

**SMEETH PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council**  
**Held at 7.00pm on Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> July 2011**  
**At Brabourne Baptist Church**

**1. Present**

Cllr Herrick (Vice-chairman), Cllrs Hinchliffe, Plowright, Thorpe, Turner and Mrs S Wood (Clerk).  
Cllr Howard (ward member), Miss Tessa O'Sullivan (Rural Housing Enabler, Action with Communities in Rural Kent) and one member of the public were present.

**2. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Austen (Chairman) and Cllr Lilley (prior commitments), and from PC Laker (Neighbourhood Officer) and Mr Graham Kingston (Community Warden).

In the absence of Cllr Austen, Cllr Herrick took the Chair.

**3. Declaration of Interest**

Cllr Plowright (planning application 11/00667/AS – personal not prejudicial).

**4. Minutes**

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 11<sup>th</sup> May be approved and confirmed as a true record.**

**Presentation on Affordable Housing Schemes**

Miss O'Sullivan asked if the Parish Council wished to take part in another such scheme, given the success of that at Fortescue Place. This being so, a survey of housing need would be carried out by the Borough Council to determine the level of need, and she recommended that this be carried out simultaneously with a survey in Brabourne (subject to the agreement of Brabourne Parish Council). Sample surveys and a draft covering letter were circulated. Miss O'Sullivan advised that the surveys would be posted out in September and 3 weeks allowed for return. A search for suitable sites would be carried out by the Borough Council, and input invited from the Parish Council. Owners of any sites identified as suitable by Planning, would be contacted with a view to selling. The English Rural Housing Association (EHRA) will assist. A report on the survey results would be issued in November, followed by discussion with the Parish Council. All costs would be borne by the Borough Council.

The Chairman thanked Miss O'Sullivan for her presentation.

Cllrs were asked to read the sample letter and submit any comments to the Clerk.

Cllr Howard advised that the criteria used by Planning to identify suitable sites have been modified and made more flexible. This was welcomed, as the lack of facilities in the rural areas compared to the urban areas has previously ruled out some rural schemes.

**5. Matters Arising**

**• Footpaths and Highways**

- a)** Church Road footpath. Cllr Thorpe advised that the decision is due shortly.
- b)** Dog fouling. Posters re fouling and Observing the Country Code are to be provided by the Community Warden, who will also put an article in Parish News. Cllr Howard is to ask that the Dog Warden patrols areas where complaints of fouling have been received, viz Calland, Lees Road and Prospect Way.
- c)** Farm visits. PHR Farms have written in reply to complaints about farm vehicles – this is to be published in Parish News. Open days are to be arranged for residents.
- d)** Dropped kerbs. These are to be installed at the entrance to Joe Farm, following liaison between Cllr Hinchliffe, Cllr Wickham and Kent Highway Services.

- e) Overhanging trees in Church Road, and bridge repairs. Work has been completed.
  - f) Overhanging vegetation on the footpath near Joe Farm. Work is in hand with Mr Graham Boulden.
  - g) Farm vehicles. An item of correspondence in complaint was circulated. There was general agreement that the size of vehicles can be intimidating, but that on occasion there may be a false perception of vehicle speed. However, there is also a lack of awareness of other road users such as cyclists. It was recognized that the parish is a rural area, and that building a relationship between the farmers and the parish would be beneficial. This may also resolve reported problems of loose dogs on farmland, with the concomitant risk of disease to cows. An informal meeting between the farmers and the Parish Council to discuss the problems, and possible solutions, eg a voluntary speed limit of 20mph in the village, is to be arranged.
  - h) The following are to be reported to KHS: overhanging vegetation on the A20; potholes in Church Road and Lees Road; a date for the repair works to the A20 footpath near Fishers Garage is to be sought.
  - i) A series of road closures will be put in place to enable a new underground cable to be installed, as part of an upgrade to the electricity supply in the Ashford area. Affected householders will be notified by a leaflet drop, 2 weeks before the expected closure. Access for residents will be maintained and diversions signposted.
  - j) KHS Parish Seminar. Cllr Hinchliffe and the Clerk attended on 11<sup>th</sup> July. Notes from the meeting are attached.
  - k) Bus stop in Pound Lane. There have been no more reported problems.
  - l) Parish Council Insurance policy. The premium has been paid and the Schedule received.
  - m) Loan to Brabourne Parish Council for the allotments' project. This will only be drawn down if the grant application to the Kent Downs and Marshes Leader Scheme is successful. This grant is paid in arrears on production of paid invoices, and the loan would be used to fund these items. The grant would be paid within 3 weeks of receipt of the invoices, and the loan would then be repaid. If the grant application fails, the loan will not be taken up. Cllr Howard advised that Brabourne Parish Council has been awarded a grant of £2000 towards the project.
  - n) Proposed purchase of The Warren by Brabourne Parish Council for use as a village green. No further progress. Cllr Howard is to pursue this with the Borough Council.
- **Speeding in Smeeth**  
Cllr Wickham may be willing to make a contribution from his Member Highway Fund, for interactive speed signs, although this is committed for the next 2 years. Speed data will be helpful – Cllr Plowright is to pursue this with PC Laker.
  - **Recycling facilities**  
The Borough Council has advised against recycling cardboard, but it may be included in the blue box collection in the new contract (2013). Cllr Turner asked why cardboard could not be included at present, given that the blue box scheme includes newspapers and both go into the same skip at the Cobbs Wood recycling centre. Cllr Howard stated that the materials are resorted at the depot, as are the contents of black bin bags from the weekly collection.
  - **Traffic Management Forum**  
Neither Cllr Plowright nor the Clerk was able to attend the meeting on 5th July. Minutes are attached.
  - **Parking in Sandy Place**  
Cllr Howard advised that there are no plans to put in a parking scheme due to financial constraints, but parking on the grass or under the tree is allowed provided that this is agreeable to all residents. A letter is to be sent to all residents in Sandy Place, and a meeting held to discuss the arrangement. Cllr Plowright asked if a Covenant could be attached to future lettings or sales regarding an agreement to park. Cllr Howard will look into this, and it was felt that any such agreement could strengthen the case for future action by the Borough Council.
6. **Report from Community Warden**  
Mr Kingston's report is attached.

