

Greatham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of Greatham Parish Council held at
Greatham Village Hall on Monday 6th July, 2009 at 7.30 p.m.

Present Cllrs A Bridgman, A J Booton, P J Larner, and C A Rudd,
Also present Mrs A Rozario (Clerk)

110/09 Apologies for Absence Cllrs Ascherl, Fellows and Redman

111/09 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman pointed out the fire escapes in the event of a fire.

112/09 Declarations of Interest None

113/09 Public Question Time

It was RESOLVED that the meeting be adjourned for 15 minutes in order for the Councillors to discuss topics with members of the public.

Mr Lewis asked when the matter of the Audit Commission would be dealt with in the meeting as it was not on the agenda. The Clerk confirmed that this matter would be dealt with under correspondence, item 12 on the agenda.

Mrs Cheesman asked if the Police could be asked to attend Greatham as there was a lot of careless driving of impatient drivers in the village. The Clerk confirmed that she had written to the Police asking for both a speed camera and the attendance of PCSO Tedder, but had received no reply. **The Clerk will contact Hampshire Police again.**

Mr Rudd commented on the haystacks which have arrived at Fern Farm Field and said that rats were now coming into the residents of Wolfmere Lane gardens. Cllr Bridgman advised Mr Rudd that this matter would need to be taken up by residents with EHDC.

Standing orders were then reinstated.

114/09 Approval of Minutes of meeting held on 1st June 2009

PROPOSED by Cllr Booton, **SECONDED** by Cllr Larner, with all in favour. **RESOLVED:** the Minutes of the meeting of the Greatham Parish Council held on 1st June 2009 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

115/09 Matters arising from the Minutes

- (i) Cllr Bridgman asked the Clerk if a letter had been sent to the Audit Commission regarding the outstanding invoice. The Clerk confirmed that a letter had been sent, but no reply received to date.
- (ii) Village Hall dissolution clause – This would be dealt with under the village hall report, item 9 (b) on the agenda.
- (iii) Footpaths – Cllr Bridgman asked if the Clerk had arranged for the stile to be fixed at Todmore. The Clerk confirmed that she had contacted HCC, but was awaiting a reply.
- (iv) Litter bin near playground – Cllr Bridgman asked Cllr Booton if the litter bin at the playground had been fixed. Cllr Booton apologised for not having got this done, but would endeavour to fix it as soon as possible.

116/09 Reports from County and District Councillors

Apologies had been received from County Councillor Clarke. Cllr Clarke had sent an email letting the Parish Council know that the Councillor's Devolved Budget Scheme is going to start in August and run to February. The scheme allows Cllr Clarke to make grants totalling £10,000 over the whole of the Hangers Division each year. The email also mentioned "The Lengthsmen experiment" which Cllr Clarke will explain to the Parish Council at a later date. **Cllr Clarke asked if the Clerk could let me know of any future meetings so that he might attend.**

117/09 Grant Application by Greatham Village Hall Trustees

Mr Dale-Harris, the Chairman of the Village Hall Trustees summarized the details given to the Parish Council previously regarding this grant application. Four tenders had been received and the figures were based on the lowest quote who could work to the time limits imposed, this being £115,000. The village hall has £77,000 in the bank. The money received from the nursery would be kept as there will be no other income in the Autumn if the hall closes for the work to commence. A discussion then ensued regarding the possibility of the village hall becoming VAT registered.

Cllr Larner questioned the cost of the extension as he had thought the expected cost a year ago was for £50,000. Cllr Larner asked if the specification had changed significantly. Mr Dale-Harris said the quotes have changed because the extension specification has changed and the hall want to ensure they get a good quality build. If the build went back to a minimum then the gap would close considerably.

Cllr Bridgman confirmed that the Parish Council held approximately £31,000 in the reserve bank account so the funds were there.

Cllr Booton suggested the Parish Council pay the rent in advance for the next five years, to enable the village hall to move on with the build.

Cllr Lerner was concerned that the s137 grant amounts were for the whole year and if we make the whole amount to the village hall then the Parish Council cannot make any further grants.

