

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, VESTRY HALL, CRANBROOK
ON THURSDAY 8TH AUGUST 2019**

PRESENT: Cllr. Veitch (in the Chair) Cllrs. Beck, Bunyan, Clifford, Fairweather, Fletcher, Gilbert, Hartley, Hatcher, Kings, and Warne. Borough Cllr. Dawlings, Borough and County Cllr. Holden.

APOLOGIES: Cllrs. Fermor, Hall, Pethurst and Smith.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced our guests Cllr. Alan McDermott, Leader of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Cllr. Carol Mackonochie – Communities and Wellbeing and William Benson – Chief Executive.

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. She notified those present that the meeting was being recorded as a Clerk's aid.

The Chairman informed the meeting that she had changed the order of the agenda to allow our guests to participate in the items on the Community Centre and the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

49/19: Minutes of the Previous Meeting to be confirmed:

Cllr. Veitch proposed that the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 11th July 2019 be adopted as a true record. This was seconded by Cllr. Bunyan and agreed.

50/19: Visit from Cllrs. Alan McDermott, Carol Mackonochie and Chief Executive William Benson:

William Benson gave a short presentation on the current priorities and challenges of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council at the current time. He explained they faced funding cuts of 60% with government grants being reduced to zero. Only ten pence in the pound of council tax is kept by the Borough, the rest being distributed to other organisations such as Kent County Council, the Police, Kent Fire and Rescue and of course parish and town councils. Only four pence in the pound collected in business rates is retained by the Borough with the rest going to central government, although there is talk of being allowed to retain business rate growth.

He advised that the Local Plan has been published and goes to Cabinet next week for approval. Assuming this is approved, consultation will commence 20th September and last for six weeks. He explained the importance of growth and ensuring it is supported by infrastructure.

There were eight major priorities across the borough which included investing £13.7m to improve the Museum, the Library and Adult Education; the Caverley Square project; the purchase of Dowding House to provide temporary accommodation for the homeless and community hubs in Cranbrook, Paddock Wood and Southborough.

Cllr. Mackonochie described her role as portfolio holder for Communities and Wellbeing. The Borough works heavily with the Police and housing which includes running the Winter Shelter.

Cllr. McDermott explained he was not only the Leader of the Council but was also in charge of Planning. The government has imposed a target of 13,800 new dwellings over a twenty year period starting from 2016.

He referred to the Borough's Draft Local Plan and advised that following on from the initial six week consultation period, the responses would be reviewed with the plan being amended as necessary. The revised version being published in February before being put before the Inspector next year.

In response to Cllr. Clifford, he advised on how the consultation would be promoted. William Benson said that anything the Parish Council can do to help get the word out would be much appreciated.

In response to Cllr. Beck, Cllr. McDermott explained that the numbers had been allocated across the parishes through the 'Call for Sites' process.

Cllr. Fletcher asked if it would be possible to safeguard S106 monies received for developments in Cranbrook. Cllr. McDermott stated although this could not be guaranteed he liked to hope that we would retain the majority, KCC does get a lot.

In regard to future development Cllr. Bunyan raised concern that developers are mostly building large houses which are not of the best quality, whereas this Parish needs smaller dwellings of a better quality than they tend to provide. Cllr. McDermott suggested that we could ask for whatever we wanted in our NDP.

In response to Cllr. Beck, Cllr. McDermott advised that if no one had put any sites forward then it would have been unlikely that we would have been allocated any.

Cllr. Clifford referred to the £400,000 that the ex-leader David Jukes had promised for the Community Centre and asked if we would still receive it. Cllr. McDermott confirmed that amount had been allocated to Cranbrook for the Community Centre and he was prepared to guarantee that.

The Chairman closed the meeting to allow members of the public to ask questions.

A Question was raised regarding the future of the Caverley Square project. Cllr. McDermott stated that the future was yet undecided. A judgement would be made when the Council were in receipt of all the facts.

The meeting was reopened.

51/19: Community Centre:

The Chairman gave an update on the status of the legal documents. There had been an issue regarding the time gap in time between the granting of the rights of access for construction purposes and the permanent rights of access. A solution had now been agreed by all main parties and proposed to the Co-Op's solicitors.

