



East Dean & Friston

P a r i s h C o u n c i l

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| Date: | 6 July 2017 |
| Title: | Report Item 8 – Annual Village Meeting |
| By: | Cllr Stewart Fuller |
| Purpose of Report: | To review the business conducted at the AVM 2017 and consider next steps |
| Recommendations: | To consider the conclusions under the five main areas identified in this note |

The AVM was held on 11 May in the Village Hall and its success was again measured by the number attending. Over 100 residents came to see the displays and chat with representatives from local clubs and societies, to hear a number of update presentations, and participate in a Q&A session. There were updates from OpenArt, the Roads Company, ED&F WI, ED Players, the Church, Compassionate Neighbours (a new initiative), Residents' Association, and the Parish Council (covering the Playground Upgrade, Sheltered Housing and the Friston Crossing). A variety of questions followed.

The Annual Village Report was handed out and this, along with a full and detailed set of minutes of the meeting taken by the clerk, is available for viewing/download from the on-line library on the Council website

This note now highlights the main PC action items arising from the AVM.

I) The Playground Project

Related extracts from the meeting minutes are (shaded):-

Cllr Ruth Maxwell spoke on this item in the Annual Village Report 2017, pages 15-16, on behalf of the parish council. [*For discussion of this topic, please see the Q&A session below*].

Q&A Extract - discussion centred on several points, as follows:

a) The financing of the project - the Rector indicated support and it was suggested that there should be a village Appeal. There was some support for the idea that the project should be undertaken by the parish council rather than by a 'Friends' group, as the parish council could reclaim VAT (up to an annual limit), and a 'Friends' group could not, thus making a 20% difference to the overall cost. However, the parish council had limited ability to seek grant aid because the great majority of grant giving bodies would not donate to a council with powers of taxation. A question was asked about the effect on the precept of raising an extra £30,000 (about half of the cost of the project). The Chair advised that the cost per average Band D household would be less than £1 per week. If, however, the

parish were to take a loan from the Public Works Loans Board, the cost of borrowing £30,000 over 20 years could be absorbed without raising the precept. Overall, there was a preference for drawing finance from a combination of sources.

b) The need for shade – both grandparents and toddlers would be grateful for some provision in this exposed location

c) Safety – the Cricket Club expressed concern about the proposed zip wire which would be closer to the pitch than the existing play area, and could be dangerous if used during matches. Balls could enter the play area, and safety during matches must be a consideration.

Conclusion

This is an ambitious project and the PC now need to consider the way forward, noting that the two Councillors previously driving the initiative have both left the Council. It may be that whilst still fully supporting the need for the upgraded play area, a more phased approach to the project over several years would better suit available resources (management and financial). A new lead member will be required.

II) Sheltered Housing

Related extracts from the meeting minutes are (shaded):-

Cllr Ian Haydock spoke on this item in the Annual Village Report 2017, pages 17-18, on behalf of the parish council. Subsequent to the publication of the Annual Report, the parish council had learned that BUPA (owners of The Grange care home) might consider it an option to sell some land for assisted living accommodation. However, BUPA's existing car park area did not fall within the Development Boundary proposed in the planning authority's draft Local Plan. *[For discussion of this topic, please see the Q&A session below].*

Q&A Extract - discussion centred on the availability of sites, which would be a key limiting factor. It was explained the parish council could not promote the development of any particular site, nor would the project be one for the parish to manage or finance. A project would depend on site owners being put in touch with providers. A query was raised over the availability of land east of Gilberts Drive, and it was noted that the development currently proposed by a private developer on land belonging to the Old Parsonage and an adjacent site was not intended to be sheltered housing. However, the Rector stated that the church would support housing as a community asset, in principle, and would not object to the use of the field adjacent to the Rectory for this purpose. There was clearly local support for the provision of sheltered accommodation.

