WICKHAMBREAUX PARISH COUNCIL MEETING 20 OCTOBER 2020 on Zoom.

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

County Cllr Michael Northey, KCC (Kent County Council)

Mrs Chenice Howard-Sparkes, Clerk to the Council

2 Members of the Public

1. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Parish Cllr Caroline Rees (Work Commitments) and Parish Cllr Catherine Holland (Illness). Cllr Twyman provided belated apologies for not attending the previous Parish Council meeting due to a diary error.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Wright declared an interest in Item 14 (Trees) as the applicant for an application to CCC to fell a wild cherry plum tree.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

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

4. INFORMATION FROM MATTERS ARISING

4(17i) – The Clerk reported that a site visit was due to be undertaken for Little Puxton in Stodmarsh on 02 October 2020 and agreed to chase for an update.
4(17ii) – The Clerk reported that investigations into clearing the blocked drains in Stodmarsh is ongoing.
4(7i) – The Clerk reported that the incorrectly sited 30mph sign in Stodmarsh has been re-installed in the correct location by KCC.
4(18Trees) – Cllr Wright reported she has received two quotations for an aboriculturalist to inspect all the trees the Parish Council is responsible for. One quotation came in at £250.00 and the other £500.00 (VAT not applicable on both). It was unanimously agreed to instruct Philip Wilson Arboriculture for £250.00.
8 – Cllr Wright reported that the High Court has determined this month a judicial review can proceed to challenge the Secretary of State's decision to allow Manston Airport to reopen.

5. REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND CITY COUNCILLORS

County Cllr Michael Northey

KCC is currently consulting on its budget for 2021-2022. KCC estimates additional spending pressures (non-Covid-19 and Covid-19 specific) will be between £70m and £120m next year, a combination of a growth in spending and a potential reduction in how much income is received from Council Tax and business rates. 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. Deadline for comments is 24th November 2020.

On the matter of Manston Airport, Cllr Northey reported that Manston being part of KCC's Traffic Management Plan post-Brexit is due to be discussed at the Full Council meeting on 22 October 2020, Item 07. In the current plans, KCC has made provision to store up to 4,000 lorries at Manston. All lorries will have to obtain a Kent Access Permit before entering Kent and if the relevant permit has not been obtained, lorries will be sent to a holding parking facility until such time as a permit is in place.

Cllr Northey reported that KCC has serious concerns at the proposed changes to the current planning system. The "Planning for the Future" White Paper proposes sweeping reforms to the planning system; while some of the proposals are positive and to be welcomed, there are others that raise concerns. These include the approach to land categorisation, the mechanistic approach to required housing numbers and the fundamental overhaul of the developer contribution system. There are also immediate concerns about the impact on public involvement and democratic accountability.

City Cllr Louise Jones-Roberts

Cllr Jones-Roberts sent a report in advance of the meeting. Topics included Concurrent Function Funding and proposals to abolish forums and amend call-in rights (which are covered under Items 09, 10 and 11 on the agenda). Cllr Jones-Roberts is supportive of the Governance Committee's recommendations to abolish forums and amend call-in rights, for reasons of efficiency and directing democratic engagement through decision making committees. Cllr Jones-Roberts is also in favour of retaining Concurrent Function Funding while a sustainable alternative is found.

Cllr Jones-Roberts also reported that more than 16,000 people across Kent have registered their interest in taking part in the Solar Together Kent project, which is backed by CCC and KCC. The scheme works by bringing lots of households together to buy solar panels as one large group and asking contractors, who have been quality checked in advance, to bid for the work. The idea is that solar panels for domestic properties will be more affordable for everyone. For more information, visit www.solartogether.co.uk/Canterbury/home.

The Lord Mayor's Gift Fund is now 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 Improvement Plan

Cllr Treacher reported that there has been no further progress on the other items of the plan.

(ii) A257 Update

Cllr Twyman reported that the A257 Group haven't met but remain concerned at the potential highways impact of a large 80 dwelling planning application on Littlebourne Road.