Savills continue to negotiate on our behalf with the owner of the Tanyard Dental Surgery site. She reiterated that when a figure had been agreed it would be put before this Council to decide if we wished to proceed.

Cllr. Veitch referred to the recent email discussion and voiced her opinion that issues should be discussed in meetings which is why she does not participate. She reiterated that all decisions are made democratically by this Council and no deal has been made in regard to a medical centre. Discussions with TWBC and Amesbury have only been on the basis that the legal documents should be worded to give us the flexibility to do this. Both she and Cllr. Fletcher were happy to talk through any concerns that councillors may have.

52/19: Neighbourhood Development Plan:

Cllr. Warne referred to item 7 of the minutes and highlighted that Berkeley Homes were keen to liaise with a local resident's group on the Turnden development.

Cllrs. Hatcher and Gilbert plus Laura Rowland, June Bell, Annie Hopper, Liz Daley and Pip Gill from the NDP Steering Group had all volunteered to form a resident's group. Cllr. Bunyan commented on the excellent job the Brick Kiln Advisory Group were doing, this was echoed by Cllr. Veitch.

In response to Cllr. Veitch, Cllr. Warne confirmed that Liz Daley had volunteered to chair the meetings. Cllr. Warne proposed that the group represent the views of residents under the same terms of reference as the Brick Kiln Advisory Group, this was seconded by Cllr. Bunyan and agreed.

Cllr. Warne gave a concise update on the current challenges the NDP are facing. We had thought we were in a position to move forward to Regulation 14 when at the last minute a request was received from AECOM for a conference call. They advised that they would not proceed with the required Strategic Environmental Assessments until our draft plan could be better aligned with the Draft TWBC Local Plan. There was some disparity in the target number of dwellings we had been working towards as TWBC did not agree with the numbers that Cheryl Beattie from AECOM had given us. We had also been led to believe that the Brick Kiln numbers would be counted against our target but we were now being told that is not the case. The new target numbers being set were over 900 for Cranbrook and Sissinghurst which is 50% above the amount identified in the Housing Needs Survey of 2017. A meeting with TWBC Head of Planning has been scheduled for next Monday to see if we can amend our plan to be more in line with the Local Plan.

The August NDP meeting has been rescheduled to discuss the most appropriate way forward.

Cllr. McDermott clarified the position regarding windfall sites.

Cllr. Warne also reminded members that Cllr. Hatcher had been delegated to respond to a consultation on 'Building for the High Weald' so to forward any comments to him direct.

Cllr. Warne proposed adoption of the minutes of the meeting held on 29th July, this was seconded by Cllr. Hatcher and agreed.

Cllr. Veitch thanked our visitors from Tunbridge Wells for coming.

53/19: Chairman's Report:

The Chairman reported on the Britain in Bloom judging and how hard everyone had worked in preparation. The judges commented on the sense of community.

She gave a precis of the Police Commissioners Coffee Morning. There were approximately twenty five attendees with everyone finding it interesting and informative. She thanked councillors and their partners for helping to set up the event and for serving teas and coffees. A copy of a police survey had been put in members wallets, she encouraged them to complete and return them. It is also available online.

There were some actions to follow up from the CrimeStoppers meeting but she is still awaiting contact from the Neighbourhood Watch organisers.

Well-being walks are on a Tuesday morning at 9.30am outside the Congregational Church, she can highly recommend them.

Cllr. Clifford's idea of a 'Roll of Honour' was well received by Mike Huxley – Cranbrook Museum. Genealogy queries are increasing and are a source of donations for the museum. Rod Dann will be retiring as the Curator of the Museum at the end of October after many years of dedicated service.

She had been unable to attend the TWBC Councillors Convention but had managed to get to the KALC Councillors Conference. Topics included insurance and HR issues. Handouts from the day are available from the Clerks if anyone is interested.

54/19: Policy & Resources:

Cllr. Beck referred to the minutes of the meeting held on 6th August and invited questions. As none were raised, he proposed adoption, this was seconded by Cllr. Fletcher and agreed.

55/19: Planning & Preservation Management:

Cllr. Bunyan referred to the minutes of the meeting held on 6th August and invited questions. None were raised.

