

SMEETH PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of a meeting held on Wednesday 12th November 2014
at Brabourne Baptist Church

1. Present

Cllr Herrick (Chairman) (DH), Cllr Thorpe (Vice-chairman) (GT), Cllr Mrs Pereboom (VP), Cllr Hinchliffe (MH), Cllr Turner (MT) and Mrs S Wood (Clerk) (SW). Cllr Howard (ward member) and PCSO Huckstepp attended.
Six members of the public were present.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs MacPhee and Plowright (prior commitments), Cllr Jane Martin (ward member) and Mr Kingston (Community Warden).

3. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Herrick: OSI agenda item 9.7 (member of the Playing Field Association Improvements Steering Group).

4. Minutes of the meeting on Wednesday 10th September.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of 10th September be approved and signed as a true record.

5. Open Session

The Chairman suspended the meeting to allow members of the public to raise matters of concern with their Council.

Concerns had been raised at the previous meeting regarding erection of a fence on a property at Manor Leaze. The owners of the property in question stated that they had sought advice from the Planning Dept of the Borough Council, and that the only condition was the height of the fence: their contractor had wrongly advised that a fence height of 1.3m is permitted, however it transpired that a fence abutting the footway requires planning permission if in excess of 1m in height. The height was therefore reduced to 1m and the Parish Council was given a copy of a letter from Planning stating that they were not in breach of any planning conditions. They noted their distress at the comments from other residents. Cllr Thorpe replied that residents had been under the misapprehension that the development was 'open plan', but no such condition is attached. Problems arising from car parking at Smeeth School were raised and photographs circulated. The Chairman noted these concerns and stated that they were on the agenda for discussion later in the meeting.

The meeting was reconvened.

6. Matters Arising

6.1 Provision of external cabinet for the village defibrillator Cllr Hinchliffe stated that Mr Richard Graham's company has offered to supply the cabinet free of charge. This was welcomed; the Chairman noted that the number of defibrillators is increasing.

6.2 Milestone Society KCC has been asked to carry out the identified repairs.

6.3 Prescription service and delivery of medicines Cllr Hinchliffe reported that Wye Surgery runs a volunteer service collecting prescriptions for the elderly; patients know of the service and requests to participate are assessed by the Pharmacist against set criteria. Those eligible have prescriptions collected twice weekly from the pharmacy which are delivered by volunteers, who must be CRB-checked, have a lockable box in the car for controlled drugs and the appropriate car insurance. Sellindge Surgery has indicated that it would be willing to participate in a similar scheme if volunteers are forthcoming. The cooperation of Brabourne Parish Council is needed to progress the scheme, the Clerk is to take this to the next meeting. Cllr Hinchliffe noted that consideration should be given to paying mileage, currently 45p/mile for the first 10,000 miles tax free (ref HMRC). Cllr Turner asked how many residents would wish to make use of the service, but numbers are unknown. The Chairman asked who would be eligible, Cllr Hinchliffe stated that the doctors will decide who may be in need and noted that there would unlikely be an increase in the car insurance premium but there would be a cost for the box.

