

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN THE
COUNCIL CHAMBER, VESTRY HALL ON THURSDAY 8TH
JANUARY 2015**

PRESENT: Cllrs. Bancroft, Bunyan, Cook, Fermor, Goodchild, Hazlewood, Hemsted, Holmes, macLachlan, Rook, Swann and Veitch. KCC & Borough Cllr. Sean Holden and Borough Cllr. Tom Dawlings.

APOLOGIES: Cllrs. Fletcher, Marley and Summers. Borough Cllrs. Linda Hall and John Smith.

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:

182: The Chairman, Cllr. F. Rook proposed that the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 11th December be adopted as a true record. This was seconded by Cllr. Cook and agreed.

The Chairman then closed the Meeting to enable a presentation by Ian Tester and David Jackson on the proposed realignment works at Wilsley Green. They were part of the campaign Wilsley Green SOS and were not convinced that the current design will solve the issues. After a ten minute presentation they left a document which was the result of a survey they had carried out and suggested that the junction should be tested by a three month trial – a positive change is needed.

The Chairman then re-opened the Meeting.

183: The Clerk tabled the order of service from the funeral of Michael John Woodford which she had attended this morning together with the Chairman and other councillors. The stained glass windows at Golford which he had designed were shown on the back page of the order of service. Former Parish Councillor Garry Blanch, a great friend of Michaels, had donated a painting by Mr. Woodford to the Parish Council. It was painted in 1975 and was a snapshot of part of the High Street at that time.

The Chairman accepted the painting on behalf of the Parish Council and thanked Mr. Blanch for his generosity.

184: Cllr. Holden gave his report. He stated that it was excellent that citizens take an interest in their community and he had taken seriously what the Wilsley Green SOS group were saying regards the junction and he was working to get the best we can achieve.

With regard to the possibility of the Library relocating to the Community Centre he had been speaking to Cllr. Veitch and the Kent County Council Members who hold the portfolio and trying to get them involved.

He had been consulted on the street naming for the McCarthy and Stone development and he was not impressed with any of the names put forward. He suggested that perhaps it should be "Bullocks end", but on a more serious note he suggested that the astronaut Piers Sellers who had attended Cranbrook School should be honoured and it should be called Sellers Court.

Cllr. Dawlings stated that he had been talking to Borough Members regarding the situation with the Regal Car Park and the Co Op. Cllr. Veitch confirmed that this was now moving forward. Cllr. Dawlings informed Members he had also attended a meeting regarding an extra runway at Gatwick Airport.

CHAIRMANS REPORT:

185: The Chairman reported that he had been interviewed by Radio Kent on mobile phone reception in this area, which is very poor.

STREET NAMING:

186: The Chairman referred to the invitation from the Borough to comment on the three names put forward by the developers of the McCarthy and Stone site at the top of the High Street. The suggested names were Humphrey Court, Tallow Court and Wealdon Court.

The Clerk read out an e mail from Cllr. Linda Hall who was not impressed by the suggestions and her choice would be one of the Cranbrook colony of painters, possibly Webster or even better J.C. Horsley who designed the first Xmas card for his friend Henry Cole of the V and A and so established an enduring tradition. He was also brother in law of Brunel and did frescoes for the Palace of Westminster, a task that required a painter of some repute.

After a full discussion Members went with the suggestion put forward by Cllr. Holden. Cllr. Bunyan stated that it should be Piers Sellers Court rather than just Sellers Court. Cllr. Rook was not entirely sure that a street could be named after person who was still alive. Cllr. Goodchild mentioned that Clancy Gardens on Angley Road was an example where the person is still alive. Cllr. Fermor suggested that Horsley Court was a good choice but she liked the idea of moving into the 21st Century with the name of the astronaut. The Chairman then proposed the amendment i.e. Piers Sellers Court as the name for the development. This was seconded by Cllr. Cook and there were seven votes for with five abstentions. The motion was therefore carried.

Cllr. Veitch then proposed that should we not legally be able to name a street after someone who was still alive that Horsley Court should be the second choice. This was seconded by Cllr. Fermor and agreed. There were eight votes for and 4 abstentions. Therefore the vote was carried.

