

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

The Chairman read out the following statement:

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.

No interests were registered.

PRESENT: Cllrs. Bunyan, Cook, Fairweather, Fermor, Goodchild, Hartley, Holmes, Kemp, Rook, Smith, Swann and Veitch. KCC & Borough Cllr. Sean Holden. Borough Cllrs. Dawlings and Hannam.

APOLOGIES: Cllrs. Clifford, Franks and Hall.

The Chairman explained the format of the meeting for the information of parishioners. She welcomed Jane Lynch, Head of Planning and Alan McDermott, Portfolio Holder for Planning & Transportation to the meeting.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING:

146: The Chairman, Cllr. B. Veitch proposed that the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 8th October be adopted as a true record. This was seconded by Cllr. Cook and agreed. She then proposed that the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on the 22nd October be adopted as a true record. This was seconded by Cllr. Fairweather and agreed.

VISIT BY JANE LYNCH, HEAD OF PLANNING & ALAN MCDERMOTT, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION – TWBC:

147: Jane Lynch confirmed that the appeals for the site at Highgate Hill have been allowed by the Inspector. There had been an outline application for 62 dwellings and a full detailed application for a slightly lesser number. There is one key similarity with the Sissinghurst appeal and that is largely to do with numbers. The Gladman applications were for 65 then a reduced scheme for 60. The Inspector's decision mentioned that the site in Highgate Hill formed part of the allocation attributed to Hawkhurst in the Core Strategy – it was an allocated site. Another issue was the five year housing land supply. The target of 300 homes per year had not been delivered. There are not many large sites coming forward, the sites are usually smaller sites. There is also the problem of how the targets are measured. There is now a push from Government for housing. The annual requirement is likely to be pushed from 300 to 600. The Inspector for the Highgate Hill appeal said that TWBC did not have deliverable five year supply of land. The Inspector will take into account all issues including whether the site is within the limits of build, but if you do not have the five year land supply the policies fall away. Sustainability and case law will also be a consideration. Ms Lynch stated that she was satisfied that on the basis of applications in the last few months that they probably have over the five year land supply.

She stated that if the site abuts a limit to build then the character of the settlement is different and Sissinghurst is in this category. The Village does not have the facilities to take large scale development to work, live and function. This is a key consideration regarding sustainability – economic, environmental and social. Twenty two new properties have been constructed within the Sissinghurst/Frittenden ward. Hawkhurst had been allocated 240 new homes within the Plan period, Sissinghurst had none. The constraints were also a consideration – historic assets, drove roads, listed buildings and Sissinghurst Castle. The Hawkhurst Highgate Hill site and the Sissinghurst Gladman site are significantly different. TWBC have an experienced Barrister working on the Gladman appeal. Officers are not submitting anything without it being checked by the Barrister. Gladman, the appellants, are a company picking up sites round the country with agricultural value and then throwing resources at the applications at appeal stage. They have made 43 appeals with 41 allowed. With the level of constraints on the Sissinghurst site, she hoped that this site would be the third site to be successfully defended.

Cllr. McDermott informed Members that the Officers had recommended approval of the Highgate Hill application but this had been turned round at the Planning Committee. Members went against the Officer's recommendation.

Cllr. Rook asked for clarification on what constituted a dwelling in terms of the quotas. Jane Lynch confirmed it was a unit of housing. It did not relate to size - 35% should be affordable. Cllr. Bunyan stated that if the Gladman appeal is allowed, that we as a Council had not asked for anything, should we be doing so? Ms Lynch suggested that we should. It is quite usual for an Inspector to cover such matters by way of a legal agreement. Cllr. Bunyan asked whether there was still an opportunity for this by way of the second application which had not yet been determined. Ms. Lynch agreed that there was still time. There could of course be two appeals being held simultaneously. She stated that the decision on the second application would be made by the end of next week.

Cllr. Smith stated that there were concerns following the recent Hawkhurst appeal. The Inspectors appear to be working on the new numbers already. He hoped that the Core Strategy was sound and he hoped that the TWBC five year land supply WAS sound and he hoped that TWBC successfully defend the appeal. Common Road has taken the majority of expansion and we need the green space to be retained. We need to protect the rural area, Sissinghurst is not anti-development but we want it developed in the right way. Jane Lynch referred to the National Planning Policy Framework and stated that there is protection for the rural areas and she read out the paragraphs which were relevant. She said that the Borough was building their case and David Scully- Landscape & Biodiversity Officer is using this matrix to apply to the Gladman appeal. Cllr. Smith asked for the timescale on the new Site Allocations DPD. Cllr. McDermot stated May next year.

