

WIVELSFIELD

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting Held
Wednesday 1st May 2024

6pm, Wivelsfield Village Hall

Present: Harriet Martin (Chair, Wivelsfield Parish Council), Parish Councillors I Haffenden, R Morris, S Morris and N Silverman, Liz Gander (Parish Clerk), John Wigzell (Community Speedwatch) and approximately eleven members of the public.

1. Welcome from the Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that it was being run as a lower key event than in previous years, owing to the Council planning a bigger event on Saturday 13th July, as an opportunity for people to meet with councillors and other local service providers.

2. To approve minutes of the last meeting, held Wednesday 8th March 2023

The minutes were agreed as a true record of the meeting.

3. Parish Council Activities & Plans

The Chair explained that there have been a number of planning issues over the last year which have taken the Council's time and attention. The Parish Council is a statutory consultee on planning, so is only able to comment on applications, just as residents can do, but seeks to do so on behalf of the community.

The Council recognises that many people did not want the two big developments in Wivelsfield which have now been given approval: the South Road site for 45 homes and the Ditchling Road site for 96 homes, for which the principle of development was agreed last year and which is now at the stage of having the 'Reserved Matters' application considered by Lewes District Council. Unfortunately, once agreed, all that we can do is try to ensure that the developments are as good as they can be, for the sake of those already living in the community and for the benefit of future residents.

There have been a number of other, ongoing planning issues that the Parish Council has been looking at, including an application for homes at Manor Nursery, Theobalds Road, which goes to Appeal this month, and on Slugwash Lane and Hundred Acre Lane.

However, the Council is keen for planning not to override everything and there is a lot that it would like to do. We have recently been talking about how we can engage with and re-energise the community, having noticed a drop off in the participation, organising and attending of clubs and events. The recent closure of the Historical

Society is an example of local clubs being unable to continue owing to a lack of volunteers willing to run it. There are some stalwarts in the community who continue to run things, but as they are getting older, other people are not necessarily stepping up to fill the void.

The Council's interest in helping to revive community spirit is one reason for the event which it is planning on 13th July. We will also be issuing a community questionnaire in the next Wivelsfield News, seeking the community's feedback on a number of things.

One of these is what people would like to see in terms of communication from the Parish Council, as the May edition of the Wivelsfield News will be the last in the current format. The publisher whom we have been working with for the last eight years is no longer able to continue to produce the magazine free of charge, so we are looking at how to take this forward. It may be that we could find someone within the community that would be willing to do the layout.

We now finally have the new speed sign on Green Road and are on the brink of opening up a publicly accessible toilet by the Renshaw Room, which will be open during daylight hours for those using the green.

The Council is up to full strength, with nine councillors for the first time in a long time, having recently had some new councillors step forward. This is very positive as it gives the Council more scope to do things.

The Council will be organising another clean up day, but unfortunately Village Day is not running this year owing to a lack of volunteers. It is hoped that more people will come forward to enable planning for the event in 2025 to begin in around September this year.

Something else that we will be asking in the questionnaire is what people would like the Council to do with the CIL money it receives. CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) is a contribution from developers paid to the District Council, of which the Parish Council receives a share, to spend specifically on infrastructure projects. In recent times a lot of the CIL has gone on the excellent refurbishment of the Village Hall, but now we would like to know what else people might like to see it being spent on.

The Parish Council is looking to find smaller things that can make a difference to and enhance the environment of Wivelsfield, as well as bigger projects, and is currently in the process of developing some Parish maps/information boards to have in various locations around the Parish.

The Chair read out a few suggestions which have already been submitted by residents in response to Facebook posts about this event, as an illustration of the kinds of things that people could put forward.

Finally, she noted that her Chair's newsletter in the upcoming Wivelsfield News is an extended piece, explaining about the role of the Parish Council and what it can do, to give people a better understanding, and encouraged people to have a look.

4. Traffic Data

John Wigzell, co-ordinator of the Wivelsfield Community Speedwatch Group, had brought along the radar speed gun which the Group uses periodically to monitor the speed of traffic going through the village. Anyone who is spotted doing more than 35mph in a 30mph zone has their details recorded and receives a letter from the Police. Repeat offenders can end up having points added to their licence.

We now also have 'SID', the Speed Indicator Device, along Green Road, which flashes up a 'thank you' if you're doing under 30mph. If it stops flashing up the message, the battery is low and needs replacing. Several people have said that when the SID was on the other (eastern) side of the Eastern Road junction it made the junction much safer. There are more sites planned and, if we had another sign to cover those, then perhaps the next one could be solar powered.

The SID monitors the number of vehicles as well as speed and has recorded approximately 6000 vehicles a day going past it, just short of 50,000 per week! In the first twelve weeks of operation, just over half a million vehicles went past it.