Cllr Bridgman said that the Parish Council could not give all the £20,000 required by the village hall, but if it was legal, it would be possible to pay the rent for the village hall in advance for five years. **The Clerk will check with HALC if it is possible to pay five years rent in advance.** **Proposed** Cllr Booton. **Seconded** by Cllr Lerner, with all in favour **RESOLVED:** The Parish Council pay five years rent in advance, subject to checking the position with HALC.

Cllr Bridgman confirmed that a further grant could be applied for by the village hall in the future from the Parish Council.

118/09 Reports of Representatives

(a) Coryton Almshouses

Nothing to report. The next meeting is to be held in September.

(b) Village Hall

The village hall trustees had asked for the dissolution clause discussed in previous meetings, to be brought to the meeting as the Charity Commission had asked for further clarification that should the village hall trust dissolve, that the Parish Council would be prepared to take on the assets of the village hall, as there is no other similar organisation in the village. **Proposed** by Cllr Lerner, **Seconded** by Cllr Rudd. **RESOLVED** the Parish Council will agree to take on the assets of the Village Hall Trust upon its dissolution. **The Clerk will write to the secretary of the Village Hall confirming the Parish Council's agreement.**

Cllr Lerner as the Parish Council representative on the Village Hall Committee confirmed that he was assisting with the finances of the village hall. The Village Hall have dis-instructed the previous gardener. The Parish Council filing cabinet will need to be moved when the building work commences.

(c) The Old Church Committee

The grass is very high at the Old Church and needs cutting back. Cllr Bridgman had tried to obtain a quote but the gardener he asked said he would not do the work. NJH Landscapes had put in a quote at £300 to clear the Church yard.

Cllr Booton confirmed that if L'Abri at The Manor House could arrange the labour then he could arrange the machinery.

Cllr Bridgman confirmed that unfortunately the picnic on the 12th July had been cancelled as no advertising had been arranged.

Cllr Lerner asked if any other quotes had been received, as the Parish Council should always obtain 3 quotes. The Clerk confirmed that no other quotes had been obtained, but will obtain a further two quotes for the work.

Cllr Bridgman confirmed that L'Abri were happy to do the hedge cutting on the site.

Mrs Cheesman said she would give the Clerk the telephone number of the village hall gardener.

Proposed by Cllr Booton and **Seconded** by Cllr Bridgman, Cllr Rudd abstaining from the vote. **RESOLVED** the Parish Council accept the quote from NJH Landscapes, subject to the **Clerk obtaining a further two quotes.**

(d) Transport and Highways

Cllr Booton said there was nothing to report.

Cllr Bridgman said that Hampshire County Council had been in touch regarding the speed limit in Church Lane. Church Lane at present does not have a speed limit and HCC are advising either a 30 mph limit or to de-restrict the lane. If a 30 limit is imposed then there would be signs at the top of the lane and repeater signs every 250 metres down the lane. If the speed limit is de-restricted then there would just be signs at the top of the lane.

Cllr Lerner said he would prefer the speed limit to be set at 30 mph as this would be a lot safer for the many walkers who use Church Lane.

Cllr Booton said he did not think anyone would try and drive at 60 mph along Church Lane and it would be unsightly to put in repeater signs all way down the lane.

Proposed by Cllr Bridgman that the speed limit be de-restricted and **Seconded** by Cllr Booton, Cllrs Lerner and Rudd voting against this proposal, Cllr Bridgman used his casting vote to pass the proposal. **RESOLVED** that the speed limit be de-restricted along Church Lane. **The Clerk will write to Hampshire County Council confirming the de-restriction.**

(e) Footpaths and Tree Warden

No further news. It was confirmed that the stile behind Todmore had still not be re-erected. **The Clerk has chased Kate Fryatt of Hampshire County Council, but will do so again.**

(f) Planning Committee

Cllr Booton explained the position with regard to 1 Kingshott Cottages. He said that the previous application had been objected to by EHDC but the planning inspectorate had agreed to a house being put in. Mr Gunning has put in an application for a larger house which has been agreed by the inspectorate. The Parish Council could not object to the application as it has already been agreed by the inspectorate. However the conditions previously put on the site by EHDC had not been followed. The Parish Council has written asking for assurance that the previous conditions are being adhered to.

