

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN THE
COUNCIL CHAMBER, VESTRY HALL ON THURSDAY 12TH
FEBRUARY 2015**

PRESENT: Cllrs. Bancroft, Bunyan, Cook, Fermor, Fletcher, Goodchild, Hemsted, Holmes, macLachlan, Summers, Swann and Veitch. Borough Cllrs. Linda Hall and John Smith.

APOLOGIES: Cllrs. Hazlewood, Marley & Rook. Borough Cllr. Tom Dawlings.

The Chairman read out the following statement.

Members who had a personal or prejudicial interest, whether direct or indirect within the meaning of Section 51 of the Local Government Act 2000, or a personal or prejudicial interest defined by the Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Parish Council's Code of Conduct, in any of the matters appearing on the agenda were invited to declare that interest at this stage. Alternatively, personal interests can be declared at the time when the specific item is being discussed, if a member wishes to speak on an item in which they have a personal interest.

No interests were declared.

Cllr. Veitch informed Members that she was standing in for the Chairman this evening. Cllr. Rook had been in hospital and was now recovering at home. Cllr. Fermor suggested that we send a get well card.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING:

205: The Vice Chairman, Cllr. B. Veitch proposed that the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 8th January be adopted as a true record. This was seconded by Cllr. Cook and agreed. Cllr. macLachlan abstained. Cllr. Summers mentioned that he had been confused when reading about the new doors for the Information Centre which was reported under the heading of "Burials". He suggested that the heading should be in full i.e. Burials and Properties and Planning should read Planning & Preservation Management. For consistency all the headings should also include the words Committee Report.

CHAIRMANS REPORT:

206: The Vice Chairman reported that Cllr. Bancroft had been our representative at a meeting in Maidstone this morning regarding rural speeding. Cllrs. macLachlan and Fermor had also attended. She invited Cllr. Bancroft to brief Members.

Cllr. Bancroft stated that according to a news report, Kent is the worst county for accidents. Rural A roads are a particular problem. However Kent has the largest stretch of motorway in the country. The main speeding problem areas are the A229 Hawkhurst to Maidstone, the A268 Hawkhurst, the A262 Sissinghurst and from East Farleigh to West Farleigh. She had mentioned at the meeting a call from a parishioner in New Road who was concerned about accidents by Angley Woods caused by speeding and parked cars. Chief Inspector Dave Pate attended the meeting; he was responsible with the rural aspect of policing with the local policing teams. He supported Speedwatch and supported one speed check per month and enforcement.

Cllr. Bancroft informed Members that she had written to him in November about rural policing and was put in touch with PS Shearing who had been very helpful and arranged speed checks in the village of Sissinghurst. She told the meeting that she had been pleased with the police intervention. Chief Inspector Pate admitted that more enforcement was needed but he was constrained by lack of resources and manpower. Guy Rollinson – Speedwatch Support Officer – stated that he was pleased with the success of Speedwatch. Neither he nor the Police supported volunteers having speed guns.

Kent County Council stated that there was £900,000 in their Members own pot which could be used for local improvements. It was generally felt that there were problems with communication with Kent County Council. We were told that parish councils could get signage changed if they put in funding and that speed limits could be changed with police support. We need to get our county councillors involved.

Suggestions made at the meeting were:-

- More enforcement of speeding offences.
- Speedwatch to have a speed gun. A pilot scheme was suggested.
- Kent speaks to other counties who seem to be solving the speeding problem e.g. Oxfordshire.
- More speed cameras but unfortunately the money goes to central government.
- Speed vans to be randomly spaced out and put in different places. Communications need to be undertaken with parish councils to find places.
- To bring speed limits in line. The problem of having 30 – 60 mph limits in a short distance. A lower speed can also bring problems, especially on a straight road.
- To continue education of road use in schools, especially for pupils ready to learn to drive.

It was decided that a sub-committee of about six people would be led by Chief Inspector Dave Pate to discuss the way forward. Names were to be put forward.

Cllr. macLachlan stated that the meeting had been arranged by Kent County Councillor Sean Holden but KCC Members were all at a budget meeting so could not attend. Helen Grant MP was in attendance. Ann Barnes – Police & Crime Commissioner – had chaired the meeting and had spent a long time taking points. A lot of parishes had attended the meeting and the Police did not have an opportunity to speak until the end of the meeting. He felt the policemen treated us as peasants but the politicians were helpful. The professional policemen were against the public using speed guns. Cllr. Bancroft stated that she disagreed with Cllr. macLachlan regarding speed guns, she was not in favour.

