

SMEETH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council

Held on 14th September 2011, at 7.00pm in Brabourne Baptist Church

1. Present

Cllr Austen (Chairman) (SA), Cllr Herrick (Vice-chairman) (DH), Cllrs Hinchliffe (MH), Plowright (IP), Turner (MT) and Mrs S Wood (Clerk) (SW). The Community Warden (Mr Graham Kingston) (GK) and the District Supervisor Community Wardens (Mr Morris Stewart), and Messrs Watson and Spinner (J Murphy and Sons and UK Power Networks respectively) attended. One member of the public was present.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Lilley and Thorpe (prior commitments).

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

4. Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 13th July 2011 be approved and confirmed as a true record.

5. Matters Arising

5.1 Footpaths and Highways

5.1.1 The decision on the application to claim the Church Road footpath is awaited. There have been no objections from the tenant but concerns have been raised re dog fouling.

5.1.2 A visit from the Dog Warden is still awaited.

5.1.3 An informal meeting is to be held with local farmers on 27th September to discuss concerns. Members of the public will not be present. The Community Warden hopes to attend.

5.1.4 The dropped kerb near the entrance to Joe Farm has been installed.

5.1.5 A complaint re an overgrown hedge in Lees Road is to be investigated.

5.1.6 A request is to be passed to Brabourne Parish Council that litter is collected along the footpath running between Lees Road and Bridge Road.

5.1.7 Further work on overhanging vegetation on The Ridgeway is required.

5.2 Speeding in Smeeth

5.2.1 Five volunteers have come forward to participate in Speedwatch, being organised by Brabourne Parish Council. When at least six have been recruited Kent Police will conduct training and approve sites.

5.2.2 Cllr Wickham's Highway Fund has been committed to projects until 2013.

5.3 Traffic Management Forum No meetings have taken place, and there is no date for the next meeting.

5.4 Parking in Sandy Place Requests arising from the meeting with residents have been passed to Housing Services. A reply is awaited. It was noted that residents are now parking on the grass verge.

5.5 PAYE A tax code has been issued for earnings from Smeeth Parish Council. All tax due will be deducted from the Westwell Parish Council salary.

6. Report from Community Warden

See Mr Kingston's report (attached).

Mr Kingston thanked the Parish Council and the village for their warm welcome as he took up the post, and advised that his probationary period will soon be completed. It was noted at the North Weald Police Forum that crime in the Ashford rural areas is lower than in other Kent boroughs.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting and invited Messrs Watson and Spinner to make a presentation on UK Power Networks' project to upgrade the Ashford electricity supply. New underground cabling is being laid from Sellindge Converter Station to Ashford East substation (at Bachelors, Kennington) due

GK

IP

SW
SW

to increased demand. The project will run for 49 weeks, and road closures of varying lengths will be necessary. Plain Road will be closed from 31st March 2012 (during the Easter school holidays and for 1 week beyond), to minimise disruption to school bus services. Messrs Watson and Spinner sought to speak with Stagecoach about Service 10 through the village, however Stagecoach responded that they would wish to discuss this nearer the time of the closure. Residents will be notified of road closures 2-3 weeks before; advance warning signs will be put up; diversion signs put in place. Security guards will be present when the cabling goes in; the Chairman suggested that mention is made of the guards in the letter, particularly as they will be in cars (albeit with a sign in the window). The most direct route is along the A20, but this was refused by KHS because of its use during Operation Stack. The highway will be reinstated as existing – the route was inspected and photographed before work commenced. Mr Watson's contact details are available from the Clerk in the event of any problems.

Messrs Watson and Spinner were thanked for their presentation and the meeting was reconvened.

7. Report from Neighbourhood Officer

No report in PC Laker's absence.

8. Financial Report

Resolved:

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

Payments

Details	£
Mrs B Podd (salary June – September)	213.48
Mrs S Wood (salary August)	215.39
Mrs S Wood (salary September)	215.39
Mrs S Wood (expenses April – September)	127.60
Audit Commission (audit fee)	144.00

Receipts

Details	£
NatWest interest	1.64
Beddingfield Educational Endowment	15.00

Balance: £12644.05

The balance of the Precept and Concurrent Functions Grant will be paid on 30th September:

Precept £3795

Concurrent Functions Grant £445

The Clerk advised that the Annual Return has been approved by the Audit Commission.

Cllr Wickham has approved a Small Community Capital Grant to the Brabourne and Smeeth Scouts and Guides Management Committee for its 'Loft Room' project.

Provision of a dog waste bin in Plain Road

Resolved:

That the quote from Environmental Services be accepted for provision of a dog waste bin, at a location to be agreed.

9. Planning Committee Report

The Vice-chairman reported in the absence of the Chairman of the Planning Committee. Two planning applications are being considered (change of use of farmland to garden for 2 properties).

10. KALC report

The Minutes of the meeting on 27th July have been circulated.

