

WICKHAMBREAUX PARISH COUNCIL MEETING 17 NOVEMBER 2020 on Zoom.

Present: Parish Cllr Robin Treacher
Parish Cllr Martin Twyman
Parish Cllr Faith Wright
Parish Cllr Darren Howe
Parish Cllr Peter Collinson
Parish Cllr Catherine Holland

County Cllr Michael Northey, KCC (Kent County Council)
City Cllr Louise Jones-Roberts, CCC (Canterbury City Council)

Mrs Chenice Howard-Sparkes, Clerk to the Council

1 Member of the Public

1. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. Cllr Treacher reported that he understands there has been a localised outbreak of Covid-19 in the village, likely as a result of an event held before lockdown. Littlebourne Pre-School has had to close following confirmed cases but to his knowledge Wickhambreaux School remains unaffected. The Parish Council is not aware of anybody in the local community requiring assistance during the second lockdown but if anybody does require any assistance, please contact the Clerk. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Parish Cllr Caroline Rees (Work Commitments).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Wright and Cllr Twyman declared a voluntary interest as members of the Conservation Society.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 OCTOBER 2020

All councillors voted in favour that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of the meeting.

4. INFORMATION FROM MATTERS ARISING

4(8) – Cllr Wright reported that the Manston Airport Judicial Review hearing has been set for 16-17 February 2021.

4(17i) – The Clerk reported that an enforcement site visit for Little Puxton in Stodmarsh was undertaken and has been passed to the Planning Department for further comment. Should the Planning Department consider the design as built unacceptable, then further action will be taken.

5. REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND CITY COUNCILLORS

County Cllr Michael Northey

KCC's 24 hour helpline Kent Together continues to be available to support vulnerable people in Kent who need urgent help, supplies or medication. If anybody is vulnerable and has an urgent need that cannot be met through existing support networks, please call 03000 41 92 92 or visit www.kent.gov.uk/KentTogether. You can also report concerns for the welfare of someone else using this service.

Cllr Northey also wished to remind councillors that the deadline for comments on KCC's budget for 2021-2022 is 24 November 2020. In particular, KCC is seeking views on spending reductions on a range of services and whether a modest Council Tax increase would be acceptable to help sustain services.

Cllr Northey reported that the cabinet member for Highways and Transport, Cllr Michael Payne, will be meeting with Cllr Ben Fitter-Harding at CCC to discuss the JTB (Joint Transportation Board) parish representatives among other topics.

Cllr Northey also reported that he has not been selected as the Conservative Candidate for Canterbury South (which includes Wickhambreaux) for the May 2021 KCC Elections. The Conservative Party has made the decision to change a number of senior members across the county, including Cllr Northey, and should not be considered a reflection of service. Cllr Treacher wished to thank Cllr Northey on behalf of the Parish Council and community for his regular attendance at meetings and his honesty, helpfulness and support over his nearly 16 years of service. Cllr Twyman seconded and all councillors unanimously agreed.

City Cllr Louise Jones-Roberts

CCC's Community Committee is due to discuss recommendations on 25 November 2020 to extend the existing CFF (Concurrent Function Funding) allocations for two further years (2021-2022 and 2022-2023). An audit is recommended to be undertaken during this time of the current levels of provision in both parishes and urban areas to better inform funding options for parishes from 2023-2024. The previous recommendation to only extend CFF for one financial year was revised to enable a thorough audit to be undertaken.

CCC Committee of Council voted on 22 October 2020 to abolish forums (including the Rural Forum for parish councils) and to amend call-in arrangements to the Planning Committee, which removes the trigger of four or more objections and the ability for parish councils to request an application be decided by Committee. Cllr Jones-Roberts encouraged the Parish Council to engage with her as early as possible should there be any planning applications councillors wish to call to Committee.

Ward councillors are "strongly encouraged to exercise their call-in rights responsibly and only call-in applications where there is a demonstrable public interest beyond local objection". Cllr Jones-Roberts reported that she is waiting on Simon Thomas, Head of Planning, to confirm the criteria for what constitutes "public interest beyond local objection". Councillors expressed their disappointment at the Committee of Council's decision and that the criteria had not been established before the change was brought in.

Cllr Jones-Roberts reported she understands Cllr Ben Fitter-Harding has offered to meet with all parish councils and Cllr Treacher confirmed that Cllr Fitter-Harding is due to attend the next KALC Canterbury Area Committee meeting on 23 November 2020 as guest speaker.

With regards to Covid-19, CCC is concentrating on what will happen after the second lockdown. More businesses are now eligible for funding and Cllr Jones-Roberts understands that there is a funding source available with a more discretionary element.

