

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, VESTRY HALL, CRANBROOK
ON THURSDAY 13TH FEBRUARY 2020.**

PRESENT: Cllr. Fletcher (in the Chair), Cllrs. Beck, Clifford, Fairweather, Fermor, Gilbert, Hartley, Pethurst, Smith, Warne (in part) and Waters.

APOLOGIES: Cllrs. Bunyan, Hatcher and Kings.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and 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. He notified those present that the meeting was being recorded as a Clerk's aid.

136/19: Minutes of the Previous Meeting to be confirmed:

Cllr. Fletcher proposed that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 9th January 2020 be adopted as a true record. This was seconded by Cllr. Gilbert and agreed.

137/19: Local Council Award Scheme:

The Chairman explained that a procedural motion was required in order to submit our application for Quality Status to the Local Council Award Scheme. All Members had been sent a copy of the application electronically, with the associated links.

Cllr. Fletcher proposed that Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Parish Council confirm that all criteria for the Local Council Award Scheme Quality Status is in place and ready for submission, including all documents which are published online. This was seconded by Cllr. Gilbert and agreed.

138/19: Chairman's Report:

Cllr. Fletcher reported that he had attended the launch of the new High Weald Academy building with Cllr. Fermor. He was awaiting a date to visit Cranbrook School in the near future. Both schools had been invited to run a competition to design a logo for the Community Centre.

139/19: Appointment of Honorary Mayor:

Cllr. Fletcher explained the role of Honorary Mayor did not come with any rights or responsibilities. He proposed that Phillip Mummery be appointed as Honorary Mayor in recognition of the time and energy that he had devoted to the Town. This was seconded by Cllr. Gilbert and agreed, with one member abstaining from the vote. A ceremony would be held the following day in the Vestry Hall. Members expressed their thanks to Stuart Cleary and Cllr. Waters for organising an event at such short notice.

140/19: Community Centre: Presentation on the Project Planning by Carl Meewezen.

The Chairman introduced Carl Meewezen as the Finance and Programme Management Lead for the project. He had already put in a huge amount of effort in a very short period of time. He had prepared a paper which had been circulated to all Members in which he detailed the timeline, governance and risks associated to the project. It also detailed the RIBA phases from 0 – Strategic Definition to 7 – In use and the Project Governance. He invited questions.

In response to Cllr. Pethurst, it was confirmed that although the timeline, including a construction period of one year was tight, however, it was achievable.

The immediate plan seeks to establish an Outline Business Case provided in draft form to members in April with a final version available for approval in June.

Community engagement is already underway to establish the local requirements and to identify any concerns being voiced by parishioners. Cllr. Clifford suggested a special edition of Parish Cake could be commissioned detailing the project. This was greeted with unanimous enthusiasm from members.

Cllr. Pethurst raised concern that the current questionnaire being circulated appeared to only be relevant to organisations, not to individuals. It was agreed this should be addressed; it was also suggested that a Community Publicity Committee be formed. Cllr. Fermor volunteered to be involved along with Cllrs. Hatcher and Waters who were already assigned to community engagement.

Cllr. Hartley raised several concerns regarding funding, ownership of the land and whether there was any necessity to include a Medical Centre. It was confirmed these questions would be answered in the Outline Business Case.

Cllr. Warne suggested that Mr. Meewezen read the funding Feasibility Report that the Parish Council commissioned a few years ago, it may contain information that would be useful.

A few minor amendments were suggested to the papers presented. *With these agreed, Cllr. Fletcher proposed that the Parish Council agrees that the Community Centre project commence, per the project plan, with the resources and governance set out in the paper presented. This was seconded by Cllr. Beck and agreed. One member voted against the motion.*

Cllr. Fletcher also proposed that the Parish Council approve the draft project branding of: Cranbrook Centre – Community, Well-being and Health as a working title. After a full discussion, Cllr. Fermor proposed an amendment to the motion by changing the working title to Cranbrook Community Centre, this was seconded by Cllr. Pethurst and agreed.

The Parish Council thanked Mr. Meewezen for his time and effort.

