

Smeeth Parish Council
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
Held on Wednesday, 14th May 2014 at 7.00pm
Brabourne Baptist Church

1. Present

Cllr Thorpe (Vice-chairman) (GT), Cllr Mrs Pereboom, Cllrs Hinchliffe (MH) and Turner (MT), and Mrs S Wood (Clerk) (SW).

Cllr Howard (WH) (ward member), Mr G Kingston (Community Warden) and PCSO Huckstepp attended. Two members of the public were present.

2. Apologies for Absence

Cllr Herrick (Chairman) (DH), Cllr Plowright (IP) (prior commitments) and Cllr Miss Martin (ward member).

In the absence of the Chairman Cllr Thorpe took the Chair.

3. Declaration of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

4. Election

Resolved:

That the election of the following be Minuted:

Chairman: Cllr Herrick

Vice-chairman: Cllr Thorpe

Planning Committee: Cllrs Thorpe (Chairman), Herrick, Hinchliffe and Plowright

Playing Field representative: Cllr Plowright

Village Hall representative: Cllr Thorpe

KALC representative: Cllr Herrick

Smeeth Primary School Local Education Authority Governor: Cllr Turner

5. Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Resolved:

That the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and Undertaking to observe the Code of Conduct will be signed by the Cllr Herrick at the next meeting of the Parish Council.

6. General Power of Competence

Resolved:

That Smeeth Parish Council satisfies itself that it continues to meet the eligibility criteria for the Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) 2012 adopted at its meeting held on 14th November 2012; such Power ceasing to have effect if the criteria cease to be met and unless a further Resolution is passed at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

7. Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 12th March 2014 and the meeting of the Parish Council held on 12th March 2014 be approved and confirmed as true records.

8. Open Session

The Chairman suspended the meeting to allow members of the public to raise concerns with the Council.

Mr Jeremy Secker and Mr David Jones, representing the Smeeth Sandpit Preservation Company, asked for an update on the provision of Local Needs Housing (LNH) in the village. The Society was set up in the summer of 2013, and the 130 village shareholders purchased the former sandpit to preserve it as a community facility. As noted at the briefing to the PC in November, it is hoped to build 2 market houses on part of the site; this is justified under planning legislation because the proceeds of the sale would be put towards Local Needs Housing in the village. Work to tidy up the site has been started, and advice sought from

similar groups elsewhere.

The Clerk replied that letters had been sent to all owners of sites identified in the desktop survey, but elicited only 1 reply; this stated that the site had been put forward during ABC's call for sites as part of the review of the Local Plan. It is, therefore, no longer available for LNH. Cllr Howard stated that all sites put forward are now being assessed for suitability for inclusion in the Local Plan by the Planners and the results are awaited. Sites may be accepted/accepted with modifications/rejected. If rejected the owners may be willing to put them forward for LNH.

He noted that care must be taken when reaching a decision otherwise it could be challenged.

Planners are taking into account the views of the PC and feedback from residents.

If a site is included in the Plan and includes an element of LNH, the process will be accelerated.

Cllr Hinchliffe and the Clerk stated that only 1 of the sites put forward in Smeeth included LNH.

In answer to a question from Mr Jones, Cllr Howard stated that in theory all sites submitted could fail the suitability test; if accepted for inclusion in the Plan they would still have to go through the usual planning process; planning permission is however likely to be granted, subject to agreement on design/numbers etc.

Cllr Hinchliffe and Cllr Howard advised that current development in Aldington arose from the Plan, which in practice runs for 10 years. Cllr Howard further noted that LNH may be put in on approved sites before market housing, because of the availability of funding for LNH – funds from the sandpit project would go only to LNH.

Mr Secker expressed concerns that affordable housing would not benefit local people, being open to all on the Borough Housing Register. Cllr Howard replied that affordable houses are allocated under a points system, and that a local connection carries additional points.

Mr Secker regretted that the project had stalled because of the Plan review process.