The Lord Mayor's Gift Fund is still open. Nominations can be for residents in the village in need, for example somebody elderly living on their own, or can be a thank you gift for residents in the village who have contributed to the parish. Cllr Treacher encouraged councillors to inform the Clerk if they wish to nominate any residents.

6. HIGHWAYS

(i) Highways Improvements Wickham Road/Mill Close

Cllr Treacher reported that a resident has approached the Parish Council to propose highway improvements in the Wickham Road/Mill Close area. Cllr Treacher attended a site visit with the resident on 12 November 2020 to discuss the proposals. The resident has suggested extending the Spicers Place junction in both directions – down the road to Mill Close to the point where the kerb stones turn sharply left, and in the other direction from the letterbox towards the white bridge. This would include the need for a couple of yards of new pavement, levelling and making good of existing pavement and replacement kerb stones in some areas.

The suggestion has been raised to improve pedestrian safety in this location as it is a regular route used by parents taking children to the Primary School. The current arrangement results in pedestrians having to walk in the road for some of the route.

Councillors were unanimously in favour of the proposals and agreed to add this to the Highways Improvement Plan. Cllr Treacher agreed to contact KCC to arrange a site visit to discuss the proposals in more detail.

(ii) Highways Improvement Plan

The Clerk circulated a letter from the Conservation Society addressed to KCC regarding the 30mph repeater signs on the green in Wickhambreaux. The Conservation Society is questioning whether the repeater signs are of a standard size and, if so, whether they could be replaced with the smallest size possible more in keeping with the Conservation Area. The Conservation Society is also questioning whether one repeater sign on the green could be removed as there are three currently installed. The Clerk has sent the Conservation Society Secretary an email address for the appropriate department to clarify these points.

Cllr Holland reported that Michelle Matthews at KCC assured her that the signs in Stodmarsh were the smallest possible in that location and assumes the same has been chosen for Wickhambreaux. Cllr Treacher confirmed that the Parish Council requested the smallest size possible but some compromise may have been reached with regards to the signs to avoid roundels being painted on the road. The Parish Council assumes the size is as per the consultation document.

(iii) A257 Update

Cllr Twyman reported that a core group of the A257 Group met approximately three weeks ago with Gary Peak from KCC. Mr Peak has advised that KCC may consider reducing the speed limit in some of the A257 Group's proposed locations. KCC has confirmed it will meet the cost for the relevant surveys but the costs for the work will likely need to be met jointly by KCC and the relevant villages. The core group will arrange a meeting in due course to obtain an update from KCC

General Highways Matters

- Cllr Twyman reported that Grove Road will be closed from 16 November 2020 for up to 10 days in the general vicinity of Newnham House. Southern Water (SW) are laying a new water pipe but have not adequately consulted directly with residents in the general vicinity of the works and only placed signage warning of the closure on the day works started.

Cllr Twyman tried to contact SW and Clancy Docwra, SW's contractor, from 13 November 2020 but nobody responded to his phone calls. Cllr Twyman contacted KCC Highways regarding the lack of and inadequate placement of signage on 16 November and was assured additional signage would be put out within three hours. No additional signs have been placed to date. The lack of signage has caused traffic chaos as drivers are unaware of the closure until they reach the closed section and have to turn around. Cllr Northey suggested Cllr Twyman contact Hazel Walters at KCC to inform her so the terms of SW's license can be checked and appropriate action taken if necessary.

- Cllr Twyman reported that some damaged salt bins in the parish have been replaced. Cllr Twyman has checked the salt levels in the bins and they are all full ready for winter.

7. PLANNING

CA/20/02169/FUL – White Cottage, The Street

The Parish Council has no objections to the proposed installation of 1no rooflight to the rear elevation together with installation of external air conditioning unit to side elevation.

CA/20/02432/FUL – The Mill Yard, 2 The Green, Wickham Road

Notification was received from CCC on 16 November 2020 for a proposed dormer window to the front and rooflights to the rear of the property. Cllr Wright encouraged councillors to contact her if they have any comments or objections.

CA/20/01647/FUL – Rowan House, Stodmarsh Road

The application for removal of existing gates and provision of new gates has been withdrawn.

CCC Local Plan Review

Cllr Wright reported that she attended CCC's Transport Conference on 21 October 2020 on behalf of the Parish Council. Attendees were split into working groups and Cllr Wright and the Clerk were placed in the same group.

Different suggestions were made for overhauling the transport system in and around Canterbury including joining Canterbury West and Canterbury East stations, relief roads and tram systems. More emphasis was placed on encouraging other more sustainable means of transport (such as electric vehicles, public transport, walking and cycling) and there was some discussion regarding the infrastructure and costs associated with these. CCC will formally consult on the proposed Transport Strategy in 2021.

