

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN
THE PARISH ROOM, SISSINGHURST
ON THURSDAY 8TH MARCH 2018**

PRESENT: Cllr. Veitch (in the Chair), Cllrs. Bunyan, Clifford, Cook, Fairweather, Fermor, Fletcher, Hartley (in part), Holmes, Smith, Swann and Warne.

APOLOGIES: Cllrs. Hall and Kemp, Borough Cllr. Dawlings.

The following statement was read out:

Members are required to declare any interests, dispensations, predetermination or lobbying on items on this agenda. Members are reminded that changes to the Register of Interests should be notified to the Clerk.

148/17: Minutes of the Previous Meeting:

Cllr. Veitch invited corrections to the accuracy of the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 8th February, the spelling of two names was corrected under item 140/17. With the amendments noted she proposed adoption, this was seconded by Cllr. Fermor and agreed.

149/17: Co-option of Parish Councillor:

Following the resignation of Peter Goodchild, a vacancy on the Parish Council had occurred. Due process had been followed, no call for an election had been made. A casual vacancy had been advertised. There had been three expressions of interest received. All the candidates were in attendance and were invited to speak in the order that their applications were received.

Cllr. Smith proposed that the voting be carried out by ballot, this was seconded by Cllr. Clifford and agreed.

Mrs Anne Marley – She explained that although she had expressed an interest as she had enjoyed her previous experience of being a councillor. As we had received two further applications the sensible option the council should take, would be to co-opt a younger candidate, with this in mind she withdrew her application.

Mr. Robin Beck – He advised that he had been born in Brighton, was 57 years old and had moved to Sissinghurst in 1993 and from there to Cranbrook, in 2006. He has two children and is married to Elaine. His business is corporate restructuring and finance which he runs from home. He enjoys playing tennis and golf and watching all sports. He has sat on various local committees in the past and his philosophy in regard to being on a committee is that you should ‘bring something to the table’. To summarise his vision, any project should be imaginative and vibrant.

Mr. Lee Hatcher – He advised that he had grown up in Cranbrook, in council housing and that his family had been part of the community for generations. He lives with his wife and stepson and is involved in Cranbrook Operatic and Dramatic Society in various capacities. He has also been involved in the Neighbourhood Development Steering Group since its inception and has attended many committee meetings and policy workshops, which demonstrates his commitment to the parish. He feels strongly that he wants to do what is best and listen to those who do not always feel they have a voice, he hoped that he would get the opportunity to show how valuable he could be to the Council, the parish and the community of Cranbrook.

Members were issued with ballot papers and asked to indicate whom they would like to co-opt.

The vote was counted by the Clerks, who advised the Chair that Robin Beck was the successful candidate; he was invited to sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and took a place at the table.

Cllr. Veitch thanked all the candidates and hoped they would consider putting themselves forward for the election next year.

150/17: Regal Car Park Repairs:

The condition survey of the Regal car park has been completed, and an estimate (but not a quote) for the recommended refurbishment had been received. The survey did not clearly identify the upper and lower car park and as no map was included, this will need clarifying. Discussion with the Co-operative Group and TWBC about how much of this work is to be done this spring is ongoing. The Co-operative Group would like it all done to match their several million pound refit of the Cranbrook store. However, it may not make financial sense to do some parts of the car park prior to a significant amount of construction traffic using it. Once all are agreed to the amount of work to be done, we will be seeking quotes. The Co-operative Group have indicated that they would be prepared to grant the Rights of Access over to Wilkes Field.

151/17: Chairman's Report:

Cllr. Veitch welcomed Robin Beck to the Parish Council, and hoped that he enjoys his time as a councillor. This would only, initially, be for one year, as May 2019 is the date for the next election. She encouraged anyone who would like to be more involved in the work of the Parish Council to consider standing for election.

Hawkhurst had their referendum on their Neighbourhood Development Plan just after our last meeting. She congratulated them on their success, with 91% of those who voted, voting in favour of the plan. This was the first Neighbourhood Development Plan in the Tunbridge Wells Borough, so a big learning curve for everyone.

She thanked everyone who turned out for the litter pick recently and wished to record her thanks to Costa Coffee who supplied the Cranbrook litter pickers with a free drink and discount off a cake each.

The next edition of Parish Cake is due to be with you all any day now, delayed briefly by last week's weather. The team have produced yet another super magazine, she congratulated them and gave recognition of the enormous amount of hard work involved.