56/19: Burials & Properties:

Cllr. Clifford referred to the meeting held on 23rd July. He explained that Rev. Ann Pollington had been invited to the meeting to discuss the idea of a wild flower meadow in St. Dunstan's Churchyard. It was agreed that Cllr. Fermor would work with the Parish Warden and Rev. Pollington to develop the idea. It was also suggested that the bund at Golford would benefit from wild flower planting.

He also commended the Burial Grounds Report which had been written by the Parish Warden and would be used to produce positive guidelines for funeral directors to observe in the cemeteries.

The Parish Warden had also produced a spreadsheet of all the street furniture in the Parish which would be shared with Cllr. Bunyan as the member responsible for benches, telephone boxes and bus shelters.

Cllr. Clifford asked members to consider possible uses for the Information Centre when the Borough finally vacate after March 2020. Cllr. Veitch confirmed that all furniture would remain but TWBC would remove all their IT equipment.

57/19: Environmental Management:

Cllr. Fairweather advised the next meeting was scheduled for 24th September.

Cllr. Veitch reported that she had been contacted by a resident of Colliers Green requesting a reduction in the speed limit to 20mph by the School. County Cllr. Holden advised that he had also been contacted and had referred the request to a Highways Manager for further investigation.

58/19: Reports from Delegates:

a) CCAAC:

Cllr. Bunyan gave a report on the meeting held on 24th July and highlighted the discussions on air pollution and an error in the recording of the issue of pavement height in Sissinghurst. The Conservation Architect Mark Stephenson had been asked about the Providence Chapel but he did not have anything to report at that time.

Cllr. Hartley as a co-owner of the Chapel advised that a meeting was planned but not yet timetabled between, the owners, TWBC and Historic England to consider the options available. He would be happy to share the decision with the Parish Council when a way forward had been agreed.

b) Hop Pickers Line Heritage Group:

Cllr. Hartley was hopeful he would be able to attend the next meeting. Cllr. Veitch read the following report from Graham Holmes who had attended the last meeting:

There is now an Information Board in Goudhurst close to the site of the old station. It depicts a map of the route together with a brief history of the line. The forthcoming programme includes:

- 18th September: High Weald AONB Walking Festival. The Group are hosting a walk covering the presence of the railway in Goudhurst.
- 21st September: The Group will have a stand at the Horsmonden Nostalgia day.
- 26th September: The Group are presenting a talk to the Horsmonden History Society.

The next meeting will be on the 27th August.

Cllr. Clifford advised there were some excellent snippets of old films of the line on YouTube which were well worth watching. In response to Cllr. Veitch, Cllr. Hartley would be happy to invite the Group to a future Parish Council meeting.

c) Age Concern:

Cllr. Warne reported that although she has not attended a meeting recently, she had sight of emails between David Summers of Age Concern and Spencer Goddard, the Tenterden Hub Manager which alluded to a misunderstanding regarding the financial contribution Age Concern would be expected to make for the use of the Tenterden facilities. She was not aware of the outcome but would keep the Council updated.

d) Katharine Elizabeth Wood Charity:

Cllr. Veitch reported that a meeting had been held recently and the Charity continues to support worthy recipients. The Charity is trying to make their aims more widely known and are considering contact through primary schools as well as secondary schools.

David Cook was no longer a parish councillor however Cllr. Veitch proposed that he remains a delegate authorised to represent the Parish Council on the board of Trustees. This was seconded by Cllr. Warne and agreed.

e) Cranbrook in Bloom:

Cllr. Veitch had been approached by Cranbrook in Bloom with a request to develop a more formal relationship with them. They would like a delegate from the Council to attend their meetings. Cllr. Hatcher voiced his interest but would need to know more details as to when and how often the Committee meet. The Clerk volunteered to make the relevant enquiries.

The following reports had been received from Graham Holmes as our delegate.

f) Cranbrook Tourism Group:

The next meeting of the Group will be on the 11th September. In the meantime, the second full page promotion entitled “Discover Cranbrook” appeared in the Wealden Advertiser on the 2nd August.

