

Friends of Memorial Playing Field

c/o Toad Lodge, Newham Lane, Steyning, BN44 3LR

07716 534087

mail@fompf.org

www.fompf.org



14th June 2013

Dear P*****,

MPF Skatepark Project

WARNING P**** !! It will take at least half an hour to read this, so please set the time aside. Sorry!

Thank you very much for your message expressing your interest and concern and I hope that after reading this you will see the need for us to meet up. The answer to your question cannot be brief, but please bear with me and hopefully by the end of the explanation you will understand how this situation has developed. I know this is very long but please can I stress the importance of reading all of it - we owe it to the young people to try to resolve this. They will be the losers and so we must for their sakes' at least meet and try to work something out.

The fact which you point out, that the Parish Councillors do their work voluntarily and for free, is not an excuse for incompetence by the Parish Council as a body. They have the professional services of the Clerk and Deputy Clerk to advise them on all matters of procedure and law which costs us, the Council Tax Payers, over £1,000 per week. There is never an excuse for the Parish Council as a body not to be honest with the electorate and absolutely no excuse to act in breach of the law.

It is the Parish Council as a body which is being taken to court. The process of judicial review is to allow a High Court judge to look at what the Parish Council has been up to and to ensure it complies with the law. We should all agree that none of us would want the Parish Council to be making its decisions unlawfully when it has a

duty to strike a proper balance between the competing interests of everyone within the community.

Copies of the relevant legal papers are attached as documents 02 and 03.

Despite the claims of Cllr Barling in his speech at the extraordinary meeting the other evening, the bringing of the litigation has been an absolute last resort. Numerous warnings that the Council was acting unlawfully were given over many months. There have been repeated invitations to Cllr Barling, to Cllr Lloyd and to Cllr Bowell to meet and discuss how we could work together to avoid the litigation. All the invitations have either been rejected or ignored except for one meeting when we persuaded them to let us present our initial ideas for a skatepark at the Leisure Centre. Our request for a second meeting to discuss the more-developed plan was ignored until the litigation started, when suddenly they were galvanised into a response and agreeing to let us present our plans. By this time the imminent SPC by-election and the need to allow the electorate to see the planning application meant that it had already been lodged at HDC.

So how has this point been reached and why is it that so much inaccurate information is circulating among the supporters of the MPF site? Even the comments on the picnic information link to which you have referred us is highly inaccurate. Without knowing who is responsible for this it is impossible to know whether this is deliberate or because the wrong information is being fed from someone within, or close to, the Parish Council. We are pretty sure from the tone of the comment that the author of the MPF Supporters' website is someone of good faith who is simply acquiring inaccurate information. The proof of this good faith will be in the pudding. I hope you will be able to arrange that this message and the supporting documents are uploaded to the supporters' site in unedited form and also forwarded as widely as possible to the supporters of the MPF site so they can then make up their own minds as to what the Parish Council has been up to and the prospects of success at the MPF.

The crucial starting point to appreciate is that the site is within the South Downs National Park which means it has a special status governed by laws and planning

policies which are intended to protect it as an area of national importance. The most important of the laws, and the one which underpins the judicial review, is that the Parish Council has an ongoing duty, whenever it considers doing anything in or near a National Park, to have regard to the statutory purposes; the relevant purpose here being “conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area”. The Parish Council has never done this, and if it had it is hard to believe that it could have concluded that a skatepark, now to include an ancillary car park, was in compliance with this purpose.

Also, I think we would all agree that any site has to take account of the interests and amenity of the local residents who live closest, and users of other land (such as the allotments) and so must not amount to a noise nuisance for them. I think we would all also agree that it is easiest to accommodate the particular noise generated by a skatepark if it is located very far from housing such as at Uckfield or at a site which already has a lot of background noise such as at Shoreham. The quieter the site and the closer the housing and other land users, the greater the problem. For the bulk of the time during which the skatepark will be in operation (dawn to dusk) the MPF is very quiet (more about that later) and so there is a particularly difficult problem here.

