

SMEETH PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of a meeting held on Wednesday 16th January 2013
at Brabourne Baptist Church

1. Present

Cllr Austen (Chairman) (SA), Cllr Herrick (Vice-chairman) (DH), Cllr Mrs Williams (MW), Cllr Hinchliffe (MH), Cllr Plowright (IP), Cllr Thorpe (GT), Cllr Turner (MT) and Mrs S Wood (Clerk) (SW). Mr Graham Kingston (Community Warden) (GK), Mr O Pendred (National Grid) and 2 colleagues from Balfour Beatty also attended. Two members of the public were present.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Wood (ward member).

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

4. Minutes of the meeting on Wednesday 14th November 2012

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting be approved and signed as a true record.

5. Matters Arising

5.1 Footpaths and Highways

5.1.1 Church Road footpath. Feedback on the process is requested by KCC – passed to Cllr Thorpe.

GT

5.1.2 A20 footpath. Improvements west of Smeeth were welcomed. KCC to be asked to progress eastbound to Sellindge as the poor state of repair is hazardous – pedestrians are forced to walk in the road.

SW

5.1.3 Potholes in Church Road are to be reported to KCC.

SW

5.1.4 Drains at the entrance to Mersham le Hatch need clearing, as evidenced by regular flooding; KCC to be notified.

SW

The Chairman suspended the meeting to allow Mr Pendred to address the meeting.

Mr Pendred (Community Relations Officer for National Grid) outlined the refurbishment project on overhead lines between Canterbury and Sellindge to be carried out during March – October 2013. Signs will be put in place, eg 'Works Traffic', but if found to cause an obstruction will be repositioned. The electricity supply to the parish will be maintained as the work is to the National Grid and not the local supply.

Temporary roadways may need to be put in place to access pylons, these will be plastic or metal – a security presence will be needed for the latter, involving cabins, generators and lighting.

Plain Road will be closed for 2 periods of up to 4 weeks each to enable work to be carried out safely – the Chairman recommended that National Grid liaise closely with the bus companies to minimise disruption. Dates for the closure are not yet known - Mr Pendred was asked to notify the Parish Council as soon as this information is available.

Some footpaths will also be closed temporarily.

There will be an increase in traffic to deliver supplies to sites.

Mr Pendred stated that all residents will be sent a letter informing them of the project, and he will be giving a presentation at local schools.

Mr Pendred undertook to send Cllr Plowright a press release for inclusion in the March Parish News.

Mr Pendred and his colleagues were thanked for their presentation, and the Chairman reconvened the meeting.

5.2 Speeding in Smeeth Cllr Plowright advised that there are now 7 fully trained volunteers, and 4 more have come forward; more volunteers would be welcome. An additional site has been approved. It is hoped to carry out 3 sessions each week. Cllr Plowright stated that regular Speedwatch exercises can lead to an 80% reduction in the number of vehicles exceeding the speed limit.

5.3 Parking in Sandy Place No progress to report - the Clerk to pursue with Paul Hills (ABC), copy to Cllr Howard. The Community Warden is to thank residents for their cooperation. It was noted that there have been no complaints of late. Cllr Hinchliffe asked for costs of putting in reinforcing mesh – Cllr Plowright offered to obtain costings for supply and installation of grasscrete.

SW
GK

5.4 Land behind Fortescue Place The Chairman advised that the landowner had approached the Parish Council to see if there would be any interest in developing the land; notes on the resulting meeting were circulated.

IP

Cllr Turner asked if the area was liable to flooding, the Chairman noted that the drainage had been improved.

Cllr Hinchliffe stated that the site is not included in the Tenterden and Rural Sites Development Plan Document and would therefore be an exception site. Cllr Turner asked for an update on the preferred site identified in the 2012 survey carried out by the Parish Councils and ACRK; the Clerk advised that there is no progress to report.

The Chairman stated that were there to be any development it would be a mix of affordable and market value housing, the latter would subsidise the landscaping.

