

DRAFT Minutes
Parish Council Meeting held on
13 June 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 Les Pearton Cllr Sue Sparks Cllr Toni Stanton	Chairman Vice Chair Also Borough Councillor
Absent:	Cllr Jamie Rivett Cllr Toni Stanton	
Members of public	3	

Item Description

1 Apologies for absence¹

Cllr Jamie Rivett and Cllr Toni Stanton sent apologies. The vote was unanimous in favour to accept. Apologies were also received from Bor. Cllr Harold Craske.

2 Declarations of interest²

None.

3 Public Session

- Report - PCSO Kirsty Lowe 58959, Gravesham Community Policing Team – Not present
- Kent Community Warden report – not present
- Peter Leakey – Speed watch report – not present, report provided as an addendum
 - Cllr Sparks spoke to confirm that while attending a speed watch session members of the public stopped them to explain that they were sitting in the wrong area. Quite clearly, they were in the right area as they had caught motorists speeding. When asking the members of the public where they thought the speed watch should be held they confirmed either Canal Road or Lower Rochester Road.

¹ Local Government Act 1972

² Localism Act 2011, s29

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- Members of public opportunity to ask questions³

Two members of the public were present to represent Higham Book Club to request a grant from the Parish Council purse. They had created two Book Boxes for the benefit of the village which has been well received. They had also started a bug hotel and intend to create a rockery to make the area look more appealing. These ladies had spent £200 of their own money. There was a discussion between the Councillors who were keen to recompense the ladies. Councillors were in agreement. Clerk was to add to the agenda for the next meeting to apply with statute. It was left that the Clerk would liaise with the ladies regarding how to provide the funds.

4 Clerk's report (to bring Members up to date with current issues)

The Chairman allowed a Member of Public to ask a question. Had there ever been any consideration regarding traffic calming. The Chairman responded that this had been done but only so far. Bor. Cllr Pearton confirmed that the Council had considered this issue in the past and it had been discussed in the Highways Committee Meetings. Cllr Martin confirmed that he had had conversations with KCC but KCC had confirmed it was a financial issue.

Cllr Jeffery suggested that the Parish Council should have complimented the Queen on her Jubilee. There was a discussion on the website in general and members were relatively content with the layout.

5 To approve Minutes of the Parish Council meeting dated 9 May 2022

There was a discussion and some wording was requested to be changed. Clerk confirmed that she would change the wording before she uploaded to the website.

The vote to accept the Minutes was unanimous in favour.

6 Parish Councillor matters

Cllr Jeffery wanted to thank Cllr Steve Sales for the work he had carried out during his time on the Parish Council. Cllr Grey, as Chairman, confirmed that he had already done so but Cllr Jeffery wanted the thank you stated in the Minutes.

Cllr Jeffery also confirmed that Gravesham Borough Council now has a new mayor. Cllr Stollard had been a councillor for Northfleet North since 2015 and attended the Jubilee football match on the recreation ground in support.

The football team was pleased that the mayor had been in attendance. They confirmed that the team wanted to make it an annual event.

³ 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.

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Cllr Jeffery also presented the Council with a copy of “Your Borough”, a Gravesham BC publication. In the Summer edition there was an article about the new Chief Inspector, Will Lay who had joined Kent Police in June 2007. Cllr Sparks spoke to ask Chief Inspector Lay to attend a parish council meeting. Clerk made a note.

Cllr Pearton explained that he had ensured that there were additional litter bins installed throughout the village and had hoped that all villagers were impressed with them. Cllr Fox had observed that one of the bins in the village didn't look quite level and required attention. Cllr Pearton confirmed he would look into that issue.

Hilary Cottage which has a static caravan on site, the Enforcement Officer has been contacted and is waiting for an answer to take this forward.

With regard to the Air B&B. There was some concern as this building is listed. Again, Cllr Pearton is awaiting a decision on this issue.

There had been complaints regarding the trains as they had been using a replacement bus service. The buses are not stopping at the stations. Cllr Pearton had been looking into this matter and will confirm the outcome at the next meeting. He understood that passengers had been stranded nowhere near where they lived.

There had been many coaches down at the Nuralite site and this issue had to be monitored. This had been occurring 24/7 and was not acceptable. Enquiries are being made as to whether the Coaches need an Operator's Licence or not. Cllr Pearton confirmed he would report back in the next Parish Council meeting.

With regards to the swings in the recreation ground, there had been an inspection by the Park Ranger of Gravesham BC and he confirmed that they are not in good order. He has confirmed that he will replace the damaged apparatus for free.

With regards to the see saw he referred to the Clerk. Clerk confirmed that Graham Marchant had the see saw seat.

With regard to the garages at Villa Road. These are owned by GBC. Some are rented and some are empty.

The Brownies funding, the company that Bor. Cllr Pearton works for are also funding this pack.

