

**Minutes**  
**Parish Council Meeting held on**  
**14 March 2022 at 7:30 pm**  
**Higham Memorial Hall, School Lane, Higham ME3 7JL**

Present:	Cllr John Grey Cllr Liz Jeffery Cllr Nikki Fox Cllr Pam Holmes Cllr Alan Howard Cllr David Martin Cllr Sue Sparks Cllr Toni Stanton	Chairman Vice Chair
Absent	Cllr Les Pearton Cllr Jamie Rivett Cllr Steve Sales	Also Borough Councillor
Members of public	3	

Item	Minute No	Description
1	128	<p><b>Apologies for absence<sup>1</sup></b></p> <p>Apologies were received from Cllr Jamie Rivett who was still at work and unavailable to attend, Cllr Steve Sales who was also unavailable due to work pressures. Cllr Les Pearton also sent apologies as he was away with his family.</p> <p>Members accepted all three apologies for the reasons provided and unanimously voted to approve.</p>
2	129	<p><b>Declarations of interest<sup>2</sup></b></p> <p>None.</p>
3	130	<p><b>Public Session</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report - PCSO Kirsty Lowe 58959, Gravesham Community Policing Team</li> <li>• Kent Community Warden report</li> <li>• Peter Leakey – Speedwatch report</li> <li>• Members of public opportunity to ask questions<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>
3	131	<p><b>PCSO Report – none received and PCSO not in attendance.</b></p> <p>Kent Community Warden – no report received and no Warden in attendance</p>

<sup>1</sup> Local Government Act 1972

<sup>2</sup> Localism Act 2011, s29

<sup>3</sup> Standing Orders state that the Public Session will only take place for 15 minutes with a member of public having only 5 minutes to ask their question. Councillors are not obliged to answer immediately.

Item	Minute No	Description
		Speedwatch report provided by Peter Leakey attached as appendix.
		Member of public rose to speak of fast-moving traffic on the Lower Rochester road on brow of hill. He confirmed that the bollards have been knocked down and where lorries are speeding they are eroding a lot of the bank. Cllr Howard confirmed that he would contact Highways at KCC and move the complaint forward.
		There was a discussion on yellow lines that had been painted in Martins Close.
4	132	<p><b>Clerk's report (to bring Members up to date with current issues)</b></p> <p>Clerk asked whether there were any questions on her report.</p> <p>Clerk confirmed that she had contacted Bryan Sweetland at KCC regarding the yellow lines that had been placed at Martins Close. Members suggested that she contact directly KCC on this.</p> <p>Cllr Sparks asked the Clerk to update the report to include the wording A226 Gads Hill Lane with regards to the tree cutting issue.</p> <p>Clerk spoke to confirm that the issue of historical paperwork for the Council was still ongoing. Cllr Grey to take this issue forward.</p> <p>There was a discussion regarding what was required and this amounted to legal documents for the Hall, the waterworks plot which is part of the rec, the allotments and any other pieces of land that Higham Parish Council. Any originals are required to be in the possession of the Parish Council.</p>
5	133	<p><b>To approve Minutes of the Parish Council meeting dated 14 February 2022</b></p> <p>Cllr Martin proposed to accept the minutes as a true record of the proceedings and Cllr Sparks seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favour.</p>
6	134	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Parish Councillors matters</b> (each member is asked for any issues)</li> <li>• <b>Borough Councillor matters</b> (Bor Cllrs update on any issues)</li> <li>• <b>KCC representative</b> (KCC update on any issues)</li> </ul> <p><b>Cllr Jeffery</b> pointed out that Higham Memorial hall will be looking into updating their website. The Trustees were asking the position on whether Higham Parish Council would place a Memorial Hall website link to the parish website. Clerk to confirm and place the link.</p> <p><b>Cllr Sparks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Highways Improvement</b> Plan which has gone in to KCC. KCC have responded to say that they would like a discussion with the Working Group via zoom. Cllr Sparks to take forward with 2 or 3 members from Highways Committee</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fly tipping and anti-social behaviour and use of cameras.</b> Cllr Sparks circulated an email for a working group on this to look at the guidance on how to use them. There is some indication of cost.</li> <li>• <b>Lorry watch</b> – PCSOs are keen to meet to be brought up to speed on how this works in the Highways Group. They want more involvement. Date in April agreed.</li> <li>• <b>Litter</b> – had an approach by a Gravesham Borough Officer. Medway Council are interested in laising with Gravesham BC in order to do a combined litter pick. Medway to work up to the Wainscott bypass and for Higham to work up to Dillywood Lane in order for Higham to have a clear section of road. Dates and times for meeting up will be circulated by email.</li> </ul> <p><b>Cllr Howard</b> spoke to advise that he had received a letter from a resident who had complained about the traffic on the A226. On a Friday or Saturday evening motorists are using these main roads as a race track. This also happens on Medway City Estate at different days and times and Blue Water.</p> <p>The Police had placed a Public Spaces Protection Order in a specific area in order to stop this practice. Cllr Howard to circulate the original email to other members.</p> <p>Clerk to answer the resident and forward the correspondence to the PCSO to ensure this issue is dealt with.</p> <p><b>Cllr Martin</b> discussed the position of insurance for the sports ground.</p> <p>He also spoke about the meeting he attended on the Local Plan – details of which are available online at Gravesham BC website. The water supply and sewage systems need upgrading but this cannot be afforded without new housing to pay for the upgrade. Its easier to build on green field sites than brown field.</p> <p><b>Cllr Fox</b> provided an updated on the allotments. Work has been done and almost finished.</p> <p>She also asked how the telephone number should be inserted on to the CCTV information plaque on the Memorial Hall. Clerk confirmed that she could write in permanent marker the mobile number of the Parish Council. Cllr Grey confirmed that he would contact the Chairman of the Memorial hall to ask what number they wanted on their information plaque.</p> <p><b>Cllr Stanton</b> confirmed that she had been collating a number of complaints regarding the GP Surgery. Many residents have been unable to obtain appointments and the overall feeling in the village was of disappointment. Cllr Martin explained that he had attended the meeting that a resident had organised. The Patient Liaison Group confirmed that each resident needs to</p>