Cllr. Cook addressing Ms Lynch stated that her assessment was that the Borough figures are robust and he asked how confident was she that the Inspector would accept the figures. She stated that she was reasonably confident. She stated that Gladman are an experienced company and would have well researched evidence. With regard to the five year supply of land there are now various ways of measuring this- there used to be two ways; there are now eight. The forecast may slip due to a variety of issues; sites may be coming forward and then don't or some development which should be delivered on time gets behind schedule and sometimes when a site is earmarked for delivery in five years, they then deliver it in two years. Cllr. McDermott suggested that even now the Government may change the numbers.

Cllr. Holmes suggested that the Borough should study the 43 appeals and look at their tactics. Ms. Lynch confirmed this was already being done. The Barrister has been up against Gladman before. Responding to the comment made by Cllr. McDermott, she confirmed that Government are changing the framework rapidly. Some legal challenges are going to the High Court.

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

- What was the difference on the cases that Gladman lost. Jane Lynch responded that they were more sensitive sites. Alan McDermott confirmed that it would have been more costly with barristers having been involved; the Borough work with barristers all the time.

Cllr. Veitch then reopened the meeting and thanked Jane Lynch and Cllr. McDermott for attending the meeting. Cllr. McDermott stated that he would be happy to come back at any time.

NOMINATION OF CHAIRMAN: NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN COMMITTEE:

148: The Chairman invited nominations for the Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee. Cllr. Cook proposed Cllr. Kemp, this was seconded by Cllr. Fermor and unanimously agreed. Cllr. Kemp was happy to accept.

CHAIRMANS REPORT:

149: The Chairman informed Members that the demolition of the various buildings on the Cranbrook Engineering site, excepting the listed building, was agreed at the Planning Meeting held in Tunbridge Wells last evening. This was subject to various conditions including that an acceptable planning application should be made and approved and a contract issued for the development. She thanked everyone who had participated. It took two hours for consideration of the applications with a full range of information and various views expressed. There had been some questions raised on the survey carried out by Helen Grant MP. This survey was circulated by her and the Parish Council was not involved in any way.

Cllr. Veitch congratulated Cranbrook in Bloom on attaining Silver Gilt in the Britain in Bloom competition. This is a tremendous achievement; it is by invite only to enter the Competition. Unfortunately she could not attend the celebrations which had been attended by the Mayor.

The Chairman congratulated Cllr. Fairweather and the rest of his team for a highly professional and enjoyable set of performances of The Producers. She was sure that those that had attended had enjoyed it as much as she did. She also congratulated the Hartley Dyke Farm Shop on winning the Kent Rural Retailer 2015 winner of Best Large Shop.

With regard to this year's Remembrance Day services and parades, she thanked all those who had participated. She reminded everyone that the new vicar of St. Dunstan's will be licensed and installed on the 17th November and she hoped that this will be well attended.

The Chairman stated that she had previously advised councillors not to put anything into emails that they would not be happy to say in public. We have now recently been experiencing large trails of emails commenting on various topics. She reminded councillors that not everyone accesses emails immediately and that the proper and best forum for discussions on parish topics is the relevant committee or the full Parish Council meeting. The Clerk will continue to circulate information as it is received, but this is not a trigger for an email discussion.

She stated that she had taken an action from the last Parish Council meeting to make TWBC aware of the strong feelings in respect of the civic amenity refuse vehicle. This triggered a long letter from Cllr. David Jukes. Before responding to the letter, the Clerk checked with other parishes and several including Benenden and Paddock Wood had reacted similarly to ourselves.

The situation is that TWBC are telling us that the civic amenity vehicle is a discretionary service, i.e. one that they are not obliged to provide, and the Parish Council's choice is to pay or not have it. This will be an agenda item on a future Council meeting, but she recommends that we keep our options open by making provision for the amounts in our budget calculations for 2016/17. It has also been said that either all Parish Councils sign up, or the service doesn't happen at all.

The Chairman informed Members that she had attended the KCC Parish Seminar on Monday. The topics were Highways and Street Lighting. KCC are planning to install LED lighting in all the street lights over the next three years in order to save money. KCC are also looking to devolve a range of activities down to parish councils, such as sign cleaning, hedge and grass cutting, gulley and gutter clearance, in fact as much as possible that is not road surface related. Initially it is suggested that money will also be provided. A lot more details are needed from KCC before she can bring this forward for Members consideration. The slides from the meeting will be made available when received. There was a pilot scheme at Wittersham, a very small parish, for a caretaker and apparently when the post was advertised there were 36 applicants with 32 having appropriate skills.

