

**WICKHAMBREAUX PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 21 MARCH 2023 AT
WICKHAMBREAUX VILLAGE HALL, THE STREET, WICKHAMBREAUX, CT3 1RJ**

Present: Parish Cllr Darren Howe
Parish Cllr Robin Treacher
Parish Cllr Faith Wright
Parish Cllr Peter Collinson
Parish Cllr Theresa McRobbie
Parish Cllr Caroline Rees
Parish Cllr Martin Twyman

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 asked for apologies for absence. Apologies for absence were received from County Cllr Mike Sole. The Parish Council wished to express its condolences to the friends and family of City Cllr Barbara Flack, who unfortunately passed away recently. Cllr Flack was very supportive of parish councils and was instrumental in negotiations to retain Concurrent Function Funding, the adoption of the Parish Charter, and assisted in local campaigns such as the proposed loss of the bus service in Wickhambreaux.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 FEBRUARY 2023

All councillors voted in favour that the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2023 be accepted as a true record of the meeting and the Chairman duly signed them.

4. INFORMATION FROM MATTERS ARISING

4(9) – The Village Sign Working Group advised that costs have now been obtained for all elements of the work, which total approximately £6,208.05. The planning application has been submitted however, CCC has advised that rear, front and side elevations are required prior to validation and a separate additional application for advertisement consent is required. The additional elevations have been submitted, along with an additional application for advertisement consent. Cllr Treacher and Cllr Wright agreed to follow up with CCC to check whether advertisement consent is necessary.

9(15ii) – Cllr Treacher reported that he met with representatives from Ickham Parish Council to discuss setting up a joint Speedwatch group. Ickham Parish Council is supportive of setting up a joint group and have a number of volunteers already. All equipment will be funded jointly between both councils should the group be successful, and Littlebourne Parish Council has agreed to temporarily loan their equipment while the group establishes itself. The Clerk reported that she has contacted Kent Police Community Speedwatch to set up a joint Speedwatch group with Ickham. The first stage is for Kent Police to assess both Wickhambreaux and Ickham for suitable sites to hold sessions.

10 (Playing Field) – The Clerk reported that CCC has approved the Parish Council's Capital Grant application for £1,635 towards the cost of replacement safety surfacing around the climbing frame. Revised quotations need to be obtained from contractors to undertake the work.

10 (Village Greens) – The Clerk confirmed a thank you letter has been sent to Conservation Society. Cllr McRobbie confirmed she has spoken to the Parish Council's contractor, who has indicated he is unable to quote for the works due to existing commitments. He provided contacts for two alternative contractors to approach and Cllr McRobbie agreed to obtain 3no quotations for future consideration.

5. REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND CITY COUNCILLORS AND PCSO

County Cllr Mike Sole

Cllr Mike Sole reported that KCC and CCC discussed and agreed their forthcoming budgets in February 2023. Both councils have been hit hard with inflationary cost increases outstripping income increases. At KCC there will be reductions in many services as items of non-statutory expenditure are reduced in order to balance the budget. Cllr Sole was extremely disappointed that the grants that KCC councillors have available to support parish councils has been cut from £10,000 a year to £3,600.

Other meetings attended in February included the Kent Fire & Rescue Service and Wickhambreaux Parish Council. Cllr Sole was also asked to speak to Conserve Adisham's Rural Environment (CARE) about the draft Canterbury Local Plan, met with residents in Petham to discuss CCC proposals for double yellow lines in the village, and was guest speaker at the February meeting of Barham Wives. Cllr Sole also met with the Canterbury branch of the National Farmers Union to discuss a number of topical issues, including the amount of farmland being lost to development.

Cllr Sole has been involved in various issues since the last meeting including flytipping, streetlights, planning, waste collections, KCC funding care and nurseries consultations, abandoned caravans, dogs, and buses.

6. HIGHWAYS

(i) A257 Update

Cllr Twyman reported that he attended the recent meeting held on 18 March 2023. The Group continues to liaise with KCC regarding the ongoing issues in Shatterling.

