

**WICKHAMBREAUX PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 20 JUNE 2023 AT
WICKHAMBREAUX VILLAGE HALL, THE STREET, WICKHAMBREAUX, CT3 1RJ**

Present: Parish Cllr Peter Collinson
Parish Cllr Caroline Rees
Parish Cllr Faith Wright
Parish Cllr Mark Wrightson
Parish Cllr Martin Twyman

City Cllr Lee Castle

PC Simon Reed (until 8.15pm)

Mrs Chenice Howard-Sparkes, Clerk to the Council

5 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 from Cllr Theresa McRobbie (Work Commitments) and County Cllr Mike Sole (Work Commitments).

2. CO-OPTION

There is currently one vacancy for the role of Parish Councillor. Cllr Twyman proposed and Cllr Rees seconded, and all councillors voted in favour, to co-opt Robin Treacher.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

Cllr Treacher was issued with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) form, which must be returned to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of taking up office.

4. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 16 MAY 2023

All councillors voted in favour that the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 16 May 2023 be accepted as a true record of the meeting and the Chairman duly signed them.

5. INFORMATION FROM MATTERS ARISING

4(7) – Cllr Wright confirmed she contacted the EA (Environment Agency) on 15 May 2023. The EA responded that clearance works recommenced on 01 June 2023 and they have requested periodic updates on movement. Site visits will be undertaken to check progress. Cllr Wright advised she has also updated Preston Parish Council.

16(i) – Cllr Twyman reported that the broken-down car in the Wickham Court Lane layby has now been removed.

6. REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND CITY COUNCILLORS

County Cllr Mike Sole

Firstly, from a City Council perspective, Cllr Sole was re-elected onto CCC for Nailbourne with 84% of the vote. Cllr Sole also wished to congratulate Cllr Lee Castle on his election success in Little Stour and Adisham. Cllr Sole has been appointed to the new coalition cabinet as the member for Finance. Cllr Sole also reported that at the annual meeting of CCC, Cllr Jean Butcher was elected as Lord Mayor. Cllr Butcher is keen to get out into the villages, so parish councils are encouraged to invite her to local events.

At KCC, Cllr Sole continues to report potholes for repair and chase for outstanding repairs to be carried out. There has been a threefold increase in the number of claims made to KCC for pothole damage, yet only on 6% do KCC admit liability and pay out.

In order to try to push things along with revising/pausing/stopping the Wincheap gyratory scheme, Cllr Sole had a meeting with Rosie Duffield MP and other councillors that represented the affected area. Work on changing the speed limit to 40mph at Stone Street Petham will start in June.

Cllr Sole attended the Growth and Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee, where he was keen to talk about village hall grants and also Kent Vision Live. Cllr Sole unfortunately had to miss the KCC Annual Meeting due to illness.

City Cllr Lee Castle

Cllr Castle reported that he is due to meet with a representative from Canenco to discuss flytipping across the district. Canenco is aware that the reporting tool on CCC's website is not fit for purpose, with a number of IT issues which are in the process of being addressed.

Cllr Castle expressed his disappointment at the recent arson incident in the playing field. As there are a lot of children in the parish turning 13 years old, Cllr Castle agreed to send Cllr Rees the details for the Youth Bus, which stops in neighbouring Littlebourne and seems to have helped combat some anti-social behaviour.

Cllr Treacher asked whether the new administration will review the ability for parish councils to call-in planning applications to CCC's Planning Committee. Cllr Castle agreed to make enquiries.

A brief discussion was had on public transport, and CCC's wish to undertake a review across the district. Cllr Wright asked whether Stagecoach has commented on the future of the No.11 bus service in Wickambreaux. Cllr Castle responded that he has not heard anything specific about this service, but will monitor for any correspondence from Stagecoach.

PC Simon Reed

PC Simon Reed explained that Kent Police is changing the face of policing in Kent by bringing in new beat officers in every ward, rather than replacing PCSOs. This has started to be rolled out and South Canterbury has been assigned PC Simon Reed and PC Liam Wratten in advance of recruitment to specific wards. PCs Reed and Wratten are keen to meet with members of the local community to better understand local issues and how best to address them.

One of the biggest issues faced by Kent Police is residents not reporting incidents that occur as they believe them to be too minor or the Police too busy. PC Reed wished to stress that he and PC Wratten, and Kent Police in general, want to hear about all incidents, however small. It is important to report all incidents so Kent Police get an accurate picture of what problems are faced in which areas, to enable them to deploy resources more effectively across Kent.

PC Reed advised he has been knocking on doors along The Street and speaking with local residents in advance of the meeting this evening. The main issues highlighted so far have been teenagers congregating in the Playing Field in the evening smoking, and cold callers. PC Reed advised he will be including the Playing Field on patrols where possible to provide a visible deterrent to any potential anti-social behaviour.

