

WICKHAMBREAUX PARISH COUNCIL MEETING 16 MARCH 2021 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 Caroline Rees

City Cllr Louise Jones-Roberts, CCC (Canterbury City Council) (until 8.21pm)

Mrs Chenice Howard-Sparkes, Clerk to the Council

3 Members of the Public

1. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for apologies for absence. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Parish Cllr Catherine Holland (Illness) and County Councillor Michael Northey (Work Commitments).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 FEBRUARY 2021

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

4. INFORMATION FROM MATTERS ARISING

6 – Cllr Collinson reported that Cllr Twyman inspected the blocked drains on the corner of The List and The Street and reported these to KCC. KCC has since marked the drains for clearance.
6 – Cllr Howe enquired whether there is an update on the deep pothole on Stodmarsh Road. A member of the public reported that KCC needs to wait for drier conditions due to agricultural vehicles using the road and the adjacent bank will be repaired at the same time. Cllr Twyman agreed to liaise with Michelle Weston, KCC Highways Steward.

17 (Footpaths) – Cllr Wright reported that KCC has moved the incorrectly positioned footpath sign on the small green and repaired the signpost on Seaton Road. Cllr Treacher thanked Cllr Wright for liaising with KCC.

5. REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND CITY COUNCILLORS

City Cllr Louise Jones-Roberts

Cllr Jones-Roberts reported that Canenco is slowly catching up with the backlog of missed bins and encouraged residents to continue to report missed bin collections online. Should there be any persistent issues, Cllr Jones-Roberts encouraged residents to contact her so she can follow up with Canenco directly.

CCC has awarded £4.7 million of government funding in discretionary Covid-19 grants to businesses across the Canterbury district since November 2020. Preparations to reopen the High Street in line with government advice and the current published 'road map' are also underway.

Many rural parishes have an issue with dog fouling and Cllr Jones-Roberts enquired whether Wickhambreaux has issues. Councillors responded that generally Wickhambreaux is fortunate that most dog owners are responsible but there is a small problem area by St Andrew's Church where dog owners are leaving full dog poo bags.

Cllr Howe enquired what CCC's view is on recently approved outline planning application CA/20/02826 for up to 630 houses in Sturry following refusal of the link road infrastructure by KCC. Cllr Jones-Roberts responded that although CCC were not overly supportive of the approved housing scheme, there were no valid planning grounds for refusal of the application.

CCC is frustrated that KCC refused the link road application as the infrastructure is considered a vital part of the housing development from CCC's point of view. The government funding allocated to the link road has now been lost as a result of the refused application and cannot be transferred over to a new scheme in due course.

County Cllr Michael Northey

County Cllr Michael Northey sent a report to the Clerk prior to the meeting which was circulated to all councillors. Cllr Northey wished to remind residents of the Kent Together 24/7 helpline (03000 41 92 92) which can give advice and assistance on financial matters, food supplies, picking up prescriptions, arranging help for people with learning or mental health difficulties, and arranging for somebody to call people identified as suffering from loneliness.

The latest edition of KCC's e-newsletter was issued today and includes a Covid-19 update from KCC Cabinet Member Shellina Prendergast, Census 2021 information, Brexit advice, health tips and information on a designated newsletter for parents of SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) children. If you wish to view the newsletter, please click on the following link – [KCC March 2021 Newsletter](#).

KCC is preparing to lead an ambitious community-based programme of activities to help children and young people reconnect with their pre-Covid-19 lives. The Reconnect: Kent Children and Young People Programme will be available to every child and young person in Kent, from early years through to the end of secondary school and onto the age of 24 for young people with SEND. The programme will be developed in partnership with stakeholders, and existing organisations that already engage with children and young people will be heavily involved. The five aims of the programme are to help Kent's children and young people reconnect to; health and happiness; learning missed; family, friends and community; sport, activities and the outdoors; and economic wellbeing. More details about the programme will be set out after the May 2021 elections. To find out more and to sign up to receive the latest news, please visit www.kent.gov.uk/reconnect.

ADJOURNMENT

Standing Orders were suspended at this point to enable residents to speak.

A resident wished to enquire whether the Parish Council would consider introducing a Dark Skies Policy to support the natural wildlife and rural ecosystem. The government recently introduced a regulatory framework to promote the preservation of dark skies after it was found that almost 100% of the population experiences light pollution. A number of parish and district councils across the country are currently exploring the introduction of a Dark Skies Policy in their local areas.