**7. Report from Neighbourhood Officer**

PC Laker's report was circulated to councillors, which stated that there have been no crimes of note to report.

**8. Financial Report**

**Resolved:**

**That the following payments be agreed in accordance with the Budget.**

Payments

Details	£
Mrs B Podd (salary April-May)	124.53
Zurich Insurance (annual premium)	325.77
S Wood (salary June)	215.39
S Wood (salary July)	215.39
ICO (DPA renewal)	35.00

Receipts

Details	£
VAT refund	87.87

**Balance £ 13542.27**

**To consider a request for a donation from the Charing Playing Field Management Committee**

**Resolved:**

**That the request be refused.**

**Registration of Smeeth Parish Council with HMRC for PAYE**

The required information has been submitted online, but no tax code yet issued due to delays at HMRC in processing the data. It is expected that this will be forthcoming in mid-July.

**9. To receive the report of the Planning Committee**

The Chairman of the Planning Committee reported that the following applications have been approved by the Borough Council: conversion of the Rake Factory to offices, and change of use from old stabling to shops at Mersham le Hatch.

One retrospective application has been received.

Comments regarding the necessity for adequate screening were submitted on application 11/00667/AS (National Grid Converter Station – erection of substation and associated equipment). Cllr Howard stated that the comments had been forwarded by the Borough Council, and that a meeting is to be held between National Grid and the Borough Council. The application is likely to be determined by the Planning Committee.

Cllr Howard reported that the Planning Dept had sought advice from the Legal Dept re the installation of solar panels on a property, and it was concluded that this required planning permission rather than a Certificate of Lawful Development.

Seven Seas Worldwide will be submitting an application to demolish its existing premises and build a new office, as the current building is too small. It has been suggested that the company discusses the proposal with the Parish Council before submitting the planning application.

**10. Report from KALC representative**

The Vice-chairman stated that he had been unable to attend the meeting of 1st June, but the Minutes were in circulation. Elections for Chairman and Vice-chairman were held, and Cllr Rivers (Wittersham) and Cllr Reed (Charing) were returned. The next meeting is on 27<sup>th</sup> July.

**11. Any Other Business**

- Cllr Thorpe reported traffic problems in Bridge Road, caused by 1 vehicle parking on the opposite side of the road from all other vehicles. This is to be passed to PC Laker.
- Cllr Hinchliffe asked if any action had been taken to improve Broadband speeds in the parish. Cllr Plowright advised that a survey in March had elicited few responses. The slow speed is due to distance from the exchange and could only be improved by the installation of fibreoptics, which is unlikely. The Chairman stated that BT has no plans to extend the Infinity system in the area.
- Cllr Hinchliffe asked if the Parish Council held an Emergency Plan. Cllr Plowright replied that a plan for a flood emergency is in place, and that a meeting had been held with representatives from the Borough Council. Cllr Howard advised that the Borough Council has the Borough Emergency Plan, which is triggered if 2 or more parishes are affected. A Committee room in Civic Centre would become the Emergency Centre, and the Monitoring Centre would become Command and Control (because of its CCTV facility). Cllr Howard would be 1 of the main coordinators, overseeing the Local Services Division and Media. Although the Parish is covered, additional local information would be useful, eg chainsaw operators with a licence, and would help with an early response, particularly if only 1 Parish were affected. Cllr Hinchliffe is to produce a draft document for circulation. Cllr Plowright suggested desk-top exercises, in addition.
- The Chairman asked that organisers of events ensure that posters are removed.

