

## **PENTON MEWSEY PARISH COUNCIL**

### **ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY 9 MAY 2016**

Welcome to you all and as ever it is nice to see so many familiar faces here this evening and an especially warm welcome to those who are attending for the first time.

I believe that it is more important than ever for villagers to keep abreast of what is happening both in the Parish, those neighbouring parishes and of course at Test Valley Borough Council. Looking at my notes on Localism from 2012 I wondered then whether we in the Pentons should think about developing a Neighbourhood Plan.

To this end I am delighted to welcome Graham Smith from the Test Valley Planning department who will speak to us on Neighbourhood Planning, how it has developed over the last few years, which Test Valley parish groups are going down the Neighbourhood Planning route and what are the implications for us today. Andy Pilley has also given up his evening to come along with Graham. Andy is Community Engagement Manager and Community Safety Ward Liaison Officer for the Rural Northern Wards. Andy often holds our hand and has recently advised us, for example, on evolving parish forums where a principal remit will be to present joint proposals to either TVBC or Hampshire County Council.

Graham over to you.

#### **Questions and Thanks**

What legal powers will transfer from TVBC or HCC to say Charlton?

Will there be any disaggregation of funding?

Will we all be subsumed in Neighbourhood Plans in due course? And will we have a choice?

Will Borough Councillor boundaries change?

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

I shall begin with the **30 mile per hour speed limit** introduced along the Weyhill Bottom Road some 12 months ago. How successful has it been? Has it been a compromise after the removal of the trial chicane? It must be remembered that the police do not see this in any way a priority although it was nice to see our local PCSO recording speeds through the village twice last month. Motorists are noticeably picking up speed as they leave the village westwards before they reach the derestriction signs. This in turn has made it more difficult for farm vehicles in particular to use Back Lane. In general speeds have increased, although to be fair not perhaps to the pre 30 mile per hour limit. Nevertheless we feel that the measures taken so far have not been as successful as we had hoped. We have asked the Senior Transport Engineer for Test Valley to monitor speeds once more and from that data we hope to draw up a plan for the future. For example, there may be merit in adopting the electronic speed sign that Charlton is using, you know the one that displays your speed followed by a sad or smiley face. This would be on a permanent basis and therefore funded by the village. The difficulty is to decide how many we need. One entering the village from the east, but what about controlling speeds west and east of the Back Lane junction? Or we could return to a physical solution such as speed humps.

**Staying on the road theme** we are trying to tie Hampshire County Council down to resurface the Weyhill Bottom Road from the Foxcotte roundabout through the village and beyond Back Lane. While the potholes have been reported and will be repaired in due course the real answer must be the proper resurfacing of this busy road, but I am glad I am not trying to put such a County plan together or pay for it.

**But let me go off script for a moment. We have some 59 Test Valley parishes out of 200 plus in the whole of Hampshire screaming for potholes to be filled all with top priority holes, we have had a HCC survey which showed that potholes were the number one concern of people in the county and incidentally where care of the elderly came last. Bluntly the lanes and minor roads were never built to sustain the volume of traffic and the weight of traffic found today. There is simply not**

enough funding unless you close the rest of the libraries, cut the social services budget and every other community activity funded by the County. Alternatively the Council Tax may need to go up by 30-50%. It might just mean us all taking a keener interest in the elections of our Borough and County Councillors. Enough of my views and back to the script.

You may have also noted that at least three road signs have been damaged and again these have been duly reported to Hampshire County Council. It would be nice to know who damaged the sign by Hillside Cottage when perhaps an insurance claim might be made.

**The Annual Litter pick** was again a tragedy in that we collected 45 bags of litter. The worst areas were nothing to do with the Pentons or Penton Corner but the litter thrown out of cars travelling along the Weyhill Bottom Road all the way from the Foxcotte Lane roundabout to the Weyhill Bottom crossroads. Can after can after sandwich packet after fast food coffee cups. I am grateful for those that turned out, but must urge more villagers to get involved and apart from a family very new to the village it was the same old faces, and I emphasize the old. It is perhaps an apocryphal tale, but when children at an Andover school were chastised for dropping litter and asked who was going to pick it up, the reply was the Caretaker, that's what he is paid for. I believe that every child from 10 to 15 in the village should turn out to see just how dirty a nation we are. Lastly a very big thank you to the couple who 4 weeks later collected the latest deposits of fast food containers that had appeared so soon along said Weyhill Bottom Road.

The Parish has now installed **two of the three defibrillators planned for the Pentons**. After considerable difficulty in identifying a suitable location at Penton Corner, Caroline Welfare offered to have it mounted on the wall of her house. It has been duly fitted and is now operational. As I reported last year this equipment was paid for by a generous donation and we are now in the process of purchasing our third and last defibrillator which will be mounted on the wall of Bluebell Farm in Penton Grafton. Indeed it may be up already. I am especially grateful to Councillor Kevin Briant for managing this project.

There were **23 planning applications during the last year**, 15 for building work and 8 for tree work. Listed building applications still cause

aggravation and we do what we can to alleviate this. There was a welcome fall in the number of tree applications this year and we are grateful for this. The Parish Council is always dismayed when trees are felled for perhaps reasons which might not stand the test of time. In the meantime a 70 year old healthy specimen has been lost forever.

**The Local Plan continues to bring its challenges.** I am glad that the proposed housing development along the eastern side of Foxcotte Lane in Charlton was rejected on appeal, but we should not be surprised if further applications are made. The Local Plan does not specify that building along Foxcotte Lane, both east and west sides is a must. The land is deemed to come under the heading of a Strategic Housing and Land Availability Assessment where owners would be happy to sell should it be considered appropriate to build there. We continue to monitor all this most carefully.

**We are thankful yet again** for the efforts put in by Tony Stubbs to keep the village ship shape, to Patrick Midgley for his work on the Neighbour Hood Watch initiative and to my fellow councillors. None of us must forget the efforts of Nanette Colbourne, our clerk, for her hard work and above all her sound advice, not least to me as chairman.

I should now like to open up the meeting for general discussion before I go through the Finance Report.

(At end of discussion issue Finance Reports)

You will see that even if our running costs and donations remain the same we only have some £750 plus any VAT returns to spend on purchases this financial year which is probably not enough.

Are there any questions on the finance spreadsheet?

To conclude I therefore believe it is time to raise our precept from £6,000 for 2017-2018. This will be the first rise in five, yes five years. This will be discussed at future Parish Council meetings.

Having said that, and alluding once more to my off script remarks, I think it is time that I also mentioned the pressures on Test Valley Borough Council. Hampshire County Council has had its government grant cut by £48m for this year alone and £15m will have to be found from the Transport and Environment Departments in 2017. Council Tax has gone up by 3.99% the maximum allowed without a public referendum. With the hint of Hampshire going down the devolution route and the pressures on all council spends it is inevitable in my own view that we will all likely to have to pay much more for the basic services we receive from local government and an increase in our precept will reflect this upward trend.

Thank you all for coming.