7. PLANNING

(i) Planning for the Future White Paper

Further to Cllr Northey's report, Cllr Wright expressed concern at the proposed high housing numbers. Nationally, 300,000 houses per annum are proposed, 61,276 of these in the South East and 1,200 in Canterbury. There is an algorithm which has been used to calculate the proposed number of houses, but critics feel that the targets were set first and then worked backwards to create the algorithm to meet them.

The White Paper has been produced to propose ways in which to speed up the planning process, believing the current system to be inefficient. Although there may be some inefficiencies, currently approximately 90% of planning applications are granted and in 2016, 500,000 applications that were granted were not built and by 2020 this figure rose to one million. This suggests that rather than overhauling the planning system, there should be greater scrutiny and action against developments which are not built.

Local authorities will be required to designate all land into one of the below categories:

- Growth – Land suitable for significant development and planning permission will be automatically granted
- Renewal – Statutory assumption in favour of development. This will consist largely of infilling, edge of villages and brownfield sites.

- Protected Areas – More stringent controls and full planning applications will be required. This will consist largely of Conservation Areas, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), etc. As Wickhambreaux village is within a designated Conservation Area (with a total of four Conservation Areas in the parish) the parish will fall into this category.

Local authorities will have 30 months to produce their plans and the plans will no longer be based on policies, instead based on clear rules set out for each of the areas.

The White Paper also covers the following two categories:

- Pillar Two – Planning for Beautiful and Sustainable Places – which relates to the design of buildings
- Pillar Three – Infrastructure and Connected Places – recommending to abolish CIL and Section 106 and replace them with a different type of CIL, which will be highest where development values are highest.

Considering the different constraints where planning development cannot occur such flood risk zones, AONBS and Greenbelt, the areas which could be considered suitable for development in Kent is narrowed down significantly.

One positive of the White Paper is that all new developments must have tree lined streets.

Cllr Collinson commented that the impact on resources like fresh water and drainage has not been considered as part of the 'growth areas'. Kent in particular is in an area of water shortage. Cllr Twyman also commented that infrastructure needs to be in place before approving large developments.

Cllr Treacher enquired whether Natural England's recent advice on nutrient neutrality for new development in the Stour Catchment area in relation to Stodmarsh Nature Reserve will have any impact. Cllr Wright responded that she has not had the opportunity to analyse Natural England's guidance with Cllr Holland yet.

A member of the public asked whether Pillar Three goes into specific detail regarding highways improvements required as part of developments. Cllr Wright confirmed that the White Paper only mentions infrastructure in generic terms and includes no detail for particular areas of the country.

The member of the public also enquired whether KCC is looking at infrastructure improvements in anticipation of large developments. Cllr Northey responded that Canterbury has a number of challenges being a medieval city but KCC is constantly reviewing what improvements can be made.

It was unanimously agreed to respond to the government's consultation in opposition to the proposed changes, in particular the large housing numbers and detrimental impact on democracy. Cllr Wright agreed to draft a response in time for the deadline of 29 October 2020.

CA/20/01647/FUL – Rowan House, Stodmarsh Road
Cllr Wright reported that KCC Highways has raised an objection due to the proximity of the gate to the highway, which will cause waiting vehicles to obstruct the carriageway while the gate is opened. KCC Highways has suggested an amendment to have the gate open away from the highway and be set back no closer to the edge of the carriageway than the existing gate.

CA/20/01560/FUL – The Quaives Retreat, Seaton Road
CCC has granted permission for an outdoor swimming pool. Cllr Wright advised that in the interest of visual amenity, any external lighting proposed must be submitted to CCC for approval.

CA/20/01468/FUL – Bradley Farmhouse, Grove Road
CCC has granted the change of use of detached garage to self-contained holiday chalet together with dormer to rear and 2no balcony windows to front.

CA/20/01566/FUL and CA/20/01567/LB – Teedleham Farm, Grove Road
The applications for a single storey rear extension with 2no dormer windows to the side roofslope to allow accommodation in the roofspace, internal alterations and photovoltaic panel installation, have been withdrawn. The Heritage Officer at CCC expressed concern at the size of the extension and the applicant will be submitting revised plans in due course.

CA/20/01830/LB – Stodmarsh Court, Stodmarsh Road
CCC has granted the retrospective application for internal alterations including the removal of a utility room stair that connects ground floor to first floor.

