

CONFIDENTIAL
ALBURY PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a meeting of Albury Parish Council held in closed session on
Monday 18th August 2008 at 6pm, in the Memorial Library**

Present: Cllr N Wenman (in the chair), Cllrs J Brockwell, J Chapman, P Gellatly, R Hogben, D Nicholson, G Robinson, P von Radowitz

In attendance: The Clerk, Mrs J Cadman

Councillors noted that the content of this meeting was strictly confidential and agreed to abide by this confidentiality.

145/08 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Were received from Cllr Croucher

146/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 1) Councillors were reminded that they must register an interest in any items on the agenda for this meeting, where appropriate, at the beginning of the meeting.
- 2) Councillors were further reminded that they must ensure that their register of interests is kept up to date and the Clerk advised of changes and additions.

All Councillors declared a personal interest in agenda item **147/08**

147/08 GRAND DESIGN SCHEME

The Chairman clarified the purpose of the meeting as follows:

1. To bring members up to date on discussions
2. To seek agreement on the following:
 - a) to proceed with housing needs survey; ie: to "go public" on ascertaining the need for affordable housing in the village.
 - b) To have further discussions with other parties.
 - c) Approval for expenditure of up to £750 to Clark Gammon to enter into negotiations with Albury Estate, leading to a Heads of Agreement. Also an additional £250 for other items of expenditure.

Cllr Hogben advised that the project had moved forward from an information gathering stage, now that it was apparent that the scheme was possible. Everyone who had been involved in discussions to date had been enthusiastic.

a) Housing Needs Survey

Before going public on the scheme, the next step was to undertake the housing needs survey. If it was found that there was no need for affordable housing in Albury, this would change the project significantly. The survey would be undertaken in collaboration with Surrey Community Action (SCA), who would receive and analyse the responses, keeping the exercise as independent as possible.

Cllr Nicholson advised that a Data Protection Statement would be needed, as contact details were requested. Cllr Hogben confirmed that there was more work to do to the survey, guided by SCA. He advised that the purpose of this survey was to assess, within the locality, the level of interest in affordable housing. GBC is driven by the needs register, which did not show a good case for affordable housing in Albury. This survey would serve the purpose of making people aware of the possibility of affordable housing, and of the possibility of registering for it.

As the affordable housing project would be driven by the Parish Council, a S106 statement could be drawn up to ensure that the development was for the benefit of local people.

- Cllr Brockwell believed that the first three lines of the flyer should be deleted, as they

outlined where the properties would go ("just outside the settlement boundary"), which would have the effect of making people ask for more information.

- Cllr Gellatly suggested that the survey should make it clear that this was being undertaken because some residents were let down over the last affordable housing scheme, and the Parish Council wished to look at this again.

Vicarage

The other purpose of this survey was to assess the level of support for a vicarage in the village.

The aim would be to include a covenant on the house to ensure that it could only be used as a vicarage and not sold by the Church in the future.

Agreed: to ask Ken to look at the wording regarding the vicarage, as he would be able to articulate the reasons why it was important.

- At present it was not clear who would pay for the survey
- SCA would have no influence on how housing was allocated.

Action:

1. Cllr Hogben to make changes to copy and circulate to all councillors in 'Word'.
2. Members to respond with any comments or changes by Friday 29th August, to either the Chairman or the Clerk.
3. Cllr Nicholson would organise the artwork and insert the Data Protection statement.
4. Cllr Hogben to insert an article in the Parish Magazine (copy date Thursday 21st) advising of the survey, which would go out to all houses in the village, via the postman, in early September.

Plan

The plan of the proposed changes to the village was tabled. It was noted that this plan had been drawn up by the Estate's architect.