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write in to the practice every time they have an issue. The practice have a legal obligation to reply to residents within 3 working days. If they do not or if you are not satisfied with the response then a complaint can be made to the CQC (Care Quality Commission) and when the CQC start to get complaints they then start taking notice.

**Cllr Grey** spoke at his dismay of the mess at Dickens Court, School Lane that had been caused by several vehicles parking on the grass verge. There was a discussion on whether there could be bollards placed there. **Bor Cllr Craske** confirmed that he would take this issue forward and put pressure on the appropriate person. He requested that Cllr Grey forward all the relevant information on this to him.

**Cllr Jeffery** confirmed that Parish Assembly arrangements were on schedule. Cllr Sparks confirmed that Friends of St Mary would offer glasses for the event.

Budget allocation had been £500 but these costs may overrun.

**Borough Councillor matters**

**REPORT FROM Bor Cllr LESLIE PEARTON who was unable to attend the meeting.**

1. I had a further meeting with two members of GBC regarding additional Litter Bins in Higham. We walked about the village and they agreed to place three additional bins; a slimline one outside the Post Office, one outside Acme Wines (no room outside Meadows) and to move the one by the Sports Courts to the steps by the school and replace with a double one by the Courts.

2. I pointed out the parking of the GBC vans at Dickens Court and they spoke with the Contractors

3. They also spoke about the Bus Stop Graffiti and confirmed that this had been dealt with.

*Cllr Jeffery commented on this point that the graffiti had not as yet been removed.*

4. Three Crutches Play Area is still being monitored by the Enforcement Officer

5. Three Crutches patrons illegal exiting off the grass verge has been passed to Tom Williams of KCC and I am chasing him on his findings to resolve this.

6. I have arranged for extra patrols regarding parking outside Higham Primary School

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		7. I have contacted KCC to enquire on the installation of the yellow lines in the Martins Close area.
		8. I have spoken with the farmer and he has given permission for the field at the Chalk Pit to be used for additional parking for the Jubilee Celebrations providing adequate monitoring is given.
		9. GBC arranged for a presentation at the Higham Village Club to the residents around the Merston Court area to understand the implementation of the Heat Pumps. Despite a lot of fuss being kicked up in the Club previously by many (and slanderous accusations on Facebook that I was receiving a back hander on this!!) only two residents attended along with two outside the village who were interested in the project; none of whom were those who previously complained.
		10. I met with Ian Rolfe, of the Higham Station Passenger Group, regarding the Thameslink timetable 'temporary' cuts and this is being monitored to prevent it being permanent.
		11. There are no other GBC matters I am dealing with since the last meeting that affect Higham.

**Bor Cllr Craske** spoke to confirm that he had had issues with his iPad and had not been receiving emails. Gravesham BC had now reprogrammed all iPads and had solved the issue. Cllr Craske asked that when emailing that everyone copy in his private address to ensure that he received all emails.

He also spoke of his attendance, along with Cllr Grey and Cllr Jeffery at the Commonwealth Day celebrations.

Boundary Commission had been quiet and no news had been received from them.

Merston Court – a meeting had been held with the residents to provide an update on what would be done with the heating system. Over 150 letters went out to residents and only 4 people attended and 2 of those didn't reside in Merston Court. Drilling of the bore holes will start on 28 March 2022 and will take around 6 weeks, processing one at a time. The new heating system will make a tremendous difference to the cost of the heating to both residents and GBC.

