

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN
THE PARISH ROOM, SISSINGHURST,
ON THURSDAY 12TH MARCH 2020.**

PRESENT: Cllr. Fletcher (in the Chair), Cllrs. Beck, Bunyan, Fairweather, Fermor, Gilbert, Hall (in part), Hartley, Hatcher, Kings, Pethurst, Warne and Waters. County & Borough Cllr. Holden.

APOLOGIES: Cllr. Smith and Borough Cllr. Dawlings.

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.

152/19: Minutes of the Previous Meeting to be confirmed:

Cllr. Fletcher proposed that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 13th February 2020 be adopted as a true record. This was seconded by Cllr. Fermor and agreed.

153/19: Presentation from Mark Wade – Crane Valley Land Trust:

Mark Wade gave an update on the first and only community led, affordable homes scheme in the Parish. The offer of half a hectare of land in Swattenden Lane resulted from the NDP Landowners meeting held some two years ago. The land is being granted for £1. In exchange the landowner would receive two units at cost, for him to rent at low levels to two of his workers, plus the option for one worker to purchase a unit at reduced cost. If the option is not taken up the unit would be made available to the community along with the other affordable homes.

The scheme will include 17-20 affordable one, two and three bedroom homes, with a target discount of 40% on the Open Market Value. This would equate to a two-bed home costing around £180,000. The homes would be built to Passivhaus standards so heating costs would also be low.

The CVLT are partnering on the development with Bioregional Homes, who work to a net zero profit margin. The layout would be based on a dispersed farmstead model, keeping the green aspect to a maximum. On completion, the affordable homes would be held in perpetuity for local people through retention of the freehold by the CVLT and covenants on the leaseholds.

Through various grants the CVLT have secured funds of £200,000 to progress the scheme through planning. Part of this requires evidence from an independent affordable Housing Needs Survey to be carried out by Action with Rural Communities Kent. The data from the survey will be of value to the Parish Council and NDP.

Mark Wade brought to the attention of the Council the possibility, raised by TWBC, of funds from the sale of the old council offices being made available to the development if the portfolio were to include social rental units

Mark Wade expressed his thanks for the support of the Parish Council and individual members. Cllr. Bunyan thanked him for all the hard work he had put into the project, which was echoed by the other members.

154/19: Chairman's Report:

The Chairman reported on the resignation of Brian Clifford as a Parish Councillor and also as editor and founder of Parish Cake. His contribution would be sorely missed. Cllr. Fermor suggested a letter should be written thanking Mr. Clifford for the years of service he had devoted to the Parish Council and for starting the magazine. Cllr. Fletcher added he hoped everyone would support Cllr. Fermor in her new role as editor.

He also reported on the sad loss of Phillip Mummery just two weeks after his successful inauguration as Honorary Mayor.

The Chairman had met with Helen Grant MP at the weekend and discussed affordable housing, the CVLT and local employment along with government house building targets.

He informed the meeting that Jockey lane Clinic had been sold by tender in January and voiced concern that no one in Cranbrook appeared to know that it had been even up for sale, it could have been a potential site for new business. He has asked Helen Grant to look into how this was able to happen.

Investigations into going paperless are ongoing, he had been looking at how Goudhurst are doing it and Cllr. Fairweather is making enquiries into the Borough's system.

He had attended the installation of Reverend Pete Deaves, the new Rector of Sissinghurst and Frittenden, which had taken place in Trinity Church and was a great evening.

155/19: Community Centre:

Members had all received an update paper on the project written by Carl Meewezen, with their agenda. Cllr. Gilbert gave a precis of the options described in the paper. He also advised that the £420,000 grant from TWBC had been approved at Cabinet level that morning. He reiterated the importance of gathering the information for the Outline Business Case as we would need to understand the user requirements and any concerns that exist.

Cllr. Hartley voiced his doubt that the project was being predetermined, Cllr. Fletcher assured him this was not the case, which was why there was a motion on the agenda to approve expenditure for communication and consultation. After further discussion on what content would be included in a special edition of Parish Cake, and how responses from the consultation would be evaluated, ***Cllr Fletcher proposed that we approve expenditure up to £5,000 for communication and consultation with the community to establish their wishes and concerns in relation to Cranbrook Community Centre to include a special edition of Parish Cake.*** This was seconded by Cllr. Beck with eleven members voting in favour of the motion and two members abstaining.

