

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN THE  
VESTRY HALL, CRANBROOK  
ON THURSDAY 9TH APRIL 2015**

**PRESENT:** Cllrs. Bancroft, Bunyan, Cook, Fermor, Goodchild, Hazlewood, Holmes, macLachlan, Marley, Rook, Summers, Swann and Veitch.

**APOLOGIES:** Cllrs. Hemsted, Fletcher and Borough Cllr. Hall.

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.

**MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING:**

247: The Chairman, Cllr. F. Rook proposed that the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 12th March be adopted as a true record. Cllr. Summers asked for it to be recorded that he had left the meeting after item 230. Cllr. Bunyan pointed out a typographical error on page 3 paragraph 5 – it should read divisive and not derisive. Cllr. Rook then proposed that the amended Minutes be adopted. This was seconded by Cllr. Cook and agreed.

**CHAIRMANS REPORT:**

248: The Chairman informed Members that Steve Holdom, a former parish councillor, was now in Hartley House and would welcome visitors.

The Chairman then gave his report, stating that this had been a difficult year for him personally. His mother's death and his sister's illness had meant that his personal life had been thrown upside down managing the estate and coping with tenants facing eviction which he thinks he has managed to avoid. His own health had been up and down and business in Cranbrook had been difficult, although it had been difficult throughout the United Kingdom with little confidence in the market and the high street in March was the worst trading month for a long time.

He stated that Cranbrook is going to face some major changes in the future and it is going to need the leadership of this Parish Council, far more than it has done in the past as personified by the renewal of the gas mains. We all knew it had got to be done but how many adequately prepared for it. Some traders ignored the fact that there was going to be a reduction in footfall and did absolutely nothing to mitigate the situation to the point when it became the straw that broke the camel's back. We should have done more and he blamed himself for that. We should have spelt it out to them and given guidance on how to mitigate the downturn in turnover. Instead we left it to the Business Association to look after its own and they failed to do anything.

We have lost our Tourist Development Officer but we do have a Tourist Forum, but that seems to have disappeared as well so this is another way where we can facilitate and coordinate another business sector to do better.

At the Chairmen's meeting in Tunbridge Wells, Cllr. Jukes suggested that the Borough Council will have to be more like a business with the parish councils being the shareholders. Cllr. Rook reminded Members that he had said in the past that the Parish Council will also need to run as a business with councillors more like directors and the population being the shareholders rather than customers.

He stated that as we were in a state of purdah he could only inform Members of the facts without being able to comment but just to say at the Chairmen's meeting it was strongly intimated that the planning service would be coming back into the Town Hall due to the problems with Mid Kent Services.

With regard to the Cranbrook Engineering project he reported that he had attended the planning meeting in Tunbridge Wells when the Members were informed of the Building Preservation Notice. He had three minutes to state our case which he did as forcefully as he could, no discussion was allowed and no vote was allowed as to whether they would have agreed with it had they had a chance. When he had challenged this with Jane Lynch and asked why as a Parish Council we were not even informed of the Order, he had been told that it was like a Tree Preservation Order and they had to act quickly, however he reminded Members that we were notified of TPO's and in the past had commented. He suggested it was getting harder and harder to get at the truth.

The Chairman then stated that he must, on behalf of this Council and himself, thank all the councillors for their contribution to the good governance and stewardship of Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Parish Council especially to those who were no longer standing. He hoped that the residents of the parish appreciate the hard work and dedication that they had given freely to this community. To those that were standing again he wished them good luck.

#### ADOPT A B.T. TELEPHONE KIOSK:

249: The Chairman handed over to the Clerk to explain the item regarding adopting B.T. Telephone Kiosks. The Clerk referred to the letter from B.T. which had been circulated to all Members prior to the meeting. The offer is that we can adopt phone kiosks for £1. She tabled a booklet which showed some innovative ways in which the community had utilised the redundant kiosks. We have two red phone boxes which are available to adopt, one at Bakers Cross and one at Swifts View. There are two other modern ones which we could also adopt, one in The Street at Sissinghurst and one at the top of the High Street in Cranbrook opposite the War Memorial. The remaining box outside of Hammonds Opticians is not available for adoption. The Clerk reminded Members that Borough Councillor John Smith had asked whether the modern kiosk in Sissinghurst could be replaced with a red box but B.T. had declined. We have asked B.T. whether the red boxes which are available could be moved but we have not yet had a response.