Cllr. Bancroft reminded everyone that the three names put forward by the developer had not been considered. The Chairman proposed that none of the three names put forward by McCarthy and Stone were considered suitable. This was seconded by Cllr. Fermor and agreed with ten voting for and two abstentions; the motion was carried.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS:

187: The Chairman stated that there are three types of community plans, i.e. village design statements, parish plans and neighbourhood plans. All Members had received the pack compiled by the Clerk and he had found the Sevenoaks explanation document the most useful. He suggested that a village design statement was not what we needed at this time. If we agree that a neighbourhood plan is what is needed then this has to conform to the Borough Core Strategy and cannot reduce their aspiration only enhance their aspiration. Whilst a neighbourhood plan has to conform to the Core Strategy, a parish plan can go outside of the Core Strategy and can give our own aspirations on what are our wishes i.e. to take a “holistic” approach; to set out a vision for how the community wants to develop in the future and to identify the actions needed to achieve it. A neighbourhood plan cannot conflict with the strategic policies in the Core Strategy and cannot be used to prevent development that is in the Strategy. It can decide where and what type of development should happen in the neighbourhood and it can promote more development than is set out in the Borough Core Strategy. It must be primarily about the use and development of land and buildings and does carry more weight in the decision making process than village design statements and parish plans. However, a parish plan can include everything that is relevant to the people who live and work in the community, including social economic and environmental issues; it can cover more than just planning issues and if the plan is adopted it can be used by planning officers in determining applications for the parish. He invited questions.

The Clerk read out e mails from Cllr. John Smith in his absence. In the first e mail he stated that with regard to neighbourhood plans he had met with the Borough Officers Jonathon McDonald and David Candlin and their position is that the 5yr land supply and Development Plan Document (DPD) is sufficient to protect against unwanted and inappropriate developments, which he did not agree with. After discussion it was agreed that the right time would be perhaps at a later date when the Core Strategy is reviewed. For a NP to be adopted by the Borough it will have to show the Core Strategy number of homes as a minimum. He suggested that in 2015 Cranbrook and the surrounding villages would be wise to develop neighbourhood plans and get them adopted by the Borough in early 2016. In the second e mail he stated that he had met Jonathan McDonald and updated Cllrs. Veitch and macLachlan. The Borough is reluctant but will assist if pressed. His view remains that that a NP adopted by TWBC would be beneficial to both Cranbrook and Sissinghurst and we should target mid-2016 to have this in place. There is no immediate urgency as current policies and plans are fairly robust.

Cllr. macLachlan informed Members that he had looked at neighbourhood plans in relation to developments such as proposed recently by Gladman in Common Road. His conclusion was that many communities already have these plans in place. Hawkhurst have been engaged in trying to undertake a neighbourhood plan and they have managed to persuade the Borough to look at brown field sites instead of green field sites. Even where an Inspector had given consent to an appeal for development sometimes this has been overturned by Eric Pickles MP if there is a neighbourhood plan in place or being undertaken. He admitted he was wearing his Sissinghurst hat rather than Cranbrook with this issue. He would like to obtain consent from the Parish Council if the village wants to undertake a NP. A planning expert from the village agrees in principle that a plan would be beneficial subject to human and financial resources.

The Chairman queried whether individuals could actually undertake a NP. He read out a sentence from the Government Planning Portal. “Neighbourhood planning can be taken forward by two types of body – town and parish councils or neighbourhood forums. Neighbourhood forums are community groups that are designated to take forward neighbourhood planning in areas without parishes.” Cllr. macLachlan asked whether in principle the Parish Council would support a group undertaking a plan.

Cllr. Veitch suggested that a forum needed to have twenty one people and this is a lot of people to be on board. She suggested that if we agreed to go forward with a NP this should be for Cranbrook and Sissinghurst, it would be much better if it was a combined effort.

Cllr. Holmes reminded Members of all the effort the Parish Council had put into various plans in the past. There had been a Parish Appraisal, a Parish Plan with revisions and a Rural Health Check. The last Parish Plan had been started in 2010 but abandoned in 2012 due to the confusion surrounding the Localism Bill. The information gathered is still currently available and reliable. His personal view was that we should be looking at a parish plan rather than a neighbourhood plan. Responding to a question from Cllr. Fermor, he confirmed that the Plan covered both Cranbrook and Sissinghurst.