PC Reed wished to encourage residents to sign up to My Community Voice. My Community Voice is a messaging service that helps Kent and Medway residents, businesses, and community groups to keep in touch with their local policing teams. The service sends updates about your local area directly from the police officers themselves, and allows you to respond to alerts to share information and inform local officers of the issues affecting you.

7. HIGHWAYS

- (i) A257 Update
Nothing to report.

General Highways Matters

Cllr Twyman reported that Nargate Street will be closed on 26 June 2023 to address potholes. Cllr Twyman also reported that Grove Road was marked up last week, and he is waiting for an action plan from KCC to address the underlying issues. Cllr Wright advised that the potholes in The List have been repaired.

8. PLANNING

CA/23/00880 – Wickhambreaux Village Hall, The Street

The Parish Council has no objections to re-roofing with height increase together with external timber cladding to existing toilet block.

CA/23/00866 – Land Adjacent to Ivy Cottage, Grove Road

The application for change of use to coffee shop together with installation of freestanding solar panels has been withdrawn following objections from KCC Highways and Planning Officer.

CA/23/00940 – Poplar Farm Barn, Stodmarsh Road

Cllr Wright reported that she attended a visit with Cllr Collinson, the applicants and the architect to discuss the proposals. The applicants attended to answer any questions from councillors. After some discussion, councillors had no objections for use of the garage as ancillary accommodation and associated external alterations together with erection and single storey detached garage. The Clerk was asked to request a condition that the garage remain ancillary to the main accommodation.

CA/23/00941 – Poplar Farm Barn, Stodmarsh Road

As above.

CA/22/01530 – Land to the North of The Quaives Retreat, Seaton Road

Cllr Wright reported she has received a response from the Planning Officer, who confirmed Natural England has requested additional information.

CA/23/00434 – Wickham Court, The Green

CCC has approved the application for a single storey side extension to Garden Room.

CA/23/00317 and CA/23/00605 – Little Green, Wickham Road

CCC has approved the applications for the erection and display of 1no non-illuminated village sign.

CA/23/00348 – Puxton Farm, Puxton Farm Road

The application for listed building consent for replacement of 4no casement windows on side elevation with double glazed, flush casement timber windows, has been withdrawn.

Enforcement

Cllr Wright reported that she has been made aware of a garden shed/summer house structure being erected along Grove Road. Due to the size of the structure, it may require planning permission. Cllr Wright agreed to contact CCC Enforcement to investigate further.

Cllr Wright also reported that concerns have been expressed regarding a new glamping site at Bluebridge, Grove Road, Preston. Cllr Castle suggested that the landowners be contacted to find out their plans for the site and to advise of the planning rules relating to glamping.

9. ANNUAL RETURN

Internal Auditor Report

The Parish Council noted the Internal Auditor's report, which found the record keeping to be of a good standard and the Parish Council's approach to the management of risks to be sound. The Parish Council considered the report and agreed no action was required at this time above and beyond the current implemented practices.

Section 1: The Annual Governance Statement

Cllr Collinson proposed and Cllr Rees seconded, and all Councillors voted in favour, to approve the Annual Return and all supporting documents for the financial year ended 31 March. The Chairman duly signed the Section 1 page: the Annual Governance Statement. (Section 1 is for the Parish Council around the effectiveness of the system of internal control).

Section 2: The Accounting Statements

This had been prepared by the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer and signed and dated prior to being presented to the parish council. Cllr Collinson proposed and Cllr Rees seconded, and all Councillors voted in favour, to approve Section 2 and the Chairman duly signed this section too.

The Clerk must publish (including on the website) the Annual Return by 30 June 2023. The Parish Council must make arrangements for the exercise of public rights to inspect the accounts. The Notice will be published on the noticeboards and Parish Council website by 30 June 2023.

10. LEGAL EASEMENT

Cllr Collinson and Cllr Rees had a site meeting with the landowner of the strip of land between Seaton Road and the Frank Montgomery Playing Field. Currently there are no formal rights of access, and instead an informal arrangement exists between the landowner and Parish Council. The landowner suggested a legal easement be drawn up to formalise the arrangement.

Three quotations have been received to produce a legal easement as follows:

- Contractor A – £1,200 plus VAT and £50.00 fee to update Land Registry
- Contractor B – £650.00 plus VAT and £50.00 fee to update Land Registry
- Contractor C – £1,250 - £1,550 plus VAT and £50.00 fee to update Land Registry

It was unanimously agreed to instruct Contractor B, Girlings Solicitors, to proceed with forming an Easement. The Parish Council also agreed to enter into negotiations with the landowner should there be an expectation for the Council to pay a contribution towards their legal fees. Cllr Collinson agreed to take the lead with the landowner.

11. CLLRS' REPORTS KALC

Cllr Treacher advised that the KALC AGM (Annual General Meeting) is scheduled for tomorrow (21 June 2023) in Littlebourne. Cllr Alan Baldock, Leader of CCC, is the guest speaker.