Mrs Judith Batt stepped down as Secretary to the Ashford Area Committee after the meeting, due to other commitments. The Clerk was elected as the new Secretary.

The next meeting is on 5th October.

11. Smeeth Emergency Plan

Cllr Hinchliffe's draft Emergency Plan was circulated to councillors for discussion, and he was thanked by the Chairman for his efforts. The Chairman noted that in any emergency affecting 2 or more parishes, the borough council would take over as the civic authority. County and district authorities have an Emergency Plan, which would be implemented in the event of a significant emergency, but other resources would also be needed. The Vice-chairman noted that implementation of the borough's Emergency Plan is decided by the Chief Executive, and that it is for the emergency services to declare a State of Emergency. Cllr Hinchliffe asked if the Emergency Plan is reviewed, and whether there is any Parish Council involvement.

The draft Plan includes local knowledge, eg residents with 4x4s (for a snow emergency) or chainsaws (to deal with fallen trees), this information not being available in the Borough Plan.

Cllr Plowright recommended an annual review and desktop exercise for the Plan. The Vice-chairman suggested that each councillor take responsibility for one aspect.

The Chairman noted that the Community Warden would be involved during an emergency, but that residents also help each other.

Cllr Plowright stated that the information could be kept at the village hall and other community centres, but the Chairman cautioned that this would need to be kept securely. Consideration to appointing specific people to retain this information could also be made.

Brabourne Parish Council is to be invited to comment on the Plan, following which it will be sent to Mrs Della Fackrell (Ashford Borough Council) for review.

The Plan will be made available to Aldington and Sellindge Parish Councils.

SW

SW

12. Addition of an Action Column to Parish Council Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes include an 'Action' column.

13. Government Consultations on Local Planning Regulations, Draft National Planning Policy Framework and Local Government Resource Review

Cllr Plowright referred to the controversy regarding proposed new Planning Regulations, and noted that arguments against development would be strengthened if a Parish Plan were in place. Cllr Hinchliffe stated that there is a presumption in favour of development in the regulations. Cllr Plowright felt that the Business Rate Review would encourage development, as it will enable local authorities to retain a significant proportion of the rates generated. It is unclear if any of this money will devolve to Parish Councils.

Resolved:

That Cllr Plowright submits a response to the Consultations on behalf of Smeeth Parish Council.

The Chairman stated that the Parish had submitted a Wish List to the Borough Council in 2003/4. The Clerk advised that a Parish Plan could build on the Wish List, but would have to be produced by a local community group, not the Parish Council. Councillors, however, are not precluded from participating. On completion the Plan would be submitted to the Parish and Borough Councils, and could be used as a material consideration in planning applications. Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK) offers advice on producing Parish Plans.

It was suggested that a Parish Plan be produced jointly with Brabourne, due to their similarities. This may also help with obtaining the funding necessary to produce it.

Resolved:

That Cllr Plowright approach Action with Communities in Rural Kent for guidance to produce a Parish Plan.

Further resolved:

That the Clerk seeks the support of Cllr Howard and Brabourne Parish Council in producing a Parish Plan.

IP

IP

SW

SW

Cllr Hinchliffe asked if there was any progress regarding Brabourne Parish Council taking ownership of The Warren. The Clerk advised that a response is still awaited.

14. Proposal from Leiston-cum-Sizewell Parish Council regarding planning applications

Resolved:

That Smeeth Parish Council supports the proposal from Leiston-cum-Sizewell, namely that major developers be asked to attend meetings to answer questions on planning applications if that is the

wish of the Parish Council; and that developers may be asked to provide resources to enable Parish Councils to assess their applications based on a professional critique of their evidence.

SW

15. Dates for future meetings

14th March 2012 (and Annual Parish Meeting), 16th May (AGM of the Parish Council), 11th July, 12th September, 14th November, 16th January 2013

SA

16. Any Other Business

16.1 Cllr Plowright suggested that consideration be given to purchasing speed interactive signs. If these were shared between parishes, eg Aldington, Brabourne and Mersham, the case for a grant would be strengthened.

16.2 Cllr Hinchliffe asked if there is a scheme for bulk-buying oil. The Clerk advised that ACRK is looking into it.

16.3 Incidents of A-boards at junctions obscuring vision should be reported to KHS.

16.4 Councillors are asked to note that the Fordred Charity distribution will be on the Agenda at the next meeting.

All

16.5 The ACRK Village of the Year presentation will be held on 13th October, at Dunkirk Village Hall.

16.6 It is thought that no teams currently play football on the Playing Field. Rabbits are a persistent problem.

16.7 An invitation to attend a meeting with Damian Collins MP to discuss the Shepway LDF was declined, with regret.

16.8 KCC is making grants available in late 2011 to improve Broadband provision in the rural areas. Cllr Plowright and Cllr Hickmott (Brabourne Parish Council) are seeking data on download speeds from residents.

All

17. Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 9th November, 7.00pm in Brabourne Baptist Church.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.