

Minutes of a meeting
Higham Parish Council Meeting held on
18 October 2021, at 7:30 pm
Higham Village Memorial Hall, School Lane, Higham ME3 7JL

C/2021-22/10/1-11

Present Cllr John Grey **Chairman**
Cllr Liz Jeffery **Vice Chair**
Cllr Nikki Fox
Cllr Pam Holmes
Cllr Alan Howard
Cllr David Martin
Cllr Les Pearton
Cllr Sue Sparks
Cllr Toni Stanton

Apologies Cllr Jamie Rivett

Members of public 10

The Chairman opened the meeting on time at 7.30 pm

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1	42	Apologies for absence¹
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Cllr Rivett was unable to attend and his apologies were accepted.

2	43	Declarations of interest²
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None.

3	44	Public Session
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Chairman to suspended the meeting to allow the public to speak

The Chairman of the Memorial Hall asked questions regarding negotiations on the Memorial Hall lease which members were able to answer. There were discussions regarding the Trust Deed which Cllr Martin would seek to establish with Parish lawyers.

Other items were discussed which would be dealt with in due course.

He then went on to explain that there is an issue with parking at the hall which a solution needs to be found. The hall had secured the Blood Donor

¹ Local Government Act 1972

² Localism Act 2011, s29

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Service using the hall and the car park would be required for this and this would pose a problem during school start and close times.

PCSO report

PCSO Ellie Middleton, PCSO for Higham, Cobham, Shorne and Higham PCSO and colleague who is PCSO for Northfleet, North and South were able to provide a report of their checking on the area.

There had been parking issues with regard to the school and she had been liaising with Cllr Sparks. She had also liaised with her Parking Department and they aim to do some kind of talk to the school on road safety. She confirmed that a child had been hit a car and although the child had not been injured, this has brought the issue of parking to a head.

Elie had spoken to Council regarding a single yellow line but it is not enforceable and they are reluctant to do that. Zig zag yellow lines are enforceable by police officers and parking officers.

Headmistress confirmed that she would take a note of registration number to stop the parking issue. Ellie confirmed that she would be writing to the parents of those parking there. Cones are being considered as school times.

Green Farm Lane is an issue as it is weight restricted road. Traffic Team on this but they have stepped away from it.

There had been an issue of heavy lorries cutting through Green Farm Lane. It is a weight restricted road and therefore lorries should not be driving through that lane.

Police were keen to get photos on lorries going through this road. Police will be sending a letter to each resident in Green Farm Lane requesting that they take photos of any lorries and send to PCSO where Traffic can deal with the issue and send the culprits a fine.

Two thefts had been reported in the area.

Kent Community Warden report

Community Warden Hassell reported that they were still getting issues with the public dumping rubbish in layby but this is hard to manage.

Paul explained that the role of the Warden has changed since the COVID pandemic had taken hold. Paul now deals mainly with vulnerable people and checking on their welfare. Paul confirmed that he is still present in the village but not always when expected due to his other commitments.

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Paul's Manager then spoke to confirm that Dartford and Gravesham have staffing issues and have now been reduced to only 6 wardens. He confirmed that Paul is likely to retire very soon. It is likely that they may recruit next year but this has not been confirmed.

They are now involved in a new KickStart project who will run along the Warden service.

Many outside agencies are asking for their help which amounted to several referrals per week which takes the wardens away from their duties.

Wardens also visit scam victims so are working alongside the police.

Cllr Sparks requested information from Paul's manager as to what they can do for the village.

Cllr Fox made the point that if we should not expect to see him on his usual days was there a particular day that Paul could attend? The Manager confirmed that this all depended on what staff he had at the time.

Cllr Howard asked what a full complement of staff would be and the Manager confirmed that his ideal to run the service properly is 10.

There were no parishioners.

4	45	Clerk's report (to bring Members up to date with current issues)
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The Clerk referred to her report which was enclosed as an Appendix.

5	46	Councillors matters
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Nothing to report.

Parish Councillors matters

Cllr David Martin discussed the issue of the lease for the Memorial Hall. This had taken some time to organise due to COVID lockdown and the fact that he was not involved initially. Cllr David Martin proposed that the Parish Council go ahead and sign the lease and Cllr Grey seconded. The voting was unanimous in favour.