SW

- 6.4 New parish noticeboard** This has been installed, but there have been complaints that the ground in front is very muddy – this is being monitored by Brabourne Parish Council and paving may be needed. The Chairman reported that there is also a new noticeboard at the school which replaced the previous dilapidated board. SW
- 6.5 Works at Smeeth crossroads** Improvements are being implemented. Cllr Hinchliffe will raise the inadequacy of the proposals at the KCC Highways' seminar on November 18th. Cllr Thorpe stated that the telegraph pole should be moved, Cllr Hinchliffe stated that this has been raised with Highways who replied that it is not an issue. The Chairman noted that other traffic calming measures such as a reduction in the speed limit, a roundabout, traffic lights or an interactive flashing 'Slow Down' sign have been suggested. Cllr Howard advised that a reduction in the speed limit would have to go through an extensive consultation process, and enforcement would be needed. He suggested that the junction be widened to improve visibility, cf the Bilsington crossroads. Cllr Howard noted that a roundabout or traffic lights are unlikely to be approved, citing the lack of such provision at the exit to Sevington Business Park. He recommended that a request be made to improve visibility by widening the junction and moving the pole, and to reduce the speed limit; the Chairman agreed. A request will also be made for an 'Accident Black Spot' sign, but it is unknown if these are still issued. It was noted that if the speed limit were reduced to 40mph from the Blue and White café to beyond the crossroads, it could be included in the Speedwatch programme. Cllr Howard stated that the initiatives would have the support of the ward members. MH
- 6.6 Water leak in Plain Road** In hand with the water company but repairs have not yet been effected. SW
- 6.7 Remembrance Sunday** The Chairman laid the wreath on behalf of the Parish Councils.
- 7. Community Warden and PCSO's reports**
No report in Mr Kingston's absence.
The PCSO's report is attached.
Cllr Thorpe reported incidents of youngsters riding their bicycles after dark without lights. The Community Warden and PCSO were asked to monitor.
In answer to a question from Cllr Mrs Pereboom PCSO Huckstepp advised that motorists caught exceeding the speed limit and driving at 35-40mph during Speedwatch are sent a warning letter.
PCSO Huckstepp noted that the break-ins had been overnight when the properties were unoccupied. AH/GK
- 8. Adoption of new model Standing Orders**
The Chairman advised that new Standing Orders have been published by NALC, and had been adapted for Smeeth and Brabourne Parish Councils by the Clerk. The Clerk stated that there are three significant changes from the previous SOs: i) that Saturday is now included as a working day to comply with the requirement that three clear working days elapse between issuing of an agenda and the meeting; ii) members of the press and public present at a meeting no longer need written permission from the Council to film/record a Council meeting, but must not report 'live' during the proceedings; iii) there is a statutory requirement to record the names of those voting when setting the Precept. It was proposed that the new model Standing Orders, as amended, be adopted.
Resolved:
That the new model Standing Orders, as amended, be adopted.
- 9. Financial Report**
9.1 Payments in accordance with the Budget.
Resolved:
That the following payments be made in accordance with the Budget.

Payments

Details	£
Getmapping Plc	33.60
S Wood (gross salary October)	272.95
S Wood (gross salary November)	272.95
S Wood (Fordred's Charity)	168.00
B Podd (salary)	190.44
Smeeth and Brabourne Football Club	150.00

Receipts

Details	£
Precept	5332.00
Council Tax Support Grant	320.00
Concurrent Functions Grant	310.00
NatWest interest	2.98
Fordred's Charity	168.00

Balance

£ 27154.33 as at 12th November 2014

The Clerk reported that there has been no payment from the Bedingfield Educational Endowment this year.

9.2 Contribution to Brabourne Parish Council towards the radio licence and handheld radios

The Clerk advised that Brabourne Parish Council had met all the costs for the radio licence (£75) and the purchase of handheld radios (£222.00) for use by the Fete Committee and the Emergency Plan Committee.

It was proposed that Smeeth Parish Council contributes 50% of the cost of the radio licence and handheld radios to Brabourne Parish Council, viz £148.50.

Resolved:

That Smeeth Parish Council contributes £148.50 to Brabourne Parish Council, this being 50% of the costs of the radio licence and handheld radios.

9.3 Parish Council funding for the Village Hall Association

The Parish Council has received a request from the Village Hall Association for a contribution towards refurbishment of the kitchen. The project will cost approx £21,700 of which the Association has raised £9500; Cllr Hinchliffe asked how the shortfall would be made good. Cllr Howard suggested that the Association applies to the Community Grants Fund, which makes grants of up to £10,000, but would also have to show that it has other funding. The Chairman noted that a request has also been made for a contribution towards grass and hedge cutting at the hall. Cllr Howard has given a grant of £500 (included above) and Cllr Hinchliffe proposed that the Parish Council pledges £500. Cllr Howard cautioned that if the hall is not maintained it would be lost; the Chairman agreed, stating that it is an important village facility.

Resolved:

That Smeeth Parish Council pledges £500 towards the Village Hall kitchen refurbishment project.

The meeting was suspended to allow members of the public present to discuss hall finances. Mr Peter Clayton stated that at the last meeting he had asked the Parish Council to increase its contribution to the Hall Association; the Chairman replied that no formal request had been made by the Hall Association. Mr Clayton noted that he had been unaware that this was needed, but stated that the shortfall in hall finances is known and asked that this be taken into consideration when the Budget for 2015-16 is discussed.

The meeting was reconvened.