It is clear from the minutes of the Parish Council's working group when it was first weighing up the relative merits of the various potential sites that the existence of the National Park and its possible effect never entered the councillors' heads. Our assumption is that they genuinely thought the Park boundary followed the Rublees hedgeline and so the Park was not relevant. Fair enough, and I think we can all take it that this was an honest mistake and that the choice of the MPF and the Horsham Road sites for further investigation and development of the skatepark idea was perfectly reasonable. Mind you, the professionally qualified Clerk might have been expected to know the law relating to the Council's duties in relation to the National Park and that the statutory duty applied even if the skatepark was only adjacent rather than within.

At this point an objector to the MPF site realised that the National Park boundary in fact followed an old field boundary within the MPF and so it looked as though any

skatepark would be within the National Park. He wrote to the Parish Council accordingly. And now the misconduct of the Parish Council begins. Instead of having a rethink, it started to suppress information and to make untrue statements in a process which has continued up to and including at the extraordinary meeting.

The Parish Council wrote to the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) specifically asking for the purpose of the up-coming public meeting on 28th January 2012 whether the Park Authority could clarify where the boundary lay. The Park Authority replied on 25th January 2012 stating that "Much of the proposed skateboard facility would be within the National Park". See the attached document 04 and the bottom of page one in particular.

This was the first occasion on which the Parish Council should have complied with its legal duty to have regard to the National Park statutory purposes. Instead, it decided to pretend the boundary was elsewhere. Things go down-hill from this point onwards.

Despite this information that the skate park would be within the Park, the meeting was wrongly told that the site "abutted" the National Park (page 2 of the attached document 05 which is the Parish Council's note of the meeting) and at page 4 the question was evaded by talking about "the thickness of a pen".

Next, despite this categorical information from the SDNPA about the whereabouts of the boundary, the Parish Council uploaded to its website information about the boundary it knew was untrue and despite our objections (document 06) refused to take it down until a couple of days before the planning meeting. See Document 05. This document was, without apparent irony, entitled "skatepark more information and spin" and stated the exact opposite of what the SDNPA had said. This document concluded with the false statement "Finally the South Downs National Park Boundary DOES NOT cut across the Memorial Playing Field. The boundary is at the hedgeline of the Rublees allotments". There is no escaping that this was known to be untrue and designed to mislead. The email from the SDNPA is there for all to see at attachment 04.

Meanwhile, the foundations for the Parish Council's misconduct over the noise aspect of matters were being laid. The Parish Council had been made aware by the HDC planners at an early stage that noise was going to be one of the governing factors. Quite properly the Council commissioned a preliminary report from Atkins about this. No complaint about that. The Atkins report flagged up that noise was indeed going to be a problem but indicated that much could be achieved with bunding. The Council summarised the report in its presentation at the public meeting which is attached as document 08, not entirely accurately, but given the nature of the meeting I don't think one should be too critical of this. The Council did the right thing and told the meeting that at this stage the thinking was only about an indicative scheme and here is the vital bit - it gave categorical assurances in the following terms:-

"The Parish Council is committed to ensuring that the potential noise from the facility is within the guidelines laid down by British Standards, WHO (World Health Organisation) and CIEH (Chartered Institute of Environmental Health). The Parish Council would not consider installing a facility which did not meet these criteria"

And

"The Parish Council is committed to ensuring that noise nuisance is within the guidelines specified in the report".

There is no ambiguity here and they can be read at pages 13 and 23 of attachment 08.

The explicit assumption throughout the report and the presentation was that effective noise attenuating bunding would be part of the scheme. Something that subsequent developments have shown is not in fact possible (see below). These developments should have led to a rethink, but did not.

The meeting was also told that the skatepark was to be "small" and all indications were that it would be around the size of the existing tarmac strip.

Those attending the meeting voted in favour and the result of this meeting has been relied on ever since as the democratic mandate. There is some controversy about the strength of this mandate given the contrary survey prior and the mandate given to Gill Muncey in the recent by-election since, but leaving that controversy aside - the fact that subsequently it turns out that these three very important assurances (the skatepark was not within the National Park, the noise criteria would be complied with, and the facility was about the size of the tarmac strip) have all turned out very differently and this means the mandate is now highly dubious. If these facts had been known to the residents at the meeting a very different result is highly probable.

