

**WICKHAMBREAUX PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2024 AT
WICKHAMBREAUX VILLAGE HALL, THE STREET, WICKHAMBREAUX, CT3 1RJ**

Present: Parish Cllr Peter Collinson
Parish Cllr Caroline Rees
Parish Cllr Martin Twyman
Parish Cllr Mark Wrightson
Parish Cllr Philippa Barber
Parish Cllr Emma Denning
Parish Cllr Laura Tarling

City Cllr Lee Castle

Mrs Chenice Howard-Sparkes, Clerk to the Council

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 (Work Commitments).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 OCTOBER 2024

It was proposed by Cllr Rees, seconded by Cllr Barber and AGREED that the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 15 October 2024 be accepted as a true record of the meeting and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

4. INFORMATION FROM MATTERS ARISING

5 (11 Footpaths) – The Clerk reported that the Planning and Design team has undertaken a site visit to Stodmarsh to assess the feasibility of a directional sign. Although feasible, the team consider siting a sign on the village green would not be preferable for aesthetic reasons and advance notice would be better. A highway sign stating “Nature Reserve Only” and “All Other Routes” has been suggested as a draft, to be located on the verge opposite the Red Lion at the boundary of Sawkinge Cottage and Ivy House. The Clerk has updated the resident who submitted the request and asked for their views. The Clerk has also asked KCC for clarification whether a fingerpost style design would be possible as per the original request, or whether the highway sign as proposed is the only option.

7 – The Clerk reported that a KCC engineer attended Burnt House Hill today (19 November 2024) to assess the standard of the road. There is a lot of mud and washdown throughout the road and standing water from the recent rain. In order to establish the current condition of the carriageway, KCC will need to scrape the mud off the surface and channel the standing water away. They will get rid of the water by re-establishing the grips that were dug last year and get rid of the standing water. KCC will be getting quotes for the work to clear the mud. The removal of the mud and detritus might unearth further potholes, and KCC will fill them as best they can, but it is unlikely KCC will be doing much more than that. Unfortunately, because this road does not serve any properties or lead to any other significant link roads, it will not warrant the expense of resurfacing.

5. REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND CITY COUNCILLORS

County Cllr Mike Sole

Cllr Sole reported that since the last meeting he attended Barham Parish Council meeting, various meeting of KCC and the City Council and also Kent Fire & Rescue Service. He also visited the city council control room to see how the district CCTV and bollards operate, and held a surgery at the Bekesbourne coffee morning and subsequently followed up issues raised including missing 30mph signs on Bekesbourne Hill.

It's been a good month for seeing new road signage being installed. The 30mph limit is now in place in Woolage Green, and in Bridge the HGV restriction sign is now up near Union Road. Cllr Sole has also seen the designs for the painting of 30mph roundels on the road in New House Lane, Thanington.

The City Council's budget has now gone out to consultation. Although the government has released their budget, it is not clear what this might mean in respect of local government finance, so it has not been easy to finalise the draft budget. It is clear though that costs are increasing faster than income so there is huge pressure on doing more with less. Residents are encouraged to respond to areas of the budget that impact you/matter to you the most.

Cllr Sole attended a multi-agency meeting regarding the tents that are on the Canterbury ring-road. The police, fire service, city council and homeless charities are all working to find a solution, with KCC who own the land. The city council have spare temporary accommodation for every person living in those tents, but the issue is more complex than that, and it is not possible to force individuals to take up accommodation offered to them. There is significant concern though about the safety of those choosing to stay in tents so close to a busy road.

The recent heavy rains caused significant drainage issues in Patricbourne, and Cllr Sole worked with KCC to help clear this and clean drains and the road, whilst looking for a more permanent solution. Discussions continue regarding a Kingston to Barham footpath/cycle path parallel to Valley Road.

Cllr Sole has also been investigating the possibility of a new bus shelter in Beech Avenue, Chartham, and assisted with Blue Badge applications. He is also progressing grant applications for Bridge and Bishopsbourne parish councils for parish projects.

City Cllr Lee Castle

A significant accomplishment this month was the resolution in the Adisham woodland enforcement case. The final verdict represents a substantial victory for all parties involved, particularly the hard work of the community group WOAW and the parish council. This success protects the ancient woodland, preserving this critical natural heritage for future generations.