Cllr. Marley stated that she felt that adopting the boxes were a waste of rate payer's money and could be the subject of vandalism. Cllr. Fermor strongly disagreed; it would be great to keep the red boxes. Cllr. Goodchild agreed with Cllr. Fermor. If cared for, they could be put to a good use and would help with tourism.

The Clerk informed Members that one resident of Swifts View regularly cleaned the red telephone box and that the red kiosk at Bakers Cross had recently been repaired and repainted. Both red boxes were at important gateways into Cranbrook.

Cllr. Holmes referred to the booklet and pointed out that some areas had installed defibrillators in the redundant boxes. He felt that the red boxes at the gateways into the town could be good for tourism and could contain some useful information for tourists. They could even be interactive. He thought it would be worthwhile to keep them and for the Parish Council to take on the responsibility for their maintenance and upkeep. It would promote tourism and enhance the town. Cllr. Marley reiterated her question of where was the money coming from for the maintenance. Cllr. Goodchild suggested that we should take them on in the first instance and see what happens. It would be better to take them on than lose them for ever. Cllr. Hazlewood stated that the red boxes were part of our heritage and we should not be losing them. Cllr. Fermor suggested that a clean and a lick of paint would not break the bank. Cllr. Marley queried whether if we were to adopt the kiosks who would own the freehold of the land on which they sat and who would own the boxes.

Cllr. Cook referred to the booklet which stated that the community would own the kiosks. He made the suggestion that because there were some queries which had not been answered that perhaps this should be more fully explored before we made a final decision. He therefore proposed that:-

The adoption of the kiosks to be further explored with an initial general positive interest. Members should contact the Clerks with any questions and then the issue could be discussed again at a future meeting.

This was seconded by Cllr. Fermor and agreed. There was one vote against.

#### COMMUNITY CENTRE COMMITTEE:

250: Cllr. Veitch referred to the report of the meeting held on the 17<sup>th</sup> March and invited questions. Cllr. Cook referred to the first paragraph on the second page and asked whether there was any progress. Cllr. Veitch informed Members that Helen Grant MP had met with Guy Johnson and this had been welcomed and was reported as being beneficial and appreciated. No further questions were raised. Cllr. Veitch then proposed adoption of the report; this was seconded by Cllr. Fermor and agreed.

Cllr. Veitch gave an update on the Building Preservation Notice. English Heritage have visited the site and provided an interim report to the Borough Council. They will then report back to the Secretary of State later this month and a decision will be made. This will then be relayed back to the Borough and English Heritage.

With reference to the access problems, she reported that she had seen a copy of the Draft Heads of Terms between the Borough Council and the Co Op and it appears that there will be approval for access for a very nominal sum. She was very optimistic and thanked both the Borough and the Co Op for sorting this issue out.

Cllr. Bancroft stated that there was a lot of conflicting information coming out from the Borough Council on the issue of the BPN with Cllr. Holden suggesting that this had been known for some time. TWBC fell down on their side of the bargain. The other side of the coin was that it had been said that the company did not provide the information in time.

Cllr. Veitch could not answer the question or comment on the sequence of events but she did state that she remained rather surprised that after fifteen years of deliberations that it was only after clearance of the site commenced that the BPN was served and yet in 2009 the Borough Conservation Architect had said that there was nothing there of interest. Cllr. Bancroft asked whether the information required by the developer had been provided within the time scale. Cllr. Veitch responded that the report required had recorded what was on the site; it was a log of evidence. It did not recommend that the building should be preserved, it was a record only. Cllr. Bancroft reiterated her concern of what was the truth. Cllr. Veitch hoped that we can move forward. English Heritage had been approached by an individual in December but nothing then had gone ahead as no evidence had been provided. Cllr. Hazlewood enquired who would fund works should the building become a listed building. Cllr. Veitch stated that this would fall to the owner. Cllr. Hazlewood suggested this could become another Providence Chapel waiting to happen. Cllr. Rook stated that he was angry and frustrated at the situation but there was nothing further that we could do at the moment other than to wait for the outcome.

#### POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE:

251: Cllr. Swann referred to the report of the meeting held on the 7<sup>th</sup> April and mentioned specifics such as the earmarked funds and cash balances. Responding to a question from Cllr. Rook, he confirmed they complied with legal requirements – we must not have too much in reserves and certainly not more than the annual precept amount. Cllr. Swann reported that two S137 awards had been made, one to Cranbrook in Bloom and one to Cranbrook Museum. The Parish Warden's contract had been extended for a further five years and he reminded Members that Mr. Hatcher was self-employed and not a member of staff. We had registered an interest in the parking spaces in Carriers Road and we are now being invited to negotiate to lease these spaces. Cllr. Rook informed Members that he had asked the TWBC Leader why Borough land was being auctioned in London and he was told that more money could be made this way. Cllr. Marley stated that leasing the spaces was very good news. Cllr. Swann reminded Members that we did not have to use the spaces for car parking they could be used for other purposes i.e. farmers markets etc. He mentioned the May election – the Clerks had given out twenty four packs and the deadline was 4 pm today.

A litter pick has been scheduled for the 25<sup>th</sup> April between 10 am and 12 noon and he asked Members to encourage parishioners to come along. Cllr. Marley asked the Courier representative to include this in the next edition. Cllr. Fermor asked how we can stop people from littering and promote pride in where we live. Cllr. Rook suggested that this should be a topic for the next Environmental Management Committee. Cllr. Marley stated that the answer is to start with education and target young people. Cllr. Veitch confirmed that the rendezvous points were the recycling centre in the Regal Car Park and the entrance into the Jubilee Field. She would be happy to receive information from Members of any areas which they thought were a priority as long as they could be litter picked safely. Cllr. Hazlewood offered to lend people the British Legion high visibility jackets. The Clerk confirmed that equipment and jackets had already been requested from the Borough Council.

Cllr. Holmes referred to item 78/14 (d) and reported that he had already had discussions with core members of the Tourism Forum and a meeting is to be held when it is hoped to re-launch the Forum. He suggested that the Forum is vital to the prosperity of the Parish but suggested that there needs to be stronger links to the Parish Council. Cllr. Swann thanked Cllr. Holmes for his hard work with this issue. He then proposed adoption of the report; this was seconded by Cllr. Holmes and agreed.

#### PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT:

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

#### BURIAL GROUNDS & PROPERTIES COMMITTEE REPORT:

253: Cllr. Bunyan in the absence of Cllr. Hemsted stated that there is a meeting scheduled for next Tuesday commencing at 5.15 pm in the Addison VC Room.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT:

254: Cllr. Veitch referred to the report of the meeting held on the 17<sup>th</sup> March and invited questions. Cllr. macLachlan mentioned the play equipment at Sissinghurst and asked why parishioners were being asked to fund raise when he understood the Cranbrook equipment was funded by the precept. Cllr. Swann clarified that the much of the play equipment on the Ball Field was funded by local residents. Cllr. Veitch stated that although funds are set aside each year that there was not enough in the pot to fund the amount of equipment requested and we were therefore looking for support from residents. Cllr. macLachlan suggested that the percentage of the precept which goes to young people could be perceived as low and Cllr. Veitch clarified that equipment should be phased in and reviewed annually. The Clerk confirmed to Cllr. Bancroft that the repairs to the rocking horse were in hand by Geelan Fabrications also that the concerns on the streetlights in Cobnut Close were the amount of lights, not that they were on all night. Cllr. macLachlan stated that Kent County Council is looking at the lights on exception sites. The lights are a requirement if the roads are adopted by KCC. Cllr. Veitch then proposed that the report be adopted; this was seconded by Cllr. Bancroft and agreed.

#### CRANBROOK AREA ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

255: Cllr. Bunyan informed Members that Cllr. Veitch had attended the recent meeting and given an update on the Cranbrook Engineering site and Wilkes Field. This had been extremely useful. Cllr. Veitch reported that Cllr. Swann had asked for it to be formally minuted whether CCAAC had made any contribution to the issuing of the BPN. Cllr. Rook stated that CCAAC had made no objection on the application to the demolition yet they had been mentioned in the submissions made recently to the Borough Council. Cllr. Veitch clarified that the Committee had not been formally consulted on the BPN. Cllr. Bunyan suggested that members of the CCAAC may have made private comments.

