer, Wokingham Borough Council**

Mr. Couldrick recognised that many parishioners were concerned about speculative development applications in the Parish, particularly Odiham Road, Riseley and Wyvols Field, Swallowfield. In the instance of the Riseley application he explained WBC is constrained when commenting on application in neighbouring authorities. It can only address issues which are relevant, specifically to object on technical grounds, however there were none for this site. The borough could raise other issues, but would have been liable to substantial claims if the application were taken to appeal. If the borough were unsuccessful then costs would be awarded against WBC.

Wyvols Field does lie within WBC's boundary so the issues are different. In 2010 WBC took a proactive approach developing a Core Strategy outlining sites for four Strategic Development Locations (SDLs). In 2015 it adopted the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which defines builder contributions to infrastructure. WBC's levy is one of the highest in the country outside of London, however it has not dampened the number of building projects being brought forward. We live in an area with access to London, green space and good schools; people want to live here. Government policy is presumption in favour of sustainable development.

When development, which WBC turns down, goes to appeal the appeal inspectors often rule in favour of development and if WBC loses it pays the costs. The appeal inspectors look at many factors including house prices, the number of houses delivered, which is not in WBC's control once planning permission is granted. Builders can control the delivery rate to enable them to bring forward random smaller sites. WBC need to work with developers to speed up delivery of houses so that inappropriate development can be avoided.

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WBC need to ensure that it has a good local plan, sufficient sites and the infrastructure to support the development.

In other areas WBC is working hard to deliver in other key areas:

- Sport – working with over 2,000 vulnerable adults, partnering with another council
- Social Care – working with over 1,000 vulnerable children and their families
- Waste – still delivering weekly refuse collection, something which very few councils are still doing.
- Social Housing – delivering 500 affordable houses, many through WBC's housing company which brings income back into the council
- Adult Social Care – an additional 3% of precept has been allowed and is spent in this area

All of this means that WBC need to save money and transform the way it does business by:

- Shedding jobs
- Offering customers self-service
- Changing the shape of WBC, sharing many services with other neighbouring authorities to deliver economies of scale.

Top five challenges are:

- 1) Housing and planning – need more control
- 2) Highways and transport – new roads, wider roads, but fill up as soon as built
- 3) Aging population
- 4) Keeping children safe from abuse and neglect
- 5) Financial Resilience

Need to change the relationship between resident and the state, the state needs to be smaller.

MG – What can WBC object on with relation to Odiham Road

AC – *only technical breaches with the application, I will circulate a list of what WBC can object to.*

SM – Hart stated that WBC did not object, this was a massive misinterpretation of WBC's letter.

RV – How much CIL gets passed to the parish?

PS – *we get 15% capped at £100 per household in the parish, the council has signed an agreement with WBC so that if appropriate CIL received by the parish can be passed back to WBC to fund projects which will benefit the parish.*

AC – *the borough and parishes are collaborating, but there are some which have not signed up to this agreement, but they can't then complain if infrastructure is not delivered.*

HB – will Hart pass s106 money for the Odiham Road development to WBC to mitigate issues caused, because the development will become part of Riseley and depend on WBC for services.

AC – *it is unlikely.*

MG – what about schools, it was suggested that Hart would have to ask WBC permission for children to attend schools within WBC boundaries.

AC – *this is not the case; parents can apply to any school regardless of county or borough boundaries.*

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**3 Mr. Graham Stanley, Swallowfield Horticultural Show**

Mr. Graham explained some of the history of the show which started in 1884 as the Swallowfield Cottage Garden Show Society. It first became a two day show in 1984 when it celebrated its centenary. The show is now moving back to its roots on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> August 2017 will be held in the grounds of Swallowfield Park. Key to this move has been the development of a traffic management plan which has been discussed with Thames Valley Police. There will be plenty of AA signs and plenty of free parking. It is believed that there will be minor congestion in the late mornings and residents will be encouraged not to park in the road so that traffic can move freely. At other times there should be no issues.

There is a new website – [www.swallowfieldshow.co.uk](http://www.swallowfieldshow.co.uk) and a Facebook page.

MB – we are very grateful to Lord Berstead for allowing the show to come home to Swallowfield.

RA – the bridge is not suitable for two-way traffic.

*GS – we will look at this but it is not anticipated that this will be a problem as traffic arriving from the Arborfield direction will be taken into a car park before it reaches the bridge and traffic coming from the Swallowfield direction will be taken into a different car park again before it reaches the bridge. So only through traffic should reach the bridge.*

**4 Mr Andrew Haslock, Estate Manager, Farley Estate**

Mr Haslock explained that the estate started at 200 acres and is now over 1,750 acres. It employs 26 full time staff and many part time staff as well as contractors for the arable side. He highlighted key areas:

- Milk – the estate aims to produce 3 million litres of milk per year and employs 3 full time staff who work from 4am to 8pm – 70% to Marks and Spencers, 30% to Muller.
- Crops - the Farley Estate does not grow regular crops or grass well so is looking to grow alternative crops which are more suited to the soil e.g. clover, pea & barley, lucerne.
- Students from Berkshire Agricultural College come for work experience on the estate.
- Conservation
- Shoot – big employer, its proximity to London is important in attracting customers.
- Woodland – implemented a biomass boiler plan which takes 160 tonnes of wood to run, has to be managed.
- Bridge Farm – home to a diverse range of business
- Equestrian Centre – clubhouse / indoor riding school, horse trials 24/25 June.

Projects

- Biomass boiler
- Swallowfield Show
- Weddings at Hall (trailing)

Challenges and opportunities

- Brexit
- Arborfield Relief Road
- Mineral extraction
- Flood defences

Problems

- Pitt Bridge
- By-ways – 4 wheel drivers
- Fly-tipping
- Poaching

MB – will you be planting on your side of the river to hide solar panels  
*AH – not that I know of.*

RA – Do you run tours of the estate  
*AH – not at the moment, we may look at it next year, but we could organise a bespoke tour if there is sufficient interest.*

BS – the Pitt Bridge is iconic, I'm sure there would be lots of support for its preservation in the village, are you looking at grants?  
*AH – yes, but hitting walls, we have an increasing bill and working with the EA is a slow process as we would like to alter the mouth of one ditch so that the water does not further damage the bridge.*

PNS – thanked all the speakers.

## **5 Questions or motions from parishioners**

Cllr. Sampson (PNS) invited questions or motions from parishioners.

- 5.1 RA – There has been lots of work on the inside of the Parish Hall, are there any plans to refurbish the car park.  
*PNS – Yes, we have been looking at the drainage as there is no point resurfacing the car park without resolving the drainage issues. The council has recently signed a Deed of Easement with Farley Estate which will allow water to be discharged into the ditch at the back of the car park. The work now needs to be costed.*
- 5.2 *KU – What about the bollards?*  
*PNS – we have also been looking at options for replacing the bollards and have designs for some gates which would replace bollards at both Swallowfield and Riseley. The council is now looking at costings and priorities.*
- 5.3 *MB – Fly-tipping – there is an increased number of fly-tipping incidents, often blocking the road.*  
*PNS – It is an on-going nightmare and all we can do is report each incident to WBC who are very prompt at clearing up the mess.*
- 5.4 BS – I would like to thank the Parish Council for all its hard work, it is very effective and has put Swallowfield on the map and is keeping it there.
- 5.5 Cllr. Sampson – are there any motions which residents which to put forward?  
None.

## **6 Round Table Discussions with refreshments**