An ongoing issue in Bramling has been fly-tipping, which has become increasingly disruptive. Cllr Castle has been working closely with CCC's enforcement team to tackle this matter. As a result, CCC are preparing to install surveillance cameras in strategic locations to monitor and deter illegal dumping activities. This initiative will not only aid in holding offenders accountable but also serve as a preventative measure to help keep the community cleaner and more welcoming.

In Wickhambreaux, there were challenges with waste collections as bin services experienced some interruptions. Fortunately, the catch-up crews returned shortly after, ensuring that waste collection resumed with minimal delay. However, there are still isolated cases of missed collections affecting some residents. To address this, residents are encouraged to use the council's website to report missed bins. Alternatively, they can call the dedicated number (01227 947860) and also send Cllr Castle the reference number to help streamline the resolution process.

In Ickham, it was excellent to see the Community Skip arranged by the parish council, which once again proved very popular. In Adisham, Cllr Castle is following up on longstanding issues related to trees and verge maintenance.

Road safety remains a priority, and progress is being made with the Speedwatch initiative in Bekesbourne. The Speedwatch group is nearing launch and will begin monitoring shortly. Meanwhile, Cllr Castle actively participated in Speedwatch sessions in Littlebourne, where new volunteers joined efforts. Additional sessions are planned, and it is encouraging to see more community members volunteering for this cause.

Concerns have also been raised about development works at Swanton Lane. Cllr Sole appeared on BBC News to discuss this complex legal and enforcement matter, which is currently being managed by a multi-agency task force. The situation is evolving and being monitored closely to ensure the community's concerns are appropriately addressed.

For 2025, Cllr Castle will publish a diary of surgeries and events that he will be attending for anyone to come and discuss or raise items or topics that he can be off assistance with.

Neighbourhood Watch

At this time of year, burglars know that our homes are filling up with new and expensive items and furthermore, homeowners may be away visiting relatives or simply going out to seasonal celebrations. Advice from Kent Police to minimise the risk of burglaries over the Christmas and New Year period is as follows:

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

Anyone can be conned. Young or old, we are all vulnerable to what are becoming increasingly sophisticated scams. So, in a bid to forearm us against the fraudsters, the BBC is devoting a week of special programming to its Scam Safe information and advice campaign, across television, iPlayer, radio, BBC Sounds and online, starting Saturday 23 November and continuing until 29 November 2024.

6. HIGHWAYS

Cllr Twyman reported that the A257 Group met on 16 November 2024. The main items of discussion were safety concerns at Shatterling, potential housing developments, and looking to align HIPs (Highway Improvement Plans) of parishes along the A257.

Cllr Twyman also reported that he is unable to attend the Highways Seminar scheduled for tomorrow (20 November 2024). Comments have been passed onto Hazel Walters at KCC, in particular poor management of roadwork signage, to be raised in his absence.

7. PLANNING

New Applications

CA/24/01790 – The Green, Little Green and Frank Montgomery Playing Field

The Parish Council has submitted an application to CCC to undertake various tree work identified and recommended in the recent tree survey. Works include TPO NO 2 1962, T2 Pin Oak remove touching limbs around BT cable to give 1.5m clearance, T4 Variegated Norway Maple Crown lift to 2.4m, T5 Lime Crown lift to 2m, T6 Lime Crown lift to 3m, T7 Lime Crown lift to 3m, T10 Lime Crown lift to 3m, T12 Sycamore Crown lift removing 2 lowest limbs over access gate, T16 Hawthorn Crown lift to 2m, T17 Sycamore Crown lift to 3m, T22 Sycamore Crown lift to 5m, T26 Hawthorn Crown reduce by 2m, T28 Ash clear low stem growth, T29 Ash clear around BT cable leaving 1m clearance.

CA/24/01992 – Wickham Court Oast, Wickham Court Lane

This application was received after the agenda was published and the deadline for comments is 13 December 2024. The Parish Council has no objections to the proposed single storey greenhouse as it will not be visible from the road or neighbouring properties.

