

## HIGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the re-arranged Parish Council Meeting held at the Vestry Hall, Hermitage Road, on Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at 7.30 p.m.

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

In attendance: 4 Parishioners  
Peter Leakey (Parish Advisor)  
Vikki Brooke (Parish Advisor)

Apologies for absence: Kent County Councillor Bryan Sweetland,  
Borough Councillor, Harold Craske  
Cllrs. P. Holmes and S. Mackie  
Community Warden Paul Hassell  
PCSO Jo Hartley

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.

### Parishioners Matters

None were brought to the Meeting.

### Community Reports

#### Higham Speedwatch

Peter Leakey reported that a total of 11 Speedwatch sessions had been held since the start of January over a period of 11 hours 30 minutes. Details of a total of 52 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 the Clerk reported on his behalf that the gutter in front of the bus stop by the Dickens sign on the Gravesend Road continued to flood badly after heavy rain including over the main road. Signs were to be installed at the lay-by next to The Three Crutches PH following a complaint by local residents regarding excessive amounts of litter. The door at Higham Library was still not working properly.

#### Kent Police

As PCSO Jo Hartley did not attend the Meeting no report was given.

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting, held on Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020, were confirmed and signed

#### Matters arising from the Minutes.

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

- a. P. 1366 Matters Arising. Dickens sign. The old Dickens sign had been retrieved from the verge following the recent gales. The new sign was now in position.

- b. P.1367. Borough. As requested, a copy of the report on Dickens 150 had been placed in the correspondence folder.

#### Annual Parish Newsletter and Annual Parish Assembly 2020.

The Clerk confirmed that the newsletter would be printed by Singlewell Stationery and Print Ltd. at a cost of £1088 and be delivered by Liz Hart for £260. The Clerk alerted Members to the Government prediction that the virus would peak in two weeks and that both the buffet for the APA and the singing with the Ukulele Band would pose a droplet hazard. Although the Assembly needed to proceed the buffet and entertainment were optional. As the Newsletter was due to go to print by the end of the month it was agreed to delay a final decision until further guidance was received, which could then be included in the Newsletter.

#### Lower Thames Crossing – Supplementary Consultation.

Cllr. Sparks thanked those residents who had visited the HE Information Van when it visited the village and asked questions relating to the Supplementary Consultation. Copies of the questionnaire and envelopes were now available within Higham Library or the form could be completed online. There was a large map on display within the Library and Eva and her team would be willing to come and talk to the Parish Council direct if we so wished.

#### To receive an update report from the Higham Village Sports Association

At the invitation of the Chairman Jamie Fox reported that the Sports Association had now secured £55,000 of grant funding and would be able to commence the work of extending the sports courts. The contractor would be Sovereign Sports and it was hoped that work would commence in mid-April and the Courts would re-open in mid-June. The Parish Council agreed to the provision of water for the project from the Pavilion.

#### Playground Project Update

Cllr. Mendzil reported that she would shortly place an order for the new play equipment from Playground Projects Ltd, having raised just over £49,000 in grant funding for the replacement of the wooden play equipment outside the Pavilion. Cllr. Sparks confirmed that she expected that the pile of prickly chippings to the corner of the Recreation Ground next to the new play area would be removed by the time that the equipment was to be installed.

#### Councillors' Matters.

##### County.

As Cllr. Sweetland was unable to attend the Meeting the Clerk reported on his behalf that the repair to the Library door was in hand but taking rather a long time. He was extremely concerned at the quickly developing situation regarding Coronavirus, especially as the County Council was working closely with Public Health England as it was responsible for public health in Kent. The new Leader of Kent County Council, Roger Gough, was much more supportive about the LTC than his predecessor. Cllr. Sweetland had recently met with the Director of Kent Highways in order to try and influence KCCs formal response to the Highway England consultation. He advised Members that the KCC Five Year Plan could now be accessed on the website.

##### Borough.

Cllr. Pearton reported that the Borough Council had held a meeting with Highways England regarding the Lower Thames Crossing. There was no further news regarding the Green Belt Review for the Local Plan. The GBC Housing Committee had written to the Government pressing for action to bring 250,000 empty properties back into use because of the current housing shortage.

Cllr. Carroll confirmed the receipt of the Local Housing Needs Survey documents.

### Parish.

Cllr. Pearton expressed concern that the repairs to the wire netting at the edge of the bridge over the railway line had still not been completed.

The Chairman reported that more pot holes had opened up to Steadman Close following the recent heavy rain. Fencing to the front of a bungalow to Alexander Cottages, School Lane, had been ripped down following a confrontation with a group of youngsters and the Members urged that this matter should be reported to the Police by the resident.

### Reports.

#### a. Planning.

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

##### Appln. no. 20200037 Merryview, Gravesend Road

Extension to existing house. Alterations to roof, ground and first floor to create additional bedroom.

##### Appln. no. 20200069 2, High View

Proposed side and rear extensions, conversion of loft and remodelling of front porch (existing garage and rear extension to be demolished).

##### Appln. no. 20200086 11, Carton Road

Conversion of the existing garage to living accommodation. Bricking up of the existing garage door openings with two windows being installed. Internal partitioning work to create two bedrooms and a bathroom.

##### Appln. no. 20200089 37, Forge Lane

Application for variation of condition 2 attached to planning permission reference no. 20180925 for the demolition of an existing conservatory to facilitate a two storey extension to provide additional bedroom space and ground floor accommodation, incorporating two new dormer windows and two Juliette balconies to the first floor. Conversion of a garage into habitable space with the addition of 2 new velux windows. Erection of a new 2 bay garage; to allow the new garage to be built in an alternative position to that approved.

