

HIGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held at the Memorial Hall, School Lane, on Monday, 9th September 2019 at 7.30 p.m.

Present: Cllr. J. Grey (Chairman)
Borough Councillor: Cllr. Harold Craske
Councillors: A. Carroll, R. Gilby, A. Howard, P. Holmes,
E. Jeffery, S. Mackie, A. Mendzil, L. Pearton (also Borough)
and S. Sparks.

In attendance: 4 Parishioners
PCSO Joanne Hartley and colleague
Peter Leakey (Parish Advisor)

Apologies for absence: Cllr. Bryan Sweetland (KCC)
Cllr. P. Allinson
Paul Hassell (Kent Community Warden), Vikki Brooke (Parish
Advisor), and Clive Stanley (webmaster)

The Chairman accepted apologies for absence.

There were no alterations to the Register of Members Interests.

Following concern expressed by a Parish Councillor, and consultation with KALC, it had been agreed to reinstate the gifts of hospitality register. The Clerk reminded Members that the limit above which declarations needed to be made was £40.

Weekly inspections of the Recreation Ground by the GBC Park Ranger for insurance purposes had been received.

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting, held on Monday, 22nd July 2019, were confirmed and signed .

Matters arising from the Minutes.

Including an update of actions from the last Minutes, the Clerk reported that:-

- a. P. 1344. Parklife Event. The Borough Council had supervised parking on the Recreation Ground and brought in portaloos for this event and the new look format had been a complete success.
- b. P. 1345. Higham Gardens for Pleasure Competition. The results had been received but a phone call was awaited from the judge before they could be released.
- c. P. 1346. Grant to the Poppy Project. It was agreed that the £200 grant would be paid by the re-imburement of invoices.
- d. P. 1349. Cllr. Craske had asked that the status of the parking bay outside the Meadows Stores in Forge Lane be placed on the agenda for the next Joint Transportation Board Committee.
- e. Website Report. In the absence of Clive Stanley the Clerk reported that recent updates had included the 2019 Audit accounts and forms, details of the Nuralite planning application, grounds for objection and photos of the Information Meeting, local road closure notices and the usual PC Minutes and Agendas.

In addition the following agenda items were raised by Cllr. Sparks:-

P. 1345 Parishioners Matters – Budget figures. Once the new website had been set up and current budget figures displayed, an explanation would be provided for Parishioners outlining that if the sum allocated to a certain area in the budget was not spent the figures might be open to misinterpretation. This information would also be placed in the next Parish Newsletter. At present a statement in the Annual Newsletter outlined that “the balance carried forward reflects the unused general and specific contingency funds, as well as funds for work carried out, and for which invoices are still awaited”.

P. 1345. Parishioners Matters – profile of Parish Councillors. Each Parish Councillor would be asked to provide a brief profile and this would be displayed on the new website by Cllr. Gilby.

P. 1346 Poppy Project. This initiative was to be launched on 4/11 in Higham Library at 11.30 a.m.

P. 1347 Planning tutorial. Cllr. Craske confirmed he could present this at any time except for a Wednesday evening and asked Members to provide him with some convenient dates.

P. 1347 Defibrillators. Confirmation was still awaited from GBC that these had been approved by the Planning Department.

P. 1348. Accounting Statements. The Clerk again apologised for the late arrival of these documents and assured Members that with the retirement of our Accountant a new system would be in place for the next financial year so that these could be received in sufficient time to be thoroughly read before the meeting.

Parishioners' Matters.

Barry Sutherland alerted Members to a large pothole to the railway bridge and a faded single yellow line outside Brookers Place. Cllr. Sparks confirmed that both of these items had been notified. It was agreed to ask Cllr. Sweetland to ensure that the bus stop markings were renewed as this location as it was very near to the site of the proposed roundabout. Barry Sutherland also reported an increase in lorries turning into Forge Lane by mounting the pavement and going over Telegraph Hill and down St. Johns Road.

To receive an update on the renewal of the Memorial Hall Lease.

The Clerk reported that our solicitor had offered to meet with representatives from both the Parish Council and the Memorial Hall Management Committee to answer any questions on the lease renewal and hopefully move the issue forward. Following discussion it was agreed that a representative from the Higham Village Sports Association should also be invited to attend.

To evaluate the success of the Nuralite Information Meeting held on 4th September 2019.

The Clerk reported that approximately 175 people had attended this event. The Powerpoint presentation was now on our website which was linked to our Facebook page, and spare copies of the grounds for objection were in both Higham Library and the Post Office. Caution had been expressed regarding the accuracy of some personal views given at this meeting and for this reason they had not been placed on the website at this time.

