

HIGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held at the Memorial Hall, School Lane, on Monday, 13th January 2020 at 7.30 p.m.

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

In attendance: 6 Parishioners
Peter Leakey (Parish Advisor)

Apologies for absence: Cllr. P. Holmes
Community Warden Paul Hassell
Vikki Brooke (Parish Advisor)

The Chairman accepted apologies for absence.

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

Confirmation of weekly inspections of the Recreation Ground by the GBC Park Ranger for insurance purposes had been received as well as the Annual Inspection Report for the play area which had been given to Cllrs. Mackie and Sparks.

A Risk Assessment of the Recreation Ground had been completed by Cllrs. Sparks and Howard and had identified that the path from the car park to the sports courts gate was slippery when wet. Some work to the trees in the Recreation Ground had taken place before Christmas with the remainder being expected to be completed in the spring. Any maintenance issues with the play equipment would be referred to the Borough Council.

The Parish Council welcomed Clive and Judi Stanley to the Meeting. Clive had retired as webmaster at the end of the year and the Parish Council showed its appreciation of his long service to the village by presenting him with a signed card and a gift experience to wish him a long and happy retirement.

Parishioners Matters

Fiona Spirals from The Friends of St. Marys Church reported on the successful fundraising events which had been held during 2019 and which had raised £1700 towards the restoration of the church spire. As the total cost of repairs for this had now been estimated at £20,000 further events were planned for 2020. The Parish Council awarded a grant of £600 towards the costs of a Spring Dance to be held at the Memorial Hall on 25/4/20 and would show full details of all planned events on its website.

Mr Hoggarth enquired when a reply might be expected to an email sent to the Parish Council by the Pavilion Management Committee

Community Reports

Higham Speedwatch

Peter Leakey reported that a total of 8 Speedwatch sessions had been held since the start of January over a period of 9 hours 35 minutes. Details of a total of 29 vehicles which had exceeded the speed limit had been forwarded to the Police. The highest speed observed was 46 mph. outside Buckland Farm.

Kent Community Warden

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

Kent Police

PCSO Jo Hartley reminded Members that the next PCSO surgery would be held at Hayleys Tea Room on 15/1/20. Such surgeries were advertised by a poster in the shop window. She hoped to ask the Specials to hold another Speedwatch session to support the excellent work of the local volunteers. Cllr. Sparks reported that damage had been caused to windows and street lights in the village by the firing of a ball bearing gun. This had been reported to Kent Highways but they had not reported this to the Police. A data logger was to be installed in School Lane which would record the number of lorries, their weight and speed.

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting, held on Monday, 18th November 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. 1361 Matters Arising. Dickens sign. This would shortly be removed by the signwriter for repainting.
- b. P. 1362 Website. The new look Councillors email addresses had appeared on the Church Christmas leaflet.
- c. P. 1362 Parish The Steadman Close street name sign would be inspected by GBC to see if it needed replacement.

Cllr. Jeffery highlighted a pothole located at the exit to Steadman Close which had been reported to her by a Parishioner and had been ringed with paint but not repaired. Cllr. Sparks agreed to take a photograph to send to Kent Highways.

Cllr. Sparks reported that the deep pothole reported on P. 1362 of the minutes had now been repaired.

Annual Parish Newsletter 2020.

The Clerk reminded Parish Councillors of the reports which they needed to submit by the end of the month. The front cover would feature a line drawing of Charles Dickens as 2020 would be the 150th anniversary of his death.

To receive an update on the new Parish Council website

Cllr. Gilby reported that email migration to the Microsoft server would shortly be taking place which it was hoped would resolve the current problems with the receipt of emails by the Clerk. He had noted that not all Members were using their dedicated email addresses as yet.

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

The Clerk reported that a meeting was due to take place the following evening with the Hall Committee to further discuss the content of the new Memorial Hall lease.

