

## HIGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Virtual Parish Council Meeting held by Zoom on Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021 at 7.30 p.m.

Present: Cllr. J. Grey (Chairman)  
Kent County Councillor: Bryan Sweetland  
Councillors: N. Fox, P. Holmes, A. Howard,  
E. Jeffery, D. Martin, L. Pearton (also Borough)  
J. Rivett, S. Sparks and T. Stanton.

In attendance: 2 Parishioners  
Peter Leakey (Parish Advisor)

Apologies for absence: Borough Councillor, Harold Craske  
Kent Community Warden, Paul Hassell

The Chairman accepted apologies for absence. He advised Members that he had today received the resignation of Parish Councillor Rob Gilby, although he had confirmed that the salt store could remain in his barn. The Chairman thanked him for his service to the village. The Clerk reported that Vikki Brooke had also decided to stand down from her role as a Parish Advisor which she had held for several years.

There were no alterations to the Register of Members Interests and no declarations for the gifts and hospitality register.

### To elect a Vice Chairman

Cllr. Jeffery was proposed by Cllr. Pearton, and seconded by Cllr. Howard. As no other nominations were received, Cllr. Jeffery was elected as Vice Chairman by all those present.

### To confirm the appointment of three Parish Councillors by co-option.

As no request for a By Election had been received by Gravesham Borough Council, it was proposed by Cllr. Howard, seconded by Cllr. Sparks and agreed by all those present that Nikki Fox, Jamie Rivett and Toni Stanton be co-opted on to the Parish Council to fill the existing three vacancies.

The Clerk agreed to arrange for the new Councillors and Cllr. David Martin to attend the virtual KALC Dynamic Councillor training on 16<sup>th</sup> March at the cost of £60 per delegate.

Confirmation of weekly inspections of the Recreation Ground by the GBC Park Ranger for insurance purposes had been received and the first quarterly PR6 inspection report had been sent to Cllr. Sparks.

### Parishioners Matters

Barry Sutherland expressed concern that if asbestos was now being brought to the surface at the Nuralite site all works should be stopped. Cllr. Pearton reported that he had received complaints that with no wheel wash facilities on site, the asbestos waste could easily be carried away from the area on vehicle tyres and the GBC Environmental Health department would be alerted. Cllr. Rivett confirmed that the Borough Council would have to comply with HSE Regulations on site and Cllr. Martin urged that the planning consent conditions urgently needed to be agreed during the promised consultation between the Borough Council and Shorne and Higham Parish Councils.

## Community Reports

### Higham Speedwatch

Peter Leakey reported that Speedwatch sessions remained suspended due to the lockdown on the advice of Kent Police.

### Kent Community Warden

The Clerk reported that Paul Hassell had advised her that complaints had been received about the Gads Hill lay by suffering fly tipping and also overnight HGV parking which had led to the use of the area as a public toilet.

Cllr. Pearton understood that in the Canterbury area lorries parking in country lanes and causing fly tipping could be clamped. Cllr. Martin queried that this might be in conjunction with a by law to stop overnight parking.

### Kent Police

Jo Hartley had advised the Parish Council that she was no longer the PCSO for Higham and had been replaced by Ellie Middleton. Ellie hoped to be able to attend the next Parish Council meeting.

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting, held on Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021, were confirmed and signed

### Matters arising from the Minutes (not appearing elsewhere)

The Clerk reported that:-

- a. P. 1380 Highway Improvement Plan. Details of the £1385 cheque cashed by KCC for the TROs had been sent to Cllr. Sparks.
- b. P. 1380 Higham Memorial Hall. Members agreed a revised quotations for CCTV installation to the Pavilion for £4524.00 (incl. VAT) and £3930.00 (incl. VAT) for the Memorial Hall. They also approved the installation of the new steel fire doors to the Changing Rooms extension at the Memorial Hall for the cost of £4719.60 (incl. VAT).
- c. P. 1380. Wainscott Surgery. Following the last meeting, the Surgery at Wainscott started offering COVID vaccinations. Many local volunteers had been marshalling the car park.
- d. P. 1381. Railway Bridge Fencing. KCC had now accepted responsibility for the replacement of the damaged fencing on the railway bridge and had issued a reference number for its repair.