The Clerks are looking at the extra evidence needed for the renewal of our Quality Status. This will include the biopics that she has already requested some months ago. She asked that any Member who has not already sent theirs, to do so before the next meeting. Cllr. Rook has been taking the photographs for the website this evening.

COMMUNITY CENTRE COMMITTEE:

150: Cllr. Veitch drew Members attention to the Resolution set out in the Agenda. All pending decisions which include the planning application, business plan and poll would need to be debated in Full Council. Further down the line the Committee could be reconstituted, with a different format and a different set of members. As part of the reconstitution, fund raising would be a material consideration so that this would not fall on residents. Cllr. Rook stated that he supported the resolution. Cllr. Swann agreed, stating that he had been on the Committee and it was at times very negative. Cllr. Cook asked for reassurance that people who are on the committee presently and who are not councillors will still be able to make comments. The Chairman reassured everyone that this would be the case and she thanked everyone who had been involved with the Committee.

The Chairman then proposed that:

The Community Centre Committee is dissolved.

The reason being as any anticipated decisions are such as require Full Parish Council consideration

This was seconded by Cllr. Rook and agreed, with one abstention.

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE:

151: Cllr. Goodchild referred to the report of the meeting held on the 10th November. He invited questions. No questions were raised. Cllr. Goodchild then proposed adoption of the report; this was seconded by Cllr. Fermor and agreed.

PLANNING & PRESERVATION COMMITTEE:

152: Cllr. Bunyan stated that two meetings had been held and the Minutes circulated. She informed Members that some revisions had been submitted for the Cobnut Close scheme but the Committee still had some reservations and suggestions for improvements had been put forward.

BURIAL GROUNDS & PROPERTIES COMMITTEE:

153: In the absence of Cllr. Clifford, Cllr. Bunyan stated that a meeting had been scheduled for the end of the month. Cllr. Swann reminded everyone that this is the budget meeting and that thought needs to be given to future expenditure, this applied to all the committees. Cllr. Veitch clarified that the budget for the Community Centre sits under Policy & Resources.

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY COMMITTEE:

154: Cllr. Holmes informed Members that the next meeting was scheduled for early December and he reminded his committee members that he needed the feedback from the businesses in readiness for the meeting.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT:

155: Cllr. Rook stated that the next meeting is scheduled for the 18th November and he apologised for the juggling of the dates. The original meeting date clashed with installation of the new vicar at St. Dunstan's. He informed everyone that the Wilsley Green Junction plans would be discussed at the meeting on the 18th which is being held in the Addison VC Room at 5 pm.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN:

156: Cllr. Kemp stated that he would arrange a first meeting as soon as possible.

CRANBROOK CONSERVATION AREA ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

157: Cllr. Swann reported that there had been no recent meeting.

KENT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS:

158: Cllr. Veitch informed Members that she had attended a recent meeting held at Goudhurst. The meeting notes will be circulated when available. Goudhurst Parish Council is purchasing their car park and toilets from TWBC. There is now a new free app called County Eye, launched last June. It is basically an electronic Neighbourhood Watch scheme. It can be used to report anything suspicious or items such as fly tipping, which is then forwarded to the appropriate authority. The next meeting will be at Cranbrook on Tuesday 23rd February. The KALC 68th Annual Meeting will be held on the 21st November at Ditton Community Centre.

ACTION WITH RURAL COMMUNITIES IN KENT:

159: There was nothing to report.

CLERKS REPORT:

160: The Clerk reported that with regard to The Crown public house that Enterprise Inns were now on market to find new publicans and spend on getting the pub open again.

The Clerk informed Members that Masterplanning Design Workshops are being held in the Vestry Hall on the 23rd and 30th November with regard to Land at Brick Kiln Farm and Land adjacent to the Crane Valley. Members will receive invitations to attend. The Pegasus Group are arranging the Workshops and she had been told by their Urban Designer that it is likely that a planning application would be submitted before Christmas.

CORRESPONDENCE:

161: A letter had been received from Melanie McNeir, Kent County Council regarding the claimed public right of way in Angley Woods. They had decided that an Order ought to be made to add the claimed route to the Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION:

162: Cllr. Holmes suggested that a letter of thanks be sent to David Hazlewood for organising the Remembrance Service and Parade. He asked if there was any news on festive lights. With regard to The Crown, he informed Members that the full specification was available to view on the website.

163: Cllr. Swann stated that there was public concern on the state of the Providence Chapel and he suggested that as a Parish Council we should raise these concerns.

164: Cllr. Fermor stated that she had laid the wreath at the Sissinghurst Remembrance Service, it was well attended.