141/19: Carriers Road Parking Areas:

The Chairman advised that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council intended to sell the unofficial parking spaces located in Carriers Road for retail development. He explained that the Parish Council had rejected an offer to lease the areas at a peppercorn rent in 2017. A paper had been prepared and circulated to Members pointing out concerns about the current TWBC proposals and possible counter proposals for the Parish Council to consider. It also included an idea of the economic cost and benefits to both parties.

Cllr. Hartley favoured the concept of retail development as opposed to parking spaces in the terms of Townscape. Cllr. Pethurst argued that there were already several empty shops in the town but there is an existing need for parking spaces. Cllr. Fairweather preferred the idea of retail units however any units would need to have an affordable rent with low startup costs.

No current value for the land was known. It was noted that it was originally in the ownership of Cranbrook Rural District before being part of TWBC's portfolio. Cllr. Warne suggested that if we owned the area the NDP would be happy to look into possible uses. *After a full discussion, Cllr. Fletcher proposed that he be empowered to talk to TWBC on our behalf, he would report back to the Council on what options were available to us, this was seconded by Cllr. Fermor and agreed with one member voting against the proposal.*

Reports from Committees:

142/19: Policy & Resources:

Cllr. Beck referred to the minutes of the meeting held on 11th February and invited questions. Cllr. Fermor requested that the word ‘Sissinghurst’ be added to the title of item 125/19, to avoid any confusion. With this minor amendment made, Cllr. Beck proposed adoption of the minutes, this was seconded by Cllr. Fairweather and agreed.

143/19: Planning & Preservation Management:

Cllr. Smith referred to the minutes of the meeting held on 21st January and 4th February and highlighted the decision for recommending refusal on the application for Land at Common Road. He invited questions; none were raised.

144/19: Burials & Properties:

Cllr. Clifford gave a precis of the decisions made at the meeting and invited questions. As none were raised, he proposed adoption of the minutes, this was seconded by Cllr. Gilbert and agreed

145/19: Environmental Management:

Cllr. Fairweather advised there had not been a recent meeting, the next one was scheduled for 17th March.

146/19: Neighbourhood Development Plan:

Cllr. Warne gave a precis of the meeting held on 27th January, highlighting the decision to go ahead with the Neighbourhood Plan. TWBC Planning Department had offered more support by way of a senior member of staff to liaise with neighbourhood groups. Richard Eastham was working on the amendments required to the Regulation 14 Draft, it was hoped he would be coming to present the revised version sometime next month. Cllr. Warne proposed adoption of the minutes, this was seconded by Cllr. Pethurst and agreed.

147/19: Reports from Delegates:

Appointment of Graham Holmes as Delegate to the Hop Pickers Line Heritage Group:

Cllr. Fletcher proposed that Graham Holmes be appointed as the Parish Council’s official delegate on the Hop Pickers Line Heritage Group. This was seconded by Cllr. Warne and agreed.

Cllr. Fletcher read out the following reports as provided by our representative Graham Holmes.

a) Hop Pickers Line Heritage Group:

The Group met on the 28th January. Much work is being done in preparation for this year’s activities. It is hoped that the Group will support the High Weald Walking Festival in September with another guided walk around Goudhurst. It was also agreed to attend the Horsmonden Nostalgia Day. The Group also intend to continue offering to undertake presentations to local organisations in order to help promote the work of the Hop Pickers Line Heritage Group. The next meeting is due to be held on the 24th March at Goudhurst.

b) CCAAC:

Members had been provided with the draft minutes of the meeting held on 22nd January.

c) Cranbrook Tourism Group:

The Group met on the 15th January and finalised details of their submission for the next issue of the TWBC Local magazine. It was agreed that the theme for this year would feature “Cranbrook Life”.