Village Hall Committee

The most recent Village Hall Committee meeting was the Annual General Meeting held on 24 May 2023. The main item of discussion was the village hall refurbishment works. Drawings have been obtained for the 'Plan A' refurbishment works to the village hall, which was the initial scheme to address the repairs required. These drawings have been submitted for Planning Permission and Building Control approval, which should both be in place by the end of July to enable works to proceed.

The Village Hall Committee has been exploring potential costs and feasibility of a longer term refurbishment project ('Plan B'). Advice received indicates that the proposals would be a significant financial outlay, amounting to approximately £250,000. In comparison, 'Plan A' is estimated between £20,000 and £25,000.

After careful consideration, the Village Hall Committee agreed not to proceed with 'Plan B'. It was felt that it would be difficult to meet the costs of the project, usage of the hall doesn't currently warrant a project of this size, the length of time the project would take and the knock on impact on hirers would be substantial, and the urgency to replace the existing toilet roof requires quicker intervention.

Other items of discussion included funding applications, both for the hall refurbishment works and other projects, bookings and hall activity, location of the Frank Montgomery Playing Field shed, and whether to purchase a card reader, which the Committee decided to use the Frank Montgomery Playing Field's rather than purchase their own.

Playing Field

Cllr Rees reported there was recent incident of arson involving the bug hotel. Cllr Rees has spoken with the two young people involved in the presence of their parents, and both young people will split the costs of repairs to the bug hotel. Should a similar incident happen again, this will be reported to Kent Police. Fortunately, incidents of vandalism and arson are low in the Playing Field. Cllr Treacher wished to record thanks on behalf of the Parish Council to Cllr Rees for her sensitive handling of the situation.

Cllr Rees also reported that a request has been received to use the playing field on 11 July 2023 for School Sports Day, including the hire of the BBQ. This request will be discussed at the next Playing Field Committee meeting on 28 June 2023, which is also the AGM.

Village Greens

Cllr Wrightson suggested that the Parish Council consider purchasing temporary signage for contractors to use when undertaking works on Parish Council owned land. Cllr Wrightson agreed to investigate further for discussion at the next meeting.

Cllr Twyman confirmed he provided a tree guard for the small green and a local volunteer has been tending to the planters on the bridge.

Flooding

Cllr Twyman reported that the aquifer is depleting and a hose pipe ban may be implemented in the near future. Cllr Twyman also reported that he has not received any further communication from MP Rosie Duffield following her visit to inspect the condition of the Great Stour a month ago. The National Farmers Union is following up on the visit.

Cllr Twyman reported that he phoned the Environment Agency (EA) today (20 June 2023) to chase for an update on the minor leak in the riverbank near The Mill. The EA believes the leak is Southern Water's responsibility and a representative was due to speak to Cllr Treacher to clarify the origins of the leak. Cllr Treacher confirmed he had not received a phone call.

Speedwatch

Cllr Treacher reported he has contacted the lead councillor at Ickham Parish Council to formalise the joint arrangement between the two parishes and push forward with the initiative. Cllr Treacher has suggested a meeting and is waiting to hear back.

Footpaths

Cllr Wright reported that a local volunteer who cuts back overgrown vegetation on public footpaths has contacted KCC to formally register his activities, but has not received a response to date.

Website

Cllr Wrightson suggested that, rather than the Parish Council setting up a Facebook page, a village Whatsapp Group be set up as a method of quick communication with residents. Cllr Castle suggested that the Whatsapp group have comments disabled, but that the administrators of the Whatsapp group have their contact details available for private messages.

12. FINANCE

The expenditure totalling £3,141.94 was authorised, made up of:

- KALC – Finance for Councillors Course 20 June 2023 - £48.00
- Munford Contracting – Deposit payment for supply and erection of village sign - £2000.00

- Majestic Garden Care – Playing Field maintenance May 2023 - £180.00
- Wickhambreaux Village Hall – Grant towards refreshments for King Charles III Coronation Event - £177.49
- Lionel Robbins – Internal Auditor Fee 2022-2023 - £90.00
- Steve Rees – Supply of additional keys for noticeboard and electrical box on the village green - £31.32
- KOMPAN – June Quarterly Play Equipment Inspection - £96.00
- Cllr Faith Wright – Reimbursement for replacement plaque for footpath map - £44.00
- Chenice Howard-Sparkes – Reimbursement for ink cartridges - £33.98
- Chenice Howard-Sparkes – Clerk Salary June 2023
- Elizabeth Stevens – Village Hall Cleaner Salary June
- HMRC – Employee and PAYE June 2023

13. CLERK REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE

- Draft Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2024-39 and Draft Kent Mineral Sites Plan consultations received. Deadline for comments 25 July 2023.
- Guide to taking part in the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings, taking place on 06th June 2024 received.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Cllr Rees wished to thank Cllr Wrightson on behalf of St Andrew's Church for hosting the recent summer fundraising event, which saw around 72 guests attend and raised approximately £1,500.

The meeting closed at 10.00pm

Signed..... (Chairman)

Date.....