With regard to RS Skips he is also chasing Kirsty Lowe with regard to what is happening on this issue. Cllr Sparks confirmed that PCSO Lowe was trying to get relevant parties around the party. She is working towards this.

Three Crutches Public house; the fence has been restored to stop the cars pulling straight on to the road. There had been an application for a beer garden in the front

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of the public house but this has to be discussed with the Licencing Officer for a way forward.

Cllr Pearton asked what had happened to the Community Workshop.

The Clerk confirmed the person who wanted to take this forward had issues with his electricity bill for the building and confirmed he was putting the idea on hold for the present time. Clerk to liaise with him in a couple of months' time.

There had been discussions on Facebook with regard to children who had been approached by women standing in the bushes near the school. The police were called but could not get access to the cabinet (which is in the office in the pavilion) as she did not have a key to the cabinet. Cllrs discussed whether the Nursery Manager could have a key to the cabinet. When the Police are trying to gain access to the cabinet when its time critical.

Clerk to contact CCTV contractor to ascertain the best way forward on this to keep it legal.

As a reminder, on Friday 8 July, between 8:00 am and 9:00 am, the **Queens Baton Relay** will go through Gravesend. It will visit the Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara before being carried through the streets to Town Pier where it will be taken on board a boat and ferried across to Tilbury from where it will start its tour of Eastern England.

Cllr Pearton confirmed that these items were both Parish and Borough issues.

Cllr Fox had a request asking if the winners of the Jubilee football match are allowed to have the cup engraved with the winner's name on it. Members agreed that the Jubilee Cup could be engraved. All players would like to make this an annual event. Members agreed this would be possible and another "cup" would be purchased by way of a "Shield" to have the winners engraved on the shield each year.

Cllr Sparks spoke regarding Litter Picking. The next day would be a convenient day in July but negotiations are going on between Medway Council and Gravesham BC. A volunteer suggested a clean up of the riverside. This was welcomed by the Scout Leaders. This would be in September. Getting the litter back to dry land is an issue and this was being investigated.

Cllr Holmes confirmed that she had had her questions answered by Bor. Cllr Pearton in his report.

Cllr Martin confirmed that Cllr Pearton has answered any questions he had.

Cllr Howard mentioned a theft of the Salt Bin. Another salt bin had been stolen in Shorne. Clerk to confirm the issue with GBC.

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Cllr Grey was concerned at the fly tipping at the land by Higham railway station. Clerk asked to enquire if Network Rail could monitor.

7 Finance

“Thank you” letter received from Higham Brownies.

Acknowledged with thanks.

To consider a grant application made by The Gardeners Public House towards Jubilee expenses. There was a discussion on this and members wanted more details. The Clerk would provide receipts by email.

Decision deferred until the next meeting.

To consider the Parish Council funds and approve payments made on behalf of the Council

Cllr Martin proposed and Cllr Grey seconded to accept the payments made. Vote in favour was unanimous.

8 KALC – update from meeting

Cllr Grey attended the meeting by way of zoom. Pop Up Cafes were discussed. These are very popular with villagers. It was thought that maybe a pop up café in the Falstaff might be possible, or the Library.

The Lower Thames Crossing was also discussed. There are several consultations being carried out.

9 Higham Memorial Hall Lease Cllr Martin

Cllr Martin had heard nothing further back from the Trustees.

10 Allotments Cllr Sparks

Assist Clerk requested a decision on the cost of several plots that are being farmed rather than used as allotment plots. There was a discussion between all members on this issue. There was a proposal that the rent should double, from £75 to £150. Although this figure falls short of what could be recouped, the farmer carries out several tasks that would be a cost to the Council. The proposal for £150 was felt reasonable but it was pushed back to the Allotment Working Group to finalise the figure.

11 Higham Preschool Cllr Martin

Cllr Martin confirmed that the Parish Council needed to touch base with the pre-school with regard to a daily rate or otherwise. At present the pre-school have a 12-

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month contract. **Cllr Fox** confirmed that this arrangement appeared to be running successfully.

There were discussions on the amount of rent that should be charged.

They started the pre-school in Higham on 1 August 2021. It was decided that Cllrs Martin, Grey and Jeffery would meet to discuss a possible increase and to bring their decision back to full Council for confirmation.

12 Sports Courts Cllr Fox

Cllr Fox confirmed that they are working on the Changing Rooms. The outside area is also overgrown. A decision needs to be made who should look after this area.

It was confirmed that the sports association had applied for a number of grants towards the works needed and, as yet, not all the works had been completed, therefore it wasn't possible to know if there are any profits until all works have been completed.