Cllr Fox commented on the Working Group that will be set up for the Rec. Unfortunately, Cllr Rivett was unable to attend the meeting to discuss the way forward for the Working Group. Cllr Fox confirmed that she has some issues with regard to vegetation on the rec that needs addressing.

Cllr Jeffery confirmed that she had attended Vision Zero at Manston Airport which was a Kent County Council strategy for setting a target for zero road fatalities by 2050. She handed leaflets she had been given to Cllr Sparks and the Clerk.

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Cllr Jeffery also mentioned the issue of salt bins that needed addressing for the winter period. Cllr Jeffery and Cllr Howard to check the bins are sufficiently full.

Cllr Martin asked what the relationship was between the Parish Council and whoever runs the Sports Facility. Cllr Fox confirmed that there is a Higham Village Sports Association Committee who were running the facilities of the Sports Courts and the changing rooms on behalf of the Parish Council. Cllr Pearton confirmed that in previous years there had been a member of the Parish Council who sat on both the Sports Association Committee and the Hall Committee and bring forward to Parish Council meetings news from both. Cllr Holmes confirmed that there were now two members on both committees. Cllr Fox advised that there are currently no profits due to the need for continuing works/improvements that need to be carried out.

Cllr Martin reaffirmed his question regarding the Sports Committee. He asked the question whether the Sports Association whether it made a profit and what it does with the money.

Cllr Pearton asked how the Sports Association fund themselves. This clarification was required for insurance purposes.

It was concluded that the Working Group discussion should have discussions on these points. Chairman to discuss the issue with Cllr Rivett to take this forward.

Cllr Sparks thanked the Parish for the grant provided to the History Group.

Cllr Sparks also confirmed that funding may be available for St Mary's Church.

Cllr Sparks also confirmed that there would be more letters to go out to plot holders who were not keeping their plot as agreed. Also work needed to be done to clear areas and there would be a cost incurred.

Cllr Grey spoke to request that the Parish plant in a tree in Lake drive in the next financial year.

Borough Councillor matters

Cllr Pearton confirmed that he and Cllr Jeffery and Cllr Grey attended a meeting with Richard Hart at Gravesham Council regarding the Nuralite S.106 monies. The meeting went well and Richard complimented the Higham Councillors on their knowledge of the subject. Cllr Grey confirmed that they were informed that Gravesham Council have full control over the situation.

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Cllr Pearton confirmed that we were doing the very best we can for the residents of Higham. Units B1, B2 up to B3 which was storage. No retail.

The removal of the tree was discussed and Richard Hart is looking into the matter. The meeting was very constructive.

Cllr Pearton confirmed that there will be another meeting regarding RS Skips. He confirmed that due to the pressure being brought to bear from the Parish the situation looked better in that something might be able to be done about it. Councillors were hopeful.

Cllr Pearton confirmed that he was also dealing with the issue of The Three Crutches. He has scheduled meetings with the planning officers. Although the play equipment has been passed, children had been climbing on to the play equipment and looking into the gardens of the adjoining properties. Cllr Pearton had called a meeting with Richard Hart and the planning officer who passed the application.

Cllr Pearton is also dealing with Thameslink. He has requested a meeting with Adam Holloway where he will need to attend in London. Cllr Pearton would like to know what type of service Higham are expected to receive with the new franchise.

Cllr Pearton is also dealing with an issue with Derby Gardens – Leylandii trees which were put in as a hedge. The trees are some 40 feet high now and they are causing issues. Has a meeting with Chief Executive to discuss this matter. Cllr Grey asked the Clerk to process a letter from the Council in support of Cllr Pearton in this matter. Clerk to arrange. Cllr Martin then confirmed that the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 should come into play in this instance.

Cllr Pearton also confirmed that at a Gravesham B C meeting the issue of charging for the Refuse Tip was discussed and it may be that these charges will be stopped.

KCC representative

None present.

6	47	To approve
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- Minutes of Parish Council meeting held on 6 September 2021
- Minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council meeting held on 4 October 20

The vote on the proposal to accept both sets of Minutes was unanimous.