At parish level, it is particularly relevant for lighting on residential properties, for example encouraging the use of sensor lighting and downlights. Although the Parish Council cannot force residents to change lighting for more wildlife friendly ones, the policy would help to increase awareness and assist with responding to planning applications for new lighting. The Parish Council agreed to explore introducing a Dark Skies Policy and the resident agreed to assist in the formation of a draft policy for consideration at a later date.

Standing Orders were resumed at this point

6. HIGHWAYS

(i) A257 Update

Cllr Twyman reported that a virtual meeting was held on 04 March 2021 with KCC Highways to discuss the following five key proposed changes along the A257:

- Littlebourne Gateway – extend the 30mph towards Canterbury – KCC Highways has approved the change in speed limit but no date for implementation has been set.
- Wingham High Street – reduce speed limit to 20mph

- Bramling – reduction in speed limit to 40mph from The Haywain Public House to Cherville Lane
- Shatterling – double white lines to prevent overtaking on the stretch by Wingham Wildlife Park. Cllr Twyman reported that a reduction in speed limit was considered but as the main cause of accidents is overtaking, reducing the speed limit is likely to increase the number of vehicles attempting to overtake.
- Preston – extend 30mph limit

Cllr Twyman reported that another core meeting of the A257 Group was held virtually on Saturday 13 March 2021. All members of the A257 Group, including Wickhambreaux, will be asked to contribute financially towards the proposed A257 improvements in due course.

General Highways Matters

- Cllr Twyman reported that he is liaising with Michelle Weston regarding a number of pot holes in the parish.
- Cllr Twyman reported that he has been liaising with KCC regarding the weight limit sign opposite Wickham Lane that has recently appeared in the parish. Cllr Twyman reported that although the 18 tonne weight limit for Grove Ferry Bridge has been in place for at least 15 years, due to a 7.5 tonne reduced weight limit for the bridge in Monkton additional signage is required in Wickhambreaux for provide clarification for HGVs.

The sign is however pointing in the wrong direction and an inspector was due on site today (16 March 2021) to alter the positioning and check all the other signs in the vicinity (Littlebourne, Wingham, etc). Councillors also felt that the positioning of the sign is incorrect because HGVs cannot turn around when they reach the sign and will instead have to go through Ickham or Wingham. Cllr Twyman confirmed he has voiced these concerns to KCC.

KCC has indicated that as soon as both the bridges at Grove Ferry and Monkton have been upgraded, the signage can be reassessed and removed. However, no date has been set for the upgrading works to be completed so the signs may be in-situ for a few years.

Cllr Twyman has expressed the Parish Council's disappointment to KCC that there was no prior consultation or notification of the signage being installed however, KCC was under no obligation to consult or provide prior notification as the signage has been deemed essential.

7. PLANNING

CA/20/02497/LB – Teedleham Farm, Grove Road

CCC has granted permission for a single storey rear extension including internal alterations and Photovoltaic panel installation

CA/20/02922/LB – Wickham Court, The Green

CCC has granted permission for internal/external alterations including en-suite bathroom and dressing room to second floor and conversion of attached storage to residential use, alterations to soil pipes, cast iron ventilation grills and balanced flue to relocated boiler.

CA/21/00143/FUL – Pilgrims Way, Stodmarsh Road

CCC has granted permission for a two storey side extension and replacement of garage door with window.

Cllr Wright reported that concerns have been expressed regarding works being undertaken on land north of The Quaives, subject to withdrawn planning application CA/19/02059 for 10no bell tents. Groundworks and cutting back of trees and vegetation has been reported but no planning applications for change of use of the land has been submitted to CCC. Cllr Wright agreed to report the concerns to Cllr Jones-Roberts with a view to sending onto Enforcement at CCC.

8. IMPROVING BROADBAND PROVISION IN THE PARISH

No further update.

9. UPLOADING ARCHIVE DOCUMENTS TO THE WEBSITE

Cllr Treacher reported that he contacted KCC's Archive department who have indicated they will not be in a position to fully respond to the enquiry for a few weeks.

10. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Please refer to the Parish Council minutes dated 16 February 2021 for a detailed overview of neighbourhood plans.

