



Theydon Bois Parish Council

Parish Office, The Village Hall, Coppice Row,
Theydon Bois, Essex CM16 7ER

Clerk to the Council: Mrs Julie Taylor
Minutes Secretary: Mrs Sarah Barnes

Minutes of the Parish Council held at The Village Hall at 8.00pm on Thursday 30th January 2014

Councillors Present: Cllrs Philip, Gooch, Wood, Young, Howard, Jones, McDonald, Hammond and Purkiss.

Apologies: Cllrs Vincent and Hannibal

Officers Present: Mrs Julie Taylor (Parish Clerk & RFO)
Mrs Sarah Barnes (Minutes Secretary)

Councillor Philip introduced himself as Chairman and welcomed everyone to the first Main Parish Council Meeting of the New Year and announced that he would be changing the order of the agenda slightly. After the public participation session with regards to items on the agenda he will take the Planning Committee item regarding Theydon Bois Lawn Tennis Club.

88. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Vincent and Hannibal.

89. To discuss and approve the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 28th November 2013.

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed and Councillor Philip would sign at the end of the meeting.

90. Disclosure of Interests (existence and nature) with regard to items on the agenda. Members of the council are subject to the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct Order 2007 (SI.2007/1159)(The Revised Code).

Cllr Gooch: Non-pecuniary interest on item 7.2 (Tennis Club Application) as he is a Trustee of the Buxton Trust.
Pecuniary interest on item 8.5 (Cricket Club donation towards the purchase of grass cutting equipment) as he is secretary of Theydon Bois Cricket Club.

Cllr Hammond: Non-pecuniary interest on item 8.5 as he is a social member of Theydon Bois Cricket Club.

Cllr Purkiss:	Non-pecuniary interest on item 8.5 as he is a social member of Theydon Bois Cricket Club.
Cllr McDonald:	Non-pecuniary interest on item 8.5 as he is a social member of Theydon Bois Cricket Club.
Cllr Jones:	Pecuniary interest on item 7.2 due to proximity of her residence from the Tennis Club and is also a statutory consultee on the application.
Cllr Philip:	No interest to declare, however, as he sits on the District Council Planning Committee he felt it would be important that, if this item comes before that Committee, Theydon Bois Parish Council would be represented. As such he would take no part in the debate and be a non-voting Chairman.

91. Public Participation Session with regard to items on the agenda (apart from the Planning item 7.2)

None

Public Participation Session with regard to items on the agenda (Planning item only)

Councillor Jones left the room and members of the public were asked to keep their points brief. Councillor Gooch presented the applications with public participation to follow.

Councillor Gooch reported the following:

Regarding items 7.2, there are two applications from the Tennis Courts. The main application is to install floodlights to courts 3 and 4, the alternative is to install floodlights to court 3 only. There are 6 courts at present at the Tennis Court and courts 3 and 4 are the centre two – immediately in front of the pavilion and the one to the right of the pavilion. Plans were shown to all Councillors. Councillor Gooch pointed out that this was the fifth application and that all previous applications had been either refused or dismissed on appeal. The main difference on this application from the last is that the previous application was to light the three courts on the left hand side that are nearest to Red Oaks and the new application has used new technology available now for lighting, reducing the number of pylons. The pylons being applied for are 7 meters high and there are four in each court. The courts, and their situation, were pointed out on plan to the Councillors present so they were clear on their position to Sydney Road/cricket club etc.

The previous application was dismissed on appeal because this is a very dark part of the village and as such is used by the Loughton Astronomy club for stargazing etc. The planning inspectors view was that the light had an illuminating effect and had an overpowering effect in an otherwise dark landscape. Since 2004, the village has a Dark Skies policy which is part of the Village Design Statement and has been accepted by Epping Forest Planning as an input into local planning considerations. The new application states that the ‘spill’ of light is less than on previous applications and would illuminate the courts only.

Councillor Philip reported that the Parish Office had received 17 letters in support of the application and 9 against the application.

