

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON
THURSDAY 9th JULY 2020

The meeting was held remotely using Zoom software.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

PRESENT: Cllr. Fletcher (Chairman), Cllrs. Beck, Bunyan, Fairweather, Fermor, Gilbert, Hartley, Hatcher, Kings, Meewezen, Pethurst, Smith, Warne and Waters.

Declaration of Interests, Dispensations, Predetermination or Lobbying:

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.

APOLOGIES: Cllr. Hall and Borough Cllr. Dawlings.

35/20: Minutes of the Previous Meeting:

The Chairman, Cllr. Fletcher proposed that the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 11th June be adopted as a true record. This was seconded by Cllr. Fermor and agreed.

36/20: Community Centre:

Cllr. Gilbert reported that the Tanyard Dental Surgery had now been purchased and the utilities were in the process of being sorted out. A meeting had taken place with the CCG (West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group) and Dr. Charlesworth, which had been a very positive.

Cllr. Fletcher explained that the CCG were agreeable in principle to an 'open book' construction project. They would draw up a 25 year lease, the rent of which would pay the annual cost of a 25 year loan the Parish would have to take out. The Medical centre would bear its fair % of the development costs, and specialist medical construction. These would be itemised in quotes and invoices, so the District Valuer of the CCG would be aware of them and allow for them in the final rent.

The CCG would also bring forward Section 106 money so that funds are available to start work. Cllr. Meewezen explained that the financial risk of building a medical centre would be passed on to the CCG. This would be de-risking the Parish Council from the whole medical centre.

A great deal of discussion took place on this topic and Cllr. Meewezen informed members that he would be presenting a business case, giving all the different options at the next Full Council Meeting. Cllr. Hartley was of the view that this looked attractive over a 25 year term, however, he was nervous that the initial responsibility to develop a specialised doctors surgery would be with the Parish Council. It was stated that the Parish would buy in the expertise to deliver the medical centre. Cllr. Bunyan asked if the CCG would continue to pay rent after 25 years, Cllr Fletcher confirmed they would and this is an opportunity to develop an asset for the Parish council that would generate an income in the future.

Cllr. Warne said that without the business case it is not possible to make a decision and in principle is this what the Parish Council wishes to do? Cllr. Bunyan asked if much feedback had been received on parishioners' views. Cllr. Hatcher agreed to circulate a spreadsheet which he had formulated with all the views received. He went on to explain that it was clear from these responses that the parishioners did not want an increase in precept to cover the cost of the building.

Cllr. Fletcher thanked Cllr. Meewezen and Cllr. Gilbert for all their hard work on this project. Cllr. Meewezen asked councillors to drop him an email if they would like anything considered in the business plan.

37/20: Parking Spaces Carriers Road:

Cllr. Fletcher informed members that he had been working closely with Cllr. Dawlings in acquiring the parking places in Carriers Road. The option to have them on a peppercorn rent is still there. Cllr. Hartley commented that this would be an astute purchase for the Parish Council especially if the price was reasonable.

Reports from Chair and Committees:

38/20: Chairman's Report:

Cllr. Fletcher began his report by informing members that the clerks have been stars this month – the internal KCC audit was passed with flying colours and we have been re accredited with Quality Parish Status.

The Tanyard Dental surgery now belongs to the Parish Council as of 12th June and the gas, electricity and water supply would be disconnected in the near future.

Although the Parish Council had tried to register the Jockey Lane Clinic as an Asset of Community Value this was rejected by the panel. However, he was pleased to report that this building would hopefully remain as D1 use.

Cranbrook Museum and Windmill will be closed this year and the Mill cap is going to be refurbished.