In December she had mentioned that there was a suggestion that instead of the site for the Community Centre being given directly to the Parish Council it could be given to TWBC initially, until the Community Centre was built. Subsequent consideration of items such as Stamp Duty Tax has now meant that this idea has been discarded, and the land will come straight to the Parish Council as originally intended. As part of the preparation for the Community Centre the land on which the public toilet block sits, is to be transferred to the Parish Council. Providing the Parish Council approves, this is likely to happen sooner rather than later, it will mean the Parish Council assumes responsibility for the public toilets. Quotes are being obtained for the legal services needed for the Community Centre project. These will be presented to the Parish Council for consideration in the very near future. In order not to delay matters there may be a need for an Extraordinary Meeting to make this important decision. She had attended a brief meeting with Cllr. David Jukes who reiterated TWBC's support for the Community Centre project.

Cllr. Veitch reported the sad news, Peter Davies, who many members knew well, had sadly died last weekend after a short illness. Latterly he was Chairman of Benenden Parish Council, but for some years previously had been Borough Councillor for Cranbrook and Benenden. Our sincere condolences to his family and friends. He was a gentleman.

Reports from Committees:

152/17: Policy & Resources:

Cllr. Swann gave a report of the meeting held on 6th March and invited questions, none were raised. He proposed adoption of the minutes, this was seconded by Cllr. Fairweather and agreed. Cllr. Holmes endorsed his thanks to the Clerks for their efforts during the recent bad weather.

153/17: Planning & Preservation:

Cllr. Bunyan gave a report of the meetings held on 20th February and 6th March and invited questions. She advised that the application for the land at Hurstways had been deferred because hard copies of the application had been delayed in the post. It was hoped that it could be confirmed that they are looking to expand and will remain local. Cllr. Bunyan invited Cllr. Beck to join the committee. In response to Cllr. Swann, Cllr. Veitch advised that it had been intimated that the Brick Kiln application may be considered by the TWBC planning committee at their meeting on 28th March, although we had not yet received formal notification that it would be on the agenda.

154/17: Burials & Properties:

Cllr. Clifford advised that some necessary repair work to the drainage system of the Vestry Hall had been approved. At Cllr. Bunyan's request, Cllr. Clifford also agreed to discuss exterior decoration of the Vestry Hall at the next meeting. The committee would also be looking at some of their maintenance contracts at the same time

155/17: Environmental Management:

Cllr. Fairweather advised the next meeting was scheduled for 13th March, at the slightly earlier time of 6pm and would be held in the Addison Room. He also wished to record his thanks to all the members of the community and councillors that took part in the litter picks last month. There were about 35 participants in Sissinghurst and 20 in Cranbrook which as a result, meant the areas of coverage could be extended. There were approximately 80 black bags of rubbish collected in total.

156/17: Neighbourhood Plan:

Cllr. Warne gave a detailed and thorough report of the meeting held on 26th February. She highlighted that the Regulation 14 Consultation had been rescheduled for late June. In response to Cllr. Swann, she confirmed several of the processes that needed to be undertaken. The site assessment report completed by AECOM had been received, which she had circulated, hard copies were available to read in the office. She advised of several engagements and meetings scheduled that would continue to help formulate the policies. She is intending to press TWBC for justification of the amount of new dwellings that we will be expected to take, they have a duty to share this information with us. At the last Full Council meeting she had requested that the decision to undertake site assessments ourselves be deferred until we were in receipt of more information in relation to the number of dwellings we are expected to accommodate, as we are still not in receipt of these figures, it is necessary to defer that decision again. Cllr. Warne reiterated that a Neighbourhood Plan is the best defence against unwanted development although it is not a total defence, refusals can still be overturned at the appeal stage if there is an insufficient land supply. Cllr. Bunyan reiterated that employment opportunities must be included in the plan. Cllr. Veitch advised that TWBC are expected to give an update on the current position of the Local Plan at the Parish Chairman's meeting next week.

157/17: CCAAC:

The next meeting was scheduled for 28th March.

158/17: KALC:

The February meeting was held in Cranbrook. Cllr. Veitch thanked the Goudhurst Clerk for taking the minutes as our Clerks had been unavailable, she would circulate them on receipt.

159/17: Reports from Delegates:

Katherine Elizabeth Wood Charity – Cllr. Cook.

Cllr. Cook advised that the charity had been able to award a substantial grant which would allow a student to pursue her training.

Cranbrook Tourism Group – Cllr. Holmes

Cllr. Holmes reported that work to gather material for a promotional film and a feature in the Wealden Advertiser continues. He congratulated Cranbrook Windmill for the excellent leaflet they had produced encouraging people to volunteer. He also referred to the bulletin from the Economic Team at TWBC in regard to tourism and his disappointment at the absence of any entries promoting attractions in the rural eastern area of the borough, he had raised his concerns with them and was awaiting a response.

Transport Accessibility Group - Cllr. Holmes

At the meeting in February, the initiative from KCC to apply for a community grant to run a community bus service was discussed. Both he and the representative from Staplehurst agreed that it was unlikely to be sufficient financial resources available to provide continued support for this venture.