CA//19/01798/FUL – The Pear Orchard, Hawthorne Bungalow and Altona, The List
Cllr Wright reported that the Planning Inspectorate has dismissed the appeal.

CA//19/10054/FUL – Land West of the Old Forge House, The Street
Cllr Wright reported that an appeal has been submitted against CCC's decision to refuse permission for a change of use from workshop and storage to shop. The applicant disputes the reasons for refusal, in particular that there are any parking pressures in the village and that The Street is a busy road for traffic.

It was unanimously agreed to respond to the appeal in opposition to the proposals and to draw the incorrect statements in the Appeal Statement regarding lack of parking constraints and pressures to the Planning Inspector's attention. Cllr Wright agreed to draft a response.

CCC Local Plan Review
Cllr Wright reported that she will be attending CCC's Transport Conference tomorrow (21 October 2020) on behalf of the Parish Council.

8. CLERK SALARY REVIEW
Cllr Collinson proposed that this item be deferred until the end of the meeting and taken as Confidential, excluding members of the public and press, due to the nature of discussions. This was unanimously agreed. Please see 'Confidential Item' at the end of the minutes.

9. UPDATE ON CALL-IN RIGHTS FOR PLANNING APPLICATIONS
Cllr Ben Fitter-Harding, new leader of CCC, put forward proposals to amend call-in rights for planning applications in conjunction with Item 10 on the agenda. This was discussed by the Governance Committee on 07 October 2020. The proposal for call-in rights was to:

- Remove the right of parish councils and the three urban amenity groups representing Canterbury, Herne Bay and Whitstable unparished areas to call-in a planning application to the planning committee, and
- Remove the trigger of four or more objections forcing an application to planning committee.

CCC feel the proposals will improve efficiency and strengthen the role of ward councillors. Under the new proposals, residents and parish councils will need their local ward councillor to request an application be heard by the Planning Committee. These proposals were only brought to the Parish Council's attention when the Governance Committee's agenda and reports were published a week prior to the meeting.

The Parish Council expressed serious concerns to members of the Governance Committee. Councillors feel that the right of call-in is not abused by parish councils (with only eight applications called-in in 2019), that the value of local knowledge and volunteer time given by parish councillors assessing applications has not been taken into consideration, and that the proposals were undemocratic and totalitarian.

Members at the KALC Canterbury Area Committee meeting held on 15 October 2020 were unanimously against the proposals, including those against Item 10 in relation to the abolition of forums. Cllr Collinson also reported that Wickhambreaux Action Group submitted an objection.

The vote was carried 6/4, strictly on party political lines (six Conservative and four Labour or Liberal Democrats). CCC's Committee of Council was due to discuss the Governance Committee's recommendations on 15 October 2020 however, due to technical difficulties, this had to be postponed until 22 October 2020.

There is no ability to pre-record a speech for this meeting but a letter can be sent to committee members directly or a petition submitted to the Chairman. As the Chairman of the Committee has not yet been appointed, a petition was submitted to the Lord Mayor instead (in line with protocol) which Cllr Treacher confirmed he signed on behalf of the Parish Council and the KALC Canterbury Area Committee. 15 signatures were required for the petition to be upheld and 90 signatures were obtained.

Cllr Treacher reported that efforts have been made to have call-in rights for members of the public and parish councils decided as separate items. Cllr Wright's suggestion of amending the trigger of four or more objectors to a higher number instead of removing completely was also put to the Committee.

Should the proposals be voted through, parish councils will still be statutory consultees on all applications in their parish (this is a legal requirement) and be able to speak at the planning committees, but only on an application that is called-in to a meeting. Parish councils and members of the public are still encouraged to continue making representations on applications. If your local ward councillor disagrees that an application should be heard by the Planning Committee, you are encouraged to contact another ward councillor.

Cllr Collinson also wished to express concern that ward councillors are only to call-in applications if they demonstrate a public interest. The report put before the Governance Committee states that ward councillors will be "strongly encouraged to exercise their call-in rights responsibly and only call-in applications where there is a demonstrable public interest beyond local objection". It is unclear what constitutes public interest beyond local objection.