Cllr Turner asked if 2 housing schemes were needed, the Chairman replied that the housing survey identified a need for 40 homes, which could not be fulfilled by the preferred site.

It was thought that access to the site via Ramstone Close would not be acceptable to KCC Highways, given the number of vehicle movements.

Cllr Plowright recommended that provision of footpaths be made a condition of any planning permission.

The Chairman noted that the landowner's agent had indicated that the landowner may be willing to act as a housing association to develop the land.

Cllr Hinchliffe noted that a section 106 agreement would accrue from any development, and this payment could be used to benefit the village.

A lack of detail regarding number of dwellings and design, and the proportion of affordable versus market value properties was noted, and the importance of integration into the village emphasised.

Cllr Mrs Williams stated that the site had been a derelict field for over 40 years.

The Chairman stated that he would be opposed to more than 30 dwellings on the site, and Cllr Mrs Williams and Cllr Thorpe said that properties for first and second time buyers are needed – the parish already has sufficient 4 and 5 bedroom properties.

The Chairman stated that these comments would be relayed to the agent.

SW

5.5 Parish Council noticeboard Cllr Hinchliffe was thanked for his hard work to refurbish the noticeboard.

6. Community Warden's report

Mr Kingston's report is attached, and was thanked by the Chairman for his efforts on behalf of the parish.

7. Financial Report

7.1 To agree payments in accordance with the Budget.

Resolved:

That the following payments be made in accordance with the Budget.

Payments

Details	£
HMRC PAYE Q3	159.20
S Wood (Fordred's reimbursement)	168.00
S Wood (net salary December)	211.95
S Wood (net salary January)	212.15
SLCC (annual subscription)	37.83
Barbara Podd (salary)	111.42
ABC – 2 dog waste bins	492.00

Receipts

Details	£
Smeeth Field Rent	175.00
Fordred's Charity	168.00

Balance: £ 17726.86

7.2 Draft Budget for 2013-2014

The draft budget was presented.

The Clerk advised that payment of the Concurrent Functions Grant is unlikely to continue after 2015; that the Street Cleansing grant may not be paid after 2014; and that capping of PC Precepts may be introduced in 2014. This would mean that any rise in the Precept of more than 2% would have to be approved by a parish referendum, the costs of which would have to be borne by the PC. KALC has advised that Precepts be increased this year to make good any shortfall, prior to introduction of a cap. It was recognised that any changes of grant status would be reflected in the Precept and increases might not need to be applied in future years, or may be reduced if the grants are reinstated.

It was proposed that the Precept be increased by 12.5% to cover the shortfall in income.

Resolved:

That the Precept be increased by 12.5% to £8440 for 2013-2014.

7.3 Purchase of Speedwatch equipment

Cllr Plowright proposed the Parish Council consider purchasing Speedwatch equipment; if used together with that on loan from Kent Police the effectiveness of Speedwatch would be greatly increased. He suggested that the Parish Council apply for grants from the County and Borough Councillors towards the purchase of Speedwatch equipment. It was agreed that the Clerk would contact the councillors re grants.

SW

7.4 Allotment Society

Further to the Parish Council's agreement at the November meeting to fund purchases of capital items to a value of £150, details of items were passed to the Clerk. Further information regarding the webcam is to be requested.

SW

8. Planning Committee report

Cllr Thorpe (Planning Committee Chairman) reported on 1 application to KCC for a recycling centre south of Evegate Mill. There were concerns regarding the size of vehicles accessing the site and the resulting deposition of mud on the road; these have been passed to KCC.

An application from ABC for 2 semidetached homes at Manse Field is in circulation (12/01439/AS).

Vodafone and O2 are working together to improve coverage in the parish.

9. KALC

Cllr Herrick advised that the latest meeting was on 9th January, and the Minutes will be circulated in due course. A financial and legal conference will be held on 2nd February. Ann Barnes (Police and Crime Commissioner) has circulated a Police and Crime Plan for comment.