Cllr. Fletcher informed members that there were currently approximately 2,200 dwellings in Cranbrook and 465 of these were social rented, that is 21%. He was hoping to have an article in the next Parish Cake on 'How to get on the property ladder with Shared Ownership'. The NDP and Parish Councillors will need to come to a view as to whether the 40% affordable housing imposed by the new local plan is acceptable to us. Cllr. Pethurst reminded members that he had written a report for the KCC Select Committee earlier in the year on Affordable Housing and the needs of Cranbrook and Sissinghurst. A great deal of discussion took place on the type and mix of housing required in Cranbrook and Sissinghurst. Cllr. Warne was of the view that before making any decisions, an up to date Housing Needs Survey for Cranbrook & Sissinghurst needs to be undertaken. This would provide the Parish Council with invaluable evidence to support the Neighbourhood Plan policies on housing needs.

Cllr. Bunyan was of the view that more self-build plots should be made available, which was supported by members. Cllr. Warne stated that some housing should have the local connection test applied with could form part of the NDP policies. Cllr. Meewezen commented that in his view the term "Affordable Housing" was not affordable to many.

Cllr. Fletcher reported that he had been asked to get involved with the tennis courts at High Weald/Fusion to see if they can be reopened. Cllr. Fermor was under the impression that funding could be obtained from Sport England.

The playgrounds were opened today after new signage and risk assessments by the Clerk and inspections by the Parish Warden had been undertaken.

Cranbrook in Bloom will plant and manage the new spinney on the Ball Field and it is already attracting good feedback. They have a list of trees from the tree warden to procure and plant in the Autumn. Any Councillors who can collect wild flower seed, please do so for an autumn planting session.

39/20: Policy & Resources:

Cllr. Beck referred to the meeting held on 7th July and highlighted the payments between Committee totalling £250,570.37. Cllr. Beck proposed adoption of the minutes, this was seconded by Cllr. Meewezen and agreed.

40/20: Planning & Preservation Management:

Cllr. Smith reported on the minutes of the meetings which were held on 16th June and 7th July and asked if there were any questions. The Committee had refused the planning application 20/01335/FULL for three detached dwellings at the Vicarage, Waterloo Road, Cranbrook. Cllr. Warne confirmed that she had called this planning application in to be discussed at TWBC Planning Committee. Cllr. Hartley informed the meeting he had contacted the developer who had been instructed to maximise value of the site.

41/20: Properties and Burial Grounds:

Cllr. Gilbert advised that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on 21st July. The insurance company had rejected the claim for business interruption as Covid-19 was not on the list of diseases recognised.

42/20: Environmental Management:

Cllr. Fairweather presented the minutes of the meeting held on 30th June. Cllr. Warne asked if the classes held on the Ball Field were being charged. Cllr. Fairweather explained that the situation is being monitored, however at present the Parish Council were promoting Health and Wellbeing and would not be charging at the moment.

Cllr. Fermor informed the meeting that The Pound at Wilsley Pound, was now looking absolutely wonderful and passed on her thanks to those responsible.

Cllr. Fairweather proposed adoption of the minutes, this was seconded by Cllr. Gilbert and agreed.

43/20: Neighbourhood Development Plan:

Cllr. Warne referred to the minutes of the meeting held on 29th June. There were just a few tweaks required to the Neighbourhood Development Plan before it could go to the Draft Regulation 14 consultation. Discussion then ensued on how the consultation might take place due to the Covid-19 situation. It was agreed that the Autumn edition of the Parish Cake would carry articles on the NDP which would try to encourage the whole community to take part. The Draft Reg. 14 consultation would be online, hard copies available at specific location points in Cranbrook and Sissinghurst and perhaps by setting up special zoom meetings.

Members agreed unanimously that the Parish Cake for this special Neighbourhood Development Plan edition should be sent out by post and would fund it.

Cllr. Warne proposed adoption of the minutes, this was seconded by Cllr. Pethurst and agreed.

44/20: Clerk's Report:

The PCSOs report for May was available should any Councillor request a copy from the Deputy Clerk.

45/20: Correspondence:

No correspondence which required reporting.

46/20: Reports from Borough Councillors:

In the absence of Borough Cllr. Dawlings, the Chairman read out his report:

The Tourism Group had emailed the major attractions in the town (Museum, Windmill, Church, Cranbrook in Bloom) about their opening plans to see if there might be merit in advertising what is happening in Cranbrook.