Conclusion

The Sheltered Housing Working Group consisted of a mixture of councillors and members of the public and was set up following a request at the October 2016 PCM. Its aim was to look into the need/provision of independent/assisted living within ED&F and conclude with a report to the AVM. Information reported at the AVM which could further the cause was taken up by a group member thus keeping a distance between councillors and any further developments. The working group has met its objective and various organisations are now

in touch with each other.

III) Friston Crossing

Related extracts from the meeting minutes are (shaded):-

Cllr Paul Seeley spoke on this item on behalf of the parish council. The council had been investigating ways of improving safety at this crossing, which lay between the northbound and southbound Friston bus stops, and was well used by school children, walkers, residents and churchgoers. The crossing was very dangerous due to its location between the 60mph and 40mph sections of the A259; the proximity of a complex junction; and limited visibility on the main road. The council had lobbied East Sussex Highways for improvements, and it had become clear that any solution must involve match funding and must be affordable: the current proposals for a partial build-out by the bus layby on the south side of the A259 represented the only solution that might be both affordable and meet Highways standards. Cllr Hill had met an East Sussex Highways Project Manager on site on 10th May 2017, and ESCC would now study movements at the site over several weeks and report to the parish in six weeks' time. A paper would then be brought to the July parish council meeting for consideration.

Q&A Extract - in discussion of this topic several points were raised for future consideration, namely:

a) There was support for a 'proper crossing' where residents would have right of way, but it was explained that this would be prohibitively expensive. Any project would have to be match funded (50% by East Sussex Highways and 50% by the parish), and it was already known that the current proposal to reduce the width of the main carriageway at the crossing was the only improvement that was financially viable. The carriageway was too narrow for a central refuge to be installed without moving the bus stops. It was then suggested that the bus stops be moved. The Chair advised that this had been considered, but that East Sussex Highways would be asked to comment on all these questions in their report, which the parish council would pass on to residents.

b) The council was requested also to consider improving pedestrian access from Jevington Road to Old Willington Road. Even cutting back the verges hard would be some help. However, it was noted that South East Water had pulled out of a scheme to install a pavement (in return for an easement across Friston Green to their reservoir), due to cutbacks within the industry. The cost would be beyond the resources of the parish.

c) A concern was raised that if motorists could no longer undertake through the bus layby, to get past vehicles waiting to turn into Windmill Lane, there could be tail-backs. The Chair explained that it should remain possible to undertake, though the space for it would be reduced.

d) It was agreed that a reduction in the speed limit would theoretically make the crossing safer. The parish council had been asking for this for some years. However, the location did not meet the Highways criteria for introducing a 30 mph limit.

Conclusion

No further action at this time, pending ESCC completing and reporting on their feasibility study (initial aim was for a paper to July PCM, but this will probably now not be until the Sept meeting)

IV Village Safety Day

Related extracts from the meeting minutes are (shaded):-

Cllr Fuller reported that the parish had an opportunity to hold another Village Safety Day, possibly in September or October 2017. A number of key organisations were willing to take part. However, on a previous occasion attendance had been low. On a show of hands, about 50 people indicated support, which was deemed to be sufficient for an event to be arranged.

Conclusion

Based on feedback from the AVM, and recognizing the time required to arrange such an event, it is suggested a Safety Day be arranged for Spring 2018, to include local organisations (eg East Dean Responders, Community Watch, Chaplaincy); non-local organisations (eg Age Concern), and the emergency services. A lead member will be required.

V Bonfire 2018

Related extracts from the meeting minutes are (shaded):-

Should the parish council organise a Bonfire event in 2018? – Cllr Fuller reminded the meeting that due to the overwhelming numbers of non-residents that had attended the last event, no Bonfire had been held in 2015 or 2016, and none was planned for 2017. However, the parish council had promised to gauge opinion again in time for an event in 2018, if residents so wished. At least 30-35 volunteers would be needed to marshal the event. On a show of hands, there was some support for holding Bonfire in 2018, but only 10-12 volunteers.

Conclusion

Based on feedback at the AVM (and at earlier Bonfire specific meetings) it is proposed that the PC do not plan to organise a Bonfire event in 2018.