General Highways Matters

Cllr Twyman reported that he attended an additional meeting with KCC representative David Burton for another 1.5 hours, and has followed up a number of points by phone since the meeting.

Cllr Twyman reported that the recent Grove Road closure was due to a subsidence hole appearing in the road. Cllr Twyman has been liaising with KCC, who have agreed to excavate to investigate the cause of the hole, put a steel membrane over to strengthen the area and will return between July and November to undertake a more thorough repair due to other commitments along Grove Road prior to July.

Cllr Twyman reported that flytipping located in the Drill Lane layby has been reported to CCC today (21 March 2023).

7. PLANNING

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

The Parish Council has no objections to the application for Listed Building Consent for replacement of four casement windows on the side elevation with double-glazed, flush casement timber windows.

CA/23/00327 – Closes House, Grove Road

The Parish Council has no objections to the proposed single storey rear extension following demolition of conservatory.

CA/22/02508 – Ivy House, Stodmarsh Road

CCC has granted the application for a replacement outbuilding to form workshop and studio.

CA/22/02575 – Ivy House, Stodmarsh Road

CCC has granted the Listed Building Consent application for external and internal alterations including replacement fireplaces to ground floor, removal of arched brick over fireplace, replacement front door and rear door from timber to timber, removal of balustrade and handrail,

extend partition to attic floor and replacement gable end windows from timber to timber to side elevations.

Land to the West of Grove Road, Preston

Cllr Wright advised that it appears no further waste clearance has been undertaken on the site since the Environment Agency (EA) visited on 11 October 2022. The EA previously advised that, should the work to clear the site slow or stop, they will issue a notice making it an offence to fail to remove the waste within an agreed timeframe. As there has been no substantial movement, Cllr Wright agreed to contact the EA to reassess the site and take enforcement action if necessary.

8. VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE PAYMENT IN LIEU FOR SMALL CAPITAL WORKS

The Parish Council agreed to underwrite a substantial portion of the cost associated with the village hall toilet roof repairs, up to a maximum of £15,000, at its meeting on 20 February 2023. Cllr Treacher advised that the Village Hall Committee is hoping to obtain quotations to undertake the works by the end of March 2023 and agree a preferred contractor, with a view to undertaking the works during the summer holidays.

The Parish Council had no objections to a payment in lieu to avoid any delays in instructing a contractor. For clarity, the Village Hall Committee is a committee of the Parish Council and, although the committee holds a separate bank account to fund running costs of the hall, the funds are retained under the umbrella of the Parish Council. It was agreed to delegate to the Finance Committee and Clerk to establish the most efficient and transparent manner to meet the costs for the capital works.

9. PROCUREMENT POLICY

Cllr Howe proposed that this item be deferred to the end of the meeting and be taken as a confidential item due to the nature of the item to be discussed. This was unanimously agreed.

10. LOCATION OF FOOTPATH MAP

Cllr Wright previously advised that the Four Villages' Conservation Society is exploring siting the replacement footpath map and noticeboard on the small green. A number of parish councillors attended a site meeting and proposed the map be located back-to-back to the Parish Council noticeboard. The noticeboard will be self-standing, i.e., not attached to the Parish Council noticeboard. The noticeboard for the footpath map will protrude six inches above and below the Parish Council noticeboard as it is larger. It was unanimously agreed to proceed with the proposed change in location.

The Parish Council previously agreed to fund the cost of refurbishment of the footpath map on 17 April 2018 for the sum of £300.00. It was unanimously agreed to honour the agreement in the next financial year.

11. ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

It was unanimously agreed to hold the Annual Parish Meeting on Tuesday 18 April 2023, and postpone the current normal monthly meeting currently scheduled for that date. The Parish Council agreed to have a guest speaker, and enquiries will be sent after the meeting to check availability.

12. REVIEW OF POLICIES

The Parish Council reviewed and unanimously agreed to adopt the following policies:

- (i) Standing Orders: Adopted with non-substantive amendments to align the Parish Council's Standing Orders with the latest NALC Model (published April 2022).
- (ii) Financial Regulations: Adopted with no amendments.
- (iii) Office and Finance Risk Assessment: Adopted with no amendments.
- (iv) Council's Statement of Internal Control: Adopted with amendment to update external auditor to Mazars LLP.