Cllr Twyman enquired what the call-in arrangements for other district councils in Kent are. Cllr Treacher confirmed that the proposed changes would bring CCC in line with the majority of other councils.

10. FUTURE OF THE RURAL FORUM

The Governance Committee discussed the following three options on 07 October 2020:

- Option A – Continue with the current arrangement
- Option B – Replace forums with consultation workshops
- Option C – Abolish the forums

The Community Governance Review undertaken in 2018 saw the previous Area Member Panels replaced with the Forums in late 2018. Cllr Fitter-Harding recommended Option C, to abolish forums, believing it better to encourage direct participation at decision making committees and to save money and officer time.

If abolished, one-off area based meetings to consider the Annual Parking Review and similar items could take place. For parish councils, it is also proposed to have a stand-alone arrangement so both parties can continue to meet informally with no members of the public present. No specific details of this arrangement have been disclosed.

As with Item 09, the vote was carried 6/4, strictly on party political lines (six Conservative and four Labour or Liberal Democrats). CCC's Committee of Council will discuss the recommendations on 22 October 2020.

In the event that the forums are abolished in line with the Governance Committee's recommendations, Cllr Treacher will be invited to a meeting in December 2020 to assist CCC in outlining how stand-alone arrangements will take place in future.

11. CONCURRENT FUNCTION FUNDING (CFF)

CFF was set up to reimburse the delivery of services by parish councils and safeguard the provision of open spaces not owned/managed by CCC. Core items are bus shelters, closed burial grounds, two cemeteries, and open spaces.

The total funding allocation for the last four years for CFF has been £134,500. Wickhambreaux Parish Council received £5234.69 for financial year 2020-2021.

Originally, CCC recommended to the Committee of Council to reduce the budget over a four year period from 2021-22 to 2024-25, to £0 from 2025-2026 onwards. A flat rate reduction would be made to parish council applications agreed for 2020-2021. CCC Committee of Council agreed to convene a special meeting of parish representatives and rural ward councillors to gather feedback in advance of making a decision, which was held on 19 October 2020 and attended by Cllr Treacher and the Clerk.

Covid-19 has highlighted to CCC the importance of community provisions in the rural areas. During lockdown, it was evident that residents living in the urban areas were travelling to rural parishes to use their facilities. With most parish councils facing additional financial pressures due to Covid-19, the potential loss of facilities in rural areas should the funding be removed completely was of great concern. The need to address the issue of double taxation was also raised as a concern.

CCC therefore now propose not make any changes for 2021-22 and to fund parish councils at the same level as 2020-21. Alongside this, it is proposed an audit of the current levels of provision in parishes compared to urban areas will be undertaken. Subsequently CCC will consider funding options for 2022-23 in line with the average costs incurred across all parish councils for the maintenance of this provision.

The Parish Council welcome the continuation of CFF for another year and Cllr Treacher is due to meet with CCC in December 2020, date to be confirmed, to assist with the formation of the audit.

Cllr Howe wished to thank Cllr Treacher for campaigning against the abolition of the forums and CFF and the changes to planning call-in rights, which was unanimously agreed by all councillors. Cllr Howe expressed disappointment at the proposed changes which will impact how parish councils will serve their local communities in the future, although the extension of CFF for another year is positive.

12. LOCATION OF NEW BENCH IN STODMARSH

The Clerk reported that the land at the top of the hill by the Stodmarsh sign is not owned or maintained by KCC. Initial investigations by the Highways Steward suggest the land is unregistered. It is possible for the Parish Council to apply for "Cultivation Rights" but KCC may object to the siting of a bench in that location due to the National Speed Limit.

Rather than pursuing a location outside of Stodmarsh, Cllr Howe suggested a second bench on the green in Stodmarsh as the existing bench is well used by cyclists and walkers. As it is unclear whether there is an identified need for a second bench in Stodmarsh itself, Cllr Treacher proposed not pursuing the installation of another bench at this current time. Should a proposal be forthcoming for a bench or other item of civic furniture from a resident with a proposed location, the Parish Council will consider the request. This was unanimously agreed.

13. IMPROVING BROADBAND PROVISION IN THE PARISH

Nothing to report.

