

SMEETH PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council
Held at 7.00pm on Wednesday, 18th January 2012
At Brabourne Baptist Church

1. Present

Cllr Austen (Chairman) (SA), Cllr Herrick (Vice-chairman) (DH), Cllr Hinchliffe (MH), Cllr Lilley (GL), Cllr Plowright (IP), Cllr Thorpe (GT), Cllr Turner (MT) and Mrs Wood (Clerk) (SW). Mr Kingston (Community Warden) (GK) and Miss Tessa O' Sullivan (Rural Housing Enabler, Action with Communities in Rural Kent) also attended. Two members of the public were present.

2. Apologies

No Apologies were received.

3. Declaration of Interest.

No Declarations of Interest were received.

4. Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 9th November 2011 be approved and confirmed as a true record.

5. Rural Housing Needs Survey report

Brought forward from item 10 with the Chairman's permission.

Miss O'Sullivan's summary was circulated (attached); all respondents were asked to complete Section 1, and those with a housing need, Section 2. A return rate of 31% was good, other surveys returned 26-27%.

In answer to a question from the Chairman, Miss O'Sullivan advised that if the Parish Council agreed, the next stage is a search for possible sites via a desktop survey with representatives from Brabourne Parish Council as it had been a joint survey. Site visits would then be undertaken and a Report submitted to the Planning Dept (ABC) which would carry out an assessment. The owners of suitable sites would then be approached re the possibility of selling, after which ERHA would take over. Cllr Hinchliffe asked if sites could be those with an existing property on a large plot, but it was thought that these would be too expensive. The search is for 'exception' sites, outside the village envelope, which would carry a lower land value. Cllr Lilley said that this may prove controversial, as private developers would not get planning permission in these circumstances. Miss O'Sullivan felt that this may change after introduction of the new planning laws.

The survey will be updated at a future date.

A need for 40 houses was identified but it would not be possible to build a development of that size; recent builds (Charing and Challock) were for 8 homes. The Parish Council will be consulted on size etc. Miss O'Sullivan was thanked for her report.

Resolved:

That Smeeth Parish Council conducts a search for exception sites with Brabourne Parish Council

Further resolved:

That Cllrs Herrick and Thorpe be the representatives for Smeeth Parish Council

DH,GT

6. Matters Arising

6.1 Footpaths and Highways

6.1.1 The objection by the Byways and Bridleways Trust to the Church Road footpath has not yet been resolved.

6.1.2 The Highways Steward's visit will be on 30th January, 10.00am in Brabourne Baptist Church.

6.1.3 The draft Code of Conduct for agricultural vehicles and information leaflet for residents were agreed by Brabourne Parish Council. When the drafts have been finalised they will be in Parish News, on the website and available at local outlets, eg Orpins.

6.1.4 It is not yet known if the repairs to the bridge, scheduled for mid-January, have been carried out.

6.1.5 The two dog bins have been installed, following the Parish Councils' requests. The Dog Warden has not yet visited the parish – the Clerk to follow up.

SW

6.2 Speeding in Smeeth

The Interactive speed sign has been installed and is operating. Initial reservations as to its location appear to have been unfounded. Speedwatch will commence when the equipment has been made available by Kent Police.

IP

6.3 Parking in Sandy Place

The proposed site meeting has not yet taken place – the Clerk to ask Cllr Howard to progress this as a matter of urgency. A letter was sent to all residents asking that they refrain from parking on the grass during the winter, but it was noted that contractors renovating bathrooms had parked here. Non-residents continue to park, obscuring sight lines and on one occasion obstructing an ambulance on a call-out. The Community Warden is to check if offences are being committed by these vehicles parking and also accessing gardens over the verge.

SW

Cllr Plowright suggested that a covenant be put on new occupiers restricting the no. of parking spaces per property.

GK

6.4 Emergency plan and Community led plan

Cllrs Hinchliffe and Plowright met Cllr Mrs Beavers (JB) and Cllr Mayland (JM) of Brabourne Parish Council. It was agreed that Cllr Mrs Beavers and Cllr Hinchliffe will work on the Emergency Plan (EP), and Cllrs Plowright and Mayland on the Community Led Plan (CLP).