There will be signage with contact numbers for residents who have any issues with the procedures.

A new Leisure Centre is to be built on the same site as the present one at a cost of £7.5m. Work will commence to build the new Leisure Centre on the car park of the present site and once works are completed the old site will become the car park. It has an expected completion date of 2024 but this appears ambitious.

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St Georges Day parade will go ahead again now that COVID restrictions have been lifted. This year's parade will be on Friday 22 April.

**Cllr Craske** then spoke on the subject of Council tax. Although the (approx.) figure of £2,000 is charged, only a small part of this goes to Gravesham Borough Council. GBC did increase the charges this year, which equates to an increase of (approx.) £4.98 but this only equates to around 10p per week on average. Cllr Craske quoted the following approximate figures:

KCC	£1461
Fire & Rescue	£82
Police	£228
Gravesham BC	£217

**Cllr Jeffery** pointed out that all properties will receive a rebate of £150 almost immediately if paid by Direct Debit. The rebate in October will be £200 which relates to gas and electricity but that will be a loan which will be paid back by around £40 a year.

**Cllr Grey** confirmed that Cllr Bryan Sweetland is not attending Parish Council meetings but will be attending the Higham April Parish Assembly.

7	135	<b>Finance</b>
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- To consider the Parish Council funds and approve payments made on behalf of the Council

Members considered the payments Cllr Sparks proposed to accept the payments made and Cllr Holmes seconded the motion.

**The vote was unanimous in acceptance.**

- Proposal to purchase new Noticeboard

The Noticeboard located at the Three Crutches but had now fallen into complete disrepair. There was a discussion of where a new noticeboard should be placed. It was proposed that a new noticeboard would be best placed by the bench that is already insitu.

There was a discussion on the purchase of a Noticeboard, the Clerk having circulated a quotation.

**Cllr Howard** proposed that the Noticeboard be purchased and Cllr Holmes seconded he motion.

**The vote was unanimous in favour to purchase a landscape aluminium noticeboard sprayed in green.**

**Cllr Sparks** confirmed that she would liaise with KCC with regards to where the noticeboard should be placed. The previous noticeboard was in a precarious

Item	Minute No	Description
		position and members felt that it would be safer to request KCC for it to be placed next to the bench already there.
8	136	<p><b>KALC – update from meeting</b></p> <p>Cllr Grey confirmed that they discussed the rubbish on A226 and other parishes Neighbourhood watch schemes.</p> <p>Other councils are wearing Parish Council lanyards when carrying out litter picking. Something that Higham Parish Council might consider.</p> <p>The issue of Ellie Middleton PCSO had left was discussed.</p> <p>Some Councils have a pop up café or marquee in pub grounds where you can have tea and coffee. Cllr Jeffery confirmed that PCSO used to do that.</p> <p>Cllr Howard raised in the meeting the fact that housing development was going on right up the Higham Border. Cllr Pearton was taking this issue forward in any event.</p>
9	137	<p><b>Higham Memorial Hall Lease</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Cllr Martin</b></span></p> <p>Cllr Martin confirmed that he had contacted the Chairman of the Memorial Hall regarding the fact that a part of the car park (the small patch of grass) might be needed for Parish Council use and this needed to be included in the negotiations for the new lease. Cllr Martin was waiting for final response from Chairman of the hall having had several conversations on the subject.</p> <p>There was a discussion on why there is not a representative from the Parish Council at the Memorial Hall meetings.</p> <p>Cllr Grey put forward that when processing the Annual Council meeting Agenda that a Representative from the Parish Council for the Memorial Hall will be considered and proposed</p>
10	138	<p><b>Higham Preschool</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Clerk</b></span></p> <p>Clerk confirmed that she had invoiced the pre-school and awaiting payment.</p>
11	139	<p><b>Sports Courts</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Cllr Fox</b></span></p> <p>Insurance was discussed. All surfaced areas are insured and paid by the Parish Council. Cllr Holmes confirmed that the Sports Courts Association is run by a group of volunteers. Cllr Martin proposed that the Sports Association should have members of the Parish Council in a working group ie Cllr Fox and Cllr Holmes. The working group would be part of a quarterly meeting where finance, fencing, lighting and equipment would be discussed and confirmed.</p>