CA/21/02165 – The Pear Orchard, Hawthorn Bungalow and Altona, The List

CCC has granted the application for 5no two-storey detached dwellings and 2no single-storey detached dwellings following demolition of 2no existing dwellings. City Cllr Castle advised he has spoken to a number of residents to discuss their concerns following approval of the application. Cllr Castle also advised that there will be CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) monies payable to the Parish Council from the development.

EN/21/00287 – Grove Road Caravans on Preston Marshes

The Environment Agency advised on 29 October 2024 that works should have recommenced from 03 November 2024. Initial works identified include the dismantling and removal of the caravans, and the clearance of vegetation from an area of ground in the middle of the site on which the excavated soils will be stockpiled. Soil will then be progressively moved from the perimeter of the site to this central location.

8. BUDGET AND PRECEPT REQUIREMENT 2025-2026

Cllr Wrightson proposed and Cllr Rees seconded, and all councillors voted in favour, to agree a budget of £16,635 for 2025-2026, to cover all expected expenditure. It was further agreed to request a Precept of £16,635 for 2025-2026 to fully cover the approved budget.

In addition, Cllr Rees proposed and Cllr Barber seconded, and all councillors voted in favour, to agree Earmarked Reserves totalling £16,150 to cover computer/office equipment (£700.00), elections and bi-elections (£750.00), staffing contingency (£3,700), Village Hall (£3,000), Frank Montgomery Playing Field (£3,000) and Concurrent Function Funding shortfall (£5,000). It was further agreed to keep non-designed reserves at £12,000, in line with best practice advice for smaller authorities.

9. FORMATION OF PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Cllr Wrightson proposed and Cllr Rees seconded, and all councillors voted in favour, not to create a Planning Advisory Committee at this time. Instead, each councillor will take a turn taking the lead on investigating planning applications and reporting back to the full Council. For more complex or controversial applications, multiple councillors will investigate together to share the workload. All councillors are encouraged to attend planning training.

10. WEED AND FEED TREATMENT FOR VILLAGE GREENS

Quotations have been sought for a one-off weed, feed and moss killer treatment to be applied to all three village greens. The following quotations have been received:

- Contractor A – £340.00 plus VAT
- Contractor B – £354.00 plus VAT per month on a 12 month treatment plan.
- Contractor C – declined to quote due to the small nature of the works.

Cllr Rees proposed and Cllr Denning seconded, and all councillors voted in favour, to appoint Contractor A, Majestic Garden Care.

11. FUNDING FOR ST ANDREW'S CHURCH CAROLS ON THE GREEN EVENT

A request has been received from St Andrew's Church for a donation towards their Christmas carol event on 22 December 2024. A suggestion of up to £50.00 has been made to cover the cost of mulled wine, juice, mince pies, squash and biscuits. Cllr Rees proposed and Cllr Wrightson seconded, and all councillors voted in favour, to cover costs up to the sum of £50.00.

12. DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY

From 26 October 2024, employers have a legal duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of employees in the course of their employment. NALC (National Association of Local Councils) has a template Dignity at Work Policy which will meet this requirement. Cllr Barber proposed and Cllr Denning seconded, and all councillors voted in favour, to adopt the NALC Dignity at Work Policy.

13. MEETING DATES 2025

Wickhambreaux Parish Council meetings are normally held on the third Tuesday evening of each month, except August and December when there is no meeting. The Parish Council decided on the following meeting dates for 2025; 21 January, 18 February, 18 March, 15 April, 27 May for both the Annual General Meeting followed by the Annual Parish Meeting, 17 June, 15 July, 16 September, 21 October and 18 November. The meeting dates will be published on the website and noticeboard.

14. CLLRS' REPORTS

Village Hall Committee

The next Committee meeting will be held on 27 November 2024.

Playing Field Committee

Cllr Rees reported that Clearwater undertook the cleaning and treatment of the play equipment week commencing 21 October 2024. The current bank balance remains £7,238.85. The next Committee meeting will be held on 15 January 2025 at 6pm.

Village Greens

Cllr Denning reported that the Christmas trees are due to be delivered on 29 November 2024. Cllr Barber and Cllr Denning agreed to liaise with Polo Contractors to arrange their installation.