So how did it come about that the categorical assurance on noise has been abandoned? I think one would have to say it is incompetence and naivety underpinned by a serial reluctance to spend the money required to do the job properly. Instead of employing an architect or other independent paid consultant, reliance has been placed on the contractors for advice and many of the planning documents and with the Clerk producing other paperwork, all held together by councillors who have many other matters to attend to and so have not been in a position to maintain a proper grip on how things were developing. The Council has been out of its depth but has refused to recognise this.

The fundamental problem has been a failure to appreciate at an early stage what a serious problem the topography presents, so that there was just an assumption that noise attenuating bunding could easily be provided to comply with what Atkins said would be necessary. It was assumed that bunding would prevent a noise nuisance and thereby the Council could comply with the assurances given regarding compliance with the noise criteria. Only after the Council felt itself to be in too deep did the realisation dawn that bunding was a real problem and the unwillingness to admit this and disappoint the supporters of the MPF appears to have been what has led to increasingly inappropriate conduct by the Council.

Instead of explaining to the supporters that it had to comply with its unequivocal assurances that it would not go ahead, the Council just abandoned its assurances and instead it employed a sound engineer who has no known expertise in this field who has come up with a report, which says what the Council wanted it to, but which

is hopelessly flawed for all the reasons set out in the Saunders report. I will not set these all out here; please just read the three sound reports which can be seen on the HDC planning portal or ask me for copies. The thing is, this will be another matter where the proof is in the pudding. Sound reports are just predictors as to what will prevail when the thing is built. If the Council gets planning permission and builds the facility and the noise is as their expert predicts then, happily for all, there will be no problem on this score. On the other hand, if the predictions of the country's leading experts turn out to be right and there is a noise nuisance then the local residents most affected will be entitled to ask the court to close the facility down. This happened at Devizes in 2002. Saunders (our sound expert) was the expert witness for the residents. The skatepark was closed down within weeks of opening and never re-opened. Does anyone other than our parish council seriously think it is sensible to gamble around £150,000 to build this and then another large sum to fill it in again if the two leading experts turn out to be right and the council's untested expert wrong?

Meanwhile, the realisation about the height of the bunding has finally been appreciated by the Council – about a year later than would have been the case if they had employed a proper consultant. It is not possible for an observer to say where individual culpability lies, but the bunding in the planning illustrations bears no relation to the reality and initially the illustration from the most important direction was suppressed. Everyone was nearly fooled by these but the Friends had proper professional illustrations prepared from the published data showing the true massive ramparts which were to be constructed, as a result of which both the police and the HDC landscape officer objected. It appears that even most of the councillors did not know what they were about to sign up to; having, it seems, relied on the highly misleading illustrations prepared by the installer. Very belatedly, SPC has acknowledged the nature of the problem and has prepared yet another design which means there is no noise attenuation at all (which means that they ought to re-read what their own sound engineer, Atkins, has said) but at least the visual impact is diminished.

I will rattle through some of the other problems before your eyes glaze over completely.

The Design and Access Statement is a very important mandatory planning document. One of the fundamental requirements is that it should deal with how the disabled users and disabled spectators will access the facility. Because this was prepared in the most amateurish of fashions by the Clerk, apparently without any professional advice at all, it failed to give this most basic of matters any consideration at all. This was also in breach of the Council's separate legal duty under the Disability Act which is to promote disability equality in all it does – yet another legal duty the Council was either ignorant of or decided to ignore. Very belatedly there has been an attempt to comply at the MPF. This led to the Clerk and one councillor hurriedly meeting with the HDC disability officer and amending the scheme, it seems without reference to anyone else in the Parish Council or (crucially) with the HDC landscape officer, to include a car park on the MPF. There are lots of problems with this which I won't go into the detail about at the moment, however one of them is that, again, the topography has not been taken into account and substantial bunds that were unacceptable at the main site have been re-introduced here. Unsurprisingly, the HDC landscape officer has objected. Also, no consideration at all was given to the National Park statutory purposes. This is one of the main grounds of the judicial review. This hasty and ill-considered major amendment was made without any debate in public even though it was lodged on the same day as a Playing Fields Committee meeting which managed to discuss all sorts of unimportant stuff in front of the public but not even mention this. This secrecy and attempt to avoid accountability is doing the status of the Council great harm in the eyes of many.