Cllr. Bunyan asked how the results for the worst offending roads were arrived at. It appeared that they were in areas where there were speed watch groups. Cllr. Holmes thanked Cllrs. Bancroft, Fermor and macLachlan for attending and he sensed that there was a certain amount of frustration in speed watch groups. He asked the Members who had attended whether they felt that things would improve. Cllr. macLachlan replied that some schemes were losing volunteers and unless they get some teeth things would not improve. Responding to a question from Cllr. Veitch, the Clerk confirmed that the Sissinghurst speed watch group is made up of volunteers and not a parish council responsibility; it is therefore up to the various groups to nominate volunteers for the sub-committee to be led by Chief Inspector Pate.

STANDING ORDERS & FINANCIAL REGULATIONS:

207: The Vice Chairman invited Cllr. Swann to respond to questions from Members on the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations which were carried over from the last meeting to enable Members more time to read them.

The Clerk clarified to Cllr. Bancroft that the under the heading Previous resolutions that the standard wording was now six months when previously it had been five. No other questions were raised and therefore Cllr. Swann proposed that the newer version of the Standing Orders be adopted. This was seconded by Cllr. Goodchild and agreed.

Cllr. Swann then referred to the Financial Regulations. Cllr. macLachlan had already raised an issue under 1.13 which referred to the setting of the final budget or the precept. He was correct in that the Parish Council is not entitled to delegate this specific item and therefore it was quite right and proper that this should now always be considered at Full Council.

A full discussion then took place on the problems of the timetable for the various committees to set their budgets and also the fact that the Policy & Resources Committee met on the Tuesday before the Thursday Council Meeting. Cllr. Cook suggested that the Policy & Resources meetings could be moved back a week but Cllr. Swann reminded Members that this would cause problems with paying the monthly cheques. More thought would need to be given to the problem.

Cllr. Swann then proposed that the Financial Regulations be adopted with the clarification that the setting of the final budget and precept is considered by Full Council as a proper agenda item. This was seconded by Cllr. Fermor and agreed.

COMMUNITY CENTRE COMMITTEE:

208: Cllr. Veitch referred to the report of the meeting held on the 20th January and mentioned the Draft Head of Terms with the Library and also a Draft on a paper which might be put out to residents should we need to go for a loan. She asked Members that if they had any comments on these two issues that they send them to her by email.

She then referred to 65/14 and the planning application. The latest status is that the application has not yet been validated. In the third paragraph of the Report, Members would note that there is an issue surrounding the right of access through the Regal Car Park. The Co-Op has put two options to the Borough but TWBC are saying that they are not acceptable. Unless we get access we cannot build a community centre. She had met with Nigel Taylor on Tuesday and the only other option which seemed feasible was coming up through the Tanyard Car Park which would mean acquiring some additional land and then sweeping the access up through our land in Crane Valley. There would be cost implications. Diagrams are being drawn up which would then be taken to the TWBC planners to see if they are acceptable. Cllr. Holden is proposing a formal press release to try to persuade the Co-Op to come up with an alternative proposal which might be more acceptable. The Co-Op is not responding or returning calls. Basically the issue is that there is a legal paper which states that TWBC cannot give a right of way across the land to any other surrounding land without the consent of the Co-Op.

Responding to Cllr. Holme's question on whether the contractual arrangement was with any predecessor of the site before the Co-Op, Cllr. Veitch confirmed that the agreement was signed in 2006 between the two parties but it could have been historic with previous companies who had the store. Responding to a question from Cllr. Goodchild on what 50% of the market value of the right of access would be, Cllr. Veitch stated that it could be anything from £100,000 to £300,000. Cllr. Swann suggested that the Borough needed to do more but Cllr. Veitch pointed out that abutting meant not only the front of the store but also the exit and entry roads and the Borough would not agree to dispose of these. Cllr. Bunyan agreed stating that the land actually runs right down to the sub-station. Cllr. Fermor asked whether it affects the housing development. Cllr. Veitch stated that it did and it didn't; it does allow light motor vehicles but not access for heavy vehicles and plant etc. She stated that we knew about this document last summer but there has been no resolution to the issue. Responding to a question from Cllr. Goodchild, she confirmed that the Co-Op only owned the land at the left hand side of the store, the rest is freehold to TWBC. She also confirmed to Cllr. Summers that Guy Johnson would not have any influence in trying to solve the issue. Responding to Cllr. Goodchild, she stated there would be no mileage in trying to persuade a sale and then trying to lease the land back as the Borough would not agree to give up the rights for the exit and entrance.

With regard to a possible entrance from The Tanyard, she reminded Members that the Parish Council has an existing three metre right of way for vehicles over land owned by TWBC. Cllr. Swann thought this a good idea, stating that there would not be a problem with realigning some existing parking spaces. Cllr. Bunyan stated that historically there was always a right of way via a gate. Cllr. Veitch confirmed to Cllr. Goodchild that if an access went in this way it would be permanent and not temporary. He could not believe that the parties could not get together to solve this issue. Cllr. Veitch suggested this was difficult if the Co-Op would not return calls but if there was an alternative access perhaps they might start talking. Cllr. Fermor suggested that we should boycott the Co-Op store. Cllr. Veitch informed Members that Nigel Taylor was undertaking the diagrams free of charge.