Cllr Wright reported that she attended a meeting with Karen Britton from CCC on 02 March 2021 to discuss neighbourhood plans with Cllr Collinson and Christine Le Jeune from the Conservation Society. Karen Britton clarified the process of producing a neighbourhood plan and confirmed that the main purpose of the plan is to identify areas suitable for development. Neighbourhood plans can also be produced with a focus on one subject such as open spaces, roads, environment, flooding, etc. The Conservation Society has since confirmed they do not wish to be involved in the production of a plan as they do not consider Wickhambreaux to be a sustainable area for development.

Cllr Treacher reported that he has spoken with Bridge Parish Council, who are in the process of producing a plan, and they have indicated it has had wider benefits for them in terms of increasing the profile of the parish council through increased resident consultations. However, Bridge Parish Council questioned whether the financial cost for a parish of Wickhambreaux's size would be proportional to the benefits gained, even if Wickhambreaux was to join with neighbouring parish Ickham.

As CCC is in the process of reviewing their Local Plan and the future of neighbourhood plans remains uncertain based on the recent draft government Planning White Paper, it was unanimously agreed not to proceed with producing a neighbourhood plan at this time and to review at a later date. Cllr Wright advised that the Parish Council could consider producing a Village Design Statement or Parish Plan as alternatives but this would not hold the same weight as CCC's Local Plan.

11. ENTRANCE IMPROVEMENT WORKS TO THE FRANK MONTGOMERY PLAYING FIELD

The Clerk reported that she has received the following four quotations (plus VAT):

	Playing Field Entrance	Adjacent Footpath	Total for Works
Contractor A	£1860.00	£1195.00	£3055.00
Contractor B	£2419.00	£1000.00	£3419.00
Contractor C	£2694.00	£2219.38	£4913.38
Contractor D	£2416.00	£2518.00	£4934.00

The Clerk advised that she met all contractors on site except Contractor A, who declined two site meeting invitations. If both elements of the works are instructed at the same time, there would be a £305.50 discount for Contractor A and a discount of £540.00 for Contractor C. Contractor B has priced for both elements being undertaken at the same time and there would be an increase of approximately £100.00 per element if not undertaken together. There would be no change in price for Contractor D. The Clerk also advised that Contractor A has only recently started trading in January 2021 according to Companies House so there is a potential risk if instructed.

Cllr Wright reported that she has contacted KCC PROW (Public Rights of Way) to request permission to undertake the improvement works to the public footpath adjacent to the playing field. KCC previously partially resurfaced the footpath up to the playing field gate and the proposal is to continue the resurfacing for the entire length of the footpath. No response has been received to date.

Cllr Rees proposed and Cllr Collinson seconded that Contractor B, Bourne to Garden, be instructed for both elements of the works, to which there was no objections.

12. CLLRS' REPORTS

School Report

Patrick Duffy sent a report on behalf of the School prior to the meeting which was circulated to all councillors. The School is now receiving all pupils following the change in government Covid-19 restrictions but had to close on 11 March 2021 due to electrical problems in the village. The KCC School Improvement Advisor congratulated the school on their Lockdown Remote Learning Programme, which had 100% engagement from pupils.

In addition, 11 out of 15 pupils passed the recent Kent Test and were allocated their first choice grammar school. The Parish Council wished to congratulate the School on their excellent results.

Councillors appreciate the continued attendance from Mr Duffy at meetings but understand this is a large time commitment. Cllr Collinson agreed to contact Mr Duffy to review the delivery of the monthly School report in view of the current positive relationship between both parties.

Tree Report

The Parish Council has no objections to the following notifications:

- CA/21/00447 – Hooksfield House, Seaton Road – T1) Poplar - multi-stemmed tree located on edge of dyke/brook - to reduce stems by 6m to recreate one crown. T2) Ash - located on dyke/brook edge - fell. T3) Poplars - multi-stemmed tree nearest the house - to reduce by 5m and reshape.
- CA/21/00477 – Crossdykes, The Street – T1) Twisted Willow - overall reduction by 10%, removal of dead wood back to previous pollards. T2) Flowering Cherry - overall reduction by 10%, removal of interior growth located to rear of property.
- CA/21/00527 – Wickham Court, The Green – T7) Yew - fell, located to left hand side of house along front wall.
- CA/21/00565 – Star Cottage, The Street – T1) To crown reduce Yew tree by 2 metres leaving a 3 metre radial crown in rear garden for maintenance. T2) To crown reduce in height Hazel tree to previous points or by 3 metres leaving a 3 metre vertical crown by 4 metres horizontally for maintenance. T3) To reduce Conifer tree in height by 3 metres leaving a 4 metre tree in rear garden for maintenance

Law and Order

The Clerk circulated a Neighbourhood Watch report to all councillors prior to the meeting. A male, armed with a stick, attempted to steal a dog in Blean Woods from its owner at 3pm on 10 March 2021. Whilst the attempt was unsuccessful, Police are urging dog owners to be vigilant and try to vary when and where they exercise their dogs.

