**KIRDFORD PARISH COUNCIL**

**c/o 8 Saville Gardens, Billingshurst, West Sussex, RH14 9RR.**

**Clerk: Mrs. I. Marshall, BA (Hons), FILCM.**

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**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in the Kirdford Village Hall, on Monday, 20th April, 2014, commencing at 7.30 p.m.**

**Present**: Cllr. Mr. I. Campbell in the Chair.

14 Members of the Public.

**In Attendance**: Mrs. Katy Bourne, Police and Crime Commissioner.

1. **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**. No apologies for absence had been received.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**. There were no declarations of interest at this point in the meeting.

3. **PRESENTATION BY MRS. KATY BOURNE, POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER**. Mrs. Bourne stated that there had been a lot in the papers recently about Sussex Police and cuts to the Police budget. Currently it had a budget of £250 million for the County. There were seven Clinical Groups under the new changes to the NHS and everyone has a budget bigger than Sussex Police for the whole County. It had had to take £50 million out of its budget, which had been done; there had been year on year cuts. Savings had been found, but the next five years would be more challenging as Sussex has to take a further £57 million out of its budget. The Sussex Police Precept is the fourth lowest in the country, whereas Surrey residents pay the most in the country for their Police. More than 30% of policing in Sussex is done in collaboration with Surrey and 70% of its budget comes from the Government out of general taxation. The impact of a cut of £57 million puts Sussex in a difficult place. There were pressures on the budget due to cyber-crime, fraud and theft. Twenty years ago policing was face to face, but now was on-line and there are no boundaries as it was world-wide and particularly bad for the elderly and more vulnerable. The heavy stuff, banks and big corporations were covered by the National Crime Agency that does this at a national level. However, few people reported cyber-crime to the Police, whereas they advise their bank. There was now a Cyber Crime Unit between Surrey and Sussex and was the first in the country.

Sussex was not immune from sexual exploitation; there were many historical cases from people in their 40s/50s or older that were exploited when children. Years ago the Police did not know much about it; such cases can take weeks, months or years to bring to Court. Budgets being reduced results in difficult decisions having to be taken. Whilst Sussex may not get it all right, it did have a plan about what needs doing in order to meet the challenges financially whilst maintaining the Police Service expected and keeping people safe. Over the last four months it had looked at over 2½ million pieces of data; what it was doing that should not and what should it do more efficiently. Rather than responding to 999 calls locally, this was now being done across Sussex and one Officer has a strategic over-view.

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Eighty per cent of the £250 million budget went on pay and pensions for staff, so it was very difficult to find the £57 million cuts from the remainder. It has decided that 1,000 staff would have to go which would be achieved through retirement, etc., as there was no means of compulsory redundancy for Officers and these Officers would then not be replaced. Other staff could be made redundant but they hoped to minimize this. Senior Officers had given presentations to Parish Councils about this. The Police and Crime Commissioner was supposed to be like a prism and to feed things to the Police. It was hoped to keep dialogue open as it was important that Senior Officers came out and see things for themselves. What the model would look like was not known, and where Officers were deployed was not down to Mrs. Bourne; it was for the Chief Constable. Mrs. Bourne’s job was to challenge his decisions and ask why on behalf of the population and that was what she intended to do. These decisions were being made with real understanding and commitment on both sides and feedback people’s concerns. Every month she holds the Chief Constable to account at a formal meeting which was webcast.

Mrs. Bourne’s role was not just about Police; on the 1st April she took over responsibility for services to victims of crime across Sussex. Traditionally the Government would give money to organizations that would ask victims if they want extra help, etc. The money was split 41 ways to be spent locally. Mrs. Bourne had written a framework so that people could bid for that money. Victim Support had been awarded the contract and had agreed to give a little extra. £3 million would be spent in the area over the next three years. The contract was being managed through Mrs. Bourne’s office and at the end she would be able to say how that money had been spent, performance would be measured with outcomes.

Rhetorical Justice was where the offender of crime was brought together with the victim. Even rape victim like to meet the perpetrator in order to say what they think to them. It was the victim’s choice. Sussex Police was working in partnership across Sussex and had a plan and was leading the UK on this because many other places were playing catch-up; Sussex was held as a vanguard.

Mrs. Bourne realized that Sussex Police did not always get things right, but Officers were passionate about what they do and did a fantastic job on our behalf. Sussex was a relatively safe County and it was hoped to keep it that way.

A question and answer session then ensued. She was asked ‘what is the position regarding her manifesto pledge to have Police in every village?’ There were now 400 Specials and there would have been more, but many Specials had decided to become regular Constables so they had to recruit again. The idea was to get people to step forward and help keep communities safe. Community Speed Watch – the Police could not be there all the time and they had to be sensible about resources, but would resource you and get you to be trained and feed into Operation Crackdown which if someone is seen driving too fast or anti-socially the time it happened, details of the vehicle can be reported on-line and they owner would be sent a letter advising that they were speeding at time and location and ask that they not do it again. Mostly this worked; however, if a further report was received for the same vehicle another letter is send but the third time they get a visit from a Police Officer. It was recommended that people use Operation Crackdown. Some Parish Councils raise their Precept in order to fund a Community Warden or volunteer and the Police were keen to support that. It was felt that the Council should try and encourage a local person to volunteer.