With regard to the small business grants paid out by TWBC with Government funds. They are still dealing with a few appeals. TWBC have precisely £171,750 to pay out, having distributed grants totalling £27.329 million to 2,077 small businesses in the Borough. This has been a very major exercise.

He commented on TWBC's overall financial position. The Council's main sources of income are from Council Tax (budget £8.5 million) and Fees & Charges (budget £21.4 million). Income from fees and charges has been dramatically affected by the Covid-19 lockdown. The Council's shortfall in April was about £1 million (this has been covered by Government funding) with a similar shortfall in May. The shortfall reduced in June with more businesses opening up and is being monitored very closely. The latest announcement from Government is that, rather than fully compensate Local Authorities for losses during the Covid-19 lockdown, the Government will cover 75% of lost income in the current year with Authorities needing to cover the other 25%. We are continuing to lobby for a fairer/better settlement - and Councils in a weaker financial position than TWBC may continue to threaten issuing section 114 notices (effectively announcing they are not able to finance the provision of statutory services). In the short-term TWBC will be able to cover the likely shortfall from reserves but for next year will need to plan how to balance the budget with reduced income.

The opening up of more shops in towns on 15th June and Super Saturday on 4th July seemed to occur with few problems.

The first on-line Full Council meeting was held yesterday. Four main items were addressed. First, the appointment of a new Mayor (Joy Podbury) and Deputy Mayor (Chris Woodward) - the mayor-making would normally have been held after the May elections (postponed to May 2021). Cllr. Dawlings reiterated the important benefits of having a Mayor. Second, TWBC approved the priorities of the Community Safety Partnership. Third, TWBC agreed the changed political balance of the Council and the number of places on politically balanced committees that are allocated to each political group. Finally, TWBC approved a cross-party motion thanking everyone who had helped those affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

b) Borough Cllr. Warne reported that Cabinet had agreed to award £60,000 which would fund one affordable housing unit at a reduced rent at the Turnden Site from the s106 Commuted Sums from the sale of the former Council Offices in the High Street.

c) Cllr. Fairweather informed members that all meetings were being held online and during working hours which precluded him and many other Borough Councillors from attending. He went on to say that many of the TWBC Officers were still working from home and it was difficult to get any answers to queries he had raised.

47/20: Delegated Reports:

Tourism Group:

Graham Holmes reported that there had not been a meeting since the 3rd March. It is understood that the Windmill will remain closed for the remainder of the season and the Museum have deferred

reopening until September. St. Dunstan's is open for private prayer and reflection. Cranbrook in Bloom are currently running a Front Garden Competition.

Transport Group:

At the present time it is not known when the Group will recommence its activities.

Hop Pickers Line Heritage Group:

The meeting due to be held on 24th had been cancelled. In the meantime, work had carried on via messaging. The Group made the Parish aware of a proposal by the Historical Railway Estates to infill the cutting between Hall Wood Farm Bridge and Badgers Oak Tunnel. Further news is awaited on a planning application.

The planned participation in the Weald Walking Festival on the 16th September has been cancelled as has the Horsmonden Nostalgia Day on the 26th September.

Work is progressing to install an Information Panel on the Village Green at Horsmonden.

Katharine Elizabeth Wood Charity: Cllr. Hatcher reported that the Katharine Elizabeth Wood Charity were in the process of awarding a small grant to a local student.

48/20: Items for Information:

- a) Cllr. Hatcher commented that he had been forwarded a copy of the Kent Ramblers Walking Guide for feedback. He was concerned that the name was very similar to the walking guide produced by Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Parish Council.
- b) Cllr. Smith notified members that St. Georges Institute Hall in Sissinghurst had now reopened and followed the guidelines provided by Action for Communities in Rural England and had undertaken a risk assessment.

The meeting was closed.

There were no questions from members of the public attending.