Cllr. Swann suggested that a NP must be undertaken by a parish council. This Parish Council would have to be the leading body. Cllr. Rook reminded Members that we can co-opt people for specific projects. Cllr. Bancroft stated that she had understood that a NP has to be supported by a parish council and adopted by a borough council. She thought that a NP was just about housing but it seems as though it isn't. In some documents it states that it also covers planning, transport, environment and business yet in other documents it states that it cannot cover infrastructure so there is conflicting information. We would have to apply for a NP to be granted yet if the Borough does not support it then it would fail. We already have a conservation group CCAAC and a business association and she felt with such conflicting advice she could not see how we could go forward to undertake a NP. Cllr. Rook reminded Members that Cllr. macLachlan was seeking whether in principle the Parish Council would support a group undertaking a NP.

Cllr. Cook asked whether this group could be a sub-committee of the Council. After a full discussion it was agreed that the group could not be a sub-committee. The Parish Council could however be part of the group if Members agreed to take part. Cllr. Bunyan suggested that the group could also not be called a “forum” on the basis of the sentence read out by Cllr. Rook earlier. Cllr. Fermor was concerned regarding the finances for a NP. Cllr. Hazlewood reminded Members that we already had a Parish Council which represents Cranbrook and Sissinghurst and he felt that setting up a group to undertake a NP at great expense which ultimately has to be brought back to the Parish Council to agree was not a good use of resources.

Cllr. macLachlan then proposed that:-

This Council resolves that in principle it agrees that if a neighbourhood plan group is set up and human and financial resources can be secured, it consents to Sissinghurst making a separate neighbourhood plan for Sissinghurst ward.

This was seconded by Cllr. Bunyan and a vote took place. There were two for, seven against and three abstentions. The motion therefore failed.

The Chairman suggested that with the Community Centre project and elections taking place this year that it would be more suitable to look at this issue after the May elections. Cllr. Bunyan asked Members generally whether they would be for or against a NP. Cllr. Veitch stated that she was not against but any plan should be for the entire parish and not just for Sissinghurst. Cllr. Bancroft also felt it should be a joint plan. Cllr. Rook stated that his personal view was that we should look at a parish plan which would give us more scope.

Cllr. Dawlings stated that it appears that the Borough tells the parishes what to do and he feels it should be the other way round, we should tell them what we would like instead of being dictated to. Hawkhurst has just done this with their housing sites. Cllr. Rook suggested that they had done this without a NP being in place.

COMMUNITY CENTRE COMMITTEE:

188: Cllr. Veitch referred to the report of the meeting held on the 16th December. She invited questions. No questions were raised. She then proposed adoption of the report. This was seconded by Cllr. Bunyan and agreed.

Cllr. Veitch updated Members and reported that the planning application for the Community Centre and enabling development had been submitted to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council during the last forty eight hours. She thanked everyone who had read the Business Plan and provided comments; these had been included in the final version.

At the next committee meeting, a discussion will be held on the consultation process and a letter had already been drafted which will go out to all parishioners. Everyone is welcome to attend the committee meeting. Cllr. Swann stated that he was worried about the finances and fundraising had still not been discussed. Cllr. Veitch reminded Members that this had been included in the Business Plan and we can only actively take up fundraising when a planning consent has been obtained. She will be attending a one day fundraising course in the near future and we will be asking our parishioners on whether they are happy for us to take up a loan.

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPORT:

189: Cllr. Swann referred to the report of the meeting held on the 6th January and mentioned that the accounts had been checked, the invoices had been looked at and the cheques signed. A further cheque had been signed this evening for Kent Grassland Services for the grounds contract as the invoice had been received after the meeting had been held. This will be included on the list of payments outside of committee. The Standing Orders were discussed. A Model version had been circulated by NALC and the Clerk had drafted a version which had been amended to relate to this Council. The items in bold are statutory and have to be included. We also have to adopt new Financial Regulations and again the Clerk had drafted a version from the NALC Model which was fit for purpose for this Council. He invited questions. Cllr. Cook pointed out a typographical error. The Chairman responding to a question from Cllr. Fermor explained why it was only the Chairman or in his/her absence, the Vice Chairman who could speak to the Press. This was accepted. Cllr. Bancroft was concerned that Members had not had time to read the documents and was unhappy for the report to be adopted. The Clerk stated that the report could still be adopted, excepting the two items i.e. Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and then these two items could be brought forward at the next Full Council Meeting for adoption. Members agreed to revisit the two items at the next meeting.