### Parish Street Lighting

Cllr. Martin had studied the former Parish Street Lighting Agreement carefully and noted that all the lighting assets would revert back to the Parish Council from April 2022 unless they were suitable for conversion and adoption by KCC. As large numbers of lights on wooden poles would not be accepted by KCC, and this reduced the size of the lighting stock dramatically, he proposed that the Borough Council should be asked to provide the name of its contact at UK Power Networks and allow sight of the current agreement between them.

### Annual Parish Newsletter 2021

The Clerk reported that copy material was still being collected in at the present time and those reports to be prepared by Councillors were discussed. The front cover would feature Pat Oakeshott who had died in January.

### Allotments

Cllr. Sparks had circulated papers to Members prior to the Meeting. Councillors agreed a revised version of the current allotment agreement which emphasised the need to keep plots in good condition and that they must be handed back in a workable state or the outgoing tenant would be charged for the necessary work to make it fit to rent to a new tenant. Allotment invoices would be sent out early in the allotment year and so any plots given up

could be offered immediately to those on the waiting list. Vehicles needed to be driven carefully on site and parked considerately. Future items under consideration included increasing the number of taps on site, improvements to the parking areas and flattening the surface of the track down the allotment gardens. Cllr. Fox agreed to join the Allotment Committee of Cllrs. Sparks and Howard.

#### Recreation Ground tree surgery and sleeper replacement

Cllr. Sparks had circulated papers to Members prior to the Meeting giving comparison figures received from several contractors to carry out tree works in different areas in and around the Recreation Ground. Councillors were asked to consider these figures carefully and contact Cllr. Sparks direct with their chosen contractor.

Two quotations of £9,000 and £14,000 had been received for the renewal of the supporting wall at the Recreation Ground, constructed from railway sleepers, but others were still awaited.

#### Report from the meeting of Parish Council Chairmen.

The Chairman expressed concern that the Leader of Gravesham Borough Council had stated that the Borough Council had been informed by the Government that the number of new homes delivered in the Borough was falling below required levels and that they must now look to grant permission for any application that can show the development being proposed is sustainable. This was particularly relevant within Higham due to the potentially large areas to be considered for development, as highlighted in the recent “Stop the Green Belt Grab” campaign. It had also been reported that only 20% of all Parish Council Clerks within the Country held a formal vocational qualification.

#### Housing Needs Survey – 2020

Copies of the Rural Housing Needs Survey, published in December 2020, had only just been released by the Borough Council and had been distributed to Members prior to the Meeting. Further discussion of this report would form a future agenda item.

Cllr. Stanton agreed to join the Chairman on the Rural Housing Committee.

#### To amend dates for Parish Council Meetings in 2021

The Clerk reported that it seemed unlikely that the government planned to renew the current remote meeting regulations which allowed Parish Council Meetings to be held via Zoom. Current advice from KALC was to hold both the Annual Parish Assembly and the Annual Parish Council Meeting before the current legislation ran out on 6<sup>th</sup> May. She therefore proposed that the Annual Parish Assembly (basic meeting only) should be held on Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> April at 7.30 p.m. and the Annual Parish Council Meeting, followed by a Parish Council Meeting, should be held on Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> May at 7.30 p.m., both by Zoom, and Members were in agreement with both of these dates.

#### Councillors' Matters.

##### County.

Cllr. Sweetland confirmed that the KCC budget increase this year would be 4.99% which comprised a 1.99% increase in Council Tax and an additional 3.00% increase for Social Care. The amount of money available for Members Grants would be halved from April. Kent County Council elections would be held on Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> May.

