

EASTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on 6th September 2011 in Eastington Methodist Church

1. In attendance were Cllrs Niblett (Chair), Bullock, Edwards, Souster and Cozens; County Councillor Blackburn; Mary Gribble (Clerk). Two members of the public were present, including Ken Nicholls. Apologies were accepted from Cllrs Hill and Stephens, and Robert Powell (RFO).
2. Chair confirmed that on 26th September the contractors working at 9 Bath Road had fenced around Sophie's Pitch. The fence has now been taken down and laid aside. The bungalow at 9 Bath Road has been demolished and the hedge removed.

Chair thanked Cllr Blackburn for his immediate involvement on 26th September. Cllr Blackburn confirmed that he has written to the contractors and the developer, and contacted GCC legal department. Cllr Blackburn advised that GCC's solicitor has written to the developer and contractor to advise them that in fencing this land is an illegal act.

Chair reported on a brief private meeting with the developer. The developer said that he does not wish to be in opposition to the village. He purchased 9 Bath Road with existing planning permission to build 4 dwellings. The developer is keen to build the 4 dwellings, and will seek to get access from Bath Road if he is unable to get access across Sophie's Pitch. He acknowledges that he does not own Sophie's Pitch, and that as a 'ransom strip' it will have considerable value. The developer has photographs which show Sophie's Pitch in an overgrown and unusable state, and does not feel that the size of the land provides sufficient space for recreation. He listened to the argument that as the 4 dwellings to be built on this site will have very little garden area, the residents will appreciate any additional amenity space.

Ken Nicholls presented documents confirming that the land that was 'left over' after the completion of Swallowcroft is escheat to the Crown. The Crown Estate will decide how to dispose of it, but will not make any decisions until the Commons Registration Committee has decided on Sophie's Pitch.

Ken Nicholls pointed out that the previous developer had no right to appeal on the village green registration, as only the owner has the right to appeal.

Cllr Souster suggested that negotiations be entered with the developer to try to reach a mutually acceptable compromise. This was discussed, but as the developer has expressed his strong determination to build the 4 dwellings it was felt little would be achieved.

Chair proposed that EPC writes to the developer and the contractor:

- To confirm that EPC supports the neighbours;
- to ask them to remove the fence;
- to point out that they do not own the land;
- ask them to desist from development across Sophie's Pitch as the land is subject to an application to register it as a village green.

Chair further proposed that EPC writes to the Crown's solicitor:

- to declare an interest in the land
- to confirm support the village green application
- to encourage the solicitor to write to the developer and contractor requesting that they desist from development across Sophie's Pitch.

The vote was 3 in favour and 2 abstentions (Cllrs Souster and Cozens). Carried.

Chair proposed that an appointment with our solicitor is made, after the solicitor to confirm that he feels competent to deal with this issue. Chair, Clerk and Mr Nicholls to attend, to:

- take the solicitor through the history
- review the written supportive evidence (including the QC's report)
- seek his advice

The vote was 4 in favour and one abstention (Cllr Souster). Carried.

The meeting closed at 8:10

Signed
Chairman/Responsible Officer

Date