He had been asked again if the Parish Council can nominate a delegate to attend meetings (usually bi monthly on a Wednesday morning). This is seen as particularly important since the Council not only provides financial support but also receives useful tourist information from the Borough and other interested bodies.

g) Transport Accessibility Group:

The Group last met on the 14th June when Arriva were to be asked to explain the unusually high level of vehicle breakdowns affecting the No.5 service. A response is awaited. The next meeting is due to take place on the 20th September.

59/19: Clerk's Report:

The Clerk gave a report of recent crime figures that had been provided by PCSO Lee Jules.

60/19: Correspondence:

There was no correspondence to report.

61/19: Items for Information:

Cllr. Bunyan reminded everyone that the Sissinghurst Fete was on Bank holiday Monday, she would be on the coconut shy.

Cllr. Fairweather also referred to the Fete stating it would start at 1pm on the Jubilee Field. Helen Grant MP was returning this year to judge the Dog Show again. He also reported that the entire Fete Committee would be standing down this year so unless fresh volunteers could be found it will be the Fete's last year.

Cllr. Clifford asked how much influence the Parish Council can bring to bear on KCC footpaths and PROW. In response Cllr. Fairweather advised that Sissinghurst resident Jeremy Boxall had approached the Environmental Management Committee for a parish council delegate to take issues forward to KCC but there was insufficient information available to entice any volunteers. Mr Boxall had agreed to write a role specification to be circulated to all members of the Council but we had yet to receive it. Cllr. Bunyan informed Cllr. Clifford that we had received a letter from KCC today asking us to comment on a possible footpath diversion. This would be discussed at the next planning meeting. County Cllr. Holden stated he would be happy to forward any concerns or requests onto Jonathan Bibby- KCC Footpaths Officer.

Cllr. Fletcher wished to congratulate Ivor Hatcher on achieving his degree. He also wanted to circulate news of Buss Murton's move to Clermont House and of 'Tractorfest' on 17th & 18th August being held as usual at Woolpack Corner.

Cllr. Veitch advised of the current consultation on the traffic restrictions in Stone Street/High Street which would be closing on 18th September. Anyone wishing to comment should do so before then.

62/19: Reports from Borough and County Councillors:

County Cllr. Holden was pleased to report that 'Kent Plan Bee' had been adopted into the County's Environmental Strategy.

The idea was to mobilise the people of Kent to improve pollination opportunities and protect habitats. Apparently a third of everything we eat comes from the actions of pollinating insects.

He advised of a select committee on knife crime to which he had submitted a paper. The increase in knife crime had been associated with the 'county lines' drug gangs; he believed a review on drug law was necessary. A report of the Committee's findings is due out in October.

He also advised on the struggle to keep lorries off of minor roads continues. The Government had given Kent £29m in March to prepare for Brexit and it was believed more had been allocated from the new government to help prepare for a no deal Brexit.

Cllr. Dawlings referred to an earlier comment regarding footpaths believing the level of consultation offered by KCC to be excellent.

In his role as Chairman of the Tourism Forum he advised an advert had appeared in last week's Wealden Advertiser promoting summer activities in this area including Sissinghurst Fete. An article has also been submitted for the 'Local' magazine due out in September showcasing the Art Show, the Apple Fair and the October exhibition in the Museum.

He gave an update on Cranbrook Sports Club (formally known as the Rugby Club). A successful quote of just under £1.7m to build the new pavilion had been received, so they are now looking at how to achieve that figure.

He advised that TWBC had adopted a policy on 'carbon neutrality'.

He referred to what he described at the 'wretched refuse charge' and reiterated his disapproval, however he did add there had been more uptake than had been forecast, so he could only conclude that it was a service that residents regards as worth paying for.

Cllr. Fairweather had nothing to report.

Cllr. Warne advised that she had attended the Councillors Convention which had discussed the next Five Year Plan for the Borough Council.

The meeting was closed. Parishioners were invited to ask questions

A question was raised regarding the finance reports and how much has been put aside in reserves for the Community Centre. It was also suggested that a dedicated page on the website could be created which would keep residents more informed on the progress of the Community Centre and which Councillor they could contact with any particular concerns they may have.

A further question was raised on the possibility of a medical centre in the Community Centre, they were advised that all options are being explored but no decisions have yet been taken.

Signed.....

Date: 12th September 2019