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12	140	<p><b>Streeting Lighting</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Cllr Martin</b></span></p> <p>Cllr Martin confirmed that the street lighting should be insured for at least £180,000 - £200,000.</p> <p>The Parish Council have accepted the quotation from Ken Bonner who has now been informed that he has been successful in winning the contract for the street lighting.</p> <p>The Parish will need to go out to EDF or Scottish power for competitive rates.</p>
13	141	<p><b>Lower Thames Crossing update</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Cllrs, Grey, Martin, Pearton and Sparks</b></span></p> <p><b>Cllr Sparks</b> had attended a meeting. Not a great improvement on changes to the plans for the south side.</p> <p><b>Cllr Martin</b> confirmed that there had been changes on the north side of the river.</p> <p>On the south side of the river there were to be no hard shoulders “because is not a motorway” (quote from LTC) and there are only two straight through lanes from Nells Café to go on to the M2 down to Medway bridge. Cllr Martin spoke to explain to LTC that they had a one-off chance to get this right. No emergency services would be able to get through. No extra lane could be added after. Cllr Martin asked them to reconsider their position.</p>
14	142	<p><b>Defibrillator</b></p> <p>Looked at possible sites for defibrillator. Looking at other options.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phone box at A226 – concerned at traffic and speed there</li> <li>• Garage at the top of Villa Road – concerned about traffic and traffic lights</li> <li>• Hollytree Garage</li> <li>• Indian takeaway – parking an issue</li> <li>• Malcolm’s bench – not many people living that way</li> <li>• Bodyworks – in the layby</li> </ul> <p>Options are to go for a solar powered cabinet which would provide more options to place. These are in the region of £1,000.</p> <p>Clerk suggested applying for a grant from either the National Lottery or British Heart Foundation. Cllr Sparks confirmed that the Parish would need to apply for a minimum of £5,000 to cover all costs.</p> <p><b>It was agreed that Clerk would investigate and apply for grant funding.</b></p>
15	143	<p><b>Newsletter</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to date position on articles</li> <li>• To resolve (vote) on budget if appropriate</li> </ul>

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		On schedule for printing. A meeting had been scheduled to finalise arrangements.
16	144	<b>Tree works and Recreation Ground</b> <b>Cllr Rivett</b>  No report.
17	145	<b>The Queen's Platinum Jubilee</b> <b>Cllr Jeffery and Cllr Stanton</b>  <b>Cllr Jeffery</b> reported that arrangements had been going well. Another meeting had been scheduled for April.  On the Thursday morning a coffee and cake event is being considered as a partnership with the Parish Council and The Gardeners. This could launch off the Jubilee Celebrations with the possibility of inviting the Mayor. Liz to invite the Mayor if the event is confirmed.  The history group are organising a display of village photographs from across the 70 years of the Queens reign.  A competition is being organised in partnership with Higham School - children can make bunting or book in a box for display in the Library and local shops. Entries will be judged in 2 age groups. A prize in each category and age group prize is proposed and a chocolate bar for every pupil entering the competition.  Cllr Grey proposed that the Parish Council provide the prizes for the school competition and members agreed.  The Bell ringers are proposing an opportunity for people to ring a bell for the Queen - an event on the Saturday and will be ringing themselves on the Thursday between 19.52 hours and 20.22 hours.
18	146	<b>Annual Chairman's Award</b> <b>Cllr Liz Jeffery</b>  Higham Parish Council Chairman's Community Award will be presented annually.  This is the Parish Council's opportunity to celebrate and recognise the contribution that people living and working in Higham for the community on a voluntary capacity.  Details will be posted on the Parish website.
19	147	<b>Climate change</b> <b>Cllr Howard</b>  Cllr confirmed that he is gathering information from the Clerk as to what it required in the report. Cllr Howard to send a list to Clerk of information required.
20	148	<b>Confirmation of next meeting</b>  Parish Assembly 7 April 2022

Item	Minute No	Description
21	149	<p><b>Resolution to exclude the press and the public</b></p> <p>To resolve<sup>4</sup> that the public be excluded from the meeting for the business specified below on the grounds that if the public were present during this item, it is likely that there would be the disclosure to them of exempt information.</p>
22	150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Storage</b></li><li>• <b>Assets – present and future</b></li><li>• <b>Employment Contracts</b></li></ul> <p>Cllr Grey proposed that Cllr Jeffery join him in checking items belonging to the Parish Council that are being stored in the previous Clerk's garage and sheds. They would then be able to discuss what to do with the records.</p> <p>Cllr Sparks suggested that she contact KCC archive regarding their collecting policy.</p> <p>Cllr Martin suggested keeping the garage and place shelving in the garage to enable additional storage.</p> <p>All councillors confirmed that all property of the Parish Council should be returned to enable the decision to be made. Members requested that the Clerk should write to the previous Clerk for access to her property in order that a collection of all documentation and assets of the Parish Council could be collected.</p> <p>A discussion then took place to the consideration of acquiring land to aid the residents of Higham.</p> <p>Employment Contracts were to be discussed in the next Parish Council meeting.</p> <p><b>The Chairman closed the meeting at 9:40 pm and thanked the members for attending.</b></p>

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**Cllr John Grey**  
**Chairman**  
**Dated 9 May 2022**

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<sup>4</sup> Pursuant to Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972