

MARCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of an extraordinary meeting of Marcham Parish Council held on Wednesday 25th October, 2006 in Marcham Primary School, Morland Road, Marcham at 7.30 p.m.

Present:

Mr. W. Cumber (Chairman), Mrs. J. Allan, Mr. C. Bough, Mr I. Charles,
Mr. M. Denton, Mrs. M. Evans, Mr. D. Hutchinson, Mr. P. Rowe, Mrs. S. Turney
Clerk: Mrs. L. Martin
Approximately 100 members of the public
Cllr. J. Hanna (District Councillor)

The Chairman welcomed everyone who had attended and expressed his pleasure at seeing so many members of the public interested in village matters.

- 2006/205 Apologies for Absence
Apologies for absence had been received from Mrs. C. Ricketts.
- 2006/206 Declarations of Interest
Mrs. Allan declared a personal interest in the agenda item relating to the Anson Trust in that she was married to one of the Trustees. Mr. Bough, and Mr. Denton declared personal and prejudicial interests in the agenda item relating to The Anson Trust in that they were directors of the Trust. Mr. Hutchinson declared a personal interest in the agenda item relating to the Anson Trust in that he was involved with the Youth Club which would be affected by the Anson Trust's proposals. Mrs. Turney declared a personal interest in the agenda item relating to the Anson Trust in that she lived in the vicinity of the site where new community facilities could be constructed.
- 2006/207 Minutes of the meeting held on 11th October, 2006
The minutes of a meeting held on 11th October, 2006 were agreed and signed as a true record of the proceedings.
- 2006/208 Mr. Cumber then declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the agenda items relating to both Thames Water's proposed Reservoir and the Anson Trust in that he was a director of a company which owned land at Hanney and North of Howard Cornish Road, which would be acquired by either or both companies should their proposals proceed.
- Mr. Cumber left the room and the Vice-Chairman, Mr. Rowe took the Chair for the remainder of the agenda. Mr. Rowe introduced himself.
- 2006/209 Thames Water Utilities Ltd – Upper Thames Major Resource Development
Council noted that Thames Water had mounted exhibitions over the past 6 weeks regarding its proposed reservoir development. Members expressed concern that the exhibition showed no provision to allow road access into and near the site. Given that the highways agency did not support a further access onto the A34, heavy equipment and vehicles would be brought on village roads which would present a problem for Marcham. In addition, there was the planned expansion of Grove which would result in increased traffic, but without the infrastructure. The County Council had also imposed a weight restriction on the A415 bridge at Newbridge which would cause heavy lorries to be diverted. It was generally felt that it was essential to proceed with Marcham By Pass as

part of the initiative. Mrs. Evans referred to the meeting for Parish Councils which she had attended in September where it had been understood that information would be available in stages. She felt information about the road situation would follow. Mr. Bough proposed that as a minimum a By Pass for the village should be built if the reservoir went ahead, and that the question of traffic problems and the provision of infrastructure should be fully resolved first. Mr. Denton seconded this proposal.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that this Council writes to Thames Water Utilities Ltd expressing its concern regarding the impact that the reservoir would have on traffic in the area and the lack of existing infrastructure
- (ii) that Marcham By Pass be considered as a necessity should the scheme go ahead.

2006/210 Mr. Bough explained the nature of personal and prejudicial interests and why he and Mr. Denton, as Trustees of the Anson Trust were leaving the meeting and not taking part in the next agenda item.

Mr. Bough and Mr. Denton left the meeting.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting to allow the public present to bring matters to the attention of the Council.

2006/211

Public Participation

Several members of the public expressed their views and comments on the Anson Trust's proposals to develop part of the existing recreation ground with housing and to construct a new village hall, and sports pitches to the North with the possible relocation of Marcham Primary School.

The general comments raised were:

1. A feeling of being conned by the Trust, with a decision already having been made, with no real opportunity for consultation.
2. The preservation of the Institute.
3. Costings involved and how much money was to be gained by selling the recreation field, cost of any new land, and amount of profits to be made if a new hall was erected elsewhere.
4. A general feeling of mis-trust in the Anson Trustees, who appeared not to be open about village matters and kept control of things themselves. It was suggested that there should be a wider group of Trustees more representative of the village.
5. The lack of knowledge of the process for consultation, as no consultation had taken place.

Cllr. Jane Hanna (District Councillor), explained the planning process, and stated that there was no statutory requirement for the Trust to consult in advance of any planning application. She answered questions on planning procedure.

6. This was an opportunity to get things right or wrong. The village should work together. Those in the hall represented only .5% of the village and the Parish Council should come off the fence and do something.

7. A suggestion was put forward to leave the sports pitches where they are and if there were a need to build new houses, put them to the North instead. Housing development in the Anson field would turn the area into a new Peachcroft.

8. A plea was made for honest genuine thought to be given to the needs of the village, and for the Parish Council to “get in and do something”.

9. A family had moved to the area as the field was marvellous for children. A question was asked as to how many parents let their children play elsewhere. Worries were raised that should consent be granted for a certain number of houses, the developers always re-apply and increase the density.