Cllr. Swann reported that he had been speaking to one of the local doctors who had thought it would be wonderful if they could be part of the Community Centre. This idea could be explored.

Cllr. Summers enquired whether the impasse was causing a delay with the redevelopment of the Cranbrook Engineering Site. Cllr. Veitch reminded Members that the original scheme was approved with the access via the entrance at the side of Lloyds Chemist so the development can go ahead although it will not be ideal. It would have been cheaper and easier to go via the Regal Car Park. Cllr. Cook suggested that the approved entrance to the site will have an adverse impact on the town centre. Cllr. Veitch informed Members that the developers are going to remove part of the hedge as mentioned in the Policy & Resources Report in anticipation that they can use the Regal to access their site. Any increase in costs on the redevelopment scheme will spill over into the enabling houses for a community centre and she reminded Members that the letter from Guy Johnson stated that if he cannot make a good business case that he could withdraw his offer. Cllr. Bunyan suggested that the people working on the redevelopment scheme could park in Wilkes Field.

Cllr. Holmes asked whether he was right in thinking that the latest adverse development will delay any offer of funding from TWBC. Cllr. Goodchild pointed out a typographical error on the Heads of Terms for Libraries – on Page 2, a zero – it should be £100,000.

Cllr. Veitch confirmed to Cllr. Swann that a legal view would be sought on any final document. She then proposed adoption of the report of the meeting held on the 20th January. This was seconded by Cllr. Fermor and agreed.

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPORT:

209: Cllr. Swann referred to the report of the meeting held on the 10th February and that the removal of the hedge had already been covered under the discussion earlier on the Community Centre report. He referred to 57/14 and that the Complaints Procedure had been updated. He drew Members attention to the anomaly with the two Transparency Codes and it had been agreed to adopt the Code for smaller parishes until the situation is addressed by central government. We already publish much of the information and the Clerk can quite easily produce the required list of all payments over £100. He invited questions. Responding to a question from Cllr. Fermor on why we had declined a grant to the Samaritans, Cllr. Swann stated that S137 is for local groups and not for national organisations. He mentioned the 2015 elections and that some advertising had already been undertaken but the Committee put forward some more ideas to encourage people to stand for election. Cllr. Summers queried the content of the second line of No.5 in the Complaints Procedure, it was agreed that this was a typing error and should be “complaint”. The Clerk confirmed to Cllr. Fermor that the scheme for the Bringloe land in Sissinghurst was now in the public domain as a leaflet drop to residents was under way and posters put up for the public exhibition of the plans. Cllr. Swann then proposed adoption of the report of the meeting held on the 10th February. This was seconded by Cllr. Cook and agreed.

PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT:

210: Cllr. Bunyan referred to the Minutes of the two meetings held and invited questions. No questions were raised.

BURIAL GROUNDS & PROPERTIES COMMITTEE REPORT:

211: Cllr. Hemsted stated that there has been no recent meeting.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT:

212: Cllr. Veitch stated that the next meeting is in March. Cllr. Swann informed Members that the hazel trees on the boundary of the Crane Valley had been laid by the Kent High Weald Project. Cllr. Veitch clarified that this was between the steps into the Crane Valley to where the Co-Op land starts. Cllr. Swann reported that he had been working with our grounds contractors and a lot more of the brambles in the Regal had been cleared. The contractors had even come out on Sunday morning and tidied up the Jockey Lane Car Park and some items in the Regal.

CRANBROOK CONSERVATION AREA ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

213: Cllr. Bunyan stated that the Conservation Architect had been unable to attend the meeting. The Committee were upset regarding the deep yellow no parking lines, they preferred the narrow paler primrose lines. Cllr. Swann confirmed that we always used to have these type of “conservation” lines and he suggested that the Parish should write. Cllr. Bunyan stated that CCAAC objected to the new Nat West signs and were going to remind the planners that we are in a conservation area within the town centre. Cllr. Swann wondered whether the planning officers were aware of conservation areas. Cllr. Bunyan mentioned that CCAAC had raised the issue of dangerous paving on the north side of the High Street which needed attention. She invited questions.

Responding to a question from Cllr. Fermor, Cllr. Bunyan confirmed that the Bull Rooms were part of the Cranbrook Engineering site and the Bird in Hand was formally the cobblers shop and house at the lower end of Stone Street. Cllr. Bancroft asked about local listings and Cllr. Bunyan confirmed that this is buildings or other things that are important but which are not listed. Local listings are looking at all the other things that could be listed which could also include things such as milestones.