It was also agreed that the first of three full page ads in the Wealden Advertiser would appear in May, coinciding with “Nuts in May”. Following a discussion, the Group decided that it would support the proposal to appoint Phillip Mummery as Hon. Mayor of the Town. At the request of the Editor of Parish Cake, a report on activities would be provided for its next issue. The next meeting is due on the 3rd March when it is hoped that Cllr. Hatcher will be in attendance.

d) Transport Accessibility Group:

The next meeting is due to be held in Hawkhurst on the 21st February at 11.00am

f) Age Concern:

Cllr. Warne advised the next meeting scheduled for 12th February had been postponed.

148/19: Clerk’s Report:

The Clerk reported on a Facebook post stating that the volunteers and Kent High Weald Project Officers had finished off the circular boardwalk. After 20 years the final nail has been hammered into the boardwalk so the public can wander round the site with ease. They were also encouraging people to join in the next volunteer day.

149/19: Correspondence:

There was no correspondence to report.

150/19: Reports from Borough Councillors:

Borough Cllr. Tom Dawlings thought that the idea of an Honorary Mayor was splendid and was just sorry it hadn’t been thought of earlier.

He referred to the original decision by Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Parish Council in 2017 to refuse the offer of the Carriers Road parking spaces at a peppercorn rent. He was pleased the Council had voted to give the Chairman the right to negotiate with TWBC to come up with an alternative to selling the land for retail space.

A lot of people at both TWBC and the Parish Council had worked hard to acquire the land and access rights to the Community Centre, he wished us well with the project.

He reported that in reference to refuse collections, the number of missed bins being logged was dropping.

He also reported that he and Cllr. Seán Holden had attended a meeting with the Weald Sports Centre. The tennis courts were discussed. It had been identified that they are in the ownership of The High Weald Academy. Efforts to get them transferred and resurfaced so they can be used by the community were being sought.

Borough Cllr. Warne reported that the TWBC Climate Emergency Action Panel had commissioned a ‘green audit’ of the council’s operations. One option being considered is to decide whether or not to set up a citizen’s assembly to look at Climate Emergency in the Borough.

151/19: Items for Information:

a) Cllr. Fletcher sent best wishes to Cllr. Bunyan as she had undergone her hip operation today.

b) Cllr. Fletcher advised that ex-Chairman Rod Dann had offered to do parish walks for any members of the Parish Council that would like to go, either on a Sunday or in the evening. He has an extensive knowledge of local walks.

c) Cllr. Warne advised on an international campaign to combat loneliness called 'Happy Benches'. The idea being that a bench is signposted as such and anyone sitting at it would be open to chatting with anyone else on the bench.

d) Cllr. Hartley advised there was a meeting scheduled for 28th February at the Civic Centre in Tunbridge Wells to discuss the future of the Providence Chapel. The meeting was being convened by Historic England, chaired and hosted by TWBC. He encouraged anyone that thought it should become a community asset to attend and say so.

e) Cllr. Clifford advised the Spring edition of Parish Cake was due to be delivered slightly later than usual, around the second week of March. This was to allow for a feature on the appointment of Cranbrook's first Honorary Mayor to be included.

f) Cllr. Fairweather advised the Spring litter picks for Cranbrook and Sissinghurst had been arranged for Saturday 28th March.

g) Cllr. Fairweather advised it was Cranbrook Operatic and Dramatic Society's centenary this year. There was an event planned for Saturday 14th March in St. Dunstan's Church where excerpts of one hundred years of musicals would be sung. Admission was free.

h) Cllr. Smith raised concern about vehicles that were parked in the electric charging bays that were not being charged. He was advised that notices were being produced to advise this was unacceptable.

i) Cllr. Smith reported that he had heard that the local PCSO, Lee Jules was leaving and not being replaced.

h) Cllr. Fletcher advised we had been joined at tonight's meeting by the Chairman of Goudhurst Parish Council, Cllr. Anthony Harris who was visiting all local parishes to see how different council's run their meetings.

The meeting was closed.

Questions from the Public:

A parishioner asked the Parish Council to put pressure on KCC for a crossing in the High Street close to the Post Office and the Chemist. It was also suggested that a priority system should be implemented in Stone Street and a multi storey car park should be built in the town.

In reference to the precept, a parishioner reminded Members that they should offer value for money and that all parishioners are liable for the decisions made by the Council.