KCC has issued a template for EPs, which should be led by the Parish Council but with the involvement of volunteers. A risk assessment should be carried out and a list of resources and questionnaire drawn up. Some expenditure will be incurred, eg writing to all residents, but there is no funding available from ABC or KCC. Cllr Thorpe offered to help with distribution, following the Chairman's suggestion that volunteers be sought. Cllr Mrs Beavers and Cllr Hinchliffe are to produce a draft letter.

GT
MH, JB

Cllr Plowright advised that a public meeting to gauge interest in a CLP is to be held in the village hall in late March, led by Miss Bugden (ACRK). The Clerk advised that Brabourne Parish Council may be willing to help with start-up costs from its Village of the Year (Economy Section) prize.

6.5 Broadband provision

The Clerk reported that ABC is submitting a bid to the DEFRA Rural Community Broadband Fund for funding to take Super Fast Broadband to the rural areas. The recently completed survey forms were submitted and an online survey uploaded on to the parish website – a good response has been noted. It was agreed to send a letter of support for the bid.

SW

6.6 Hang10

The Chairmen of Smeeth and Brabourne Parish Councils and the Community Warden met Mr Pelham regarding the possibility of a trial run in the village. The Community Warden has passed details of local youth groups to the organisers.

6.7 Jubilee beacons

Cllr Plowright advised that the Scouts and Guides are organising a bonfire on the playing field, with live music, on Monday 4th June. Cllr Lilley stated that those attending will be asked to bring a picnic, due to the difficulties of catering for an unknown number, but a BBQ may be held in the evening. The Chairman asked about public liability insurance, but this will be covered by the Scouts and Guides' policy.

A beacon will be lit by Mr Jessel at Penstock Hall, but this will be a private event.

Mr and Mrs Joules have kindly offered the use of a field to Brabourne Parish Council.

7. Report from Community Warden

The Community Warden reported that the Christmas and New Year period passed quietly, but there were a couple of minor thefts of property from residents' front gardens. There was a burglary at The Rectory and an attempted burglary at a property in Plain Road – residents are asked to be vigilant. There was also an incident of criminal damage to a house where it appears that an air gun was used to break a window and yoghurt and eggs were thrown at the premises: it appears to be an isolated incident and the owners are not aware of anyone who has a grudge against them. Three post boxes have been damaged in the area, the doors having been blown off (possibly by a firework); the doors have been taken by the Royal Mail for examination and the boxes are not currently in use. The Warden is awaiting a reply as to when the boxes will be repaired.

The Warden met Stagecoach and the contractors to discuss the closure of Plain Road over the Easter period, this has been extended to 28 days from 21. The Warden will place an item in Parish News requesting volunteers to assist with giving lifts to and from the bus stop for more isolated and vulnerable residents.

The Warden and Chairmen of the two parish councils met Mr Pelham of the Hang10 street pastors' youth project to discuss the possibility of them working in the area. The Warden has passed

contact details of existing youth groups to Mr Pelham so that he can canvass the need for his services. The Warden was thanked for his report.

8. Financial report

8.1 To agree payments in accordance with the Budget.

Resolved:

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

Payments

Details	£
Mrs B Podd (salary)	91.20
S Wood (salary Dec)	215.39
S Wood (salary Jan)	215.39
SLCC (annual subscription)	31.82
S Wood (stationery)	18.68

Receipts

Details	£
NatWest interest	2.08

Balance: £ 15803.86

9. Planning Committee report

Cllr Thorpe (Chairman, Planning Committee) reported that Evegate Business Park has submitted an application for 2 new units and an extension to the car park. The Committee supported the application and submitted comments: it was agreed that the site will benefit from regeneration; the Design and Access statement was criticised for a lack of detail in achieving the objectives; a number of errors were noted; diffusers should be fitted to security lighting to prevent light pollution. Cllr Plowright asked if money could be raised under Community Infrastructure Levy from this application. The Clerk is to follow up.

SW

10. KALC report

The meeting on 30th November was held at the Elwick Club because of industrial action, and the Minutes have been circulated. There was an update on working groups and a discussion on the Concurrent Functions Grant process. The next meeting is on 8th February and will include a presentation by Mr David Brazier (deputy Cabinet member, Environment, Highways and Waste).