The upcoming 2021 census is providing criminals with another scamming opportunity. Some victims have already been contacted by someone claiming to be from the local authority and acting on behalf of the Office of National Statistics. The caller suggested that the individual's census form was completed incorrectly and they had a fine to pay, requesting bank details. Criminals may also use this as an opportunity to send phishing emails or texts.

To prevent scams, the Police have issued the following advice – you will only be contacted about the census via letter; never by email, text or by phone. When filling out the census you will only ever be asked personal details such as date of birth, address and occupation – no financial details or national insurance number details will be requested.

If you are aware of vulnerable residents, you can assist them by completing the census online on their behalf using their unique 16-digit code. Alternatively, they can request a paper form at www.census.gov.uk or by calling 0800 141 2021.

KALC

Cllr Treacher reported that the most recent KALC Area Committee meeting was held on 25 February 2021. The main items of discussion included the draft CCC Engagement meetings Terms of Reference, an update on the Parish Charter, and the push for voting rights for parish councils on the JTB (Joint Transportation Board). The CCC Engagement meetings Terms of Reference was subsequently approved at the CCC engagement meeting held on 01 March 2021. The next KALC Area Committee meeting is scheduled for 25 March 2021.

Village Hall Committee

Cllr Treacher reported that KCC has approved the draft village hall hire agreement in principle following some amendments after discussions with the School. Cllr Treacher also reported that efforts to finalise the Viridor funding application continue and the application is due to be submitted shortly.

Cllr Treacher reported that the government's roadmap issued on 22 February 2021 indicated that village halls can reopen on 12 April 2021. This has since been contradicted by guidance issued on 25 February indicating that village halls can only open on 12 April for activities already permitted under lockdown and should otherwise stay closed until 17 May 2021. The Village Hall Committee is considering guidance issued by ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) and will meet virtually in due course to discuss what action needs to be taken prior to reopening.

A leak was recently identified in the ladies toilets caused by a previous fix to the felt on the flat roof failing. The Committee unanimously instructed N J Roofing to undertake emergency repair works by applying a larger patch of felt over the previous fix, taking the felt up and over the upstand to prevent future problems, and adjusting the existing guttering for £370.00.

Playing Field Committee

Cllr Rees reported that the Committee joined with St Andrew's Church to participate in the Bag4Church scheme, which collected 1200kg of clothes and raised £360.00. The money will go towards repairs to the Church roof and another collection is planned towards the end of April 2021. Cllr Rees also reported that the Classic Car Show will not be held this year due to the continued uncertainty regarding Covid-19 and a provisional date has been booked for 15 May 2022. A plant sale will take place this year instead to raise money for the playing field.

Cllr Rees reported that the willow dome requires weaving and she will be undertaking this with Linda Lodge alongside other gardening tasks shortly. The Playing Field Committee bank balance is currently £2,631.85

Village Greens

Cllr Howe reported that the first cut of the greens for the year has been undertaken and both greens are in good condition. Cllr Howe will be meeting with Inside Out Services in due course to discuss maintenance of the greens for the upcoming year. Cllr Treacher commented how picturesque the large Wickhambreaux green is looking with the daffodils and crocuses in bloom.

Flood Protection

Cllr Twyman reported that 20 people from approximately 12 parish councils attended the Little Stour and Nailbourne Management Group's AGM (Annual General Meeting) on 26 February 2021 on Zoom. Cllr Twyman was re-elected as Chairman, Alan Atkinson from Bridge Parish Council was re-elected as Vice-Chairman, Jonathan Mount from Wickhambreaux will continue in his new role as Secretary and Brian Hurlow from Littlebourne Parish Council has been elected as Treasurer following the death of Ken Percival. A tribute and two minute silence was held in memory of both Ken Percival and Jill Thomas at the AGM.

The EA (Environment Agency) gave their report on the current situation – the water levels dropped a few weeks ago but have since risen again. The EA continues to monitor the levels closely following the high water input from October 2020 through to March 2021. Although the threat of flooding has now reduced, there is still the possibility should heavy rainfall continue.