Matthew Arnold from Stagecoach was in the group and Cllr Wright enquired about smaller buses on rural roads. Mr Arnold explained it is more cost effective to run larger buses as the majority of their running costs for the day have already been met in the peak school run period. In addition, there are not enough of the smaller buses to run solely on rural roads and all buses need to be at least 2.5m wide to accommodate wheelchairs. Mr Arnold also confirmed that the number of pupils using the school bus from Plucks Gutter to Canterbury requires a large capacity bus.

Natural England Report on Nutrient Neutrality

Cllr Treacher suggested that the Parish Council invite a guest speaker to explain Natural England's report on nutrient neutrality for new development in the Stour Catchment area, which was unanimously agreed. Planning applications across Kent have been delayed while negotiations with Natural England are ongoing but no acceptable mitigation measures have been identified.

Cllr Jones-Roberts reported that she understands Simon Thomas, Head of Planning at CCC, has been working with Natural England, other Councils and Southern Water to identify potential actions and mitigation measures. In particular the possibility of water processing plants is currently being considered but this would favour large scale developers with higher budgets. Cllr Jones-Roberts agreed to circulate some more information when available. Cllr Twyman reported that he contacted Natural England's Reserve Manager who has only recently been made aware of the report and is investigating the current situation.

Planning for the Future White Paper

Cllr Treacher reported that he understands the House of Lords has rejected the government's Planning for the Future White Paper. The House of Commons will now consider amendments before resubmitting to the House of Lords.

8. PRECEPT 2021-2022

CCC has confirmed that CFF has been extended for the next two financial years at the same amount as the current financial year (£5,605). No provision therefore needs to be made for any loss of funding in 2021-2022 however, the future of CFF funding after 2022-2023 remains uncertain. It was agreed to add the CFF audit to the next agenda following the first replacement Rural Forum meeting scheduled for 14 December 2020.

Cllr Treacher proposed that the budget and resulting precept of £16,074 be kept the same for financial year 2021-2022. This was unanimously approved and ratified.

Cllr Treacher reported that a resident has made a suggestion to the Playing Field Committee to resurface the Seaton entrance to the playing field as it can become waterlogged after rainfall. The vehicle layby by the entrance to the playing field is owned by a third party and the Playing Field Committee has approached the landowner to request permission to undertake improvements works. CFF covers ground maintenance and there is money in the budget for this financial year (2019-2020) to cover the cost. Four councillors voted for and two abstained to undertake the works.

9. IMPROVING BROADBAND PROVISION IN THE PARISH

Cllr Holland reported that Openreach have approved the application for all properties in Stodmarsh to have fibre broadband and is due to have a Zoom meeting with the Openreach design team tomorrow (18 November 2020). All properties in Stodmarsh meet the criteria and it is expected that the installation works will be fully funded by grants following additional funding from KCC, with no costs to the homeowners or Parish Council. Deadline for the scheme grants is 31 March 2021 so Cllr Holland is pushing for the project to be undertaken before then.

Cllr Treacher thanked Cllr Holland for her efforts to date and encouraged her to reach out to other councillors if she requires any assistance, including the need for professional advice.

10. PARISH COUNCIL MEETING DATES 2021

Wickhambreaux Parish Council meetings are normally held on the third Tuesday evening of each month, except August and December when there is no meeting. The Parish Council decided on the following meeting dates for 2021; 19 January, 16 February, 16 March, 20 April, 18 May, 15 June, 20 July, 21 September, 19 October and 16 November. The meeting dates will be published on the website for future reference.

11. CLLRS' REPORTS

School Report

Patrick Duffy advised that school attendance is currently at 97% during Covid-19. The School is not aware of any children testing positive for the virus but one teaching assistant has been self-isolating following possible exposure.

Mr Duffy also reported that the draft Village Hall Hire Agreement has been sent to Marisa White, District Area Education Officer, at KCC to review. As the existing agreement is between KCC and the Parish Council, Mr Duffy asked for clarification as to why the Parish Council sent the agreement to the School and not KCC. Cllr Treacher responded that with the devolution of more powers and responsibilities from KCC, the Parish Council did not want to make assumptions as to who would be responsible for signing the agreement.

School Liaison

Cllr Collinson wished to thank Cllr Treacher and Janis Volckman, Chairman of the Village Hall Committee, for finalising the draft Village Hall Agreement to send to the School. Cllr Treacher wished to record thanks to Cllr Collinson for his investigative work to date.

Tree Report

Cllr Wright reported that Philip Wilson Arboriculture has completed the tree survey of all the trees the Parish Council is responsible for. Two recommendations for maintenance were made and submitted to CCC as follows:

- CA/20/02528 – Little Green, Wickham Road – Remove low growth of Red Oak to a height of 3m
- CA/20/02535 – Stodmarsh Green – Remove vigorous vertical shoots of Hawthorn (at height of 0-1.5m) at their origin in the lower crown to improve the form of the tree.