To further discuss the upgrading of the Parish Council website.

As Cantium Business Solutions could not offer an immediate service for the upgrading of the Parish Council website Cllr. Gilby outlined his proposals for a new website based on a wordpress format as used by Ticehurst Parish Council. He would build the new website which would be GDPR compliant and transfer the gov.uk domain name. Current information from the existing website could be dropped into the agreed format to which a Facebook feed could also be added and new email addresses generated for all Councillors. The cost of this would be £600 plus an annual subscription. of £300. Members thanked Cllr. Gilby for his offer of support and unanimously agreed to proceed.

To receive the report of the Joint Working Groups Meeting and to ratify the decisions.

The notes of the Joint Executive, Community Development and Infrastructure Working Groups meeting held on 2/9 had been circulated to Councillors prior to the Meeting and attention was focussed on those decisions which required ratification as below:-

1. Allotments. Costs for the clearance of 2 plots were awaited. Outstanding rents would be collected by the deadline and vacant plots offered elsewhere. Overgrown plots would be identified. Approval was given for the purchase of weed suppressant sheeting (est. £300)

2. Highways Issues. Cllr. Sparks would chase all outstanding items she is dealing with including following up with KCC regarding weight restrictions. It was agreed to proceed with the application for yellow lines at the Gardeners Junction for the "tip" only.
3. Bus Stops. Cllr. Mendzil would photograph and get costings for bus shelters (including bee friendly).
4. Higham Village Plan. The ownership of the wall at the front of the shops would be investigated.
5. Recreation Ground and Landway. It was agreed to:- get the potholes to the Landway filled in by KCC, obtain quotations for play equipment up to the sum of £10,000, carry out further work to the trees in the Recreation Ground and obtain quotations for new tables and chairs up to the sum of £6000, award a £15,000 grant for improvements to the sports courts to the Higham Village Sports Association, and remove the tree to the rear of the changing rooms,
6. Garden Competition prizegiving. It was agreed that:- this should be the same format as last year and take place on 25/11 in Higham Library with the Mayor of Gravesham in attendance and an in-house buffet provided. The judge, Lucy, would be invited to attend. Due to the larger number of prizewinners the prize fund would be increased to £300.
7. Salt Bin Inspections. A check list would be provided by Cllr. Jeffery for salt levels in bins throughout the village.
8. Pond Restoration It was agreed that Cllr. Jeffery would send a letter to local residents close to the Sun Pond appealing for help in cutting back the brambles. Specialist surveys would be needed in the spring up to the agreed sum of £10,000 and grants applied for.
9. Arrangements for Firework Display. It was agreed that Cllr. Mackie would contact Cllr. Allinson to arrange a meeting with him and a handover of the completed forms and documents.
10. Events for 2020. Dickens 150 (150th anniversary of the death of Charles Dickens) would take place in June 2020 and items under consideration included performances. red geraniums throughout the village, an outdoor cinema, and theatre group, The Tokyo Olympics would also take place in 2020..

Members commented that they much preferred the format of this joint meeting which had followed strict time limits for each item and much had been achieved in one meeting.

Lower Thames Crossing update.

Highways England had asked to meet with the Parish Council to give a presentation regarding progress with the Lower Thames Crossing works and to explain about the forthcoming Development Consent Order. A provisional date of 28/10 had been identified and would be confirmed at the next Meeting.

Councillors' Matters.

County.

As Cllr. Sweetland did not attend the Meeting no report was given.

Borough.

Cllr. Craske reported that he was unsure when the Nuralite planning application might come before the Regulatory Board as new documentation was still being received. It would be possible to keep an eye on the number of objections received by way of the planning portal. It was agreed to request that Parishioners should submit their objections to the Borough Council by the end of the month and messages to this effect would be placed on the website and Facebook page.

Parish.

Cllr. Cllr. Jeffery reported that a tractor unit was being parked to the edge of the field opposite the entrance to Martins Close. She had reported fly tipping to Canal Road which had now been collected.

Cllr. Gilby alerted Members of the need to produce various policies compliant with the new web presence.

Cllr. Mackie reported damage to the CCTV cameras to the Memorial Hall linked to the incident of youngsters climbing onto the roof.

Cllr. Pearton commented that at the present time the banning of parking on pavements was under consideration at a national level.

The Chairman expressed concern that the damaged fencing from the recent accident adjacent to the railway bridge had still not been adequately repaired.