Councillor Gooch explained that he is a Trustee of the Buxton Trust and elected Secretary of the Buxton Trust. He felt it was important that it be made clear of the views of the Trust – the application has been put forward to the Trust by the Tennis Club and has already been refused by the Trust. Apart from the representatives of the Tennis Club on the Trust, it was a unanimous vote against the application by the remainder of the trustees. He felt that it was important to point out that irrespective of the outcome of the application, unless there is a significant change of heart from the Trustees, the lights will not be allowed to be implemented because the Tennis Courts form part of the Buxton Trust (along with the Cricket Club and Football Club) and as such, does not own the land it is situated on. The Trust is managed by nine trustees. The Trust was very conscious of the need to maintain a good relationship with the neighbours and felt that lights would have a huge impact regardless of the advance in technologies. The trustees are also very sensitive to the village views on 'Dark Skies' and the majority of trustees support this. The final view was that overall there was not a real justification for the lighting as it is primarily a summer sport. Comparisons were made with the cricket club/football club where they hire other facilities during winter months. Ultimately, it seemed likely to benefit relatively few people and would not outweigh the inconvenience to nearby residents.

Theydon Bois resident and District Rural Preservation Society representative:

The Rural Preservation Society was formed in 1943 and has many local members. Whilst the Society fully appreciates the contribution that the Tennis Club makes to our community, they are disappointed that yet another application has been submitted and feel that it will be a nuisance to neighbours and could affect wildlife within Epping Forest. The Society does not accept that there will be minimum impact from the 7 metre high pylons and the reflection and light created will affect many neighbours. The Village Design Statement (VDS) could be undermined if this application is approved and could set a precedent for other local applications. Evidence suggests that 78.5% of people support the Dark Skies Policy and the VDS should be upheld. The District Rural Preservation Society strongly asks the Parish Council to object to the applications.

Epping Resident:

As a past Captain of the Tennis Club he supported the previous applications. During the winter months, there is reduced coaching available because of light levels and the hire of alternative premises would increase costs for families and deter them. For the past 20 years tennis lessons have been provided to the local Primary School free of charge and felt that it was a valid contribution. The application has been changed from previous applications and consultancy, assisting with the specifications regarding light spillage, has been sought. He pointed out that floodlighting would only be for three evenings per week and they would be turned off at 9.35pm.

Abridge Resident:

Wanted to make the point that lights would only be used 3 nights per week in the winter, and only when required.

Theydon Bois Resident:

Wanted to know what the proposals were for the increase in vehicles that would attend the Tennis Club. There were already problems with pavements and drives being blocked by cars.

Theydon Bois Resident:

Acts as a Junior Coach and wanted to explain that in reality the tennis season would only probably be extended for a few weeks at the beginning of the season and a few weeks at the end of the season. He was doubtful that there would be many games being played in the middle of the winter, and therefore, the number of cars parked would not exceed the numbers parked during the summer season.

Theydon Bois Resident:

Chairman of the Village Design Statement and a supporter of the Tennis Club, praised the amenity for its continued good work with the School and the youth of the village. He understood the Tennis Club's desire to have floodlights but there have never been street lights in Theydon Bois. After a number of surveys, the majority of residents voted to keep the village dark and this formed the Dark Skies Policy for the village which is used today. He felt that the pylons are too high, intruding into neighbours houses/gardens and would contravene the Dark Skies Policy. Many of the neighbours affected would actually look up into the lights because their houses are situated below the level of the Tennis Courts. He felt that any lighting would have a detrimental effect on the wildlife in that area and in conclusion asked that the application be refused.

Theydon Bois Resident:

An owner of an allotment wondered why children couldn't be taught on a Sunday morning when the courts are empty. She wondered why non-residents wanted to have the lighting and thought that it should be the residents of Theydon Bois who decide.

Theydon Bois Resident:

Was concerned about the amount of light produced from the floodlights with the height of the pylons and thought she would be looking up at the lights. She enjoyed the darkness of the village and thought Sydney Road would suffer with the increased traffic.

Theydon Bois Resident:

Wanted clarification on the number of letters received either for or against the application and wanted to know if any letters or emails sent directly to EFDC had been taken into account.

Councillor Philip confirmed that 17 letters in support and 9 letters against had been received at the Parish Council office – it was unknown how many letters/emails EFDC had received.

Theydon Bois Resident:

Fully in support of the lights and is frustrated at not being able to finish matches in the summer. As a resident he is in agreement with the Dark Skies Policy but didn't feel that the lights would make much of an effect the whole village and that there are other lights around the village already (The Queen Victoria Pub boules area and the station car park).

Theydon Bois Resident and TBAG Representative:

Wanted to point out that the whole of the Buxton Trust is on green belt land and as such other policies apply. Green belt policy 7A says 'no conspicuous development' in the green belt and he argued that the 7 meter high poles for the flood lights were certainly conspicuous. This would affect both the countryside and the urban area and would have a large impact on local residents. The planning inspector on a previous application said that it was not consistent with the surrounding area.