Flood Protection

Cllr Twyman reported that there has been less rain compared to this time last year so as a result, the aquifer is rising slowly. Drill Lane also dried out within the last 10 days, having had continuous water for some time.

Cllr Twyman reported that the next meeting of the Little Stour and Nailbourne River Group will be held on 07 December 2024 in Littlebourne. Cllr Twyman also reported that the Emergency Committee has agreed not to meet at this current time, and will instead reassess the Emergency Plan in 12 months' time.

Speedwatch

Cllr Denning confirmed that a meeting has been arranged with Cllr Sandra Claxton and Cllr Jason Drew from Ickham Parish Council on 03 December 2024 to discuss next steps. Ickham Parish Council will be discussing additional volunteer recruitment at their next meeting, and Wickhambreaux will be seeking additional volunteers at the Christmas Social Saturday on 14 December 2024. Unfortunately, residents who expressed an initial interest at the last Social Saturday have upon further reflection decided not to proceed.

Footpaths

Cllr Barber reported that she attended an event hosted by the Ramblers Society on 11 November 2024. Funding is available for up to £300.00 towards printing of a parish OS map for walkers, which could be applied for in Stodmarsh if felt appropriate. Cllr Barber also reported that she has chased KCC on a number of outstanding reports to the PROW (Public Right of Way) team, including missing fingerposts and broke stiles.

Events

Sunday 01 December 2024 is St Andrew's Lunch at 1pm in Wickhambreaux Village Hall. This is a ticketed event. Saturday 14th December 2024 is the Christmas Social Saturday in the Village Hall, free entry and everyone is welcome.

15. FINANCE
Payments

The expenditure totalling £6,028.42 was authorised, made up of:

- Clearwater – Cleaning and treatment of play equipment at Frank Montgomery Playing Field - £4,410.00
- Majestic Garden Care – Playing Field Grass Cutting October 2024 - £270.00
- Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) – Annual Subscription – £110.00
- Wickhambreaux Parochial Church Council – Annual burial maintenance - £500.00
- Stodmarsh Parochial Church Council – Annual burial maintenance - £60.00
- Caroline Rees – Reimbursement for thank you gift for Faith Wright - £50.00
- Chenice Howard-Sparkes – Clerk Salary November 2024
- HMRC – Employee and PAYE November 2024
- Moss Stevens – Village Hall Cleaning November 2024

The above payments were proposed by Cllr Wrightson, seconded by Cllr Rees and AGREED thus authorised for payment.

The Clerk advised that the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) has agreed new national salary payscales to be implemented from 01 April 2024. The Clerk is currently on spinal point 8 which results in an hourly rate increase from £12.84 to £13.47.

16. CLERK REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE

- i) The Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2024-39 was submitted to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination on 17 May 2024 and the Public Hearings took place in September 2024. Following the closure of the Hearings, a number of Main Modifications have been identified that are required in order to ensure that the Local Plan is sound and legally compliant. KCC has now published the Main Modifications to the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2024-39, along with the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal for representations. Representations can be submitted during the consultation period up to midnight on 28 November 2024.
- ii) Following changes to the draft Local Plan timetable, CCC has launched an additional Call for Sites to identify any potential brownfield sites that are suitable and available for development in the district, which have previously not been submitted for consideration. Deadline for submissions is 01 December 2024.
- iii) Groups and organisations can now apply for a grant from CCC to fund projects that support biodiversity in the district. Total funding available is £15,000, with bids welcome for amounts between £500.00 and £7,500. The grants can be used to fund the entirety of a project, or as match funding for a larger initiative. Funds must be fully spent by 31 March 2025.
- iv) The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has launched a consultation on the subject of hedgerow management, in particular seeking views on the approach to the use of civil and criminal sanctions. Further information can be found on the government's website – [DEFRA Hedgerow Consultation](#). Deadline for comments is 10 December 2024.
- v) The Environment Agency (EA) has launched a consultation on proposals to new regulatory charges for waste. Further information can be found on the government's website – [EA Waste Charges](#). Deadline for comments is 20 January 2025.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (i) Cllr Twyman reported he has checked the salt bin levels and all are full. Additional salt is stored at Cllr Twyman's farm should any be needed.

The meeting closed at 9.33pm.

Signed..... (Chairman)

Date.....