KENT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS:

214: Cllr. Fletcher had no recent news. Cllr. macLachlan referred to a set of recent minutes which had been circulated. Cllr. Fletcher stated that he would attend the next meeting which is due to be held on the 26th February. Cllr. Bunyan asked Cllr. Swann to explain the item regarding precepts which had been mentioned in the minutes. He reminded Members that when the council tax information was sent out there used to be a booklet which explained the figures and any increase in percentage terms. If you want this information now you have to go on the internet. Parishes are all being asked to take on more things including car parks and toilets. We are the only parish to have taken on the car parks. Some of the smaller parishes could have a dramatic increase in their precept if they take on additional items. Cllr. Veitch noted the comment in the minutes on quality status and the Clerk confirmed that we had a confirmation email but had not yet received the certificate. Cllr. macLachlan mentioned the next Chairman's meeting at the Borough and the reluctance of the Chairman to attend. He hoped we would send someone to this meeting. Cllr. Swann reminded Members that Cllr. Rook had attended when able and more so now that he was no longer a Borough Councillor. Cllr. Veitch stated that she would attend the meeting if Cllr. Rook was not well enough to attend.

ACTION WITH RURAL COMMUNITIES IN KENT:

215: Cllr. macLachlan stated that thanks to the online petition, the funding had not been withdrawn from central government.

CLERKS REPORT:

216: The Clerk reminded Members that the consultation event on the Site Allocation Plan is due to be held in the Vestry Hall on Wednesday 18th February from 4 pm – 7 pm.

CORRESPONDENCE:

217: There was no correspondence to report.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION:

218: Cllr. Bunyan reminded Members that the consultation event for the Bringloe land will be held on the 26th February between 3 pm – 7 pm in St. George's Institute.

219: Cllr. Fletcher reported that there had been a number of break-ins within the town centre including Wilkes – butchers, Ipanema – coffee shop and Bartholomews – mower shop.

220: Cllr. Cook informed Members that he had contacted Guy Johnson about the possibility of decorating the hoarding in Crane Lane by an A level candidate from Cranbrook School.

221: Cllr. Goodchild reported that Benenden Primary School had been successful in obtaining the funding for a new school. On another issue he was disappointed how many shops were struggling to remain in business in the High Street and Stone Street.

222: Cllr. Bancroft stated that she had received an email from a power company about what to do in a power cut and she wondered whether this information could be included in the next newsletter.

223: Cllr. Swann referred to the Site Allocations Plan which is the same as the previous one and therefore he assumed that we could reiterate our previous comments. The Clerk stated that the item would have to go back to Full Council and therefore Members could not preempt our views on the final Plan until it had been discussed. Cllr. Holmes reminded Cllr. Swann that he would be entitled to give his personal views.

224: Cllr. Hemsted informed Members that Wynn Tremenheere had sadly passed away. His funeral is on Friday 20th February at 2 pm in Trinity Church, Sissinghurst.

225: Borough Cllr. John Smith reported that TWBC had been setting its budget and there had been a 50% cut in the revenue support grant and it will probably disappear entirely within the next few years. There had been staff cuts from around 400 to now 280 with another 20 – 30 next year. Parking income will increase together with planning application income. The property portfolio is generating income and there will be a 2% increase in the council tax. There continues to be a paring back with parishes being expected to take on more. He reminded Members that the longer the Community Centre project takes then the likelihood of money diminishes. Cllr. Homes asked how much TWBC is spending on St. John's Car Park but Cllr. Smith did not have the figures to hand, he would be happy to provide these.

Cllr. Fletcher suggested that the working together with other boroughs was “not” working planning was a good example. Cllr. Smith stated that half a million pounds had been awarded to help the situation. There are eight shared services but IT and staffing have been an issue. Responding to a question from Cllr. Bunyan, he confirmed that the time clock on a planning application commenced from the date of validation and not from the date of receipt.

226: Borough Cllr. Hall mentioned Neighbourhood Plans and urged the Parish to get involved. Benenden, Hawkhurst and Sandhurst are all on board. She reminded everyone that the number of houses could not be reduced from that already agreed but we could determine where those houses should go. She understands that the Borough is reluctant to get involved but they do receive funding. Hawkhurst is a master of its own fate and they won the battle of Fowlers Park and want to see development on brown field sites. Any NP has to go through a referendum and then once it is passed it is not the Borough who makes the decision; it would go to an Inspector. She saw that in our discussions at the last meeting that Sissinghurst wanted a separate plan from Cranbrook and she thought this was a good idea. A NP can be part of a parish or even a section of a parish. She noted that we had deferred any further discussion until after the May elections.