

## **MINUTES OF MEETING**

An Extraordinary meeting of Ockley Parish Council was held at Ockley Cricket Pavilion on Thursday 13 April 2017 at 8 pm.

### **Councillors present**

Mr R Herbert                      Chairman  
Mr D Thomas  
Mr S Figg  
Ms J Page  
Mr B Thorne  
Mr G Lee-Steere  
Mrs L Hogarth  
Mrs L Fletcher                  Clerk

Also present:

SCCouncillor H Clack  
Mrs C Read, Ockley resident

Apologies had been received from MVDCouncillor V Michael

### **Declarations of interest**

Mr R Herbert                      Governor at the Scott-Broadwood School

Mr D Thomas and              together with Mr B Thomson and Dr B Thomas  
Mr G Lee-Steere              had met with the Parents Action Group from the  
Scott-Broadwood School with a view to discussing what  
might be done with the school site at Ockley if the consolidation  
went ahead

DT reported that the PAG were very keen and enthusiastic about setting up a free school and also a Nursery which would be open 8 am to 6 pm for children aged 1 to 4 years. Ownership of the land and buildings would have to be ascertained.

GL-S stated that the land at the back of the site belonged to SCC. It was thought that the front of the site and the School House was held in a church trust, but this was not clear. The Diocese at Guildford would not spend money on any investigations regarding ownership until the outcomes of the consultation were known.

**1. Parish Council response to the School Organisation Consultation:**

*Proposal to consolidate Scott-Broadwood C of E Infant School onto the Capel site*

The formal consultation documents had been circulated to councillors.

A formal consultation meeting had been held at The Ashcombe School on 22 March 2017. DT had circulated notes from this meeting.

A discussion was held regarding the Ockley base of the school so that there was information to put in to a draft response - to be considered / approved by councillors before submission. Submission deadline mid-day Monday 24 April 2017.

To be noted:

The Scott-Broadwood School has a base at Ockley and one at Capel.

However the base at Ockley was being referred to by many as Ockley School.

It was the Ockley Base/Ockley School that was discussed at this meeting.

*The meeting was opened to all present*

JP asked why the school had closed on 31 March 2017.

RH stated that only seven Year 2 children were still at the school as at 31 March 2017 so educationally it was not a viable solution to operate with this number. Parents had become anxious about their child's education and many had got their child a place at other local schools. The decision regarding the closure had been made in school with the parents and children involved.

JP queried what would happen with all the staff that had been at Ockley and also the notice given to parents and children. It was noted that HR consultants would be involved with any staffing issues.

HC stated that it would be the school and governors' decision to initially close the school, then SCC would make the final decision. She noted that numbers were also down at the Capel Base. She quoted 50 NOR at Capel. She informed those at the meeting that the Head from Newdigate School had been at the Newdigate Parish Council Annual Assembly held recently. The Head had stated that schools in the area were working together to share expertise and resources.

Regarding the response to the consultation GL-S stated that the logic of the proposal could be accepted but that holes could be picked in it. JP disagreed with the proposal; she felt that the consultation proposal was not solid. She had issues with the management and leadership at the school. However RH did not agree with this comment as he felt there was no evidence to support this view.

GL-S stated that educational consultants from Babcock 4S were involved with the proposals at the school. Parents had voted with their feet by placing their children in other schools.

RH informed those present that the PAG had put forward a number of proposals to keep the Ockley base open but they all involved the movement of children from one village to the other for part of their time at the Scott-Broadwood School. This wasn't something that many current Ockley parents had been willing to accept and so why would Capel parents feel differently.

Returning to a response to the consultation it was noted that if an objection was to be submitted then reasons for the objection would have to be given.

DT felt that only comments of an educational nature would be felt relevant. Points on the village and community would not be felt relevant. He had prepared four pages of notes against a closure but in essence a decision had been made in that at September 2017 no-one would turn up at Ockley.

JP queried marketing outside the SCC authority. HC stated that SCC remain impartial regarding crossover of borders. However West Sussex CC do have sufficient places for children in the Horsham area. HC felt that in their response to the consultation the parish council should highlight the impact on the community of the closure of the Base together with the long term effect on the site. HC would be at the meeting (hoping that outcome of elections being positive for her) with the Leader of the Council when the consultation response was discussed at SCC. The welfare and education of the children was the first concern. HC would hope that the buildings could be kept open for educational purposes. The main thing would be not to lose the site - there may be other educational groups that could use the site - eg. high needs groups of children.

LH pointed out that one of the issues raised in the Ockley Neighbourhood Development Plan was the lack of affordable houses for families in the village. More families in the village would mean there would be demand for a school in the village. HC stated that there were not enough affordable houses in Surrey - too many executive homes were being built. There were affordable houses in Dorking and Leatherhead but not many in the villages.

GL-S commented that there would be a concern that if the Ockley site continued as a separate school then this would put pressure on Capel and whether two schools would be sustainable. RH said that any plans for a new free school in Ockley would have to stand/fall on their own merit and wouldn't necessarily have to consider Capel as the two entities would most likely be separate entities.

DT stated that it was thought that there would be a significant demand for a free school in the village. There would be no restrictions as to where marketing could be done / catchment areas. There would be more freedom around the curriculum. Currently it was perceived that there were children from the village who were being taken out of the village for schooling in other local authority schools. Parents may well bring their children back to the village to a Free School.

LH felt it was important to keep the site open as an educational establishment so that there would be the option to open a school once again. HC agreed that the site should remain available for educational use which may change over time.

DT asked whether the parish council would be happy to support the PAG or whoever took the lead on further plans for the Ockley site. The PAG are happy to continue with their efforts.

The group had organised a further open meeting on 18 May 2017 regarding their campaign to 'Save our School'. DT said it was great to see such enthusiasm in the PAG. However he added that there had been a lot of change in the village - currently there were no houses for young people - many of those moving in to the village often had no interest in the village itself.

LH said that in any response the powerful thing was about community but educational issues have to be covered. BT stated that the response should include insistence that the site remains as a school. SF agreed that the site should be kept open for educational use.

All councillors were very concerned that if the school did close then this would not be good for the community. They felt strongly that the site should be used as a provision for other educational use.

HC stated that the SCC decision on the consultation should be announced in June. GL-S commented that if an application for the opening of a free school was to be made then this had to be submitted by September 2017 in order for a school to be opened in September 2018. There were two waves for applications - one in September, then one in March.

#### Conclusion

Taking into account the discussions summarised above JP would prepare a response to the consultation/send to DT for comments before it was circulated to councillors for comments/approval then submission by the Clerk to the school.

#### **Vann Fest 2017**

The Clerk was asked to contact MVDC regarding the licence for the proposed festival. There was concern in the village regarding access to the site and possible number of people attending the event.