In the SID's first week of operation, 70% of vehicles travelling west along Green Road (towards the SID) were doing 30mph or less. Three months later, this statistic had risen to 78% of vehicles, which seems to provide clear evidence that the SID is having a positive effect. In the other direction (where drivers don't see the flashing sign) only 60% were doing 30mph or less in the first week, with this rising slightly to 63% after three months.

Anecdotally, people believe that vehicles regularly do excessive speeds, however in a typical week the average speed of vehicles going towards Haywards Heath along Green Road is 28.5mph. Towards the Village Shop, the average is 30mph. Overall, 94% of drivers are doing less than 35mph according to the SID and this is consistent with the findings of the speed gun.

In the first three months of SID, the maximum speed registered was 76mph at around 2am going west along Green Road (in the Haywards Heath/Burgess Hill direction). The fastest recorded speed going the other way was 67mph, again in the early hours of the morning.

Ultimately, these devices are designed to help educate people and to encourage them to take it gently through the village. John encouraged anyone who is bothered by speeding, or interested in helping, to please get in touch to join the Speedwatch Group. In an ideal world it would be good to have the Group out every couple of weeks, but this relies upon having more volunteers.

A number of questions followed from the audience, which are briefly outlined below, along with any responses or ensuing discussion:

- Does the SID record vehicle details as well as traffic numbers and speed?
 - No.
- Anecdotally, does the lower speed limit of 20mph near the school seem to have an effect, or are people concerned about this being a problem?

- The Chair advised that there had recently been a petition in the village to ask Highways to install speed bumps either side of the zebra crossing on South Road, to help reduce speed and improve safety on the crossing. She noted that, unfortunately, Highways have strict criteria to adhere to in terms of the allocation of resources and they have to have evidence of a certain number of accidents for a site to receive priority for additional work. That said, the Parish Council is looking into whether some form of further speed reduction might be possible through a matched funding scheme and has submitted the initial appraisal form, which will allow Highways to assess if they think that there are any options which would be feasible and effective. There are however lots of rules and regulations about what can be put in within a certain distance of junctions.
- Is there an equivalent to the SID that could be sited near the school to flash up a warning?
 - The Chair said that in order to have sites for a SID, you have to have a licence from the County Council and she had a suspicion that they would not be willing to licence anything in that area owing to the junctions, zebra crossing and other signage. In the past when the Parish Council has sought extra signage to help slow traffic, this has been turned down as Highways will not allow the street scene to become too cluttered.
- Do people have to have much training in order to help with Speedwatch? If parents are concerned about speed, could they get involved?
 - Training is straightforward and most people do it online.
- Does the Speedwatch group do any profiling of offenders to know whether the majority are from the village or elsewhere?
 - No, the Speedwatch group doesn't have that data unfortunately, although John has always thought that it is probably 50:50.
- Could having a lollipop person outside the school be an option? Someone in the audience knew of a lollipop person who had had a camera and snapped those failing to stop etc.
 - The Parish Council does not know and this is perhaps something that the school would need to explore with the County Council.
- What about coloured surfacing and speed limit reminders on the roads?
 - We will wait to hear back from Highways to see what they suggest might be feasible to help remind people of the 20mph limit and slow people near the school.
- Ditchling Road is becoming another problem area, with the popularity of the Morrisons Daily and competitively priced fuel causing traffic to back up onto the road. There was also an accident there on Sunday.
 - It was noted that many filling stations have a way in and way out, which this one doesn't, but might be helpful.
 - The Chair noted that as the only planning consent needed for the Morrisons was a change of use from the former car showroom to a shop, it seems no one took account of the additional traffic that this would generate.
 - There will also be the cumulative effect of the new 96 homes development.
 - Anyone with concerns about traffic on this road were encouraged to write to Highways and Lewes District Council to flag these concerns, as the more

people that comment, the greater notice they might take, as it gives an understanding of the issues.

- It was also suggested that, if vehicles continue to queue onto Ditchling Road, this would become a police issue.
- However, someone noted that a Facebook post from Morrisons recently, had indicated that they will be having a third fuel pump installed which will hopefully alleviate some of the issues.

5. Questions and Comments

- Nick Dutt, Village Day organiser, advised that the date of 12th July 2025 has been booked for the next Village Day and asked for more volunteers to come forward, ready to start the planning from September.
- Vicar, Christopher Powell, thanked Councillors for all the work they do for the village, for the community engagement meeting held recently and for moving this on by means of the upcoming questionnaire.
- He advised that one thing the Church has been talking about is getting the harvest festival out of the church and into the community. As such, they have booked the Village Hall for Saturday 5th October and would like the involvement of other community organisations. Initial thoughts are to run some grow your own competitions etc and if anyone would like to get involved, please come forward.

The Chair then thanked everyone for coming, asked them to give some thought to what they might like to see in the community, perhaps not this year, but next, or in the coming years, as well as considering how the Parish Council can help to promote community spirit and well-being in Wivelsfield.

The meeting closed at 6.48pm.