165: Cllr. Cook referred to the Cranbrook Remembrance Service & Parade and he suggested a letter of thanks be sent to the CCF and the ACF.

166: Cllr. Smith informed Members that Jane Watkins and Denis Hemsted were obtaining donations to improve the Christmas lights in Sissinghurst.

167: Cllr. Kemp stated that he had already received his invite for the Workshops as mentioned by the Clerk. He had already responded with his intention to attend.

168: Cllr. Veitch reminded Members that the annual Art Show is being held in the Vestry Hall from today until Saturday.

169: Borough Cllr. Hannam updated Members on the 20mph speed limit. It is hoped to be a Borough wide policy and will be going before the Joint Transport Board. On another issue, a resident had contacted him with regard to concerns regarding a footpath which went over the land for sale by auction at Cleavers. He had been reassured that the footpath would not be removed. He informed Members that the very successful Frittenden Quiz night was being held on Saturday.

170: Borough Cllr. Dawlings stated that he and Cllr. Holden will put forward views on the civic amenity refuse vehicle on behalf of Cranbrook & Benenden. Many other parishes are concerned. It is a valued service which we need to fight for.

He and Cllr. Hannam are on a committee which is involved with the grants of £15,000 to help with devolvement of services – there is nothing planned for Cranbrook yet. Cllr. Veitch suggested that we could apply retrospectively for the car parks but this had been declined. Cllr. Rook pointed out that with regard to the amenity refuse vehicle - we are already paying so to pay again would be double taxation. He gave examples of how many trips would be needed to deal with fly tipping and how any savings TWBC anticipated would be wiped out. Cllr. Dawlings stated that the anticipated saving was trivial and instead they should look at addressing the recycling aspect. Cllr. Swann stated that it was not just the cost issue, there was also the reduction in the service.

171: Borough Cllr. Holden stated that the Borough have said that fly tipping will not increase. He had written to David Jukes with regard to double taxation and also that Tunbridge Wells has a weekly collection in the central area. We need the same service as we are getting now, discretionary or not.

172: Cllr. Holden, speaking as a County Councillor informed Members that there are now updated plans for the Wilsley Green Junction to deal with the problem of lorries coming down Waterloo Road and the town centre. He had set aside £25,000 in his 2013/14 budget after the issue of a lorry crushing a car in Stone Street. A campaign group had been set up who opposed the original realignment plan. There was however, a case for the greater good and he had taken notice of the views put forward and gone back to the officers for the plans to be amended. There have been delays and he had worked with five different officers on the scheme. There had been issues including sight lines but he believed we had now found a way of keeping the lorries out of the town centre and taking the main traffic along what is the town bypass. He tabled the amended plans. He was strongly of the view that the priority should be changed. The plans now show a change to the shape of the road. He is persuaded that this is the way forward. He had listened to the campaigners. Cllr. Swann asked whether the 40 mph limit from the roundabout would be going ahead. Cllr. Fermor said this was already in place. Cllr. Holden explained that the police would not support a 40mph north of the roundabout as the average speed was 46mph, there will be a reduction from 60 to 50. There will be another survey undertaken. He confirmed to Cllr. Fermor that the double yellow lines in front of the row of cottages at the junction will be removed. He had not authorised the lines and would not be paying for them to be removed.

The Chairman explained that Cllr. Holden had reported on the Wilsley Green junction plans for information only. She closed the meeting to enable questions or comments from parishioners.

- There is no signage to divert lorries at Wilsley Green. The existing signs are back in the trees and obscured. There is nothing to say Cranbrook Town only. Cllr. Holden – the strongest sign is the shape of the road.
- With regard to community centre – set up a Trust. When looking at planning, add a business use/business units. Consultation with both Cranbrook and Sissinghurst. Will there be a referendum? Precept might be increased.

Cllr. Bridget Veitch – well documented, there is no way the Parish Council would agree to a loan without a full referendum of all residents. The Poll letter has been drafted and redrafted. Cllr. Rook – it is a requirement of the Loan Board that a referendum has to be undertaken. Cllr. Veitch – it is also documented that we have to have an acceptable Business Plan. Cllr. Swann – The Parish Council has not voted on or decided on a loan. No decision has been made.

- Commend the new plans for Wilsley Green. Better solution. Has any regard to signage from the other side of the junction been considered? Is there a budget and what the process is. Cllr. Holden – signage is shown on the plans. Double yellow lines will go. Budget has been assigned - £25,000.
- Parking in Stone Street – there is no enforcement. Good news about The Crown – what about the former Windmill Inn. Cllr. Veitch – will contact owners to enquire and has contacted the Parking Manager regarding enforcement.

Signed

Dated 10th December 2015