The Chairman suspended the meeting to allow the member of the public present to raise matters with the Council. It was stated that the lack of representation by Smeeth Parish Councillors at a meeting in May to promote local shops was disappointing. The Chairman said that this was regretted, but that the Parish Council wished to express the strongest support for Orpins Stores, which is a vital community asset.

- Correspondence.
  - Applications for KCC Community Grants have been invited by Cllr Wickham.
  - Entry forms for the ACRK Village of the Year Competition have been received.
  - KCC is offering 25 free tree whips to community organisations under its 'Free Trees' scheme.

Cllr Howard was invited to present a report.

He advised that KCC is consulting on Youth Centres, the proposal being 1 base per district, with other centres being commissioned for use. The reception area at the Stour Centre will become a youth facility/café, but will not be open until September due to necessary structural work.

An Outreach van/minibus is to be provided with support workers and equipment, to encourage young people to become involved in the community.

The Borough Council will be encouraging local organisations and Sports Clubs with regard to celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of HM Queen and building on the legacy of the 2012 Olympics. It is hoped that small grants will be made available via the Single Grants Gateway for Jubilee celebrations.

Cllr Howard will tour all sports facilities in the Borough. Cllr Thorpe stated that the playing field cannot be used as a football pitch because of the stones, arising from its former use a gravel pit. Costs to rectify the problem are prohibitive, and football teams play elsewhere.

The Borough Council is installing solar panels on borough-owned facilities. This will reduce electricity costs and raise income by selling electricity to the National Grid. £55/week was generated from a house in a pilot scheme; larger buildings such as the Stour Centre would raise more.

## **12. Date and time of next meeting.**

Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> September at 7.00pm in Brabourne Baptist Church.

The meeting closed at 9.25pm.

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**Ashford Borough Traffic Management Forum**  
**Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2011 at 7.30pm at Pluckley Village Hall**

1.     **Introductions if necessary**  
Present: Martin Newman, Tim Maddrell, Ron Butcher, David Hooper, Keith Ashby, Emily Neighbour, Geraldine Dyer, Brian Bristow, Malcolm Eke, Craig Armstrong  
Apologies: Susan Wood
2.     **Jackie Allen**  
Jackie Allen has stepped down.
3.     **Feedback of survey findings at the meeting with John Burr**  
The feedback from the meeting with John Burr was circulated and presented by Ron Butcher.  
Ask Ashford Borough Council about access to the accident database.
4.     **Update on Pluckley Independent Review**  
MN circulated the document of the Pluckley Independent Review which recommends speed limits for Pluckley. It is to be shown to residents then forwarded to KCC.
5.     **Update on rural speed limits**  
Ron Butcher said there was 98% support for this at NALC and has been forwarded to HM Government.
6.     **Any other business**  
Appledore have recently had a 300 yard extension of the 30mph sign on Mike Hill which cost a staggering £6,000 – this is after Highways said that the original 30mph zone couldn't be extended to this part of the road.  
The cost of the Dartford Crossing is being increased to £2.50 per car, this is despite the Crossing having already paid for itself – the government need the money.  
Jenny Wickenden is now a "Highways Steward".  
If there are any planning applications to increase HGV traffic which crosses parish boundaries, then parishes should work together
7.     **Date, Chair and venue of next meeting**  
The Forum have decided the next meeting shall be in October, date to be confirmed. The venue will be Kenardington and the Chair will be Keith Ashby.  
Martin Newman to suggest dates to see which suits the Forum best – afternoon or evening?  
Ron Butcher to draft up an agenda with one topic being the Highways seminar he is attending on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> July.

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**Community Warden's Report, July 2011**

Unfortunately I am not allowed to work in the evenings yet.

I'm on leave from 18/7/11 for two weeks and I hope to be out and about afterwards.

Richard did mention the dog fouling posters to me and I will chase him up to see how far he got and with whom.

I also met the editor of the parish magazine, and will endeavour to get a map with the dog bin locations marked on it.

Otherwise things are reasonably quiet, a couple of people have mentioned the tractors going through the village sometimes until late at night and there was an incident of a couple of stones from a dry stone wall being knocked out.

I have spoken to Mr and Mrs Joules who arranged to have the damage repaired the same day. They were appreciative of the concerns of those in the village whilst having to run a business. Mrs Joules was going to write a letter to the parish council.

I was made aware of some damage to the derelict Rake Shop in Church Rd which I am led to believe is awaiting demolition. It is now insecure and I feel a potential fire risk. I have spoken to the estate agent and he confirmed he will do his best to get it secured but it is a flimsy building and if someone wishes to get in it will be difficult to stop them.

There is also an untaxed BMW in Church Rd, Smeeth which has been reported to ABC. The borough council is about to run an operation to remove untaxed vehicles in the Ashford area so hopefully the BMW will go soon.

Everyone has been very welcoming and I have been very lucky with the weather, and I hope soon to deliver reports in person.

Graham Kingston.  
Community Warden