Responding to a question from Cllr. Holmes on whether we would be compromised if we did not adopt these two items this evening, the Clerk confirmed that we are still covered by our existing versions until the new ones are adopted. Cllr. Bunyan thanked the Clerks for all their hard work on producing the new policy documents. Cllr. Holmes recommended to Members that they should have their original Standing Orders at hand when reading the new version. The original ones have been rearranged with some additions.

Cllr. Swann then proposed that the report of the meeting held on the 6th December be adopted save 48/14 and 49/14 where it has already been agreed to defer these items to the next meeting. This was seconded by Cllr. Bunyan and agreed.

PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT:

190: Cllr. Bunyan referred to the Minutes of the two meetings held and invited questions. Cllr. Swann mentioned the application for Cranbrook Engineering for the access to be now via the Regal Car Park. Cllr. Bunyan confirmed that the developers had spoken to the Parish Council to discuss the access to the site; they have now included having a banksman to allow access for the recycling lorries. The developers have also agreed to make good any damage to the car park during the works. We think this is the better route for the vehicles to be able to access the site. Responding to a question from Cllr. Bancroft, Cllr. Bunyan confirmed that workmen's car parking is shown within the area shown on plan. Cllr. Veitch also confirmed that she had checked this on the planning application. Cllr. Bunyan informed Members that a Building Notice has been given for the demolition of the existing buildings to proceed and she understood that this would be happening probably next week. The Hospice in the Weald has been hugely successful and she thanked the volunteers and also the owner of the property for allowing them to use the premises.

BURIAL GROUNDS COMMITTEE REPORT:

191: Cllr. Hemsted stated that the decision had been taken to cancel the meeting scheduled for next week as there are no items on the agenda which needs urgent action. We have accepted a quote for servicing of the electronic doors on the Weald Info Centre.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT:

192: Cllr. Veitch stated that the next meeting is in March. The new litter bins are still being installed but unfortunately we have suffered from some vandalism and so this is taking slightly longer than anticipated.

CRANBROOK CONSERVATION AREA ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

193: Cllr. Bunyan stated that the next meeting is at the end of the month.

KENT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS:

194: In the absence of Cllr. Fletcher there was nothing to report.

ACTION WITH RURAL COMMUNITIES IN KENT:

195: The Clerk asked Cllr. macLachlan whether it was true that Central Government was withdrawing funding. He stated that this has not yet actually happened; people are being asked to sign up on line to put on pressure to try to stop this happening. It is a national problem.

CLERKS REPORT:

196: The Clerk had nothing to report.

CORRESPONDENCE:

197: There was no correspondence to report.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION:

198: Cllr. Veitch informed Members that she has a meeting scheduled with Kent Libraries on Monday 19th January to discuss terms with regard to the Community Centre.

199: Cllr. Bunyan for the benefit of the two guests attending this evening, stated that we had an election coming up in May and we needed some new blood.

200: Cllr. Fermor mentioned an intriguing planning consent given which was for a large underground car park at a property on The Common.

201: Cllr. Holmes wished to record this Council's sadness on the passing of Michael Woodford, a true character of Cranbrook. He will be missed.

202: Cllr. Cook reminded Members of the Governments focus on the Great War and other significant anniversaries including Gallipoli, Anzac Day, Waterloo and Agincourt, Battle of Britain and the Magna Carta.

203: Cllr. macLachlan referred to the resignation of Richard Williams, Vicar of St. Dunstan's. He would like to record the Council's thanks for his term of office in Cranbrook. Cllr. Fermor wished him good luck for the future.

204: Cllr. Bancroft informed Members that unfortunately due to ill health she would not be standing for election in May. The Chairman stated that she had been a great asset and would be missed. He thanked her for all her efforts in the time she has served as a parish councillor.