The CCTV system. This was supposed to be an inherent part of the scheme and it is clear from the minutes of SPC meetings that councillors were under the impression it would permit live monitoring. I think it is obvious to even the least technically minded that this system is hopelessly under-specified. The system does not permit live monitoring or have any pan and tilt facilities. There is not even any dome to disguise where the cameras are pointing. Add to this that it was erected in breach of planning laws (and one must ask again why the Clerk seems to have been unaware of the fundamental need to comply with planning laws) and so the mast had to be reduced in height to bring it into compliance with the law without the necessity

of actually applying for planning permission. The resulting inadequacy is obvious. Thousands of pounds of our taxes have been wasted on an ugly and ineffective system. We were repeatedly told that the system was fine, and then when the police said it was not, the Parish Council immediately claimed that it had “always” intended to upgrade the system. Another example of the Parish Council saying what suits it rather than what is true.

The planning documents are inconsistent as to the intentions regarding lavatory facilities, and the current claim that the pavilion toilets will be used does not appear to be possible for reasons of security and child protection.

There is much inconsistency in the planning documents over materials.

There was a complete refusal to consult RoSPA, and instead the Parish Council insisted on relying on advice from the installer that all was well. When we gave the facts to RoSPA they immediately raised objections which the Council has still not addressed- in fact their latest design makes things worse by moving the facility nearer to the source of falling leaves.

Then we have the Sport England objection which came very late in the day because the Council failed to appreciate that this body was a statutory consultee. The normal process of seeking their preliminary views before submitting a planning application was completely overlooked. If that had been done it is doubtful that we would even have got as far as the public meeting at which so many hopes were raised. The Parish Council has very few responsibilities and playing fields is one of them. One would have expected the professionally qualified clerk to have known the relationship between planning rules and the playing fields which are such a fundamental responsibility and to have ensured that the necessary preliminary enquiries were made.

There are other matters of detail but I think I have said enough here to make the point that unrealistic expectations have been raised about the MPF site because this has all been so ill-prepared and executed.

In addition, it is really vital that you read the attached rebuttal document (09) of February 2013 as this sets out a lot of additional important information both about the merits of the MPF planning application and about the Parish Council's conduct.

Of course we also had Cllr Barling accusing those who called the by-election of having deliberately wasted the council's funds by calling the election too late for it to coincide with the county elections. A false and offensive accusation. The false accusation of deliberately wasting funds was made again at the meeting. That the election was deliberately called late was demonstrably untrue and came about because of a mistake at HDC, the result of which was that, at my suggestion, HDC put up a substantial amount of the election expense. The ten people whose integrity Cllr Barling attacked on the front page of the Herald are entitled to a fulsome apology. Indeed they are entitled to sue Cllr Barling and the Parish Council for significant damages in libel. Cllr Barling has not been able to bring himself to apologise. Let him hope that the ten continue to exercise restraint.

I would also like to just clarify the things I have seen on the supporters' website about the extraordinary meeting.

The site says that litigation was threatened "subsequently" and that it was regarding the demand that the MPF proposal be withdrawn altogether. Neither is true. The litigation was first threatened on 20th March, long before the meeting, and has always related only to the decision made that day to put a car park on the MPF without any public debate and without regard to the National Park statutory purposes. There has never been any link between resolving the court case and withdrawing the planning application. There were attempts to meet and discuss this with both Cllrs Barling and Lloyd before anything was done. Both refused to meet. There have been three subsequent attempts to meet with Cllr Howell or any other colleague. All went without even an acknowledgement. In the days leading up to the meeting, when it became apparent that there was confusion in the Parish Council engendered by their refusal to meet, it was spelt out in the simplest of language that the litigation could be ended by a few words which would not fetter the council in any way if and when it went ahead with the planning application. By the same token I would still be able to go to the court if the car park was part of that application and

the National Parks duty had still not been complied with. This was proposed because we were being told through an intermediary that the Council was now looking for reconciliation. There was precious little sign of that in the complete failure to engage on this matter, in the animosity expressed at the meeting, and in the refusal even to consider the words which were these:-