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The second question was ‘Given the reductions in manpower for West Sussex that have been reported, has a new remit been agreed with the Chief Constable/Home Secretary regarding priorities, response times, crimes that would not be investigated, etc. – if so, what is that? Currently PCSOs cover huge areas. Mrs. Bourne pointed out that there was not just one PCSO for that area as there was a massive machine behind them; the PCSO takes details and feed this into the Regional Unit. A query was raised about Police presence and Mrs. Bourne assured the meeting that there was a Police presence and if they were needed in an emergency they would be there, but you would not see Police walking down the street and knocking on doors. Should anyone feel unsafe they must let the Police know or even contact the District Commander. One in three calls are because of problem with people that have mental health problems and they can be aggressive and the mental health nurses go home on Fridays at 5.00 p.m., so the Police have to turn out on Saturdays and do the only thing they can which is to put them in a cell where they can be kept safe and try and get help for them. However, such people should never be in a cell. A pilot was having mental health nurses going out with the Police and they ask the person if they have taken their medication and tell them to go home and take them and this takes a large number out of the system. This pilot has now been extended across the County.

The next question was ‘Members attended the recent presentation by the Chief Constable and came away thinking that what he said sounded fine, but then had concerns about the technology that was mentioned. If this is supposedly to save time by cutting out journeys to stations that sounds great, but in practise, is the technology available and will it work in areas where it would be most needed, i.e., out in the country areas a long way from the Police Stations where mobile ‘phone connection, etc., is extremely poor. Do these new mini computers work all the time irrespective of location?’ Currently Sussex Police was trialling mobile tablets for Officers and add an app each week so that Officers get used to using them. By Christmas when every Officer has an app they will need connectivity to do some work and can then fill out forms. Currently they cannot, but will be able to as they improve the apps and as soon as they drive into an area where there is connectivity things will get sent. This was part of the contract that has been signed with BT and O2 in conjunction with Dorset Police and funding from the Home Office. They were mapping the areas of poor connectivity and looking at putting satellite in areas, but this could not be in all areas because it was expensive.

Mrs. Bourne was asked what her view was on merging police forces as some think there should be one National Police Force. She considered that Sussex Police was successful because it has a local flavour and that was really important. They were working collaboratively with Surrey and had a combined Fire Arms Unit, Dog Unit and were merging ICT technology as they both used the same system. The Police did not used to talk to each other, but they do now. There were 41 Police Forces with computer systems that did not talk to each other. Roads Policing should be done regionally, as should procurement, although some was already done nationally. It was not thought that merging of Surrey and Sussex would happen because of the size of the respective Precepts; everyone in Sussex would pay more and those in Surrey would pay less. Sussex would have a 40% increase and that would take legislation to do that. She felt that on-line crime could definitely be done on a regional basis.

The role of Police and Crime Commissioners was discussed and if there was a change of Government this could make a big difference because Labour want to go back to

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the committee structure made up of people in the criminal justice system. Currently you can vote the current Police and Crime Commissioners out of office. Committees would not be cheaper. Not holding elections would save £40 million, but if held at the same time as other elections this could be reduced. The election was due May next year. The Police and Crime Plan reflects what local people want and whilst could get this with a Committee, you would not necessarily get the accountability or the opportunity to you do not like what you are doing and get someone else which goes against democracy.

Mrs. Bourne left the meeting at 8.25 p.m.

4. **TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING**. The minutes of the meeting held on the 28th April, 2014 were duly **APPROVED**.

5. **CHAIRMAN’S REPORT** :-

Mr. Campbell explained that the Council had had an extremely busy year. A lot of people had contributed to a successful year and he thanked his fellow Members who gave their time freely and generously and referred especially to Cllr. Mr. Allfrey who was retiring this year after very many years’ service to the community. He thanked the Clerk for keeping the Council on the straight and narrow and for the many additional hours worked; the Deputy Clerk who unfortunately had now moved on for personal reasons. He also thanked Cllrs. Mr. Ransley (District Councillor and Vice-Chairman) and Cllr. Mrs. Duncton (County Councillor) for everything that they had done at District and County.

There had been many planning applications, big and small; it had addressed flooding of the highways and almost the river. Various community assets had been listed such as the Half Moon and an application was being made to English Heritage to List Isling Bridge. A permissive footpath across the Recreation Ground and Churchyard was close to being secured. There had been many consultations to respond to, e.g., the second runway at Gatwick, flight paths, etc. The new website is at last nearing completion. Work on the Winter Management and Emergency Plans were being worked on. There had once more been a good bonfire.