The Chairman noted that the Parish Council Budget for 2014-15 included £700 for the Hall Association, but the contribution had been held at this figure for several years. He further noted that that hall is running at a loss of £300pa, and proposed that the Parish Council contribution for 2014-15 be raised to £1000.

Resolved:

The Smeeth Parish Council increases its contribution to the Village Hall Association for 2014-15 to £1000.

9.4 Contribution to Brabourne Parish Council towards the costs of mowing and hedge cutting at the village hall

The Clerk reported that the grass and hedge surrounding the Village Hall had been maintained by the Borough Council, but it has been ascertained that part of this area belongs to the hall which must now take on the work. Brabourne Parish Council agreed to help with costs, and accepted quotes from Landscape Services of £140pa for

mowing and from Harmer and Sons of £80pa for hedgecutting. It was proposed that Smeeth Parish Council contributes half of the costs, this to be reviewed annually.

Resolved:

That Smeeth Parish Council contributes £110 to Brabourne Parish Council to defray the costs of grounds maintenance at the Brabourne and Smeeth Village Hall, this to be reviewed annually.

9.5 Provision of a salt bin on Woolpack Hill

The request for a salt bin on Woolpack Hill was refused because the allocation of new salt bins for 2014-15 has been completed. Requests are scored on a points system and it is unknown if a request for 2015-16 will be successful. Parish Councils can provide their own bins, but these must be a colour other than yellow to differentiate them from KCC Highways' bins, and the Parish Council would be responsible for supplying the salt. Cllr Hinchliffe reported that salt has been lost from the salt bag at this location, youths meet here but it was thought that loss is more likely due to seepage than antisocial behaviour. The Clerk will bring quotes for a green, lockable bin to the next meeting.

SW

9.6 Payment of the grant to the Playing Field Association

A request has been received from the Association for early payment of the grant (due in March).

The meeting was suspended to allow Mr Brian Sanders (Secretary of the Playing Field Association) to address the Parish Council.

Mr Sanders stated that it is hoped to improve the playing field by levelling the field, improving drainage, reseeding and installing rabbit-proof fencing. The cost is approx £85,500 inclusive of expenses, consultancy fees and £4000 for contingency.

An initial grant application was unsuccessful despite early indications to the contrary. Additional grant applications are being made. Mr Sanders reported that the rabbit-proof fencing is to be put in during November at a cost of £9100; the Association has funds of approx £6500 and asked that the Parish Council's donation (due in March) be brought forward. Mr Sanders stated that the grant applications are football-led but that the long-term objective is to bring in other sports, eg hockey and tennis. Cllr Mrs Pereboom asked what would be the outcome if the grants were not forthcoming. Mr Sanders replied that the project's scope would be reduced and the area would only be scraped and reseeded. The rabbit-proof fencing is needed to prevent ingress of rabbits and damage to the field. He stated that the field is in active use by the Scouts, the fete and the karate club. The football club hopes to return to the village (it currently plays elsewhere). Mr Sanders noted that the De Haan Trust is encouraging sporting hubs, to include use by schools; the playing field is ideally placed to be a hub for the local primary schools.

The meeting was reconvened.

Cllr Hinchliffe proposed that the Parish Council grant for 2014-15 be increased to £1000 and that it be paid in November.

A vote was taken, Cllr Herrick abstained.

Resolved:

That the Parish Council grant to the Playing Field Association be increased to £1000 and that it be paid in November 2014.

Mr Sanders thanked the Parish Council and advised that there would be a written agreement between sports clubs and the Association regarding use of the Scout hut to prevent misuse/abuse.

9.7 Draft Budget for 2015-2016

The Clerk circulated the draft Budget. The Concurrent Functions Grant and Council Tax Support Grant will be paid in 2015-16 but will be subject to a reduction of approx 25%, figures have yet to be confirmed. It is unknown when payment of the Street Cleansing Grant will cease, the waste contract is being reviewed. Cllr Turner noted that the Precept for 2014-15 had been increased to fund the Sandy Place parking scheme. It was proposed that the Parish Council increases its contribution from £600 to £1000 to the Playing Field Association, and from £700 to £1000 to the Village Hall Association, giving total expenditure of £11468 for the year.