The Stagecoach Sunday 349 service was being extended until September as evidence of loadings had been very good.

He assured the Sissinghurst councillors that he would be keeping a close eye that the promise of an enhanced No5 service, as part of the S106 agreement for the Common Road development was delivered.

The group were writing to the High Weald A.O.N.B with a request to promote bus services in the High Weald to allow visitors to access the areas by bus.

Hop Pickers Line Heritage Group - Cllr. Holmes.

The meeting was scheduled for 27th February was postponed until 20th March due to the weather.

Cranbrook Museum – Cllr. Holmes

Cllr. Holmes reported that the finances were looking good, mainly due to a £6000 grant from the Co-Op. The museum has continued its programme of greater efficiency in energy savings such as the use of LED's. They have completed work to the paths and garden area to enhance the experience for visitors. They had also received a report on preventative conservation of documents and books, which they would be considering. He was pleased to report they had received several good postings on the Trip Advisor website. Cllr. Veitch was delighted to see they were participating in the 'Wheels of Time' event this year.

Citizen's Advice Bureau – Cllr. Smith

Cllr. Smith reported that the Citizens Advice Bureau were still settling in at their new premises in Monson Way and that their service in Cranbrook Library is unaffected. There will be a launch event in Tunbridge Wells on 11th May which he will be attending. They have reiterated their appreciation for the support this council continues to give them.

160/17: Clerk's Report:

There were no issues to report.

161/17: Correspondence:

A letter had been received from Messy Church Thanking the Parish Council for the recent grant allocation of £500.

162/17: Items for Information:

Cllr. Veitch will circulate the agenda for the next Parish Chairman's meeting and if anyone has any points to raise under the agenda heading then they should email her. The change from S106 to CIL has been included on the agenda at her request.

Cllr. Swann reported that the windmill is in full production again and has produced 70 kilo bags of flour.

Cllr. Bunyan advised that the Sissinghurst Flower Show was being held on March 24th at Sissinghurst Primary School from 2.30pm.

Cllr. Fairweather reported that the Canterbury Choristers would be singing at Trinity Church on Saturday evening, tickets are available at £12.50 from the village shop.

Cllr. Smith advised of a meeting scheduled to update the members of the Sissinghurst Task Group on the Neighbourhood Development Plan, to be held in the Parish Room on 22nd March at 7.30pm.

163/17: Report from Borough Cllr. Dawlings

An email report received from Cllr. Dawlings was read by the Chairman in his absence:

Neighbourhood Development Plans

Cllr. Dawlings advised that he was covering for the Chairman of Benenden's NDP Group. They have about 40 volunteers in 5 groups looking at sites (13 included in the call for sites), housing design, businesses, transport and environment, reporting to a Steering Group of the group leaders, a consultant and the Chair. They are planning a 6th Group to pursue a Community Land Trust and on this he had a very helpful meeting with Tim Kemp and Mark Wade. They have had training sessions with TWBC and are liaising closely with them. So far as housing numbers are concerned, the most vulnerable areas in the Borough that are within the AONB seem to be those where lots of sites were identified in the call for sites, and sadly that includes Benenden and Sissinghurst. Most vulnerable of all are those sites closest (albeit outside) the LBD. The focus for a new rural settlement will be outside the AONB.

Cranbrook Rugby & Cricket Club

The planning application for a new club house with changing rooms downstairs and club room above has now been approved. Cllr. Dawlings is very involved with planning fundraising and applying for whatever public money might be available. Last week he started with TWBC because a question likely to be asked by all funding bodies is what support you are being given by your local authority. He presented the argument that the club was providing a valuable public service, provided mainly by volunteers and, unlike many other sports grounds in the borough, the Tomlin Ground was maintained by the club. For sports grounds owned by TWBC, there were significant costs involved with maintenance. He had argued that a capital contribution to a new clubhouse was appropriate. Seemingly this argument was appreciated because indicative support of £50K was offered. This will be ring fenced when the Business Plan presently being prepared is sent to TWBC.

Berkeley Homes

Cllr. Dawlings advised that along with Cllr. Veitch he would be meeting Alex Davies of Berkeley Homes next week. He was also meeting with another director, Peter Smith, at the Rugby Club on Saturday.

The meeting was closed.

Questions from Parishioners:

A parishioner requested more gritting on the footpaths especially the PROW across the Crane Valley, which was treacherous during the bad weather. She was advised that the Parish Warden had been treating the worst affected areas.

A further question was raised as to when the decommissioned BT phone box by the Jubilee Field would be removed. This was in the hands of B.T, although the Clerk offered to write and request removal as soon as possible.