Cllr. Holmes referred to item 1(c) the Crown Inn. He understood that the tenant is still paying rent on the property and the repairs in hand are just to make the building safe. Cllr. Bancroft asked the current situation with regard to the Providence Chapel which continues to be a blot on the landscape. Cllr. Bunyan stated that the Conservation Architect did not attend the meeting and therefore the issue was not discussed. Cllr. Bancroft suggested that both the Providence Chapel and the buildings from the Cranbrook Engineering site could be dismantled and re-erected at an agricultural museum. Cllr. Veitch stated that the owner of the Providence Chapel had told her that a museum had wanted the owner to pay all the costs of dismantling and re-erecting together with an endowment for the future maintenance of the building. Cllr. Rook reminded Members that the problems with the Providence Chapel have been discussed for at least ten years, the Parish Council had facilitated a public meeting and the Chapel had been visited by Members. Cllr. Swann suggested that the Borough is hoping to move the Museum into the Providence Chapel and then they could sell the Museum building. Cllr. Bunyan stated that all the while the building just sits and rots.

To lighten the mood Cllr. Goodchild pointed out something in 2(e) where a house was being “sought”.

#### KENT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS:

256: In the absence of Cllr. Fletcher there was nothing to report. The Parish News had been circulated.

#### ACTION WITH RURAL COMMUNITIES IN KENT:

257: Cllr. macLachlan had no issues to mention.

#### CLERKS REPORT:

258: The Clerk thanked all outgoing councillors for their support during their four years of office. She wished them well.

#### CORRESPONDENCE:

259: There was no correspondence to report. Cllr. macLachlan queried why the Clerk was not reporting the letter from KCC regarding neighbourhood plans. The Clerk confirmed that the attachment referred to in the letter had not been received and therefore it would be premature to report this.

#### ITEMS FOR INFORMATION:

260: Cllr. Rook thanked councillors for their support during this term of office.

261: Cllr. Bunyan thanked the Clerks for their help and support during the four year term of office. This was reiterated by all Members.

262: Cllr. Cook was delighted to be able to inform Members that Miss Alison Hatch, the Acting Head of Cranbrook Primary School had been successful with her application for Headteacher and he suggested that a letter of congratulations should be sent.

263: Cllr. Hazlewood wished good luck to all the candidates for the forthcoming election. He hoped that a new council would be able to bring the community spirit back to Cranbrook. He enquired on progress with the fingerpost sign at the junction of Stone Street and Waterloo Road. The Clerk confirmed that this was in hand by KCC and also the missing Waterloo Road street nameplate had been brought to the attention of the Borough Council.

264: Cllr. Swann informed Members that the date for the next Full Council had been moved to the 21<sup>st</sup> May. This was due to timescales following the election.

265: Cllr. macLachlan stated that he would be leaving the Council and leaving as a resident of Sissinghurst. He was unhappy in the set-up of the Council and stated that the Town needs a shake-up. There was talent outside of the Council and people not wanting to sit around a table once a month rubber stamping decisions. We needed to look at how we can harness this talent. He accepted that the set-up was dictated by local government. The Chairman totally agreed stating that we had to up our game as a Council we cannot expect others to do it for us. However, he stated that we are a well-run Council with good governance – some council’s get into a terrible mess. We do have to be more proactive, legislation may change and we may be given more powers. There could be a demise of borough councils and parish councils could get larger.

In the next term of office he suggested that re-numeration should be considered not only for the Chairman but also for the Vice Chairman. Cllr. Veitch has incurred expenses which she has not claimed. The Chairman thanked Cllr. macLachlan and wished him well for the future.

266: Cllr. Bancroft thanked everyone for their support during her term of office. She had enjoyed her time with the Council. She did not agree with Cllr. macLachlan; she felt that we had managed to achieve many positive things despite coming across stumbling blocks. If she could help with anything in the future she would be happy to help. She mentioned dirty and tatty signage and she might tackle these on the litter pick day rather than picking up the litter.

267: Cllr. Marley confirmed that she would not be standing for election and she thanked the Clerks and the Chairman for their support. She reiterated the views of Cllr. Bancroft, she would be happy to help if she could.

The Chairman then closed the meeting to enable any questions or comments from parishioners.

Joy Temple stated that she really appreciated what the Parish Council does and thanked Members. She confirmed that she would be attending the Annual Parish Meeting. She then went on to mention something regarding the Cranbrook Engineering site. A sensitive issue had arisen with regard to a Borough Councillor who she could not mention by name as it was during the purdah period. Certain allegations had been made by certain people and she thought the language used by the Parish Council i.e. relating to truth was not being helpful. She asked for clarification as to the facts. Cllr. Veitch did her best to tell her the facts as we knew them. Cllr. Swann along with some other Members did not quite understand what Ms Temple was alluding to in her comments.

The Chairman thanked Joy Temple for her comments and wished everyone standing in the election good luck.