“As a gesture of goodwill, and in order to provide the Council with maximum flexibility for future decision-making, and without prejudice to its right to revisit the decision at any time, it is proposed that the Council annuls the decision of 13th May 2013 to amend the planning application, and that it postpones making and submitting any amendments to HDC until after 30th September 2013”

Instead of the words the Parish Council had come up with, apparently without legal advice on the drafting, and without consultation with me or the Friends, which were these:-

“As a gesture of goodwill it is proposed that the Council delays implementing its decision made on 13th May 2013, to amend the Council’s Planning Application for a skateboard facility at the Memorial Playing Field site and its submission to HDC, until 30th September 2013. These amendments were to remove the bunding from the North and South of the facility and introduce two disabled car parking spaces”

For entirely technical reasons, the first form of words would enable the litigation to end and the second would not. If you or anyone else can tell me why the Parish Council would refuse even to discuss the first form of words and thereby has caused the litigation to continue at substantial cost to all then I really would like to know, please.

The Friends remain bemused by the Parish Council's insistence that the holding back of the planning application was sought by the Friends and is being done as a gesture of goodwill. The notes of our meeting are attached (10) and you will see that the decision to recommend a delay was entirely down to the Parish Council. I also attach a copy of the email we sent as soon as we saw the draft resolution falsely claiming this was being done at our request (attachment 11), pointing out that it was

not at our request and that we did not support it. If you can fathom why the Parish Council has done something we did not ask for and which the supporters of the MPF scheme also do not want, and why the Parish Council claims to be doing this as a supposed gesture of goodwill while refusing to communicate and abusing us at the meeting then I would love to hear it. My guess is that they know the MPF scheme is doomed but do not want to admit it publicly. They want to present themselves as victims of circumstance.

It was rather extraordinary to see Cllr Barling abusing the Friends with his untrue accusations, but then arguing for what they too had said they wanted (defeat of the resolution), and then when it came to the vote, achieving absolutely no support from his fellow councillors. Meanwhile the rest of the councillors voted exactly as I had been told by the intermediary that it appeared they would. This seems to mean that either Cllr Barling had been left out of the loop by his fellow councillors, or that, knowing full well what the result was going to be, he just put on the show for the benefit of his supporters. After all, this is the same man who on 13th May at the PC meeting had said that that his duty as Chairman of the Council had led him to articulate the views of council members at the expense of not saying what he personally believed. He went on to say that now he was no longer Chairman he was freed from that constraint and would say more later, but for now he would confine himself to supporting Councillor Rogers who had just articulated her concern about whether the skatepark could ever be built on the MPF. He went on to second her motion to have a reappraisal and to meet with the Friends. (All in attachment 12) The clear implication of this statement was that he was recognising that the MPF scheme he had championed in his capacity as Chairman was losing his support, if it had not already done so. It also implied that he had never personally believed in it. Given all this and all the problems that need to be overcome, it seems unwise to us that anyone in the community should put their trust in this figure to direct them through the problems created under his leadership and thereby bring about the skatepark on the MPF which they seek.

In fact, this leadership has brought the Parish Council to the point at which a Community Governance Review under Part 3 of the Local Government and Public

Involvement in Health Act 2007 is now probable. This document is one of those which will be lodged in support.

I do not know on what basis the editor of the MPF Supporters' website bases his or her impression of the will of the people. The best objective test would seem to be the election at which this was a major issue. The overwhelming support for Gill Muncey seems to speak volumes as does the correspondence on the HDC site for the LCCP scheme.

SUMMARY of PROBLEMS for MPF SCHEME

The really serious one is that, even if everything else is overcome, we are left with the highly questionable sound report. If this is wrong and the other experts are right, then the facility will be closed down by the courts and all will come to naught. See Devizes.