It was proposed that the Parish Council is minded to increase the Precept by 2%, to

£10877, exclusive of the Concurrent Functions Grant and Council Tax Support Grant.

Resolved:

That Smeeth Parish Council is minded to increase the Precept to £10877, exclusive of the Concurrent Functions Grant and Council Tax Support Grant.

10. Planning Committee report

Cllr Thorpe (Committee chairman) reported on five planning applications:

Springfield, Ramstone Close. Alterations to the driveway; a meeting with KCC Highways has been requested.

Apple Barn. Glazing of courtyard. The Planning Committee had no objections and the application has been permitted by the Borough Council.

Orchard House, Station Road (retrospective). The Planning Committee had no objections and the application has been permitted by the Borough Council.

Ashbourne House (retrospective). The Planning Committee has objected to the application.

Little Home Farm (retrospective). Change of use of barn to domestic use. The Planning Committee had objected to a previous application, which was disposed of by the Borough Council as 'undetermined'. A later application for retrospective planning permission for the conversion was submitted; the Planning Committee's initial comments were withdrawn pending a site meeting.

Cllr Thorpe regretted the number of retrospective planning applications and suggested that these be subject to a surcharge. Cllr Howard noted that such applications have to be considered as if they are not retrospective, but would take the recommendation of a surcharge to the Cabinet member for Planning. He noted that such applications may take more Officer time which would therefore justify a surcharge. Cllr Howard further stated that there is no presumption to approve retrospective applications; if refused they may lead to negotiations with the applicants who would likely incur additional costs to make any required changes. Cllr Howard noted that most retrospective applications are because the applicants are generally unaware that planning permission is needed.

11. KALC

The Chairman reported that the last meeting was on 24th September at which Damian Green MP spoke on localism. The Minutes have been circulated and the next meeting is on November 19th.

12. Footpaths and Highways

12.1 Parking at Smeeth School Problems regarding parked cars blocking the footpath and careless driving were raised. The Headteacher had written to parents but to no effect. The PCSO has been asked to police the situation, given that there are concerns for children's safety and access for emergency vehicles. It was noted that parking is available at the playing field for those dropping off or collecting children. Mitigating measures such as bollards or yellow lines were proposed, but it was noted that enforcement would be needed for the latter. Cllr Howard suggested that Cllr Wickham be approached re a grant for these measures. Cllr Howard reported that similar problems had been experienced at Mersham School, and had been resolved after the Headteacher engaged 'pester power' – parents were actively encouraged by pupils to park responsibly. Cllr Turner will raise this with the Headteacher.

12.2 Safety of pedestrians in Plain Road Concerns have been raised regarding pedestrians' safety. It was felt that mitigating measures would be difficult because of ownership issues and cost; Cllr Mrs Pereboom suggested traffic-calming. Cllr Hinchliffe stated that this is in the Community Led Plan and put forward several proposals: that it be a 'shared space' with a reduced speed limit; a one-way system; discussions with owners re putting in a footway; pinch points where a path could not be provided.

12.3 Footpaths Complaints re installation of stiles on footpaths are in hand with the Public Rights' of Way Office.

12.4 Church Road Damaged chevrons near the War Memorial have been repaired.

13. Community Led Plan and Emergency Plan

Cllr Hinchliffe reported that after a meeting with the Ashford Borough Council Community Resilience Forum the Emergency Plan had been redrafted and is now with the Steering Group.

The draft Community Led Plan is with the Steering Group, after which it will be sent to the Parish Councils and borough councillors for comment.

14. Speedwatch

Cllr Hinchliffe reported that three sessions were held in November, others were cancelled because of adverse weather. The programme aims to change driver behaviour and is effective, of those sent a first warning letter only 20% are sent a second.

15. Local Needs Housing

The Chairman reported that a meeting had been held with the potential developer of one of the sites, which is now on the shortlist following the Borough Council's call for sites. Of those originally submitted, four are on the initial shortlist and will be further assessed.

These are:

SS7 Land at Church Road

SS8 Old Builders Yard

SS29 Land rear of Fortescue Place

SS54 Land at Walnut Tree Farm, Church Road.

Cllr Hinchliffe noted that in any development, 50% of affordable housing provided is Local Needs Housing, and therefore one of the two new-builds at Manse Field will be Local Needs. Cllr Howard stated that affordable housing is allocated on a points system, and a local connection scores highly.