The second motion being considered was to approve expenditure up to £15,000 to allow for essential project development up to and including RIBA Stages 1 & 2 and for any necessary topographical surveys and evaluations. After a lengthy debate it was proposed by Cllr. Fletcher to amend the motion as follows: ***To approve expenditure up to £15,000 to allow for any necessary topographical surveys and evaluations or any associated costs in relation to recently acquired land.*** This was seconded by Cllr. Gilbert and agreed unanimously. It was clarified that expenditure would be taken from funds already set aside.

Cllr. Fletcher reported that today at a Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Cabinet meeting the release of a grant the £420,000 promised to us was approved. On the 14th November at a Full Council meeting under item 106/19, this Council resolved unanimously to make an offer of £230,000 for the Tanyard Dental Surgery.

With this in mind *Cllr. Fletcher proposed that Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Parish Council resolves that to complete the purchase of Tanyard Dental Surgery for £230,000, the Transfer Deed (TR1) approved by the Council's solicitor for the transaction can be executed in accordance with the Council's Standing Order 23.* Cllr. Hartley voiced several concerns in connection with the purchase. Cllr. Fletcher enquired as to whether he wished to declare an interest on the matter in reference to ownership of an adjoining site and as he had been in discussions with the agent on a professional basis. Cllr. Hartley stated the adjoining land belonged to his wife and he did not feel he would gain any interest from the discussions with the agent; therefore, he did not see any need to declare an interest. Cllr. Pethurst agreed to second the motion on the table, which was then put to a vote. Eleven members voted in favour of the motion, two voted against.

156/19: Update on St. George's Institute – Cllr. Smith.

In Cllr. Smith's absence, this item would be deferred until the next meeting.

Reports from Committees:

157/19: Policy & Resources:

Cllr. Beck referred to the minutes of the meeting held on the 10th March and invited questions. In response to Cllr. Hall, he confirmed that the three month trial for the Thai food van to operate from Jockey Lane car park would be on Saturday evening from 6 – 9pm only. He highlighted the need for a volunteer to join the website development working group, as none were forthcoming it was agreed to seek a volunteer with the appropriate skills from outside the Parish Council. He also commented on the amount of physical cheques being written and advised that methods of making online payments were being assessed. He proposed adoption of the minutes which was seconded by Cllr. Pethurst and agreed.

158/19: Planning & Preservation Management:

Cllr. Gilbert gave a report of the meetings held on 18th February and 3rd March, highlighting the application for 44 homes in Mill Lane. The Deputy Clerk had written a letter to the Planning Authority reiterating the reasons for refusal and challenging the consultation the developer stated they had undertaken with the Parish Council on highway matters.

159/19: Burials & Properties:

Cllr. Bunyan advised the next meeting was scheduled for 21st April. Repairs to the lynch gate at Sissinghurst Cemetery would be considered at that meeting.

160/19: Environmental Management:

Cllr. Fairweather advised the next meeting was scheduled for 5pm on 17th March and would be held in the Council Chamber.

161/19: Neighbourhood Plan:

Cllr. Pethurst referred to the minutes of the meeting held on 17th February and stated that although the Steering Group had received several resignations, those that remained were no less keen to get the job done.

They would be seeking new members when they are in a position to take the draft plan to the Regulation 14 stage. They are intending to present the draft plan to the Council in May, prior to it going out for public consultation in June He invited questions. As none were raised, he proposed adoption of the minutes, this was seconded by Cllr. Hatcher and agreed.

162/19: Reports from Delegates:

a) Age Concern:

Cllr. Warne advised there was an Age Concern meeting scheduled for next Wednesday.

b) Tourism Group:

Cllr. Hatcher reported that the group had discussed the possibility of dedicating a page to tourism on the Parish Council website. He also advised that Cranbrook Goes Nuts in May would be held on Sunday 24th May and the Cranbrook in Bloom Garden Safari on Sunday 21st June.

c) Transport Accessibility Group:

Graham Holmes reported that sadly, the Group recently lost its long serving Secretary, Margaret Skeet, who died following a road traffic accident at Hurst Green. The date of the next meeting is still to be arranged.

d) Hop Pickers Line Heritage Group:

Graham Holmes advised that the next meeting is due to be held on 24th March in Goudhurst.

c) CCAAC:

Cllr. Bunyan advised the next meeting was scheduled for 25th March.

163/19: Clerk's Report:

There were no items to report.

164/19: Correspondence:

A letter had been received from St. Dunstan's Messy Church thanking the Council for supporting their organisation by agreeing to waive the hire fees of the Vestry Hall for the next financial year.

