

Shadoxhurst Village Forum

Notes from the 8th Village Forum meeting held in the Pavilion on Thursday 5th January 2017

- To maintain the quality of life for all in the village
- To generate issues that could be put to the Parish Council
- To re-kindle community spirit and engender friendship
- To build a social feeling in the village
- To suggest things that will bring people together
- **With a vision to create and develop a positive community spirit.**

1) Welcome and Notes from last meeting

Over 30 villagers attended the meeting. David Ledger, chairing the meeting, wished everyone a happy new year and thanked everyone for coming.

A summary of notes from the last meeting had been circulated and there were no further additions to them.

2) Setting the Forum agenda for 2017

Everyone was asked to feel free to contribute to the discussion and say what they would like to see included over the coming year. In addition to discussing and responding to planning developments, the following items were suggested:

- organise village events.
 - ideas included a village dance, perhaps a Barn Dance or 60's themed dance. Would anyone / or a small group be willing to organise this if there is enough interest?
 - There was interest expressed in a village table top sale to give people the chance to de-clutter and re-use and re-cycle stuff. Carol said she would be willing to organise this and will send an email round with information.
- set up new clubs in the village.
 - The idea of a new gardening club was mentioned. Is anyone / or a small group willing to organise this if there is enough interest?
 - The coffee club on Tuesday afternoons continues to be popular. Val and Colin were thanked for their work organising this, but if anyone else is willing to step up so that the regular organisers can have the occasional Tuesday afternoon off it would be appreciated!
- raise money (perhaps some from profits of social events) and seek grant funding towards making the Pavilion and Village hall accessible to all, including the provision of a disabled toilet at both. We need to determine costs as the first step.

- Hold occasional working parties to improve aspects of the village.
 - People commented about the poor state of the recreation field car park. The quotes obtained by the parish council for remedial work were unaffordable at present. It was mentioned that there might be the skills / contacts within the village to help with this work.
 - It was suggested that we could carry out a 'skills audit' to see how Forum members might be able to offer help and expertise to village projects.

It was also commented that there should be more information about what is going on, maybe events publicised on the village noticeboards and web site.

3) Update on planning appeal site.

David thanked everyone who had made representations to the planning inspectorate. The Hearing would be held on 7th February 2017.

Another planning application has now been made by the developer for this same site. Everyone who has previously objected to the original application, or to the appeal, will have to again make objections because the previous ones won't be carried through to this new application! It was mentioned that if we don't object, this one may go through. The good news is you can say what you said before, but make sure you quote the new application number **16/01841/AS** and please send to Ashford Borough Council Planning Department by Friday 13th January 2017 (see below). Get any concerned family, friends and neighbours to write too!

There was also some discussion that the application intended to create a small amount of narrowing of Woodchurch Road in the vicinity of the access to road to be able to create a sufficient vision splay for drivers coming out of the site to see traffic coming from the pub side. People were worried about narrowing the road when we already have large haulage lorries using the road daily.

Aline (our Ward Councillor) said that this application was likely to be considered at Ashford Borough Council's February Planning Committee meeting.

4) Update on King's Head pub field development

The planning application remains 'frozen' but there have been some amendments to the plans. Objections can still be made to Ashford Borough Council about this proposed development, the application number to quote is **15/01496/AS**. It also remains an allocated site in the draft local plan.

People expressed their dissatisfaction with the way development was being imposed on our village. The majority of people don't want any building on either of these two strategic sites at the centre of the village, and there was discussion about poor drainage and increased flood risk. Overall, there was a real concern that if development continues we will lose our green spaces and village identity, becoming part of an urban Greater Ashford.

It was pointed out that the very high number of houses proposed for the Borough go way beyond what is needed for our natural population growth, they are due to a political decision to become a growth area and attract people in from other parts of the country. Aline said the house building needs to achieve 700 per year in the borough, 300 of these for the growth of Ashford's population and the other 400 for people coming in from elsewhere, including 50 from London.

Despite lots of house building going on, Ashford has been unable to meet its huge housing growth targets, which is why developers are saying we have a 'housing shortfall'! Under government rules, having a 'housing shortfall' makes our countryside building restraint policies 'out of date' and potentially makes it much easier for developers to build wherever they like.

Aline thought that Chilmington Green was likely to be built at a rate of 300 per year. There was also a discussion about the confusion about what constitutes 'affordable housing' and whether bought or rented.

5) The Great British Spring Clean (3rd – 5th March 2017)

It was agreed that a Forum working party would take place on Saturday 4th March. Possible places for a tidy-up include:

Around the recreation field

Village sign

Area between the pub and Maytree Place

The phone box

Street name signs (KCC have been asked to replace damaged and missing signs and have agreed to do this in the spring)

It was suggested that the Saturday walkers group could be asked to report any areas they notice that need tidying or fixing, as well as any issues with public right of way footpaths.

We were told that ABC are now employing a private company called Kingdom to patrol grassed areas and issue fixed penalty tickets for any dog owner not cleaning up after their dog fouls.

There was a discussion about what to do around the village millennium sign now the shrubs have been cut back. Suggestions included keeping low shrubs, but also laying slate chips to discourage weed growth.

If reading this, you have any thoughts and ideas for the spring clean up, whether parts that need attention or if you are willing to come out for an hour or so on the day, please let David know, either on 733540 or amberherne@btinternet.com .

6) Showcasing Shadoxhurst (25th March 2017, 10am- 3pm)

There was a discussion about the timing and venue. It was agreed that 10 – 3 was the best time. The venue will be the Village Hall and local groups can come along and showcase their clubs, groups and societies with a stall and their leaflets. Of those that had been contacted some had already confirmed they will be coming. It will give us a great opportunity to find out what's going on in our area. David asked that people step forward to give a hand on the day and in the run up to it, particularly he would be grateful for any offers of help with publicity for this event. Publicising would be aided by the Newsletter, web site and Facebook, other ideas included parish magazine and the Kent Messenger.

Simon and Kim attended the meeting on behalf of the Scouts Association and said the Shadoxhurst Beavers and Cubs were both thriving and growing in number, also the Scout Hut was well on the way to being refurbished. They plan to have an event perhaps a fete in the summer. They are keen to be part of the village activities and will certainly help with this event.

If you would like to help with this event, whether in a small or larger way, please let David know (as above).

7) Village Facebook pages

One public site has recently been shut down, and another independent group, 'SHADOXHURST, A Kent village' has just been started. The group description says:

Welcome to the independent Shadoxhurst Village web site. This is a fairly new venture to encourage not only villagers, but village businesses and those in the surrounding areas to make their trades known. We also want to see lots of photos and planning issues, some of which appear to be trying to turn this rural and peaceful area into a suburb of Ashford. Let's try to stop it happening. Let's stay rural and let's stay peaceful.

David said he had hoped that the Admin person for the site could be here tonight, but she had another commitment, hopefully we can throw more light on the situation soon.

8) Date of next meeting

This will be on Thursday 2nd of February 2017

David thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting.

Postscript

We have since been advised that the final date for submissions to Ashford Borough Council in relation the item 3 was put back to the 19th January, then subsequently it was moved back again to 27th January.

We suggest that any objections / comments need to be sent to Ashford BC Planning Department during the week of the 23rd at the latest to ensure it arrives before or by the 27th.

We also had it confirmed by the ABC Case Officer that it will be taken to the Planning Committee on the 15th February 2017.