The Parish Council has no objections to the recommendations and will undertake the work following the expiry of the notifications.

Cllr Treacher enquired whether councillors would like to explore planting more trees in the parish. Councillors were encouraged to propose suitable locations should they be supportive of additional trees.

Law and Order

The Clerk circulated a Neighbourhood Watch report to all councillors prior to the meeting. Cllr Holland reported that there are no specific incidents to report but advice has been circulated on how to minimise opportunistic burglaries over the Christmas period as follows:

- Keep presents out of view: A tree surrounded by presents in plain view of a window or open door will attract attention.
- Be careful if you are updating your status on Facebook, Twitter etc. Do not advertise that you and your family will be away for Christmas or the New Year.
- Dispose carefully of packaging that contained expensive items: burglars will look for signs that new presents or electrical equipment have recently been purchased.
- Outside decorations: Ensure windows and doors are securely locked at night or when you are away from home. This is especially important if you have outside lights or decorations that have leads coming from inside the house.
- Sheds and garages: Keep well secured with good locks and security lighting. Do not leave tools and ladders unsecured, these could be used to break into your property. Bikes and expensive equipment should be properly marked and maybe even listed with your insurer. Check your policy for details of cover.

Cllr Collinson reported that he has received a number of female robotic spam telephone calls since the last meeting.

KALC

The next KALC Area Committee meeting is scheduled for 23 November 2020, with Cllr Ben Fitter-Harding, Leader of CCC, as guest speaker.

Village Hall Committee

Cllr Treacher reported that the Village Hall Committee met on 11 November 2020. Main points to note from the meeting include the hall is currently closed to everyone but the School in line with government advice, the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations were noted by the Committee, and preparation to submit the Viridor funding application for replacement windows is now progressing following CCC confirming planning permission was not required. CCC has refunded the planning application fee and the costs associated with the production of drawings initially requested by the Planning Department.

The Village Hall Committee also agreed to change banks from Natwest to Metro Bank to enable online banking, which has a £1,250 cash incentive for switching. Natwest is not issuing bank statements at the present time but the bank balance at 21 August 2020 was £13,491.

Playing Field Committee

Cllr Treacher confirmed that the playing field remains open in line with government advice.

Village Greens

Cllr Howe confirmed that he will be purchasing the Christmas trees for both Wickhambreaux and Stodmarsh shortly. Inside Out Services will also be undertaking the remedial works previously agreed on the greens in due course.

Flood Protection

Cllr Twyman reported that there has been a 50% increase in rainfall for October compared to 2019 and the aquifer is beginning to recharge. The EA (Environment Agency) has carried out a reed cut of the Little Stour and a multi-agency Little Stour and Nailbourne River Group meeting with KCC will be held in December on Zoom. The Nailbourne could start flowing again from as early as the middle of December 2020 depending on rainfall.

Footpaths

Cllr Wright agreed to follow up with the EA with regards to the raised plastic capping on the riverbank by The Mill.

Website

Cllr Collinson reported that Cantium has now taken down the previous website and he has posted various news pages on the current website since the last meeting, most Covid-19 related. Cllr Collinson suggested using the existing resident run virtual noticeboards to advertise the website subscription facility to ensure that as many residents as possible are being reached.

Cllr Collinson also reported that he has signed up to be a Covid-19 Community Champion and has attended the first meeting. A variety of information has been circulated which has been added to the website and Cllr Collinson suggested to the group they send smaller graphics of the posters more suitable for inclusion on websites.

12. FINANCE

The expenditure totalling £751.05 was authorised, made up of:

- KALC – KALC Virtual Chairman Conference - £42.00
- Philip Wilson – Tree Inspection - £250.00
- DM Payroll Services Ltd – Payroll services second half of 2020-2021 - £54.00
- Chenice Howard-Sparkes – Clerk salary November 2020
- Lyssi Varghese – Village Hall Cleaner Salary November 2020
- HMRC – Employee and PAYE November 2020

13. CLERK REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE

None not covered on the agenda.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (i) Cllr Collinson confirmed that he has reported a pot hole on The Street near the junction with The List to KCC.
- (ii) Cllr Wright suggested putting a notice on the website reminding residents to take extra precautions during lockdown with the localised Covid-19 outbreak, in particular to be careful of touching footpath stiles, etc, when out walking. Councillors were mindful of putting out too much information and the potential for scaremongering. It was agreed only new information should be published.

The meeting closed at 9.34pm

Signed..... (Chairman)

Date.....