OTHERS

("NPPF" is the National Planning Policy Framework, "CP" is a Horsham District Council Core Policy and "DC" is a Horsham District Council Development Control Policy)

1 Noise - Non-compliance with recognised national noise assessment criteria thus strongly suggestive of noise nuisance. Also contra-indicated by NPPF109, 110, 120, 123, WHO Para.s 4.3.1 and 4.3.7, Horsham CP2, DC1a, DC2a, and DC9b and DEFRA Noise Policy Statement.

2 Appearance – Substantial bunds of grassed spoil at car park and at facility will become mud heaps integral to the BMX riders' circuit and muddy approach paths will surround concrete facility. Parked cars are an inappropriate intrusion to this landscape. National Park Location. NPPF 115 and 98 and 78 and Horsham DC4, and DC9b all contra-indicate.

3 Equality Act - Disabled access not properly considered; mud and puddles render the route impassable unless in a vehicle. There is no right of way across (as

opposed to along) the ransom strip and so vehicles entering the MPF will do so in breach of Road Traffic Act

4 **Supervision for health and safety** – Remote location and inadequate CCTV will prevent natural supervision.

5 **Supervision for crime and anti-social behaviour** - Police guidelines breached. Remote and hard to supervise.

6 **Sport England** - Statutory consultee has objected. Adverse impact on adjacent sports area.

7 **RoSPA** - Non-compliance with nine out of eleven of their published guidelines.

8 **Health and Safety at Work Act** - Refusal to carry out an assessment of the design, but likely breaches.

9 **Access** - Mud, puddles and potholes on route and sheer remoteness impede access from North - supposedly the access route to the Hexapath.

10 **Toilets** - None available and no realistic prospect of change.

11 **Hours of use** - Vague, unenforceable and unreasonable burden on residents and other users

12 **CCTV** - Insufficient range and sophistication.

13 **Unfeasible Management Plan** - Numerous fanciful, vague, and unenforceable expressions of hope.

14 **Urbanisation** - See Henfield PC minutes for equivalent pressure to further urbanise once built.

15 **Heritage Asset** - Effect on character of the Town and on tourism ignored.

16 **Rublees Hedgerow** - Conflict between duty to preserve and fallen leaves accumulating in facility.

17 **Wildlife** - Effect on bats, adders, slow worms and nesting and roosting birds.

18 **Village Green status** – Probable insurmountable legal obstacles. Will not be for the “better enjoyment” of those very local residents (not the whole of Steyning) in favour of whom the Green was registered by WSCC. NB In case this is seen as divisive, the Friends applied for registration on behalf of **all** of Steyning but the WSCC solicitor recommended to the committee that the area of benefit should be restricted. If SPC had consented instead of opposing on mistaken and invalid grounds, which revealed that they did not understand the legislation, then the registration would have been for the benefit of all.

19 **Amenity** - Adverse impact on the amenity of all the other users of the MPF and adjacent allotment holders, Bowls Club and Cricket Club.

20 **Objectors** - Sport England, The Ramblers' Association, The Campaign to Preserve Rural England, The South Downs Society, The Open Spaces Society, The Steyning Society, Steyning Cricket Club and hundreds of local residents have all raised significant and various objections.

If, despite all the foregoing, the HDC planners grant consent there is likely to be another judicial review process to go through and/or the scheme will need to be referred to the Secretary of State because of the Sport England objection.

If the scheme negotiates all that, and assuming that grant funding can be obtained when such a large proportion of the Town objects to the facility (something which normally frightens off grant authorities), there is the final hurdle of the Village Green and the Noise Nuisance aspects which both lead to the real likelihood that after construction is complete the courts will permanently close the facility down. It seems very dubious that grants will be given in the face of that prediction. It is unlikely that the necessary funding will ever be obtained.