13. CLLRS' REPORTS

Trees

Cllr Wright reported that the hornbeam tree on the corner of Mill Close, which has a TPO (Tree Protection Order) and is on land managed by KCC, appears not to have been planted deep enough and the roots are stretching across the surface. Cllr Wright has reported this to KCC for further assessment.

KALC

Cllr Treacher advised that as he is not standing at the upcoming elections, he will also be stepping down as Chairman of the KALC Canterbury Area Committee. The Vice-Chairman, Alan Atkinson, will be acting chairman until a new chairman is elected.

Village Hall Committee

The next Village Hall Committee is scheduled for tomorrow (22 March 2023). The Committee will discuss arrangements for the King's Coronation, a neighbour request for scaffolding access to undertake roof repairs, and receive updates on hall bookings, the small capital works to the toilet block and energy bills and suppliers. The next coffee morning is scheduled for 15 April 2023.

A representative from the Village Hall Committee has invited Cllr Rees to meet with a surveyor on 29 March 2023, who will be inspecting the site in relation to the small capital works proposed for the village hall toilets. Cllr Rees will discuss appropriate positions for the recently purchased Playing Field Committee shed during the meeting.

Flooding

Cllr Twyman reported that the Emergency Committee met on 27 February 2023 and agreed to update the household emergency card. The Parish Council unanimously agreed to fund the cost of printing the new cards. The Little Stour and Nailbourne River Group is due to meet in Littlebourne Village Hall on 01 April 2023.

Cllr Treacher advised that beavers have been trying to build a dam near The Mill. The beavers have been chewing through local willow trees and causing localised damage. Cllr Treacher advised he is monitoring the river to check for dams.

Footpaths

Cllr Wright advised that a number of finger posts and signs previously reported for repair/replacement have now been completed by KCC PROW (Public Rights of Way). A few signs remain outstanding.

Website

Cllr Collinson reported that he liaised with CCC Electoral Services prior to posting a news item on the requirement to bring photographic ID when voting. Further reminders will be posted running up to the election.

Sloyden Charity

Cllr Collinson advised that the Charity Commission has approved the application to create a new charity, which will be known as Harry Sloyden Charity (Wickhambreaux) to avoid confusion with the Sloyden Littlebourne charity.

Neighbourhood Watch

Fraud and scams make up 42% of all major crime types in the UK and have sadly risen with the pandemic. Residents are encouraged to view the BBC Panorama expose on fraud and the activities of Kent Police: "Cops, Cash and Fraudsters", which was broadcast on 13 March 2023 and is available on BBC iPlayer.

The most effective means of protection available to the public is being aware of the methods used by fraudsters. This programme identified these and useful tips for avoiding becoming a victim of this type of crime.

A major role of Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) is to provide information and education to help members be safer, which is why the important subject of scams and fraud features prominently in the NHW conference on Saturday 25 March 2023. A principal speaker will be Stephen Kelly from Kent Police's Fraud Office.

14. FINANCE

The expenditure totalling £427.65 was authorised, made up of:

- Open Spaces Society – Annual Subscription - £45.00
- Chenice Howard-Sparkes - Clerk Salary March 2023
- HMRC - Employee and PAYE March 2023

The Clerk advised she is meeting with the Internal Auditor on 18 April 2023.

15. CLERK REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE

Nothing to report not previously discussed.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Cllr Twyman reported that the St Bride's Choir, based in Fleet Street in London, will be performing at St Andrew's Church on 29 April 2023 for a Coronation Celebration concert. Tickets cost £10.00.

17. CONFIDENTIAL ITEM – PROCUREMENT POLICY

The public and press were excluded from the meeting for the following item of business (Item 08) by virtue of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

Councillors considered a draft procurement policy for low value contracts where it can be difficult to obtain multiple quotations for consideration. It was unanimously agreed to adopt the Policy with one amendment, subject to legal checks.

The meeting closed at 9.45pm

Signed..... (Chairman)

Date.....