##### Appln. no. 20200130

Erection of a single storey rear extension.

##### Appln. no. 20200136 15, St. Johns Close

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

##### Appln. no. 20200132 Gads Hill House School, Gravesend Road

Retention of existing temporary portacabins for a period of three years or until Phase II of the current approved master plan for the site is completed.

##### Appln. no. 20200143 Land South of Two Gates Hill, Town Road

Use of the land for the stationing of 4 x caravans for occupation by seasonal agricultural workers all year round; the stationing of 15 x caravans for occupation by seasonal agricultural workers from 01 March to 31 October and the unoccupied storage of the 15 caravans over winter (part retrospective).

##### Appln. no. 20200194 Hollycroft, Watling Street

Proposed conversion of existing double garage into a self-contained annex dwelling for clients elderly parents.

##### Appln. no. 20200208 Oast View, Lower Rochester Road

Erection of a first floor side extension.

##### Appln. no. 20200215 23, Hermitage Road

Proposed front extension with internal wc.

#### b. Community Development Working Group.

It was reported that the Parish Council would not make a decision regarding holding a

Firework Display within the village this November until it was advised what restrictions might be in place regarding Coronavirus.

c. Infrastructure Working Group.

An update report from Cllr. Sparks had been provided for Members prior to the Meeting. Members noted comments from the Memorial Hall Committee regarding what they would like to see inserted in the updated Village Plan in place of the current entry.. A date remained to be arranged for a brainstorming session, to be led by the Chairman, for the updating of the Village Plan. Members agreed the updated KCC Highway Improvement Plan which would now be submitted. Everything was in place for the forthcoming BIG Higham Clean Up on 28 and 29 March with additional equipment purchased, risk assessments reviewed and revised and publicity in place. The Memorial Hall had offered to store the three new defibrillators until they could be fitted. Signed Hosting Agreements needed to be obtained once venues had been re-checked before the new equipment could be ordered. Clearance works at the allotments were now complete and 7 plots were vacant at the current time. Overgrown plots had been identified and the revised weed letter would be sent. Two sheds had collapsed in a recent storm. Consideration needed to be given to the next phase of the tree works at the Recreation Ground identified in the tree survey. A safety check of the play equipment had been carried out with Cllr.Howard.

Cllr. Sparks appealed for help with administering the Parish Portal whereby faults for the attention of Kent Highways were entered onto the system. Cllr. Howard expressed an interest to help.

The Clerk reported that the Gr@nd had advised her that their accounts system would be changing from an academic year basis to a financial year basis which would bring it in line with that of the Parish Council. She was awaiting the last invoice for Higham Youth Club and would then send the outstanding cheque for the running costs to Kay Pinder.

d. Executive Management Working Group

Cllr. Jeffery advised Member that it was hoped to hold a garden competition for the children in 2021 which would be judged by Millbrook Garden Centre. Details of the forthcoming Dickens 150 celebrations were contained within the current issue of Your Borough.

To fill the current vacancy on the Parish Council by co-option

Expressions of interest from two applicants had been circulated to Members prior to the Meeting where both were in attendance. In alphabetical order, each applicant was invited to introduce themselves to Members and to answer any questions that they might have.

The votes cast by a show of hands were as follows:-

Applicant 1: 3 (Cllrs Sparks, Howard and Carroll).

Applicant 2: 5 (Cllrs Grey, Mendzil, Jeffery, Pearton and Gilby).

David Martin signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office form as a Parish Councillor.

Finance.

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

Clerks salary (January)	1150.95
HMRC (PAYE/NI January)	212.62
KCC (LGPS January)	433.52
Clerks salary (February)	1150.95
HMRC (PAYE/NI February)	212.62
KCC (LGPS February)	433.52

British Telecom (broadband)	181.47
EDF Energy (electricity – Pavilion)	253.68
SSE (electricity – toilets)	38.92
Business Stream (water – toilets)	40.45
Business Stream (water – allotments)	12.45
Sue Sparks (litter hoops)	79.90
JMF Garden Solutions (allotment clearance)	3336.00
Emma Jeffrey (outsourced accountancy provision)	200.00
Friends of St. Marys Church (S. 137/139 grant)	660.00
1 <sup>st</sup> Higham Scouts (S137/139 grant)	300.00
Action with Communities in Rural Kent (subscription)	80.00
G. Knight (Love Higham website maintenance – 6 months)	45.00
KALC (Website Accessibility workshop)	72.00
KALC (Good Councillors Guide)	15.76
Terry Morris (signwriter – new Dickens sign)	210.00
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 25/03)	750.00

#### Correspondence.

The contents of 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 items:-

1. Receipt of a thank you email from Clive Stanley for his retirement gift from the Parish Council.
2. To note the collapse of the retaining wall behind the bus stop in Chequers Street in early March which had been reported to Bryan Sweetland.
3. Receipt of a complaint from a Parishioner that ball bearings had been fired from a catapult at windows in the centre of the village.
4. Commencement of the repair works for the Larkin Memorial by the clearance of dense brambles around the monument.
5. It was agreed to give a grant of £330 to 1<sup>st</sup> Higham Brownies under (S137) to offset the cost of holding meetings within the village.

#### To note the dates of the next Parish Council Meetings

These were given as being Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020 for Parish Council Meeting  
Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> April for the Annual Parish Assembly.

#### Any Other Business.

None was brought to the notice of the Meeting.

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.