14. CLLRS' REPORTS

School Report

Patrick Duffy advised that school attendance has been 98% since the start of term and the School has been functioning well within the Covid-19 guidelines. Social distancing is being maintained within designated "bubbles" within the school. Parent drop off has been staggered between 8.35am and 9am and parents are given assigned times to pick up between 3pm and 3.30pm. Unfortunately due to Covid-19, car sharing is not possible at this current time.

As agreed at the previous meeting, the Clerk contacted the School to propose a note be circulated to parents asking them to be mindful of parking considerately for local residents. The Clerk understands an email has been sent to all parents to this effect.

Mr Duffy reported that pupils have contributed art work to St Andrew's Church for the Harvest Festival. Cllr Twyman wished to thank the pupils on behalf of the Church for their art work, which has been gratefully received and used for decoration.

Mr Duffy also reported that, along with all schools, funds received through fundraising activities is expected to be severely reduced this year due to Covid-19. Fundraising is essential to enable the School to subsidise enhanced lessons, manage government cuts and increase computer and science equipment. The normal Easter and autumn fairs, high tea and quiz nights are not able to be held so instead of the usual £10,000, funds are likely to be in the region of £2,000.

Cllr Twyman enquired whether there has been any changes to the Governors Board since the start of term. Cllr Treacher also enquired whether there is any update on the appointment of a Head Teacher. Mr Duffy agreed to check with Acting Head Teacher Lisa Crosbie and report back.

Tree Report

Cllr Wright reported that since the last meeting there have been three notifications to fell trees in the parish that have been either dead or dangerous, which are exempt from requiring permission.

Cllr Wright reported that four tree notifications have been received since the last meeting:

- CA/20/02173 – The Oast House, The Green – Pollard a Bay tree to a height of 4m, located 2m away from the side of the house and river.
- CA/20/02081 – The Mill Yard, 2 The Green, Wickham Road – To fell two Cypress trees, crown reduce a Cherry tree by 40% (3m), remove the right hand stem and crown lift to 1.8m a Hawthorn, and removal of two low lateral limbs and secondary limbs of an Oak tree (crown lift to 5m) and reduce crown by 30% (3m) and crown thin by 20%
- CA/20/02087 – The Thatch, The Street – Pollard Eucalyptus located in rear garden to 6m
- CA/20/01955 – The Old Rectory, The List – Fell wild Cherry Plum tree (as the tree was dead/dangerous due to disease and split/collapsed trunk, permission has already been granted by CCC).

The Parish Council has no objections to the notifications.

Law and Order

The Clerk circulated a Neighbourhood Watch report to all councillors prior to the meeting. Royal Mail and Trading Standards are making people aware of a scam from a company called PDS (Parcel Delivery Service) where a card is posted through your door suggesting they were unable to deliver a parcel. You are asked to contact them on 0906 661 1911 (a premium rate number) to rearrange delivery. If you call the number and start to hear a recorded message, you will have automatically been billed £315.00 for the phone call. If anybody receives a card, you are encouraged to call Royal Mail fraud on 020 7239 6655.

Dash-cam evidence is being used by CCC's Street Scene Enforcement Officer to issue fines to motorists throwing litter, including cigarette ends, from their vehicles. One motorist travelling along the A28 east of Canterbury was fined £300.00 for two offences.

Dog thefts are on the rise, with the South East of England being near the top of the list of locations for thieves to strike. Cycle thefts are also on the rise, with an estimated 296,000 being stolen across the UK in 2019.

PCSO Eleanor Castle provided a written introduction to herself and explanation of her role which was circulated to councillors prior to the meeting. If councillors have any questions, they are encouraged to contact PCSO Castle directly.

A PCSO report for September 2020 was also circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting and included the criminal damage to the bug hotel in the playing field and multiple reports of Covid-19 breaches across the ward (which includes Littlebourne, Adisham, Wickhambreaux, Ickham, Grove and Bekesbourne). PCSOs have been out on proactive patrols around recreational grounds and parks late afternoon/early evening to deter anti-social behaviour.