Epping Resident and Loughton Astronomical Society Member:

Pointed out that Loughton Astronomical Society ran the Astrokyds program for children within Theydon Bois and he appreciated the need for the Dark Skies Policy. He pointed out that there were other amenities where you could play football, tennis or cricket but there were very few places left where it was dark enough to look at the stars.

Theydon Bois Resident:

Wanted to make the point that the lights at the pub and station were there for safety. She also suggested that the money saved from not installing the floodlights could be used instead to help cover the cost of hiring other premises during the winter months.

Theydon Bois Resident:

Was representing her son who had recently moved to Sydney Road, Theydon Bois after growing up in the village. He feels that the Tennis Club should be more sympathetic of the feelings of the local residents.

Theydon Bois Resident and Secretary of the Loughton Astronomical Society:

The Theydon Bois Astrokyds is the only society of its kind in the area and you would have to go as far as Cambridge to find a similar children's society. The proposed lighting would have a huge impact on the society's weekly meetings. They work very closely with the Youth Club and Scout Hut in keeping that area dark. In January and February they take part in the Stargazing Live which is on the BBC.

Theydon Bois Resident:

Was concerned that if this application was approved, other applications would be submitted for lighting of the remainder of the courts and this could jeopardize our Dark Skies Policy.

Theydon Bois Resident:

Lives directly in front of court 4 and was concerned that the light would be very intrusive and would also look very unsightly. She works from home and reported that the courts are not being used during the day.

Councillor Philip invited the Councillors to discuss the proposals:

Councillor Gooch

The Cricket Club has 70 members aged 16 and under who meet during the summer on a Friday night and during the winter only approximately 10 children take part in winter nets. He thought it would be doubtful that the Tennis Club would attract more children during the winter months.

Councillor Hammond

The village is a Dark Skies village and thought that only a very small number of people would make use of the Tennis Club during the winter. Concerned that once the lights go up, they would be used and the sound of tennis being played of an evening and therefore more traffic would be a problem. Feels that it is unfair on the residents and thought it was wrong of the Tennis Club to override their landlord, The Buxton Trust, who are against the proposals.

Councillor Purkiss

The Dark Skies Policy is fundamental to the village. Although he would like to see a successful Cricket Club/Tennis Club and Astronomical Society, as a councillor he has to take a balanced view and the Dark Skies Policy should be upheld.

Councillor McDonald

Supported youth sport but felt that residents will suffer. The Dark Skies Policy should be upheld to protect the village and the reaction of the local residents was understandable.

Councillor Woods

Lives in Avenue Road and supports the Dark Skies Policy. Agrees with the Councillors that the Dark Skies Policy should be upheld.

Councillor Howard

Has lived in the village for 30 years and cherishes the Dark Skies Policy. Understands why the Tennis Club has made the application but is concerned that it would set a precedent.

Councillor Young

Agrees with the other Councillors that the Dark Skies Policy should be upheld.

Councillor Gooch proposes a strong objection to the flood lighting of the tennis courts on the basis that it will undermine the amenity of the neighbours who are affected, also, it is clearly against the Dark Skies Policy and it is on Green Belt land.

Councillor Hammond seconds

7 Councillor For

1 Abstention (Cllr Philip)

Council will object to the application.

92. Correspondence - Clerks Report:

The Clerk drew particular attention to the following:

- The new computer has been fully installed, the old computer has been kept in the office so that two people can work at any one time.
- A double plug socket needs to be installed for the old computer. The Village Association has agreed that a new socket can be added.
- RBS Software has now been installed and currently working through transferring the data from quickbooks.
- A quote from PHS Datashred has been received to shred outdated paperwork.
- Several residents have complained about commuter parking and parking on pavements.
- Caroline Law is stepping down from her role as Theydon Bois Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator. A letter of thanks to be drafted for her dedication and hard work.

Councillor Philip reported that we have received a letter of thanks from Mrs Bonds for the glass vase that was presented to her at the Christmas Market.

93. Finance and General Purposes Committee

Councillor Philip commented on the following:

- 93.1 Payments made since the last meeting were approved.
- 93.2 Budget for 2014/15 approved by Councillors.
- 93.3 Precept level for 2014/15 set at £99,133

Proposed by Councillor Philip
Seconded by Councillor Gooch
All in favour – unanimous

94. Planning Committee

Councillor Gooch commented on the following:

- 94.1 Advised that the planning appeal for the Eco House, Coppice Row has been dismissed because of the impact on the environment and the Green Belt.