Cllr Gellatly was concerned that this plan could not be progressed unless planning permission was obtained for the private housing development on the recreation ground. An application for planning permission would put the project in the public domain. Cllr Wenman advised that discussions had taken place with Tim Dawes, Head of Planning at GBC, and that he had been enthusiastic about the prospects for the project, with some reservations. Cllr Hogben had a meeting with Tim Dawes and Michael Baxter the following day.

b) Fringe negotiations

Cllr Wenman stated that it was vital to get agreement from Albury Estate before proceeding any further, as without agreement this project could not proceed. Cllr Nicholson believed the village should be asked for their views first. Cllr Brockwell also believed that the Heads of Agreement was the first step to take. Cllr Wenman believed that the Parish Council were in a stronger negotiating position with the Estate before plans were made public. Anyone involved in the fringe negotiations was likely to make their views generally known.

It was **agreed** that the process for moving the project forward should be as follows

- Agreement from GBC in principle
- Agreement from Estate in principle (Heads of Agreement)
- Agreement of Parish Council to proceed
- Public Consultation (if the majority of the Parish did not like the scheme, it would go no further)

Cllr Robinson was asked for his views, as owner of a house in Westonfields. He advised that he would support the Council, as a Member, but had severe reservations about the project for the following reasons:

- More housing in the centre of Albury. He recalled the problems caused by the Toppers Court development, many of which had not been resolved. These ranged from damage caused by builders' lorries to problems with tenants.
- Infrastructure: Cllr Robinson did not believe this could support more housing, and he

gave the example of the bus service: there are no buses on Sunday, and the last one runs at 6pm.

Cllr Robinson reminded Members that he had asked many times over the years for the Estate field for a village green, and the Estate would not consider it. Now that they were being given a good incentive it was a different matter.

Cllr Wenman responded as follows:

- If the field was not protected by Parish Council ownership, it was an obvious place for affordable housing within the next 10 to 15 years. The Council was under enormous pressure from the Government to provide more housing, and would be looking at all possibilities.
- Affordable housing would attract more young families into the village
- The Housing Needs survey would examine the need for a more robust infrastructure.
- A S106 agreement would ensure that housing went firstly to village people.

It was **agreed** that the fringe negotiations should be delayed until after draft Heads of Agreement had been reached with the Estate.

Expenditure

Proposal from Clark Gammon

A discussion took place concerning the use of Clark Gammon. Cllr Nicholson believed that the Council should seek two valuations, to have a means of comparison. They should also consider whether another company should negotiate with the Estate if they gave a potentially more accurate valuation. Cllr Wenman believed that negotiation with the Estate was the crucial element, to get the best deal for the Parish Council, and Clark Gammon had experience in negotiating with the Estate in the past.

Cllr Brockwell pointed out that the number of houses that it was possible to be built on the site was a central issue to the valuation. The fact that the access road was single width could be a deciding factor in this. An accurate valuation was less vital at this stage than were effective negotiations.

Cllr Wenman pointed out that there could be as much as £1.5 million released from this land. How this got used had yet to be decided, but it was clear that there would be enough money to achieve what the parish council was aiming for, at the same time as providing a deal that would be acceptable to the Estate. He clarified that the Rural Housing Association would purchase the land for the affordable housing from the Estate in a separate arrangement.

As some questions had been raised about Clark Gammon's suitability, it was **agreed** to approach another company, in order to be able to compare, and then to make a decision about which company to use. It was **agreed** that the Grand Designs Committee should make this comparison and make a recommendation to the other members.

It was **agreed** by all present that a budget of £1,000 be allocated to moving towards Heads of Agreement. All expenditure to be authorised by Cllr Wenman or Cllr Hogben, and to be ratified by Cllr Brockwell.

148/08 COUNCILLORS BUSINESS for noting or for raising on a future agenda

- a) *Recreation Ground*: Cllr von Radowitz advised that a pick up truck had been parked illegally across the entrance to the recreation ground, making it impossible for Mr Daniel to get in to mow. She had reported this to the police, and it had now been moved to the corner of the access road.
- b) *Banner at Edgeley Park*: It was not clear if this was permissible, as it was on private land. The Clerk would discuss this with the Enforcement officer at GBC.
- c) *Mill bus stop*: People were being told that the bus stop was to be removed, despite assurances from Highways that it would remain. Cllr Hogben would follow this up.

149/08 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Monday 1st September 2008

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8pm.