##### Borough.

Cllr. Pearton reported that the Borough Council was quiet at the present time but that the COVID - 19 figures for Gravesham still remained relatively high.

### Parish.

Cllr. Martin reminded Members that they needed to be mindful as to how each of the large projects currently under discussion interacted with each other e.g. Highways England was concerned about extra traffic and the Nuralite site development interfering with the rebuilding of the A2/M2 junction and the Future Hoo Project had a very tight deadline to spend the money it had been allocated and the significant amount of work which needed to be carried out at Hoo Junction.

Cllr. Sparks asked for an update on the current situation regarding the Pavilion and the sub lease to be given at the next meeting.

Cllr. Jeffery reported fly tipping to Canal Road, which had since been collected, and a deep pothole outside The Knowle. Cllr. Sparks confirmed this had already been reported. Cllr. Jeffery confirmed that the mass vaccination centre in Gravesend at the Woodville Halls had been extremely busy with queues forming around the building.

The Chairman reported that he had been contacted by a local resident regarding fly tipping on Chalk Road in the vicinity of the garage.

### Reports.

#### a. Planning.

The following planning applications had been received by the Planning Committee:-

#### Appln.no. 20201350 Abbey Farm Barn, Church Street

Application to remove condition 3 attached to planning permission reference number 20140546 for the; conversion of existing cowshed to a residential annexe incorporating living area, bedroom area, kitchen area and bathroom, together with ancillary works in association with the proposal as an annexe to the existing main barn residential conversion, to allow; the converted cowshed to be used as a separate dwelling.

#### Appln.no. 20201372 41A, Forge Lane

Retrospective application for a garage.

#### Appln.no. 20201373 41A, Forge Lane

Application for variation of condition 2 attached to planning permission reference 20191183 to replace plans 19FL-070819-P-003 Rev C and 19FL-070819-004 Rev C, approved as part of 20200634 with 19FL-070819-P-003-Proposed Plans-Rev E and 19FL-070819-P-004-Proposed Plans-Rev E respectively.

#### Appln.no 20201347 Dingley Dell, Gravesend Road

Conversion of two detached garages to a two bedroom annex.

#### Appln.no 20201290 Land South of Two Gates Hill, Town Road

Use of land for the stationing of X 28 caravans for occupation by seasonal agricultural workers, 8 caravans to be occupied all year round with 20 occupied in main season.

#### Appln.no. 20210121 Long Reach, Elm Close

Replacement of existing windows in existing rear extension with folding doors and installation of 2 new Velux roof lights.

### Finance.

The Clerk asked for approval for the items shown below, this being proposed by Cllr. Martin, seconded by Cllr. Howard and agreed by all Members.

Clerks salary (January)	1159.71
KCC (LGPS January)	490.77
HMRC (PAYE/NI January)	202.06
Clerk (Microsoft account for January)	54.72
Externiture Ltd. (base for green roof shelter)	1320.00
Plantscape Ltd. (summer liners for Dickens planters)	123.36

Clerk (donation in memory of Pat Oakeshott)	100.00
Clerk (Microsoft account for February)	54.72
Higham Memorial Hall Association (grant under S137)	1100.00
SSE (toilets electricity)	39.39
EDF Energy (electricity for Pavilion)	272.13

Correspondence.

The Clerk drew Members' attention to the following items:-

1. A Parishioner had reported that the Mr Pickwick millennium road sign had been stolen from its posts on Gads Hill. The Clerk agreed to get a quotation for a replacement.
2. Cllr. Sparks had advised her that the roof of the rented garage in Villa Road appeared to be leaking.
3. Those present were reminded that Census Day would take place on Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> March.

To note the date of the next Parish Council Meeting on Zoom

This was given as being Monday, 29th March 2021 at 7.30 p.m.

Any Other Business.

It was reported that the appraisal meeting for the Clerk would take place towards the end of March before the next meeting.

There being no other business, the Meeting closed at 10.35 p.m.