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7	48	
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Planning

Appendix A

Cllr Pearton discussed three planning applications.

1 Providence Cottages. Demolition of an existing single storey extension and the erection of a new single storey extension. The members had no objection to this application.

St Johns Road. Demolition of existing extension and loft conversion and erection of a single storey rear extension raising the ridge height of the roof to construct a dormer extension in the rear roof slope and two dormer windows in the front with a skylight window. An erection of a storm porch. This is overdevelopment and not in keeping with that area. It would then transform from a bungalow into a larger house. The members felt that this was overdevelopment and that the application should be declined.

The application 20211098 for Lawful Development Certificate of mixed use classes for retail baker and hot food café was not discussed as this would automatically be approved by Gravesham Council.

Items 1, 2 and 5 of Appendix A were not discussed and therefore no vote was taken on those applications.

Nuralite

Had been discussed earlier in the meeting.

Street Lighting

Cllr Martin confirmed that a zoom meeting with Gravesham and KCC had taken place. They confirmed that the costings in the previous letter which was sent to Clerk Linda Carnal were incorrect. It is up to the Parish Council whether they adopt the lighting or not.

Gravesham were going to send information on those companies who supply the electricity but by the time of the meeting had not been received. They were also going to send names of companies who maintain the lights and another who would work out how much the electricity would cost.

Gravesham were not prepared to survey the 163 lights and it was left to Higham councillors to do so. There was a discussion on who had what paperwork to enable the task to be carried out.

UK power networks will not allow any more street lights on their poles but are not forcing any removals.

Cllr Martin confirmed that the survey would be carried out asap.

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Cllr Pearton suggested placing a light at Steadman close steps which should be considered.

Lower Thames Crossing

Cllr Sparks confirmed that there was nothing to report.

HIF – Medway Council

Cllr Pearton wanted to make the Parish Council aware that there is an extensive amount of development proposed for the Hoo peninsula. Medway Council had requested an extension of time for the HIF bid as they realised that they were not going to finalise everything in the timescale. They received a 12 month extension. Cllr Pearton felt that the Parish should keep its finger on the pulse of Medway Council.

Cllr Pearton would like to support neighbouring councils and asked how we could do so. Cllr Howard asked whether as a parish we could write to MP Kelly Tolhurst.

It was decided that the Clerk should write to Ward Cllr Sands on the Parish behalf in support of Hoo Parish Council efforts and ask what the Parish can do in order to support them. i.e. what establishment could Higham PC write to in support.

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Finance

Appendix B

The Clerk referred Members to the Finance Appendix. Members were content to approve the payments and the vote was unanimous in favour of payment.

Youth Club – Cllr Sparks and Cllr Holmes

Cllr Holmes explained that the payment for staff for the Youth Club had been sent to the Clerk for payment and she wanted confirmation that this invoice could be paid. The Clerk confirmed that she would process for payment as soon as practicable.

Cllr Holmes also gave a short report on how well the Youth Club is doing at this time and how it has picked up again since COVID restrictions had been lifted.

British Legion payment for wreath and lamp post poppies

The Clerk confirmed that she had taken delivery of the wreath to be placed in the Church on Remembrance Day in November. She had also sought out lamp post poppies. Cllrs Howard and Stanton confirmed that they would

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place these poppies on the lamp posts in the village centre as soon as practicable nearer the date.

9	50	Village Maintenance
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Caretaker/road sweeper -Members to discuss and consider on a proposal for employing a Caretaker/Road Sweeper and the costs involved.

The Chairman asked whether any members were prepared to put a proposal for employing a Caretaker whereby a full discussion took place.

- Members discussed the question of whether employing a road sweeper would be beneficial. It was confirmed that the automatic sweeper was not doing the job as well as a manual sweep.
- Cllr Grey suggested that the Council request an additional sweep.
- Cllr Sparks asked the question whether the roadside should be sprayed with weed killer as all Councils are trying to be more environmentally friendly in this climate. If the weeding is not going to be done then how is this going to be managed in the future. Will it be done in the future and if not what would be the damage to the road.
- Cllr Sparks also asked if there was any capacity and Cllr Pearton confirmed that what was required was more vehicles.
- Cllr Pearton confirmed that Gravesham had two electric vehicles which only held enough charge for half a round. There are no charging points in the village at this time and this is another issue that will have to be investigated as we, as a nation, go over to electric vehicles.
- Cllr Sparks confirmed that she is of the opinion that the litter is less since the Community Litter picking started.
- Members felt that the matter of a Caretaker/Roadsweeper could be discussed at the Chairman's meeting at Gravesham Council and we are investigating what to do about the weed issue.

