



NEWDIGATE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF FULL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING on Monday 12th February 2024 at 7.30pm

PRESENT: Mr William Harmsworth (Chairman) Mr Phill Crutcher (Vice Chair) Ms Ameeta Garga, Mr Bill Kear, Mrs Sarah Macdonald, Mr John McKenzie-Sage, Mr Peter Perdue, Mr Richard Tyson-Davies.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: 17 members of public, Cllr Helyn Clack, Cllr Jo Farrar-Astrop & Clerk

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Bill Kear – Trig Street

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Full Parish Council meeting held on 8th January 2024 were agreed and approved by all present.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Q1. A resident raised concerns on the damaged verge and removal of the surrounding vegetation during the clearing of the village pond. This work was undertaken by Mr Kenward free of charge and the following day he returned to tidy up, fix the surrounding fence, and make good the verges. Following a long discussion, it was acknowledged that the pond and surrounding vegetation will benefit from the tidy up come the spring will look green and a lot better. A thank you will be emailed to Mr Kenward for giving up his time to carry out this work. Cllr Jo Farrar-Astrop will submit a request for the road surface to be cleaned of any mud.

Q2. A resident raised the ongoing issue of lack of or very few postal deliveries by Royal Mail. This has been an ongoing issue and has affected many residents. This has been brought to the attention of our local District Councillors and reported directly to Royal Mail in Dorking who have blamed this on the lack of staffing or long term sickness.

5. COMMUNITY POLICE REPORT

No report received due to leave of absence.

6. TRIG STREET PROJECT

Richard Tyson-Davies presented to all parish councillors and members of the public the background, current situation, and the plans to move this project forward. Two members of Capel Parish Council were in attendance and discussions will be held on the possibility of having a joint 'Working Party' to assist with moving things forward. *See Appendix 1 attached.*

6. CLERKS REPORT

- 6.1 The litter pick arranged for Saturday 9th March meeting at 11am will be included in the Parish Council magazine article.
- 6.2 Email storage has now been increased to 120GB across Councillors and the Clerk's email accounts.
- 6.3 To note our Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Monday 11th March at 7.30pm.

7. CORRESPONDENCE/INFORMATION

- 7.1 The Wheelwright pond work has now been completed, the dead tree trunk has been removed And the over-hanging branches/hedges trimmed back. Any remedial works will now be checked – Helyn Clack will investigate who is responsible for the fence/repairs and Jo Farrar-Astrop will report the clearing of mud on the road.
Helyn C reported on 17/3/24 that SCC have no responsibility for the area knowns as the Wheelwright Pond in Church Lane.
- 7.2 Councillors discussed the closure of Ibstock, Helyn Clack will update the Parish Council on steps relating to restoration of the site and future plans.
- 7.3 Village litter pick arranged for Saturday 9th March at 11am, Phill to provide equipment for residents. All councillors approved the purchase of new equipment such as litter pickers, which Phill will source and purchase. The Parish Council will reimburse the costs.
- 7.4 Nick Proctor updated the Parish Council and attending residents on the progress of the Full Fibre installation within the village. This project is making good progress with a significant uptake from residents. Nick will continue to provide regular updates via Facebook and the Parish Council will add them to their website.

8. FINANCE

- 8.1 The current bank balance of £22,525.84 was approved and accepted by all Councillor present.
- 8.2 The Chairman William Harmsworth agreed the figure on the accounting spreadsheet to the bank statement.
- 8.3 The following BAC payments were approved by all Councillors for payment by the Clerk:

PAYEE	DETAILS	AMOUNT
HMRC	Clerk Tax February	£177.00 BACS
Roland Allen	Email storage increased to 120GB	£145.07 BACS
Roland Allen	Email & Website management	£120.00 BACS
HCI Data Ltd	Domain Address Renewal Dec 2025	£102.00 BACS

9. PLANNING

- 9.1 No additional planning applications to consider weekending 9th February 2024.