10. Emergency and Community Led Plans

10.1 Emergency Plan Cllr Hinchliffe advised that the presentation will be ready shortly. Interest groups will be targeted and it is planned to give the presentation at a village meeting. Cllr Hinchliffe stated that a number of committee members are involved in village organisations and are therefore well placed to give the presentation. It was noted that a number of other groups have already planned their programmes for the year.

10.2 Community Led Plan Cllr Plowright stated that the presentation will be circulated as a pdf and will be uploaded on to the parish website, hopefully generating more interest. It is planned to give a presentation at a public meeting in May.

In answer to a question from the Chairman, Cllr Plowright stated that the groups will be present at the Summer fete on 15th June.

11. Localism

The Chairman stated that a joint meeting will be held on 17th January with Brabourne and Aldington Parish Councils to discuss the Village Caretaker ('Handyman') scheme.

Cllr Turner welcomed the initiative, and noted that it may be of particular benefit to vulnerable residents.

12. Drought conference

Cllr Hinchliffe attended the conference, organised by CPRE. Discussions concentrated on business rather than domestic use. Demand for water in Kent is currently being met but will increase when more homes are built or new industry comes to the area. It was noted that all waste water after treatment leaves the sewage works as potable, but is then discharged into rivers rather than into the system – this is being re-evaluated. Cllr Hinchliffe stated that Shepherd Neame is now using 40% recycled water for cleaning and cooling at the brewery. The conference was advised that Kent aquifers are in chalk and therefore water seeps away and must be replenished. Difficulties have been encountered in obtaining planning permission for reservoirs on farm land. Delays are experienced when applying for licences to extract water from swollen rivers – in many instances water levels have returned to normal before extraction begins. The water companies are pressing for water meters to be installed in all households.

13. Community Safety Assessment

The Parish Council has been asked by the Community Safety Unit of Kent Police to identify the three priorities for Police action. It was agreed that these are:
road safety; dog fouling; parking on pavements.

SW

14. Playing fields

The Chairman advised that the Playing Fields' Association is setting up a Committee to discuss the future of the playing fields with particular reference to the wish of the Smeeth and Brabourne Junior Football Club to return to the parish. The Committee meets on 31st January at 7.00pm at Smeeth School; Cllr Plowright will attend for the Scouts and Guides and the Vice-chairman will attend for the Parish Council. The Chairman also hopes to be present. Cllr Plowright offered to represent the Council at future meetings if other Councillors cannot attend.

15. Any Other Business

15.1 Cllr Thorpe noted complaints of overgrown vegetation in Knatchbull Way; these will be passed to Brabourne parish Council.

SW

15.2 Cllr Thorpe advised that there has been a large increase in the rat population, due to the abundance of food put out for wild birds and the increasing popularity of keeping hens.

15.3 Cllr Turner was congratulated on his selection for a shared energies project being organised by Action with Communities in Rural Kent and Canterbury Diocese, and funded by the European Union. Cllr Turner will spend 3 weeks in Sweden looking at provision of power to public buildings.

15.4 Correspondence: Parish Councils have been asked to lobby the Borough Council to make adequate provision for gypsy and traveller sites. This will be discussed at the next KALC meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.35pm.

Community Warden's Report

As mentioned at the last Parish Council meeting I can confirm that the CCTV camera near the junction of The Warren and Lees Road was placed and authorised by ABC.

Last week there was an attempted theft of petrol from a car in The Ridgeway, it is suspected that the person responsible was disturbed as the can used was left at the scene. I have not heard of similar offences locally.

I would invite anyone with concerns about elderly and infirm residents to speak to me regarding a Winter Intervention Support Kent (WISK) programme that is available.

Community Wardens are highlighting the nuisance caused by people tipping fat down their drains, with the accompanying nuisance and expense of blockages.