11. Any Other Business

11.1 Cllr Lilley stated that he will be stepping down from the Parish Council after the March meeting, due to the pressure of other commitments. The Chairman said that he was saddened by Cllr Lilley's decision, but understood and respected his reasons for so doing. Cllr Lilley was thanked for his contribution.

11.2 Cllr Hinchliffe noted that he has received complaints from residents about car parking on verges – this is to be taken up with Highways during the parish visit.

11.3 Cllr Hinchliffe asked for an update on the ACRK oil bulk-buying scheme. The Vice-chairman noted that there is also a website: www.boilerjuice.com

11.4 Cllr Hinchliffe asked if the Smeeth litter collector covered Brabourne, but was advised that the latter has its own collector.

11.5 Correspondence:

A letter has been received from National Grid, in which it seeks land on which it can fund tree planting to offset those being cut down to build a new substation at Sellindge.

The British Heart Foundation has sought permission to locate a clothing bank in the parish. KCC is carrying out a public consultation on the Household Waste Recycling Centre Service.

11.6 Cllr Thorpe asked if the reinstatement works have been carried out on the Church Road composting site. It is thought they have not yet been completed.

12. Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 14th March immediately following the Annual Parish Meeting, which begins at 7.00pm.

The meeting closed at 9.17pm.

FINDINGS OF THE BRABOURNE AND SMEETH HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY

1. Approx 973 surveys distributed – 303 returned = 31% response rate.
2. Survey shows that 257 respondents (87%) are owner occupiers.
3. 222 respondents (86%) have lived in the parish for over 10 years
4. 88 respondents said that members of their household have left the parish in the last 5 years; they were mostly children of the household. Lack of affordable housing was the most frequently given reason for doing so. 37 respondents said that those people would return if affordable accommodation could be provided.
5. 229 people, 83% of respondents who answered the question/75% of all respondents said they would support a small development of affordable housing.
6. In total 50 respondents (17%) indicated that they had a housing need either now or in the next 3 years.

HOUSING NEED SECTION

Looked at local housing costs –

At the time of writing the report – the cheapest 2 bed property found for sale was £180,000 – a 15% deposit of £27,000 required and income of over £43,000. Looked again – cheapest 2 bed (small terrace) = £160,000 – 15% deposit = £24,000 and income of £38,857.

At time of writing report only 4 properties available to rent in the area and there were no 1 or 2 beds. The cheapest was a 3 bed terraced house for £750pcm = income of £36,000. Today there is a '2 or 3' bed for £850pcm.

Mouseprice states the average property in the TN25 area costs £291,300 with the average salary being £28,564 – this means that the average property costs over 10 times more than the average salary.

SECTION 2

- 50 respondents said they had a housing need either now or in the next 3 years. 10 of those respondents were excluded for reasons including – incomplete forms, owner occupiers not eligible, only tenure sought was private renting.
- 40 households in housing need; 22 need housing now and 18 in next 3 years. Total of 20 single people, 10 couples and 10 families.
- 31 respondents currently live in the parishes; 19 in Brabourne, 12 in Smeeth. 9 currently live outside the parishes
- 26 live with relatives. 2 renting from HA. 1 owner occupier. 5 private renting. 2 shared ownership. 2 rent from council. 1 in mobile home. (The owner occupier says they cannot afford their existing mortgage following divorce/separation).
- Total of 54 adults and 17 children in housing need. 3 adults are aged over 60 and need accommodation more suitable for their needs. Majority of adults in age group 25-44.
- 18 respondents indicated an interest in shared ownership; 14 of these may be able to afford a 40% or 70% share of the size of property they require.
- A need for 1, 2, 3 and a 4 bed property can be identified from the findings. 13 out of the 30 single people/couples said they want 2 beds but in terms of rented accom. may not be possible due to council's allocation policy
- 6 respondents currently live in housing rented from the council or HA. 4 of those properties are within the parishes of Brabourne and Smeeth. Therefore if those people were re-housed, 4 local affordable homes could become vacant.