Cllr Booton then commented on the appeal made by the owner of 1 Woodland Cottages. The previous application had been permitted subject to 12 conditions placed upon the site. The owner of the field adjacent to 1 Woodland Cottages is appealing against these conditions. Cllr Booton and Bridgman felt that these conditions were unfair given what the owner of Fern Farm Field has done and wanted to write to EHDC disagreeing with the conditions.

Cllr Larner commented that the owner had cut down all the trees on the site before an application had been put in and he agreed that new trees should be planted. He said that the conditions were there to protect the village and to ensure that it was not a commercial concern.

Cllr Booton said he had spoken to Dane Swallow at EHDC recently. Mr Swallow stated that almost 30% of all planning applications are now retrospective.

Cllr Larner disagreed with writing a letter to EHDC as he agrees with all 12 conditions being set by EHDC.

Cllr Booton said EHDC are wrong to do this to one applicant but allow another to do whatever they seem to want to do.

A resident of Greatham interjected that Springfold Stables are taking out a lot of trees behind the stables.

Cllr Larner stated that the planning decision had already been imposed and the conditions were made to ensure it is for personal use only, and the planting of trees to replace those already felled.

Cllr Rudd said she did not see any problem with the conditions except for maybe parking a horse box on the land.

The Parish Councillors voted 3 to 1 to not write to EHDC. **RESOLVED** The Parish Council would not write objecting to the conditions.

(g) Playground Committee

The ROSPA report had been received on the playground and there are no problems with the play equipment.

119/09 RFO report

Cllr Bridgman read out the RFO report and the balances on the accounts were as follows:-

Reserve Account	£31,706.74
Old Church Account	£1,134.98
Current Account	£203.65

The schedule of payments to be made this month are:-

Clerk's salary	£465.00
Clerk's expenses	£14.36
NJH Landscapes	£180.00
ROSPA	£103.50
Lexis Nexis	£72.45
Blackwell Press	£30.16
Mrs D Voice (photocopying)	£35.00

The payment still outstanding for the Audit Commission invoice in the sum of £920 is still being disputed and so will not be paid at this present time.

PROPOSED by Cllr Rudd **SECONDED** by Cllr Larner that these payments are made and a transfer request for £800 be made. The transfer letter for £800 was signed by Cllrs Bridgman, Larner and Rudd. The cheques as set out above were signed by Cllrs Bridgman, Booton and Larner.

120/09 Internal Auditor

Cllr Bridgman confirmed that a new Internal Auditor had been found at short notice due to Mr Paul Reynolds not taking on Greatham this year. Mr Alan Harland had been recommended by the clerk at Headley Parish Council and he does a lot of work in the local area, including Grayshott, Petersfield and Haslemere Councils.

The Terms of Engagement were signed by Cllr Bridgman as Chairman.

The Annual Return was then signed and dated by the Chairman and by the Clerk and dated 6th July 2009.

Cllr Bridgman read out the draft minute prepared by the internal auditor regarding risk assessment as follows:-

“The Clerk noted that the Parish Council needed to minute formally the discussions regarding the risk assessments that had taken place earlier in the year, when the insurance renewal was being considered.

The Parish Council’s annual return included affirmation that the Parish Council had considered its risk assessment policies and processes, and further guidance on the ways in which risks were identified and then managed was provided in the Practitioner’s Guide to the audit process. It was acknowledged that the Parish Council’s annual budget was small and that the Parish Council had no public facilities other than the play area beside the village hall. Most of its expenditures was on administration and enabling grants to community organizations. Income other than precept, interest and the VAT refund was minimal. Overall risk levels were considered low.”