The reality is that the MPF project is doomed, and always has been, and that only the mismanagement of SPC has given the illusion of hope to its supporters. We are now at the final fork in the road. If the supporters of the MPF will not join with the supporters of the LCCP scheme then it seems there will never be a skatepark unless and until the Neighbourhood Development Plan (now about to get under way) manages to create one as part of the development of the field opposite the Leisure Centre. The Friends have seen some well-developed indicative plans about this. The preparation of a successful Neighbourhood Development Plan will rely on clear strategic thinking by SPC; something the history of this scheme leads one to be more than a little pessimistic about.

LCCP Scheme

The Friends will respond shortly to the objections currently on the HDC planning website, in particular those from WSCC, the two teachers and Mrs Hobson. We are

pleased to say that we have good answers to them all, as all were predicted and all would have been discussed with the Governors if only they had been willing to meet with us.

Most are operational rather than planning objections and we remain very optimistic of obtaining a planning consent. If refused initially it is likely to be taken to appeal.

We have made no secret from the outset that the LCCP scheme only succeeds if the lease is varied and that this needs the consent of the School Governors. Our strategy is simple. With a planning consent and with HDC and WSCC behind us, and most importantly, with the people of Steyning saying they want this development then the pressure on the School to consent will be unstoppable.

Every objection from a supporter of the MPF harms this strategy and increases the likelihood of the Town ending up with no skatepark at all. This is why there is an important fork in the road and the supporters of the MPF need to think very carefully about their strategy. To change metaphor, backing the right horse is very important if there is to be a skatepark for the current and foreseeable generations of children.

HDC officers have been enthusiastic about our scheme (at least to our face), WSCC supported a scheme at the school site when it was last on the table and were on side when Mr Deedman was our county councillor. The only problem historically has been the School itself, however its previous objection was the loss of playing field space. That is why our new scheme keeps everything within the existing car park.

Unfortunately it now looks as though County and Parish Cllr Barling is going to lead WSCC to oppose and refuse its consent to the variation of the lease for reasons he will need to explain to everyone who will be disappointed. Cllr Barling's failure to put his support behind something which is in accordance with the wishes of the people of Steyning as expressed at the survey and by the election will need to be explained by him. It is no answer for him to keep saying "the School will not consent". His duty is to represent the wishes of the community and to do his best to negotiate solutions. Without this sort of support from him and from all the other elected representatives (we know District Councillor George Cockman is a supporter of a scheme at this site)

then the LCCP scheme we are proposing is indeed likely to be dead in the water. If the supporters of a skatepark want to see one at all then we all need to work together to put pressure on our representatives to make this happen.

If planning consent can be obtained and a modest facility built after putting sufficient pressure on the governors to vary the lease then it will be for those using the skatepark to use it in accordance with the operational management plan etc., so as to allay the expressed concerns of the School about graffiti and trespass etc. If that works then the facility can be doubled (or more) in size with the displaced cars going into the grass area near the current long-jump pit. We have already obtained Sport England approval in principle.

CONCLUSION

Oppose the LCCP scheme and it is likely there will be no skatepark for Steyning at all. Support it and there is every chance of creating a nucleus on which an even better facility can flourish.

I think the idea of a picnic for the whole community with the opportunity for a friendly exchange of views is an excellent one which might start to reverse the terrible damage caused within our community by the Parish Council's handling of this.

After absorbing all this information it would be really great if we could meet up and I could take you through more of the detail and documentation. I am sure there is a way through this if only we could all start talking together. As I said at the beginning, it's vital for everyone that we try.

If you say "yes" in principle I'll let you know my phone number –I don't really want to put it here as I am asking you to give this message a wide circulation.

Really, P****. PLEASE contact me to start the process of co-operation.

Kind regards,

Paul Campbell (Vice Chair FoMPF)

From: P****

Sent: 12 June 2013 18:01

To: mail@fompf.org

Subject: re litigation

Just curious as to the litigation that was mentioned at last nights meeting is this from individuals in your group or the whole group collectively !! is this towards the parish council individuals or again collectively .

Why do you feel the need to do this, are you not ashamed !,we are a small community here and we should remain friends not throw solicitors letters , the guys on the parish council give up there free time for the community.

Regards

P****