10. HIGHWAYS & TRAFFIC CALMING

- 10.1 The Speed Watch team continue to go out subject to the weather conditions and record increasing numbers of vehicles travelling over 40mph.
- 10.2 Update from Peter Perdue – three sites for the installation of VAS signs have now been approved, Parkgate Road, Kingsland and Rusper Road. Discussions with Nigel Pond regarding the type of VAS sign to be installed and costings are still underway.

11. GATWICK MATTERS

- 11.1 No update.

12. FOOTWAYS/RoW/BRIDLEWAYS

12.1 No update.

13. BRICKWORKS

13.1 Bill Kear and Julia Forsyth met with Emily from the Surrey Wildlife Trust to discuss next steps and plans for improvement. These include a new Noticeboard, pathways and boardwalk. It was also agreed that a new bank account would be opened so that all receipts and payments will be separate from the Parish Council funds.

14. DRAFT LOCAL PLAN

14.1 Resident Neil Austin kindly presented to all Councillors and members of the public a summary of the impact of the decisions re the Local Plan from Mole Valley District Council. Please see *Appendix 2 attached*.

15. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

Meeting ended 8.50pm

Chairman Signature.....Dated.....

APPENDIX 1

TRIG STREET

RT-D Described the fifteen year saga of the Trig Street project and set out the challenges facing the community in order to deliver the completion of a new multi-user bridleway.

The project is to build a new all-weather, multi-user path over around 1220 metres (3/4 mile) in length from a point close to the gateway of the Newdigate Bowls Club to the car park of Kettles Cottages.

About 1000 metres of the route is currently a footpath and the final 220 metres will be created as a new right of way

There are two principal reasons why this new path is needed. First, Trig Street carries significant volumes of fast traffic, but is quite narrow and lacks verges on a sweeping bend. As a consequence it is very dangerous for use by non-motorised users like walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Secondly, the existing path has poor drainage on a deep clay surface and is often impassable in the winter months, with the consequence that the only safe way to travel to the west to Capel, Beare Greene and beyond, is by road.

A wide range of residents and others will benefit from an all-weather path open throughout the year and would include cyclists, horse riders, pedestrians, mobility vehicle users, child cyclists, as well as other young, disabled or elderly users. The projected path will create a pleasant rural environment to a wide range of people otherwise unable to enjoy their local countryside.

Surrey County Council Access officers agreed in 2021/2022 to undertake a feasibility study, prepare a detailed high quality specification and obtain estimates. However it was made clear that the principal part of the construction costs could not be covered by SCC as their budget will barely meet their statutory responsibilities. The bid accepted by SCC from a local contractor is for £80,000 plus VAT (which can be reclaimed).

The current funding situation is that about £35,000 has been committed from a range of donors including the British Horse Society, the Rusper and Newdigate Bridleways Association, a local resident and others. The principal landowner Ibstock Bricks has been hugely helpful but we are still left with the task of raising circa £45,000 to ensure that this major asset for the village can be created. Efforts to secure funding grants will continue and a joint working group is being set up together with Capel Parish Council, who also strongly support the project, which will run over land almost jointly covered by our two parish councils.

Update on draft Local plan as presented to Newdigate Parish Council

Monday 12th February 2024

Agenda item 14

Updated information and suggested community discussion points

1) Purpose of the agenda item

To initiate a community discussion regarding the issues surrounding the two potential new-build sites within the Metropolitan Green Belt area of Newdigate village.

2) Brief background

During an Extraordinary council meeting on Thursday 25 January 2024 MVDC Members, after much debate, voted by 18 to 12 to proceed with the draft Local plan to include all of the development policy areas on Green Belt land within the District that were originally part of the draft proposals submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in 2022.

The effect of this vote means that the draft plan can now be 'unpaused' thus enabling the Planning Inspector to proceed with her report to MVDC, formally delivering her opinion on, among many other items, whether she believes the Council's draft plan is 'sound' and 'legally compliant'. An approximate time scale for the completion of this report is unknown at the time of the Parish Council meeting.