KALC
The most recent KALC Area Committee meeting was held on 15 October 2020. Main items of discussion were Concurrent Function Funding (CFF), Parish Charter/Handbook, and the proposals to abolish forums and amend call-in rights. Members agreed to send a joint letter to CCC expressing concern at the Governance Committee's recommendations, the loss of CFF and the lack of voting rights on the Joint Transportation Forum. Once drafted, the letter will be circulated to members to collectively sign. The Parish Council unanimously agreed to support the letter.

Cllr Treacher also reported that KALC will be holding their AGM on 28 November 2020. The Parish Council is able to send two representatives and Cllr Treacher confirmed that he will be attending. Cllr Collinson volunteered to attend as the second representative as Cllr Rees is unable to attend.

Village Hall Committee
The Clerk reported that the Viridor application will be submitted once planning permission has been received for the replacement windows and all the quotations are in an acceptable format to be submitted, which Malcolm Withers is arranging.

The Clerk also reported that Linda Lodge will be attending a second community halls socially distanced workshop at the Westgate Hall on 05 November 2020 on behalf of the Committee.

Village Greens
Cllr Howe reported that he has inspected the village greens today (20 October 2020) and both are looking in good condition, particularly Stodmarsh green following the recent rain. Cllr Howe advised that he needs to check with Inside Out Services whether they have completed the remedial works on the greens in Stodmarsh.

Cllr Howe enquired whether the Parish Council wishes to purchase a Christmas tree for both Wickhambreaux and Stodmarsh this year. Cllr Treacher proposed and Cllr Collinson seconded, and all councillors voted in favour, to proceed with ordering the trees. Expenditure has already been allocated as part of the budget setting process in November 2019. Cllr Wright advised the Parish Council needs to be mindful of volunteers assisting with decorating the trees to ensure this is undertaken in accordance with Covid-19 guidelines.

Cllr Treacher suggested publicising the Christmas trees on the Parish Council's website and Cllr Howe agreed to send some photos from last year to be used.

Flood Protection
Cllr Twyman reported that a meeting originally scheduled for 15 May 2020 to assess the condition of the Great Stour (but postponed due to Covid-19) was held on 05 October 2020. Instead of the original 20 persons due to be present, only six people attended in line with the government's Rule of Six. Sally Harvey and Ian Nunn attended from the EA (Director of Operations and Operations Manager respectively), Ian Broughton the Sandwich Harbourmaster and Chris Rodell.

Roy Newing gave a tour of the Great Stour from Grove Ferry to Sandwich. The condition of the river is very poor in a number of places along this stretch due to the extensive build-up of silt, overgrown vegetation and overhanging trees. Unfortunately it was not possible to travel down to Fordwich as the river is impassable in places. Cllr Twyman expressed serious concerns to those present that Canterbury and surrounding villages could be flooded if action is not taken to clear the river of obstructions. If water levels are the same or exceed last year, there is a serious risk of flooding. Another meeting will be convened in spring 2021.

Inspections of the Great Stour have not been undertaken as previously scheduled due to Covid-19. Cllr Twyman suggested the use of drones to undertake virtual inspections, which the EA agreed to look into as they own a drone. The EA is hoping to undertake reed cutting in the spring.

Cllr Twyman reported that there are also concerns regarding the Little Stour. Although the EA has cleared a wider channel, there are concerns regarding the management of the bypass channel and Cllr Twyman is waiting on a site visit to be arranged with the EA to discuss this further. Last year the EA did not open the bypass channel early enough, despite pressure to do so, which resulted in agricultural fields being flooded. The EA stated that the telemetry data did not warrant the opening of the bypass channel as there was no immediate flood risk and wanted to clean the stones on the riverbed. The Little Stour Management Group disputes the telemetry data.

Cllr Twyman also reported that the EA will not be carrying out any maintenance to the Great Stour before Christmas. Cllr Twyman has expressed his strong objection to this in a letter sent following the meeting on 05 October 2020 to Sally Harvey, which also highlighted the main points of concern identified at the meeting. No response has been received to date.

The Little Stour Management Group hosted a virtual multi-agency meeting which was attended by representatives from KCC, CCC and the EA. Cllr Twyman requested an inspection of the 1500 salt bags currently stored at Littlebourne Court and CCC is arranging this.