95. Highways and Environment Committee

Councillor Purkiss commented on the following:

- 95.1 The wooden bench has been replaced on the green opposite the Village Hall. There are new railings on the zebra crossing and trees have been cut back on Loughton Lane and Abridge Road.
- 95.2 District and County Councillors need to ask what is happening at Highways, Chelmsford with regard to how you can actually get anything done. It is extremely hard to contact the correct person because call centres have been introduced. Parking Partnership in Colchester was contacted regarding the parking at the top of the Green where there are cars parking dangerously close to the junction. There was a site visit without any notification to councillors and the form completed, with the result being sent to the District Council. The Highways department said that there was enough space at the junction for cars to pass and they have decided that no further action should be taken – it is very frustrating. Councillor Purkiss contacted District Council and advised them that there would be finance available to solve the problem if this was supported by other Parish Councillors. A further meeting has been arranged for next week where the junction will be looked at again and a suggested price put forward so that yellow lines can be installed.

Councillors agreed that something needed to be done as lorries can't get down the street because of commuter parking. There are also problems with parking outside shops and on pavements by the shops that are causing obstructions.

- 95.3 **Councillor Purkiss proposed no increase in charges this year for Allotments.**
Seconded by Councillor Gooch.

- 95.4 It was proposed that the Allotment gates should be padlocked one day per year to ensure our rights as landlords will not be compromised.
Councillor Philip in favour – all agreed

Councillor Gooch left the meeting for the next item.

- 95.5 Councillor Hammond reported that the Cricket Club grounds men had maintained the Youth Club field for the last 15 years. There was a proposal in 2012 to contribute £2000 to Cricket Club staff.

Councillor Philip was more comfortable contributing £1000 towards the works at the Youth Club.

Councillor Hammond was happy to go with £1000 due to the current climate. He wanted to keep maintaining the ground to keep the village green status.

Councillor McDonald proposed £1000
Seconded by Councillor Purkiss
All in favour – unanimous

Councillor Purkiss asked whether we wanted to keep the planters in Forest Drive? He suggested that we ask Martin and Paul (help with the upkeep of the Cemetery) to plant and maintain the planters and we could money from the Highway's budget.

Councillor Philip wondered whether shop keepers would sponsor the planters?

Councillor Woods suggested that we ask the Flower Yard to help supply/sponsor the plants.

96. Cemetery Committee

Councillor Hammond reported that there was a meeting arranged for March and that he was trying to get quotes for planting.

97. Reports from representatives:

- 97.1 Councillor Wood said that she has spoken to Nick Blackwell (he is responsible for tendering) and he has reported that Galleon have put a proposal to run a bus from St Margaret's to Princess Alexander. There is only six months left on the contract and they are eager to know if they have the contract for next year.

Councillor Philip thought we should write again.

Councillor Howard reported that the Christmas Theydon Seniors Event was a great success and the volunteers were thanked for their assistance.

A letter of thanks has been received from the Citizen's Advice Bureau for the money that was raised at the Christmas Market.

The Christmas Market for 2014 is on the 28th November so it doesn't clash with Epping's Market.

98. Any Other Urgent Business for report (without decision)

Please note that no decisions can be lawfully made under this item. The Local Government Act 1972 section 12 10 (2) (b) states that business must be specified; therefore the Council cannot lawfully raise matters for decision.

None

99. Public Participation session – Open forum for members of the public to voice their views or make suggestions on any other Council Business or matters of local importance.

- The Rural Preservation Society representative thanked councillors for their objections to the Tennis Clubs' application. Regarding the village planters by the shops, a formal request should be sent to the Rural Preservation Society who may consider a donation. He also enquired whether there were any provisions to hire a consultant for the Issues and Options Consultation process.
- Jim Watts from the Village News said that the Village News magazine or website could possibly help with regards to a petition for the parking problems in Theydon Bois.
- A resident voiced concerns over parking within the village, particularly the corner of The Green. The Police have been asked what can be done but they have advised that unless there is an obstruction there is nothing they can do.
- A resident thought that parking problems should be a Police matter as it is a danger to pedestrians.
- A resident asked whether Eleanor Laing MP could put an argument forward.
- A resident pointed out that the light at the Golf Club blinds cars and asked whether they could be contacted and asked to move the light or change its position.
- A resident complained that parking at the corner of Buxton Road was still a problem.

Councillor Philip closed the meeting at 22.05

Julie Taylor
Clerk to the Council

Councillor John Philip
Chair of the Council