To discuss quotations received for the new playground equipment and decide upon a supplier

Cllr. Mendzil reported that a total of four playground equipment suppliers had been asked to submit ideas for new equipment for the playground along with relevant quotations. Additional funding applications for this project had been submitted. Following discussion and viewing of the proposals, the majority view of the Members was to select Playground Projects Ltd. as the supplier but the final decision on the equipment to be ordered would depend on the total amount of funding secured.

To note the current vacancy on the Parish Council to be filled by co-option

The Clerk reported that confirmation had been received from the Borough Council that the vacancy caused by the resignation of Peter Allinson could be filled by co-option. Vacancy notices were currently being displayed on parish noticeboards with a closing date of 27/1/20.

Lower Thames Crossing – Legacy and Benefits Workshop

Copies of a Powerpoint presentation provided by Cllr. Sparks, who had attended this Workshop, had been circulated to Members prior to the Meeting. She reminded Members that the Highways England Mobile Information van would be visiting the village again in March and it was anticipated that details of the funding under this initiative would be released in April.

Councillors' Matters.

County.

Cllr. Sweetland reported on the closure of the Brewers Lane overbridge for emergency repairs. Budget briefings were currently taking place and KCC had produced a five year plan consultation document entitled “Your Future Our Priorities” which was available to respond to on line. There was currently lobbying taking place for the removal of the Operation Brock traffic management scheme. The Higham Library Extra scheme had been well used by Parishioners but recent problems had been caused by the front door being broken. Cllr. Sparks agreed to email Cllr. Sweetland with up to date details.

Borough.

Cllr. Craske reported that it was understood that amendments may be made to the Nuralite planning application which would then be re-submitted. In his capacity as Vice Chairman of the North Kent Marshes Drainage Authority he reported that there was evidence of erosion of the shoreline particularly on the Higham Marshes. The Borough Council would shortly be releasing details of events taking place in the Borough to mark the 150th anniversary of the death of Charles Dickens.

Parish.

Cllr. Mendzil advised Members that the Higham Playground Project was currently a local cause featured under the “green token” scheme at Waitrose in Longfield. The Chairman enquired regarding progress with the reinstatement of the parking bay at Meadows stores and reported that he understood that the delay in repainting the faded white lines at Chequers Street was due to the current consultation being carried out by the Borough Council on the Controlled Parking Zone which was due to be concluded by the end of the month. He reminded Members that the Borough Council was still waiting to hear of any land which the Parish Council felt could be put forward for consideration to meet the Government targets for new homes within the Borough.

BREAK FOR REFRESHMENTS

Reports.

a. Planning.

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

Appln. no. 20191183 41A, Forge Lane

Erection of a single storey rear extension, alterations to the roof for an infill extension at first floor on the front elevation with alterations to the front porch.

Appln. no. 20191249 10, Dombey Close

Application for a Lawful Development Certificate in respect of the proposed erection of a single storey rear extension.

Appln. no. 20191222 Land Adjacent To Home Farm Cottage, School Lane

Outline Application with Some Matters Reserved for the erection on 3no. self build houses with associated garages and landscaping.

Appln. no. 20191161 Abbey Farm Barn, Church Street

Application for the removal of 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 proposed as an annexe to the existing main barn residential conversion; to allow the annexe to be converted to a residential dwelling.

Appln. no. 20191294 Little Mockbeggar, Town Road, Cliffe Woods

Application for approval of condition 9 attached to planning permission reference number 20190385, prior to the first occupation of the caravans hereby permitted, details of secure and weatherproof cycle storage (for a minimum of 20 bicycles).

Appln. no. 20191337 15, St. Johns Close

Single storey rear extension with a depth of 5 metres, maximum height of 2.7 metres and eaves height of 3 metres.

Appln. no. 20191259 The Pavilion, Recreation Ground, School Lane

Application for Lawful Development Certificate in respect to proposed extension to the tennis courts incorporating extension to the enclosed fencing.