There has been some infiltration issues in the sewer network and tankers are in place pumping daily at a number of locations, including Littlebourne and Lyminge. Cllr Treacher confirmed that the Mill sluice is currently set to keep the river level low to better respond to a potential surge.

The Group remains frustrated with particular departments within the EA, in particular the lack of urgent maintenance work on the Great Stour from Fordwich to Sandwich. The EA has claimed that crews are not able to undertake maintenance due to Covid-19 and Cllr Twyman is due to receive a phone call from the director tomorrow to discuss this stance further.

Cllr Twyman also reported that Roy Newing has recently passed away. Mr Newing acted as the keeper of the Great Stour and worked closely with the EA and the Little Stour and Nailbourne Management Group for many years and his loss will be felt by all that knew him.

Cllr Twyman reported that the Emergency Group have kept in regular contact via phone and email but have not felt it necessary to arrange a virtual meeting.

Website

Cllr Collinson reported that there has been one new subscriber to the website since the last meeting and he and the Clerk continue to post regular updates. The 'click' rate remains good which suggests the Parish Council has a good balance of updates.

13. FINANCE

Finance Committee Update

Cllr Howe reported that the Finance Committee met on 23 February 2021 and are recommending the following five projects be pursued before the end of this financial year (2020-2021):

1. Improvements to Spicers Place footpath along Wickham Road – 50/50 contribution with KCC previously agreed on 16 February 2021 – £2,000
2. Playing Field entrance improvements – Please refer to Item 11 above – approximately £3,600
3. Defibrillator in Stodmarsh – Budget previously agreed on 16 February 2021 – up to £2,500
4. Replacement litter bin on Stodmarsh Green – CCC has indicated a bin is on their schedule to be collected in this location but will not pay to have a bin reinstated – approximately £500.00 with installation
5. Parish maintenance – Maintenance of white posts and chains around the green, benches, noticeboards, etc have previously been maintained by volunteers. Although much appreciated, the work involved is substantial and difficult for volunteers to undertake. The Finance Committee recommend an annual maintenance programme – approximately £1,500-£3,000 depending on the number of items and frequency

The Parish Council unanimously agreed to the Finance Committee's recommendations and projects outlined above. Cllr Howe encouraged councillors to contact him if they wish to undertake a socially distanced walk round the parish in the next few weeks to establish a final maintenance list for consideration.

Cllr Collinson suggested cleaning the brass plaque on the wall near Wickham Court as part of the annual maintenance, which was unanimously agreed. Cllr Rees proposed purchasing an unlocked alarmed cabinet for the defibrillator rather than a locked one to ensure residents can access the defibrillator as quickly as possible, which was unanimously agreed.

The expenditure totalling £460.05 was authorised, made up of:

- Action with Communities in Rural Kent – Annual subscription - £55.00
- Chenice Howard-Sparkes – Clerk salary March 2021
- Lyssi Varghese – Village Hall Cleaner Salary March 2021
- HMRC – Employee and PAYE March 2021

14. CLERK REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE

- (i) The Clerk reported that KCC's Members briefing on the Environment was received today and was circulated to all councillors.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (i) Cllr Twyman reported that Brian Staley, who was the City Councillor for Wickhambreaux for eight years, passed away in February 2021. Mr Staley was a supportive councillor of the parish and councillors were saddened to hear of his passing
- (ii) Cllr Howe enquired whether there is an update on the replacement finger post sign in Stodmarsh. Cllr Twyman reported that he understands from KCC Highways Steward Michelle Weston that the matter is in hand but will chase for an update. Cllr Holland previously agreed to liaise with Michelle Weston to request the replacement sign be timber rather than metal to be more in keeping with the Conservation Area. Normally sign posts are replaced like-for-like (which would be metal) but the Parish Council could agree to pay the difference for a timber post should KCC be in agreement.
- (iii) Cllr Collinson reported that there has been a number of micro power cuts and electrical issues in Wickhambreaux recently. Cllr Treacher responded that UK Power Networks is investigating the cause of the power cuts, which is suspected to be a fault underground, and a temporary generator has been provided by the Mill.
- (iv) Cllr Twyman reported that the A257 Littlebourne Road will be closed from 05 April 2021 at 21:00 to approximately 18th April 2021 at 20:00 outside St Martin's Hospital. The works are required to enable sewer connection works to be carried out.

The meeting closed at 09.43pm

Signed..... (Chairman)

Date.....