

HIGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Virtual Parish Council Meeting held on Zoom on Monday, 7th December 2020 at 7.30 p.m.

Present: Cllr. J. Grey (Chairman)
Kent County Councillor: Bryan Sweetland
Councillors: A. Carroll, P. Holmes, A. Howard,
E. Jeffery, D. Martin, L. Pearton (also Borough)
and S. Sparks.

In attendance: 4 Parishioners
Peter Leakey (Parish Advisor)

Apologies for absence: Cllrs. Mendzil and Gilby
Vikki Brooke (Parish Advisor)
Borough Councillor, Harold Craske

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 from 11th March until 30th November a total of 60 Speedwatch sessions had been held over a period of 59 hours 15 minutes. Details of a total of 282 vehicles which had exceeded the speed limit had been forwarded to the Police. The highest speed observed was 46 mph outside Buckland Farm. He appealed for more volunteers to join the team.

Kent Community Warden

No report had been received

Kent Police

No report had been received

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting, held on Tuesday, 10th March 2020, were confirmed and signed

Matters arising from the Minutes.

There was nothing to report.

Ratification of documentation

Various items of documentation had been circulated to Members prior to the Meeting. It was proposed by Cllr. Pearton, seconded by Cllr. Carroll and agreed by all those present that they be ratified as a true record.

General update

Street Lighting Agreement

The Parish Council had been advised that its Street Lighting Agreement, signed in 1980, had been withdrawn. At the present time the Parish Council was awaiting a survey by KCC of all the lighting assets within the village and a cost for these lights to be converted and adopted by KCC.

Higham Library

Sadly the Library was not amongst the first few to be re-opened. The Parish Council had been advised not to expect this to happen until after the start of the new financial year.

Pavilion

During the summer the works to the Pavilion on the Recreation Ground had been completed and the building now had a disabled toilet provision. It was the intention of the Parish Council to offer a sub-lease for the building.

Memorial Hall Lease

Work on this had progressed well during the lockdown and the Hall Committee's solicitor was examining a draft copy of the new lease before it came back to the Parish Council for formal approval. Several people had expressed an interest in becoming a Trustee. Sadly at present the Hall was closed again as we were in Tier Three.

Lower Thames Crossing update

The Development Consent Order (DCO) for the Lower Thames Crossing had been unexpectedly withdrawn by Highways England after the Planning Inspectorate had indicated that it would be refused in its present form. It was widely expected that it would be re-submitted in the New Year

Gravesham Local Plan update

Following the long awaited publication of the Local Plan Core Strategy, the Parish Council had learnt of a serious threat to the Green Belt land within the village to accommodate approximately 1800 additional homes within Higham which would have the effect of doubling the village in size. The Parish Council was supporting the CPRE Campaign across the Gravesham Rural Parishes entitled "STOP THE GREEN BELT GRAB!" and two members had joined a large working group. Advisory leaflets had been sent to every home within the village and there was further information on both the website and Facebook page. At the present time the consultation was due to close on 31st December 2020.

Cllr. Martin explained that the planned merging of Lower Higham with Mid Higham within a new settlement boundary would open up land to accommodate an additional 335 houses in the centre of the village and the potential loss of the Recreation Ground to achieve this was of great concern to the Parish Council and Parishioners alike.

Cllr. Sparks reported that a standard objection letter was being prepared by the Working Group to accompany a campaign of banners and posters to highlight the issue. It was essential that the residents of Higham supported this campaign as we needed a big response.

Cllr. Sweetland commented that he felt that infrastructure should be secured before any plans were agreed to.

Nuralite Planning Application update

The Parish Council had submitted objections to both the original and the revised planning applications for the Nuralite site and this issue was widely expected to finally go to the Planning Board for consideration later this week.

Cllr. Sweetland revealed that he disagreed with the response submitted by Kent Highways to the consultation and had written to the engineer concerned to let him know. He offered to speak at the Planning Board Meeting against the KCC response if he was able to.

Councillors' Matters.

County.

Cllr. Sweetland confirmed that the County Council had expressed concern regarding the high number of COVID cases currently within Kent, which had been placed in Tier Three. He confirmed that he had just signed off the bus shelter grant and, on behalf of Cllr. Mendzil, the Chairman thanked him for his support.

Borough.

Cllr. Pearton confirmed that the Pantomime at the Woodville Halls had been cancelled due to the pandemic.

Parish.

Cllr. Pearton highlighted several potholes to the railway bridge.

Cllr. Jeffery reported that new liners were to be placed in the Dickens planters with a selection of flowers for the winter season. The Chairman thanked her for dealing with this matter on behalf of the village.

The Chairman reported that skip lorries had been observed travelling up through the village and Cllr. Martin confirmed that he had met an articulated lorry coming up School Lane by the flats at Mountbatten Avenue.

Reports.

a. Planning.

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

Appln. no. 20201063 Sun Farm, Church Street

Erection of part single storey and part 2 storey rear extension.

Appln. no. 20201148 Gore Green Farm, Bull Lane

Application for the approval of conditions 8 and 9 attached to Listed Building Consent reference number 20180381 relating to joinery details and materials.

Appln. no. 20201168 The Three Crutches, Old Watling Street

Application for a minor material amendment to planning permission reference number 20181094 for the erection of 2 no. detached dwellings with associated car parking and amenity space following reconfiguration of the Three Crutches PH car park and amenity space; to allow revisions to external form and materials including Permitted Development criteria compliant ground floor, single storey rear extensions to allow minor revision to external hard landscaping finishes.

Appln. no 20201200 20, Walmers Avenue

Conversion of part of the existing garage to create a one bedroom annex.

Finance.

The Clerk asked for approval for the items shown on the attached sheets, this being proposed by Cllr. Martin, seconded by Cllr. Howard and agreed by all Members.

Correspondence.

The Clerk drew Members' attention to the following items:-

1. Members indicated that they would like to invite Karen Francis to speak to Members on Zoom about the Future Hoo initiative. The Clerk would obtain a list of dates.
2. Members sadly accepted the resignation of Stewart Mackie from the Parish Council due to pressure of work brought on by the continuing COVID pandemic. The Clerk would notify the Borough Council who would advertise the vacancy to see if an election needed to be held.

To note the dates of the next Parish Council Meeting on Zoom

This was given as being Monday, 11th January 2021 at 7.30 p.m.

The Budget Working Group would meet on Monday, 14th December 2020 and Monday, 4th January 2021.

Any Other Business.

None was brought to the notice of the Meeting.

There being no other business, the Meeting closed at 8.53 p.m.