10. The Anson Trust had offered rear access to those properties which back on to the field, but they secretly had other plans. No one was being truthful. The heart and soul was being ripped from the village.

11. The proposals would destroy what the Anson sisters had left. Marcham was a beautiful village. The villagers should be heard. The plans should not be bulldozed through.

12. A suggestion was made that there was much gossip on the performance of the Trust and it being untruthful. All the facts and figures had not been presented, and there was a tendency for people to make up what they didn't know.

13. There had to be an identification of a process and a strategy, with clear consultation otherwise there was a threat of a new group forming.

14. At previous meetings, residents had requested to keep the Institute. Why was this not an option? Why did villagers have to go and read the newspapers to find out what was happening.

15. Suggestions were made that people were looking to the past, and it was time to look to the future.

16. A suggestion was made that the Trustees had an impossible task, as they had been left houses, a hall and a field, but no income to manage the facilities.

17. Reference was made to the fact that the Churchwardens who were also Anson Trustees were elected by the whole civil electorate, and not by the Church members.

This was accepted as a fact, but there were still concerns that the village did not know what was happening.

18. If the field were developed where were the children going to play?

19. A villager referred to the village appraisal undertaken 12 years ago. The residents had not wished to see the village expand. There was a recognition that the village needed new facilities and an appreciation that it was a complicated financial matter. A plea was put forward that people should work together to find a solution, and that a proper forum was needed in the village to take things

forward. Many residents were saddened at the likely loss of the Institute as a public building and the loss of the field.

20. Reference was made to the devaluation of properties near the field.

21. Questions were asked as to the source of money should the proposals proceed. Concerns were expressed regarding infrastructure and lack of adequate sewage system. There had been blockages and problems in North Street.

22. Questions were asked as to why when the new company was formed, why was the village not involved at that time. The Clerk confirmed that the Arthur Anson Memorial Trust Ltd had been set up and the Parish Council had been informed afterwards that it had been given nomination rights for 2 Directors.

23. Reference was made to the definition of a "Trustee" and the role they played, to the youngsters and what they thought as they would be the future users of any facilities.

24. A plea was made for the Parish Council to host an open meeting and for the Anson Trust to explain why the other options were disregarded by the Trust. The public needed to see the facts and figures.

25. Mr. J. Allan, a Trustee, pointed out that the Trustees were volunteers. There was no personal interest in the proposals. He confirmed the exhibition was the first step. Further meetings would be held, some open to the public. More details would be shared when available.

26. Reference was again made to the fact there was an overall feeling of a need for more information. Many had gone to the exhibition and had come away disappointed at the lack of shared knowledge. A request was made for the Trust to make everything to be more open and accessible to the public, and for the Parish Council to ensure this happened.

27. Mr. J. Collins proposed a vote of thanks to the Parish Council for listening to the residents and allowing them to make their points known.

Approximately 50 members of the public left the meeting.

The Chairman reconvened the meeting.

Council discussed the principle of the Anson Trust's proposals to develop part of the existing recreation ground with housing and to construct a new village hall, and sports pitches north of Longfields/Hyde Copse with access off Howard Cornish Road.

Discussion took place on the fact that in the past when there had been contentious issues, the Council had sought the opinion of the villagers. In view of vehement opinions stated earlier in the evening, it was suggested that this be done again. Although one member stated that when trying to gauge the views of residents on the Marcham By Pass, the two lobby groups, Divert around Marcham and the Alternatives to the By Pass Campaign, both thought that the results supported the group's position. In addition it was stated that an

independent survey undertaken by Magenta on behalf of the County Council had not produced a conclusive result. One suggestion was a questionnaire in MAD News. Council noted the emotion and depth of feeling, put forward by the parishioners. Reference was made to the loss of local control should the Charity Commission intervene, the lack of detailed information from the Trust, and the position of the Parish Council being publicly accountable, whereas the Trust held meetings in private. It was suggested that some people may wish to give views on the Trust's proposals without giving their name. It was suggested that the Anson Trust should have more detailed information available. It was noted that a considerable amount of effort had been put in to plans and fund raising to renovate the play area. Works were due to start shortly. Questions were asked as to the future of the play area should the proposed plans go ahead. Questions were raised as to the views of other village organisations. It was proposed by Mrs. Allan, and seconded by Mrs. Evans that at the next meeting, the Council sort out the questions to be put to the Anson Trust. It was suggested that the next meeting be deferred one week to allow time for additional comments to be obtained.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that a letter be written to all village organisations seeking their views on the Anson Trust's proposals.
- (ii) that the next ordinary meeting of the Council be deferred until 15th November to allow time for responses from village organisations.
- (iii) that the opinions raised by the public at this extraordinary meeting, and questions to be put to the Anson Trust be deferred for discussion until the next meeting.
- (iv) that consideration be given at the next meeting as to how best to carry out further public consultation.

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Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council would be held on Wednesday 15th November, 2006 at 7.30 p.m. at a location to be agreed.

The meeting closed at 9.25 p.m.

Signed Date