Community Litter Picking -Members to consider and discuss on a proposal for Community Litter Picking

- Cllr Grey confirmed that the Litter Pickers do a good job.
- Cllr Pearton confirmed that he felt that overall the village is clean and tidy and he would personally like to thank the Litter Pickers for doing a great job in keeping the village tidy. Cllr Pearton felt that a thank you was in order. The village would be in a much worse place without the Litter Pickers.

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- Cllr Sparks requested volunteers for the November litter pick over a two day period. She confirmed that she would set up a zoom meeting to finalising the Litter Picking days.

10	51	Highways – Cllr Sparks
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- There are issues of parking at the Memorial Hall and the new nursery.
- We must raise the issues of parking. Does the Nursery have a road safety plan? Does the school have a road safety plan? Cllr Sparks felt that it would be in order to speak with the school with the PCSO and a few representatives from the Parish Council. Cllr Rivett had already had initial conversation with the School and has expressed an interest moving forward. Cllr Sparks asked for more volunteers on this. Cllrs Pearton volunteered to attend if he was available at that time. Cllr Sparks then confirmed that 3 councillors in total would be sufficient.
- List of priorities for the Highways Improvement Plan. Cllr Sparks is waiting to hear from KCC as to when the new year and new list would come into the fore on this. Its either 1 January or 1 April. A 20 mile an hour limit was suggested and Cllr Sparks confirmed that other parish councils were also considering this option too.
- Highways Working Group has been scheduled for 15 November and Cllr Sparks was unable to attend that meeting was hoping that it would go ahead in any event.
- It was agreed talks would be undertaken with the nursery and Cllr Fox agreed to undertake this forward.

11	52	Queen’s Platinum Celebration Working Group
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The Working Group discussed the plans they had for the celebration and they were all going well for what is expected to be an Event at the Rec on Saturday 3rd June.

The Working Group insists that the event will be fully inclusive in order to allow everyone to take part with whatever they already have or can make.

Many different ideas were discussed but all are in the very early stages of organising and the group were still waiting to hear back from organisations.

One of the ideas was for a callout for knitted flowers to be made into a presentation. It was thought that some of the poppies could be used but different colours and perhaps different flowers were required. Red, white and blue would be ideal.

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There was a proposal for a grant for this celebration but the total figure was not to hand at this present time.

There will also be a gardening competition named High in Bloom to try and get red white and blue displays.

There was a discussion on a beacon and whether it would be acceptable for the Parish Council pay half the cost and the High Club pay the remainder. Cllr Martin proposed that this was a good idea. Cllr Pearton seconded the proposal and the vote was unanimous in favour.

12	53	Policies
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As the meeting had gone over time the Chairman referred the approval of the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations until the next meeting when possible.

13	54	Confirmation of next meeting
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Monday 22 November (Budget & Finance only)

Monday 29 November to include Mayoral visit

14	55	Resolution to exclude the press and the public
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To resolve³ 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.

15	56	Personnel
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Cllr Grey brought the Assistant Clerk into the meeting to introduce her to the parish. The Clerk had confirmed that she would be reducing her hours from 25 hours per week to 20 hours per week. The Assistant Clerk would work 5 hours per week on Planning initially and then helping in other areas where possible to take the load away from the Clerk.

Cllr Pearton requested that the Clerk ensure that the Assistant Clerk sign the official confidentiality agreement.

Cllr Sparks suggested that the Assistant Clerk be provided with the laptop that had been purchased for Speedwatch but was not being used. Clerk to organise.

It was suggested that the Asset Register be updated.

Cllr Grey confirmed that he would write to Linda Carnall accepting her letter confirming her retirement and to thank her for her long years of service.