16. Playing fields

See item 9.6.

17. Village caretaker scheme

Cllr Hinchliffe reported that he and the Chairman of Mersham and Singleton Parish Council had met Ashford Borough Council to discuss the scheme, which is being progressed. Cllr Howard advised that the scheme is to be discussed at the December Cabinet meeting.

18. Flooding in Plain Road

It was reported that lavatories were backing up in properties in Plain Road after recent heavy rain, and that there had also been surface water flooding. There were concerns that the pumping station is inadequate, notwithstanding assurances from Southern Water that it is. Cllr Howard will raise this with the Project Manager at Manse Field and Southern Water, the Parish Council will also contact Southern Water.

SW

19. M20 Junction 10A Community Working Group

Cllr Mrs Pereboom reported that she attended the first meeting of the group; the Highways' Agency presentation has been circulated. The proposals are controversial and the Working Group has been tasked to get feedback on the impact from the local community for the next meeting. A meeting will be held to discuss this before December. Mitigating measures will also be discussed. The next meetings of the Working Group are in December and January. Cllr Howard stated that J10A will be a full and not a partial junction, and will be a Highways' Agency project funded by central government. The Borough Council is a Consultee on the scheme. Cllr Mrs Pereboom noted that there will be disruption during construction and that the villages are concerned that there will be rat-running to avoid this.

SW/VP

20. Correspondence

All correspondence has been circulated.

21. Any Other Business

21.1 Cllr Turner stated that he will not be standing for re-election in May 2015 because he is moving away. This was received with regret and Cllr Turner was thanked by the Chairman for his efforts on behalf of the parish.

21.2 Cllr Howard gave his apologies for the January meeting.

22. Resolution to exclude the public

It was proposed that, under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, because of the confidential nature of the business to be dealt with, the public and press leave the meeting during discussion of item 23, namely distribution of Fordred's Charity payments.

Resolved:

That the press and public leave the meeting during discussion of Fordred's Charity payments.

23. Distribution of Fordred's Charity payments

Resolved:

That Cllrs Thorpe and Hinchliffe distribute the payments, as agreed.

GT/MH

24. Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday 14th January 2015 at 7.00pm in Brabourne Baptist Church.

The meeting closed at 10.30 pm.

PCSO Report

This is the police report for Smeeth Parish Council's November meeting.

There have been six recorded crimes in the village in the last two months.

Two were in relation to criminal damage, one in relation to a garage being broken into; one was in relation to an attempted break-in at a local business. There was also a report of theft from a vehicle and one report of a stolen vehicle. Two are still being investigated at this stage. All lines of enquiry have been exhausted in relation to the other four.

This month I have been making regular patrols in the village and I have also had the opportunity to attend with a PC colleague to carry out some speed checks. We spent a couple of hours in the village, in Plain Road and Church Road with the speed gun. In that time we stopped five vehicles and spoke to the drivers and on this occasion we gave them words of advice in regards to their speed through the village. We are hoping to carry out some more checks in the near future.

I would just like to take this opportunity to make everyone aware that at this time of year we often see a rise in burglaries due to it getting dark earlier, and also due to the fact that Christmas is just around the corner and criminals are often more active this time of year. This is because people will be buying many expensive gifts for family and friends and so they will see this as a good opportunity to get some expensive items. There are some very simple steps you can take to prevent your house from being targeted. Firstly ensure that all doors and windows are securely locked and that any valuables are locked away safely when you are out. If you have alarms ensure that they are set properly. And when you have been out shopping don't leave any packaging for any high-value items outside the front of your homes as this will advertise to any criminals what you may have. We also see a rise in heating oil thefts at this time of year due to the fact that most people will have had their heating oil topped up for the winter. Please be vigilant regarding this. If you see anyone acting suspiciously please let us know particularly if they have large vans as these are often the vehicles used for these types of thefts.

I will be holding my monthly surgery at the store. It will be on the 20th November from 2 o'clock and the 19th December from 3 o'clock so please visit me if you have any queries. I can offer some crime prevention advice or if you have something you wish to report I will be happy to help.

If you need to contact me please feel free to e-mail me and I will get back to you as soon as I can. My e-mail address is 58551@kent.pnn.police.uk

PCSO Andrew Huckstepp 58551.