There had been some very significant successes: the Kirdford Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan had been adopted; Crouchland which was still ongoing; the planning permission had been refused for Celtique Energie and the Public Inquiry had been withdrawn. However, sometimes successes have not been as a result of formal consultation as in the case of Crouchland there had been a need to obtain a legal opinion as the Officers had recommended approval and it was the good sense of the Planning Committee aided by the legal opinion that gained this success. Similarly with Celtique Energie the Parish Council’s stance had been added at Committee. Unfortunately this takes a considerable amount of time and money. Democracy succeeded because the Committee made the right decision rather than as a result of the consultation with the Parish Council.

2015 will be equally as busy as the saga continues with regard to Crouchland; there was a need to deliver the Neighbourhood Plan including the Plaistow Road site. There was an on-going petition trying to save Boxal Bridge as W.S.C.C., Want to replace it. Both Kirdford and Wisborough Green Parish Councils do not want that to happen as it

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is regarded as natural traffic calming. Some drainage works had been completed but there was the matter of future maintenance. A Working Party had been set up to look into the subject of play equipment within the village. Whether or not there is a second runway at Gatwick Kirdford has a flightpath problem as whilst these were dispersed over a larger area they were now concentrated. It was hoped to improve community engagement when the new website it up and running and perhaps even to have a Parish Office at some time in the future. Work was in hand to try and improve the planning consultation process with both Chichester District Council and West Sussex County Council. There was a need to recruit a new Deputy Clerk. The election would take place on May 7th, but unfortunately the Parish Council election was uncontested as there were nine candidates for nine positions.

The Council faces many challenges; localism, neighbourhood planning, complex planning applications that result in the workload getting more complex, time consuming and expensive. There was a need to employ consultants and lawyers with specialist knowledge. Kirdford was outside the National Park. The Parish Council will need to change to meet these challenges and County and District Councils will need to work more closely with Parish Councils. The Parish Council need to change to meet the many challenges that exist and there was a need to work in a more inclusive way.

The Parish Council should be the first port of call for any queries; members of the public could be involved with the Working Party working on play equipment. He felt that it would be good if more members of the public attended the Parish Council meetings as it covered a multitude of things which should be of interest to people. He thanked all members of the public for attending.

6. **FINANCIAL REPORT** – the following was presented :-

**Income**

Balance b/fwd at 1st April, 2014 £51,904.96

Precept £43,214.00

VAT Reclaim £ 2,171.40

Other Income £ 6,161.47

£103,451.83

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**Expenditure**

General Administration £23,924.60

Recreation and Grounds Maintenance £ 7,034.01

Emergency Equipment £ 0.00

Neighbourhood Plan £ 388.74

Drainage Works £ 8,752.00

Consultancy Costs £ 7,538.80

£47,638.15

VAT Paid (being reclaimed) £ 3,385.18

£51,023.33

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Current Account £19,422.00

Business Reserve Account £30,478.37

Post Office Savings Account £ 3,483.38 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

£53,383.75

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Less: Unpresented cheques £ 955.25

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£52,428.50

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Opening Balance as per Bank Statements at 1st April, 2013 £51,904.96

Receipts £51,546.87

Payments £51,023.33

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£52,428.50

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**Reserves: as at 1st April, 2015**

Village Improvement Fund £11,000.00

Neighbourhood Development Plan £ 7,020.17

Environmental Concerns (Emergency Equipment) £ 2,000.00

Community Flood Fund £ 1,248.00

Safety Surfacing Fund £ 2,000.00

Village Workshop Fund £ 441.20

General Reserve £28,719.13

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£52,428.50

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7. **OPEN FORUM FOR QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**. A member of the public asked about where the minutes of the Parish Council meetings were published and was advised that these were on the existing website, but these did not go on in a very logical order, but should be better when the new website it up and running.

Mr. Allfrey asked what the Chairman thought about moving to a full-time Clerk in the near future. The Chairman stated that the Clerk would be working 20 hours per week and the Deputy 10 per week which was 30 hours and he felt it better to have two people as can then cover holiday and sickness. Mr. Allfrey pointed out that Rudgwick had a Parish Office in the Village Hall. It was felt that it could be necessary to have a Parish Office either in an extended Village Shop or the Workshop.

It was asked how the Council was going regarding the Neighbourhood Plan and development of the village. The Chairman advised that the first thing was the development of the Plaistow Road site and this was being worked on (45 dwellings) and talks with developers were being held.

Mr. Ransley stated that the Council was keen to progress the Neighbourhood Plan otherwise the strength would dissipate, but more help was wanted from people within the parish, not necessarily Councillors, but people interested in specific areas. The Community Land Trust especially was something that will be the driver of the Neighbourhood Plan and looking to get volunteers to help on those issues in the future. There was lots to do.

Once the website was up and running it was hoped that people would be able to sign up to receive agendas, etc., by e-mail.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.00 p.m.