³ Pursuant to Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

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CLr Grey also confirmed that the Deputy Clerk is now the Clerk to Higham Parish Council

The meeting closed at 10:50 and the Chairman thanked the members for attendance.

Chairman
Dated 29 November 2021

Planning Appendix October 2021

1	<p>Roof alterations and insertion of dormers as part of the conversion of existing garage and garden store to form an annex to be used ancillary to the main dwelling house.</p> <p>11 Norah Lane Higham Rochester Kent ME3 7EP</p> <p>Ref. No: 20211236 Received: Wed 06 Oct 2021 Validated: Wed 06 Oct 2021 Status: Pending Consideration</p>
2	<p>Application for Listed Building Consent for the replacement of western red cedar shingles with riven oak shakes to spire of church.</p> <p>St Marys Church Church Street Higham Rochester Kent ME3 7LR</p> <p>Ref. No: 20211192 Received: Mon 27 Sep 2021 Validated: Wed 06 Oct 2021 Status: Pending Consideration</p>
3	<p>Application for Lawful Development Certificate in respect of the existing mixed use classes E(a) retail bakery and E(b) hot food cafe.</p> <p>Hayleys Of Higham 8 School Lane Higham Rochester Kent ME3 7AT</p> <p>Ref. No: 20211124 Received: Tue 14 Sep 2021 Validated: Tue 05 Oct 2021 Status: Pending Consideration</p>
4	<p>Erection of a single storey side and rear extension with mono pitched roof with skylights.</p> <p>1 The Larches Higham Rochester Kent ME3 7NQ</p> <p>Ref. No: 20211098 Received: Mon 06 Sep 2021 Validated: Wed 06 Oct 2021 Status: Pending Consideration</p>

FINANCE APPENDIX

Balances as at Monday 10 October 2021			
Barclays Current Account (as at 10 October 2021)			21,384.46
Barclays Deposit Account (as at 10 October 2021)			149,796.57
		Total	£171,181.03
Payments received since last update (included in figure)			
Allotment receipts			
H A Halls	Plot 4	25.00	
A Adams	Plot 70	25.00	
T S R Yelland	Plot 19	25.00	
R Vinten	Plot 74	25.00	
		Total	£100.00
BALANCE			
Payments made since last meeting			
Post Office – postage	Debit Card	6.01	
Vodafone phone payment	Debit Card	17.00	
Vodafone Deposit on the account	Debit Card	20.03	
Amazon Market place – Bluetooth mouse	Debit Card	15.99	
Amazon Market place – Microsoft 2019 for Word	Debit Card	19.99	
Kent County Playing Fields Subscription	BACS	20.00	
Mark Lyons – IT help for John Grey	BACS	40.00	
Banner Stationery	BACS	117.59	
Village Stores – Tea, Coffee, Sugar, Water for meeting	Debit Card	10.46	
Hoo News and Booz – Card for Fr James	Debit Card	6.80	
Scottish Water – Toilets school lane	Debit Card	49.45	
St Johns College Cambridge	BACS	750.00	
SI Service Solution – Legionella Pavilion	BACS	924.80	
Martin Tolhurst – Pavilion and Allotment gardens and land behind Thamesview Cottages.	BACS	1,440.00	
Post Office – postage	Debit Card	10.20	
Vodafone mobile phone (loan payment)	DD	17.00	
Nexus Group (work transferring hosting)	BACS	150.00	
Vodafone calls	DD	17.32	
Plantscape Dickens liner	BACS	18.00	
HMRC Taxi/NI September	BACS	529.20	
Clerk net salary September	BACS	1,155.53	
Deputy Clerk net salary September	BACS	1,936.00	
Buckland Lake Café – Interview Assistant Clerk	Debit Card	24.10	
		TOTAL	7,295.47
BALANCE			

Ear Marked reserves

Amenities acquisition fund	100,000	A Parish should only have 12 months Precept in the bank. It is possible to keep “Ear Marked Reserves” for special projects.
Bus Stop Replacement Fund	4,000	
IT Equipment/Repairs Fund	4,000	
Allotment income	4580	
GENERAL RESERVES	58,601	