165/19: Reports from Borough & County Councillors:

a) County and Borough Cllr. Holden congratulated the Council on the progress of the Community Centre project noting the contribution of Cllrs. Fairweather and Dawlings who were instrumental in getting the grant of £420,000 from TWBC, through the initial committee stage.

He advised of his negotiations with SGN to limit the disruption caused by the replacement pipe work being undertaken in Cranbrook.

He encouraged anyone that had reported a problem with Highway drainage or potholes who had not received any action to contact him direct.

He advised of his offer to buy and plant trees in the Parish. The Environmental Management Committee would be discussing this at their meeting next week.

In response to Cllr Fermor's request for a reduction in the speed limit to 30mph on the section of the A229 north of Wilsley Pound roundabout, he said that the police would not support a reduction which was below the average speed.

b) Cllr. Fairweather referred to the decision to grant the £420,000 for the Community Centre and explained the procedure of speaking at TWBC meetings, stating that non committee members were only allowed three minutes. He was pleased he was able to take on the mantle from Cllr. Dawlings when his three minutes were up and that between them, they had been able to persuade the Committee to vote in favour of approving the grant.

He gave an update on the refuse collections, stating that the contractor now had a 99.4% success rate with only 40 bins being missed out of 49,000 properties in the last fortnight, a massive improvement. He also advised that the essential repair work to the North Farm depot following the fire last year would mean the depot would be closed from 22nd April to 5th March. This will result in the refuse trucks having to travel to either Ashford or Sevenoaks to empty their contents, which is likely to have a knock-on effect on productivity.

There is an amendment to the schedule of black bin collections which will involve an additional collection to facilitate the adjustment.

c) Cllr. Warne reported on the discussions of the Climate Emergency Action Panel. A green audit of TWBC's own operations will hopefully identify whether or not a Citizen's Assembly is necessary or whether they can identify specific areas where expert help can be called upon. The Borough Council aim to be carbon neutral by 2030.

She advised that every year as a member of the Planning Committee, you have the opportunity to monitor and assess what you think of several sites, this year it there were two small sites, one in Hawkhurst, one in Southborough plus the former Kent & Sussex hospital site and an industrial site, the Cellar Head Brewery on the A21. She thought that officers found receiving the feedback useful and that it would be helpful in the decision making process. In response to Cllr. Bunyan, she thought planning could be made greener through the development of planning policies.

d) Cllr. Fletcher read a precis of a report that Cllr. Dawlings had emailed to the Clerk, in which he described the effect that Coronavirus was beginning to have on local government, with several public consultation events on large planning applications being cancelled.

He also referred to the grant for the Community Centre and an update on recent refuse collection which had already been reported by Cllr. Fairweather.

He was disappointed that his offering to the TWBC Local Magazine was distilled down to the diary of events, he would speak with the editor about this because he thinks articles from the rural areas are important. An interesting contribution on App for walks in Tunbridge Wells and he has asked the Economic Development team about doing something similar for walks in Cranbrook.

He also added his condolences on the sad loss of our Honorary Mayor, Phil Mummery but was delighted that at the 'Mayor making' he heard the appreciation and affection in which he was held. He hoped that a successor would be considered in due course.

166/19: Items for Information:

a) Cllr. Hatcher advised of the COD's Sing 100 Concert being held in St. Dunstan's Church this Saturday at 2.30pm.

b) Cllr. Bunyan reminded everyone it was the Sissinghurst Spring Flower Show at the Primary School on Saturday 28th March.

c) Cllr Fairweather advised the Spring litter picks were scheduled for Saturday 28th March meeting at 9.30am, outside the White Horse for Cranbrook and the Milk House for Sissinghurst volunteers.

d) Cllr. Fermor informed everyone that the High Weald Academy lambing weekend had been cancelled.

e) Cllr. Waters tabled a poster advertising the VE Day celebrations which included a Lindy Hop dance troupe, a traditional recipe Royal Victoria Sponge competition, 1940's costumes, a real tank and jeeps and various market stalls. She had been assured that the SGN work in the High Street would not affect the event.

f) Cllr. Fletcher advised he had written to TWBC asked them to give us the freehold of the parking areas in Carriers Road.

The meeting was closed.

Questions from the Public:

A parishioner asked about the provision of public toilets in Cranbrook and was advised that investigations into an alternative to the Crane Lane Toilets were ongoing.