Appln. no. 20200019 1, Whitehouse Farm Cottages, School Lane

Application for a Lawful Development Certificate in respect of the proposed construction of dormer extensions in the rear roof slope, installation of velux roof windows to the front roof slope, conversion of the roof space into a habitable room and front porch extension.

b. Community Development Working Group

Cllr. Mackie reported that the Clerk had passed him details of the supplier of the Olympic Big Screen.

c. Infrastructure Working Group

An update prepared by Cllr. Sparks had been provided for Members prior to the Meeting. The Chairman would lead a brainstorming session with Parish Councillors in February to identify the next set of priorities and action for the Village Plan and these would be added to both the Love Higham and Parish Council Websites as well as being promoted at the forthcoming Annual Parish Assembly. Cllr. Sparks would draft the content for the KCC Highway Improvement Plan. The Higham Clean Up would take place on the weekend of 28 and 29 March. The planning permission issue with the defibrillator cabinet had now been resolved and a hosting agreement produced for approval.

d. Executive Management Working Group

Cllr. Jeffery reported that Judi Stanley had agreed to prepare the 2020 Newsletter.

Finance.

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

Clerks salary (November)	1150.95
HMRC (PAYE/NI November)	212.62
KCC (LGPS November)	433.52
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HMRC (PAYE/NI December)	212.62
KCC (LGPS December)	433.52
Expenses for use of room as office (1/10/19 to 31/12/19)	227.50
Sue Sparks (Lawful Development Certificate)	142.00
Clive Stanley (webmaster services 27/9/19 to 31/12/19)	107.25
Peter Allinson (keys)	18.50
Gravesham Borough Council (business rates - Pavilion – last)	1108.00
Sue Sparks (garden prizegiving buffet)	64.97

Elizabeth Jeffery (garden prizegiving buffet)	4.50
Clerk (stationery)	283.68
John Grey (travel expenses)	27.00
Emma Jeffrey (outsourced accountancy provision)	350.00
John Grey (Chairmans allowance)	300.00
Higham with Merston PCC (church Christmas leaflet – S137/139)	120.00
Internet Stationers Ltd. (garden certificates and analysis book)	75.89
K. Cooper (tree works to Recreation Ground – phase 1)	4550.00
1 st Stop Property Solutions Ltd. (pest visits to Pavilion)	120.00
Clerk (webmaster retirement gift experience)	76.00
Packhams (Pavilion)	65.00
GBC (rent for garage December by D/D)	76.85
GBC (rent for garage January by D/D)	76.85
St Johns College (quarter year rent for Recreation Ground 25/12)	750.00

To agree a precept for the financial year 2020/2021

A copy of the updated budget figures agreed at the Meeting held on Monday, 6th January 2020 had been circulated to all Members prior to the Meeting. It was proposed by Cllr. Howard, seconded by Cllr. Pearton, and agreed by all Members that this be accepted as a true record and a precept of £ 91,294 be requested for the financial year 2020/2021

To consider the effectiveness of the current system of internal control and audit as required under Regulations 4 and 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations (2003)

At the Budget Meeting Members had reviewed the effectiveness of the current system of internal control and audit as required under Regulations 4 and 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations (2003). It was agreed that our outsourced accountancy provider, Emma Jeffrey, should be asked to carry out the completion of the accounts and annual return and Martin Fielder-White would carry out the internal audit (as he had done in 2019). As in 2019 the Notice of Audit would be displayed on both noticeboards within the village and also on the Parish Council website.

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. The Clerk had placed information on certain topics on separate treasury tags to help Councillors follow events.

To note the date of the next Parish Council Meeting

This was given as being Monday, 24th February 2020 at 7.30 p.m.

Any Other Business.

None was notified,

It was resolved that:-

“Pursuant to Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business 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. Higham Parish Council is satisfied that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information”.

There being no other business, the Meeting was closed to members of the public at 10.20 p.m. by the Chairman.