3) Summary of the development policy areas within Newdigate village

Two sites within Newdigate village have been deemed by the MVDC planners as suitable for new housing units. These have been allocated the codes: DS58 and DS59.

a) DS58 – land to the rear of Six Bells public house:-

- Consists of approximately 0.7 ha (1.73 acres) of rough agricultural land within Metropolitan Green Belt;
- Indicative capacity calculated by MVDC: 13 units;
- Designated Rural Area for affordable housing.

b) DS59 – land to the rear of 2 The Chimes, Rusper Road, opposite the doctor's surgery:-

- Consists of approximately 0.2 ha (0.49 acres) of garden land within Metropolitan Green Belt;
- Indicative capacity calculated by MVDC: 4 units (originally 6 units on approximately 0.3 ha (0.74 acres), but the area has been reduced to account for the removal of the curtilage area of 2 The Chimes mistakenly included in the policy plan area by MVDC planners)
- Designated Rural Area for affordable housing.

4) Issues for community discussion regarding DS58 and DS59

Planning permission will be required to develop these two sites so there will be a need, when presented with applications, to be clear on the nature of the main objections. Historically, whenever the field to the rear of the Six Bells was mooted for development, objections were lodged by the Parish Council and by local residents; these objections were principally based on the Green Belt designation of the land.

Given that the two sites will now become development policy areas in the Local plan (unless removed by the Planning Inspector), MVDC planners have ignored all the objections that were made by the Parish Council and by local residents during the Regulation 19 consultation in Autumn 2021.

In summary, five principal objections below are suggested as starting points to be expanded at the time of receipt of planning applications for these two sites:-

- Both sites are within the Metropolitan Green Belt which is a statutory instrument requiring the continuance of the rural nature and openness of the countryside in the locality;
- No 'very special need' has been identified that would override the Green Belt designation of these two sites;
- Both sites have been placed within an enlarged village envelop and this enlargement was never consulted upon with the local community by MVDC;
- No account has been taken of the detrimental effects the building of the indicative numbers of units will have on the Newdigate Conservation Area in the southern section of the village; this area of the village contains significant heritage assets, including four Grade II Listed residences, one ancient (soon to be Listed) public house and the Grade II Star Listed Parish Church, as well as other buildings of importance;
- Proposed access to, and egress from, the sites is understood to be via a right of way to the benefit of DS58 located immediately to the south of the Six Bells public house, although a plan of DS58 on page 196 of Chapter 9 'Development sites information' of the draft Local plan shows DS58 as being landlocked. There is high potential for conflict between site traffic, both construction and, later, residential, and fast moving traffic passing through the Village Street/ Ruspur Road/Church Lane junction immediately outside the Six Bells, which also includes access to the doctor's surgery 30 metres to the south.

5) So, what of the immediate future?

Having voted to retain all the Green Belt policy areas originally outlined within the draft Local plan, as submitted to the Planning Inspectorate, Members of MVDC have sounded the starting gun for a developer-led scramble to secure the building rights to these plots across the length and breadth of the Mole Valley District area; indeed one of the sites here in Newdigate was visited last Friday (9th February), no doubt in preparation for a planning application to be lodged with MVDC in short order.

In conclusion then, it is clear that the development of housing on these two policy areas will change the historic central/southern part of Newdigate for ever, and, unfortunately, not in a way that could be regarded as being advantageous for current and future residents. All the warning signs are in place for significant unwelcome change arriving very soon and the entire community will be the loser if everything is not done to strongly object, when appropriate, to these unwanted developments.

This battle is not over by any stretch of the imagination; indeed, with the MVDC Members' vote and the subsequent 'unpausing' of the draft Plan, the 'phoney war' has only just concluded. Now the real conflict to secure the future begins.

N J Austin

12 February 2024