The Practitioner’s Guide indicated three areas for managing risks:

1. **Using Insurance** - the Parish Council was required to have the mandatory insurance cover for public, employer and similar liabilities, and the other principal risk to be covered was property damage to street furniture and office equipment. Insurance had therefore been effected for these areas. Fidelity insurance had recently been increased as recommended by the external auditors.
2. **Working with third parties** - this was not appropriate for the Parish Council.
3. **Self-management of risks** – the Parish Council considered the internal controls in place, notably the approval of all payments by the Parish Council; the accounting system maintained by the Clerk, the budgetary review process; and the annual review by internal audit. The Parish Council considered that existing controls and procedures were appropriate for the annual expenditure levels.

Risk management arrangements were therefore considered appropriate.

Cllr Larner said the Parish Council do use a third party for the preparation of the ROSPA playground report.

RESOLVED with all in favour the minute was approved.

As requested by the Internal Auditor the Receipts and Payments Statement for year ending 31st March 2009 was re-signed. The items under the headings of assets had been amended to list the same as the previous year’s assets.

121/09 Freedom of Information

The Information Commissioner’s Office Model Publication Scheme was considered.

Proposed by Cllr Booton that the Parish Council adopt the publication scheme **Seconded** by Cllr Rudd. **RESOLVED** the Information Commissioner’s Office Model Publication Scheme is adopted by Greatham Parish Council. Cllr Larner will put the information on the website.

The Clerk said that a guide to information was also required but this would be an ongoing document to be completed at a later date.

122/09 Correspondence

- (1) Mr Lewis reported on his correspondence with the Audit Commission. He said Greatham Parish Council has an implied agreement to an annual fee and an hourly rate set by the Audit Commission. The Audit Commission appoints an auditor who is in private practice and then has no more to do with the audit. Any auditor has a duty to report any tax evasion.

Mr Lewis will be attending a meeting with Mr Witz on Wednesday 8th July and he will report back to the Parish Council following that meeting.

Mr Lewis said there is no redress unless you go through the courts which could cost a lot more. He said that unfortunately because the Annual Return for 2007/08 was signed and the appropriate notice was not given, the opportunity to complain was not allowed.

The Parish Council were however under a statutory obligation to employ the Audit Commission.

Mr Lewis confirmed he would probably write a report on the whole matter.

- (2) A letter had been received from Mr Venables at EHDC regarding a Standards Committee Workshop for Town and Parish Councils. Cllr Bridgman confirmed he would attend when a date was arranged.
- (3) An email had been received regarding the South Downs National Park and a meeting to be held at East Meon Village Hall on Monday 13th July. Cllr Bridgman confirmed he would attend the meeting.
- (4) An email had been received from Mr D Phillips of EHDC regarding the awards of costs in planning appeals. This had previously been forwarded to all the Parish Councillors.

123/09 Any Other Business

The Clerk had received quotes from the Church Centre and Greatham Primary School for the use of their premises when the building works were underway on the village hall in September. Cllr Rudd declared an interest in this item as she was on the Church PCC. After some discussion the Parish Council voted with all in favour to use the Church Centre for their meetings in October, November and December. **RESOLVED the Clerk will book the Church Centre.**

124/09 Any Other Business for Next Meeting

None

125/09 Date and place of next meeting

The next full Parish Council meeting would be on Monday 7th September 2009 at 7.30 p.m. in Greatham Village Hall.

126/09 Exempt Session

The members of the public and press were asked to leave the meeting at 9.25pm, so that the Parish Council may continue in an exempt session.

It was noted that the Clerk has resigned from the position and will work one month's notice. The Clerk will leave the position on the 31st July 2009.

The Clerk wished to discuss with the Parish Council the correct procedure to be used for all correspondence to be written by the Parish Council. This being that all actions were to be agreed at the Parish Council meetings and although the Councillors could assist the Clerk in drafting letters, all correspondence was to be signed by the Clerk.

Cllr Larner expressed his criticism of actions taken by the Chairman, Cllr Bridgman, in writing to the Chief Constable of Hampshire, and submitted a letter of resignation to the Parish Council with immediate effect. After lengthy discussions it was agreed with Cllr Larner that the resignation would not be accepted, but Cllr Larner would give it some more thought over the Summer and the resignation would be discussed at the next meeting in September.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 11.00 p.m.