Cllr Treacher wished to thank Cllr Twyman for all his effort on behalf of the Parish Council and wished to enquire whether this October is likely to be the wettest on record. Cllr Twyman confirmed that 03 October 2020 was the wettest day for rainfall since records began, with over 100mm of rainfall recorded in one day for some areas, fortunately approximately 45mm in the South East.

Last year, October, November and December averaged 100mm of rainfall each month and January and February 2020 50mm. Compared to October 2019, October 2020 is already substantially over last year's rainfall.

Footpaths
Cllr Wright reported that she spoke with two employees from the EA last week regarding the raised plastic capping on the riverbank by The Mill. The employees took photos and agreed to report this to their manager for further action. Cllr Treacher confirmed that the employees were on site to remove loose reeds at The Mill caused by vegetation clearance further upstream.

Website
Cllr Collinson reported that there have been approximately six visitors to the website each day, with approximately 100 users since the last meeting. Cllr Collinson also reported that there was an issue with news posts being sent out to subscribers recently which has now been resolved. The previous website has not yet been removed and Cllr Collinson has chased Cantium to action this.

Cllr Treacher reported that Cantium has withdrawn from continuing with parish council websites as they did not receive the required number of parishes sign up earlier this year. Cllr Northey reported that a number of parish councils have submitted complaints to Cantium regarding their level of service.

15. FINANCE

The expenditure totalling £597.05 was authorised, made up of:

- KALC – KALC Finance Conference - £60.00
- Chenice Howard-Sparkes – Clerk salary October 2020
- Lyssi Varghese – Village Hall Cleaner Salary October 2020
- HMRC – Employee and PAYE October 2020
- Majestic Garden Care – Playing Field Maintenance September 2020 - £132.00

The Clerk reported that she attended the KALC Finance Conference on 14 October 2020. Main points to note include an update on the Redmond Review (a review relating to the auditing practices of all authorities), the potential investment opportunities for larger parish councils, PWLB (Public Works Loan Board) advice, and general best practice advice.

16. CLERK REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE

(i) An email has been received from the Mayor of Fordwich regarding the possibility of Fordwich establishing a Country Park. The proposal has been brought about by a resident group concerned at two potential development sites in the town and the impact of large numbers of people visiting the area, mainly to enjoy the River Stour but also the wider town and countryside.

Ideally the Country Park will involve the wet woodland to the north and along the river bank, having a car park and the usual country park facilities, including accessible footpaths leading into the network of footpaths that presently exist along the river and round Westbere Lake. To the south of the town, there would be a car park and similar facilities, accessible footpaths leading onto the Stour Valley Way and up towards Stodmarsh and Stodmarsh Road.

It is hoped that with county park status it will be easier to manage and protect the watermeadows and river bank, making it safer to launch vessels, and to facilitate greater safety on the water itself whilst protecting the environment and privately owned land along the river. Within the town itself, the aim would be to work towards making the 'rat run' more difficult, the pavements safer, parking for residents possible, and for the story of Fordwich and its historic core to be recognised, explained and enjoyed.

(ii) The Clerk reported that she attended the KALC Clerk's Conference on 24 September 2020 which included an update from SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks), insurance advice from Came and Company, grant advice with regards to parish councils awarding grants, a legal update and general best practice advice.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Cllr Twyman wished to thank Cllr Treacher for all his efforts on behalf of the Parish Council, particularly the large number of extra hours since the last meeting. This was unanimously agreed by all councillors.

18. CONFIDENTIAL ITEM – ITEM 08

Members of the public and press were excluded from the meeting at this point to discuss the Clerk's salary review.

Following discussions by the Finance Committee, the Clerk's salary was reviewed and it was unanimously agreed to an increase from spinal point 06 to 08 (an increase from £10.24 an hour to £10.65 an hour). It was further agreed to increase the Clerk's hours from six hours a week to seven hours a week.

The Chairman will lead an appraisal of the Clerk before 2021 and it was unanimously agreed that Cllr Wright be nominated as Grievance Officer in the event that the Clerk and Chairman cannot agree on recommendations made as part of the appraisal process.

The Clerk's job description will also be reviewed as part of this process. In future, appraisals will be undertaken annually.

The meeting closed at 9.48pm

Signed……..... (Chairman)

Date…….....