13 Streeting Lighting Cllr Martin

Cllr Martin wanted to hear of news from the Chairman's meeting with Gravesham Council. Cllr Grey confirmed that Gravesham BC confirmed that they would be paying the electricity charges until all the works had been completed for eventual handover. Cllr Martin was concerned that there are one or two lights no longer appear to be working. KCC had confirmed that they had purchased several fittings in readiness to replace many of the light fittings. These fittings are now costed at £500. Cllr Martin confirmed that this is why we should not upgrade any lights as yet before they are handed over. If Higham PC had to upgrade these lights it would be to a cost in the region of £300,000. The 102 the parish council have on wooden posts would need a galvanised column and ask UKPN to supply an underground supply to. Cllr Martin confirmed that he will report back the contractor not to upgrade any lights until these have been handed over officially.

14 Lower Thames Crossing update Cllrs, Grey, Martin, Pearton and Sparks

Councillors had attended Consultations but had not found them helpful. **Cllr Martin** was to draft a response to the LTC team and circulate it to members. Clerk would then place the wording into a letter heading template for Cllr Martin to finalise and send.

Cllr Martin felt it would be necessary to liaise with Cobham and Shorne Parish Councils regarding making a joint comment to any Inquiry.

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15 Tree works and Recreation Ground Cllr Rivett

Cllr Fox requested a decision on who would be responsible for the ground outside the ground as the area required addressing for weeds and brambles.

Cllr Martin requested information on financial situation of the Sports Court Association. Cllr Fox confirmed that the finances were yet to be finalised but they had applied for several grants to carry out most of the work that was required. There was no profit in hand to pay for any ground's maintenance. The Sports Association were still trying to establish themselves financially.

Cllr Martin proposed that the Sports Association arrange for the vegetation around the Sports Area to be cleared and the Parish Council will incur the cost. Cllr Howard seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favour.

16 Operation London Bridge Cllr Jeffery

Cllr Jeffery confirmed that there would be a Working Group Meeting at the Library on 16 June at 10.30. The Church Warden would be in attendance.

17 Annual Chairman's Award Cllr Liz Jeffery

Cllr Grey moved this item forward to the next meeting.

18 Gardening Competition (name to be confirmed)

Cllr Jeffery circulated lists of roads in the village for Councillors to inspect and provide comments or marks. She also confirmed that it should be named "**The Village Annual Garden Awards**". There would be separate awards for gardens and hanging baskets. Cllr Jeffery will then ask a Horticultural Specialist to decide on the final winners.

19 Climate change Cllr Howard

Cllr Grey confirmed that he had provided Cllr Howards name to Gravesham BC as the person responsible for receiving Climate Change material for meetings etc.

20 Confirmation of next meeting 11 July 2022

Confirmed.

21 Resolution to exclude the press and the public

To resolve⁴ 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.

⁴ Pursuant to Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

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22 Storage and Employment Contracts

Storage – There was still more items to be retrieved from previous Clerk’s home. This is an ongoing task. Members discussed the issue and confirmed that the Parish Council required the signed Minutes of previous meetings. The Council required information on what had been sent to archive.

Clerk confirmed she had received all financial records that were necessary to carry out her role.

The members confirmed that any legal documents in the Clerk’s possession should be handed over to the parish.

Cllr Martin queried members on whether a set of shelves should be purchased in order to store paperwork which would be placed in plastic boxes.

Members discussed the issue and confirmed that Cllr Martin should purchase the shelves and Clerk to recompense.

Employment Contracts – These are being finalised by Cllr Rivett who was absent at the meeting. This issue was deferred until the next meeting.

23 Meeting closed by Chairman 10.29 pm

Cllr John Grey

Chairman

Dated 11 July 2022

- Speak to CCTV supplier company to ask the best way forward to keep it legal
- Clerk to speak to GBC regarding stolen salt bins.
- Cllr Martin, Cllr Grey and Cllr Jeffery to meet and discuss the proper rental charge for the pre-school for the next year of their Licence.
- Cllr Martin confirmed that he will liaise with the Street Lighting Contractor and confirm that he should not upgrade any street lights until further notice.
- Cllr Martin to draft a response to LTC team for Clerk to finalise. Clerk to then send to Cllr Martin to finalise and send.

- Cllr Fox to arrange for maintenance of the area outside of the Sports Ground and arrange payment by HPC.
- Clerk to write to previous Clerk for any signed Minutes and any legal documents in her possession.
- Cllr Martin to purchase shelving for the storage in garage hired from Gravesham BC.

Speed watch Report

09 May to 10 June

Site	Direction of Traffic	Sessions held	Time at road side	Vehicles	Top speed
School Lane before Vicarage Row	Towards station	4	7 hours 30 mins	31	35 mph
Bucklands Farm	Towards Station	4	7 hours 30 mins	31	46 mhp
Higham Primary School	Towards Village Centre	2	2 hours	1	36 mph

The lowest speed we can report a vehicle In a 30MPH Area is 35MPH

Speedwatch groups can now if they wish use bodycams