Cllr. Mendzil drew attention to the decaying metal strips which held the upright railway sleepers at the edge of the Recreation Ground together. A specialist repairer would need to be sought.

BREAK FOR REFRESHMENTS

Reports.

a. Planning.

Plans were available for the following planning applications which had been received and reviewed by the Planning Committee:-

Appln. no. 20190702 Barn At Whitehouse Farm, School Lane

Erection of a single dwelling house, associated landscaping, post and rail boundary fencing and ecological enhancements.

Appln. no. 20190794 12, Carton Road

Extension to existing front dormer.

Appln. no. 20190809 Gable End, Watling Street

Erection of a detached garage at the front of the property.

Appln. no. 20190855 7, Colewood Drive

Erection of a two storey and single storey rear extension.

Appln. No. 20190808 7, Bull Lane

Application for a Lawful Development Certificate in respect of the proposed construction of a dormer extension in the rear roof slope and conversion of the roof space into habitable rooms.

Appln. no. 20190904 The Coach House, Little Hermitage Farm, Gravesend Road

Application for approval of condition 7 of planning permission reference number 20160187 relating to details of the materials and finishes of the new joinery for the doors, windows and roof lights to be used in the conversion of part of the existing garage/domestic store (formerly bullock shed) into a residential annexe.

b. Community Development Working Group

There was nothing to add to the joint report given earlier in the Meeting.

c. Infrastructure Working Group

There was nothing to add to the joint report given earlier in the Meeting.

d. Executive Management Working Group

There was nothing to add to the joint report given earlier in the Meeting.

e. Higham Speedwatch

Peter Leakey reported that a total of 11 Speedwatch sessions had been held over a period of 13 hours 30 minutes. Details of a total of 88 vehicles which had exceeded the speed limit had been forwarded to the Police. The highest speed observed was 45 mph. outside Buckland Farm.

f. Kent Community Warden

As Paul Hassell did not attend the Meeting no report was given.

g. Kent Police

PCSO Joanne Hartley updated Members regarding problems with youngsters climbing onto the roof of the Memorial Hall. Several drug related reports had been received. The Police Speeding team had held two recent Speedwatch sessions within the village. The PCSOs noted concerns regarding speeding vehicles through the village, especially in the early hours. Cllr. Sparks advised Members that a Meeting of the Safer Higham Group would take place on 25/9 in Higham Library.

Finance.

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

Clerks salary (July)	1150.95
HMRC (PAYE/NI July)	212.62
KCC (LGPS July)	433.52
Clerks salary (Aug)	1150.95
HMRC (PAYE/NI Aug)	212.62
KCC (LGPS Aug)	433.52
SSE (electricity toilets)	37.14
KCC (TRO initial)	1385.00
EDF Energy (Pavilion electricity)	112.26
Business ~Steam Ltd. (water for toilets)	40.11
Business Stream (water for allotments)	102.68
SLCC (annual membership)	156.00
Clerk (garden vouchers for competition under S.137/139)	300.00
Singlewell Stationery and Print ltd. (Nuralite leaflets and banners)	451.60
GBC (uncontested election)	392.77
M.J.Read A4G accountants (2019 audit)	420.00
Martin Fielder-White (2019 internal audit)	80.00
KALC (Dynamic Councillor X 3)	180.00
Team Knowhow (printer insurance renewal)	30.00
Martin Tolhurst (solicitor - on A/C)	900.00
Liz Hart (delivery of Nuralite leaflets)	250.00
Higham Village Sports Association (2 broken windows)	200.00
GBC (rent for garage July by D/D)	60.35
GBC (rent for garage August by D/D)	60.35
St. Johns College (quarterly rental due 25/9)	750.00

The following proposal was recorded in the Minutes:-

“This Council in accordance with its powers under Sections 137 and 139 of the Local Government Act 1972, should incur an expenditure of £300 for garden gift tokens from Millbrook Garden Company, which is in the opinion of the Council in the interests of the area or its inhabitants”.

Correspondence.

The correspondence folder had been available for perusal by all Members during the Meeting on that evening, but the Clerk drew Members' attention to the following item:-

1. An email from a Parishioner expressing concern regarding anti-social behaviour at the Recreation Ground was to be forwarded to the PCSO.

To note the date of the next Parish Council Meeting

This was given as being Monday, 14th October 2019 at 7.30 p.m.

Any Other Business.

None was brought to the notice of the Meeting.

It was resolved that:-

“Pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public be excluded from the following item because it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted that if members of the public are present during this item, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act”.

There being no other business, the Meeting was closed to members of the public at 10.40 p.m. by the Chairman.