Cllr Howard reported that some sites had been submitted after the closing date and will be included in the assessment process. He noted that there is a general lack of sites for LNH in the borough.

The Chairman stated that the PC will ask Tessa O'Sullivan (Rural Housing Enabler) to contact the owners of sites identified in the desktop survey again. Miss O'Sullivan has indicated that ABC will look again at the site off Caroland Close; Cllr Howard asked to be copied in on any correspondence.

SW

The meeting was reconvened.

Cllr Hinchliffe suggested that the owner of the additional site off Plain Road be asked if he would be willing to make it available for LNH.

SW

9. Matters Arising

9.1 Commemoration of the outbreak of the First World War. A drumhead service will be held on 15th June, venue to be confirmed but will be either the playing field or The Warren.

Cllr Hinchliffe noted that there is a joint project being run by ABC and Kent Heritage to plant commemorative trees and suggested that a tree be planted on The Warren. The Clerk replied that this had been raised with Brabourne Parish Council (BPC), which had decided that there is already sufficient tree cover. [Post meeting note: this was Minuted at the BPC meeting on 17th March 2014.] The Chairman noted that a previous proposal to plant a tree in the parish had been ruled out for lack of a suitable site.

Cllr Hinchliffe suggested that a memorial bench or garden be sited on The Warren; this will be taken to the July meetings of both PCs.

SW

Cllr Turner stated that the Royal British Legion hopes to restore the War Memorial in Church Road.

9.2 Parish noticeboard. It is unknown when or if the noticeboard outside Orpins Stores will be refurbished or replaced. BPC has obtained quotes to install a freestanding noticeboard on The Warren. It was suggested that the PC contribute, to enable a larger board to be provided; Cllr Howard stated that a grant from his Member Community Fund may be awarded; the Clerk is to apply.

SW

9.3 Maintenance of the village defibrillator. The Chairman reported that Mr Ray Ashman (a longstanding member of the St John's Ambulance) will maintain the equipment. There have been no objections from BPC to the proposed direction signs. BPC has agreed to contribute 50% of the cost of the replacement cabinet to a maximum of £125 and has added the equipment to its insurance policy.

10. PCSO and Community Warden's reports

PCSO Huckstepp's report is attached. He reported low attendance at his surgeries, but Cllr Mrs Pereboom welcomed his presence in the village.

Mr Kingston reported that he has had a meeting with the new Headteacher of Smeeth School, Mrs Lisa Flack. Items discussed were parking issues, and parents leaving their children at school early in the morning before staff were present. A letter has been sent to all parents stating that no children should be dropped off at school before 8.40am; it was recognised that reducing the time for drop-off would impact on parking. Consideration is being given to the introduction of walking buses.

ABC will be running an anti-litter programme in June and the school is willing to be involved.

The Chairman thanked the litter pickers for their efforts, and Cllr Hinchliffe thanked other residents who also clear litter – problems at Calland were reported, but Mr Kingston replied that he is aware of this and it has been passed to the Housing Manager. Fly-tipped rubbish on The Ridgeway was swiftly cleared by ABC's street cleansing team.

Mr Kingston stated that he is liaising with Walnut Tree Farm, Brabourne Estates and Highways to improve the pond in Church Road and clear the culverts, including a drain that runs under Brabourne Estates' land – these are silted up and resulted in the flood. It is hoped that the Community Payback team will help clear the pond.

Reports of aggressive dogs on the footpath through Scots Plantation were followed up, including reports of injuries to other dogs. Mr Kingston stated that prosecutions are unlikely because the dogs were not on the footpath but on private land. He has spoken to the owner of the aggressive dogs, which were walked off-lead although muzzled.

11. Financial Report

11.1 To approve the Statement of Accounts for the Year

Resolved:

That the Statement of Accounts for 2013-2014 be approved.

11.2 To approve the Annual Return

Resolved:

That the Annual Return for 2013-2014 be approved.

11.3 To agree payments in accordance with the Budget

Resolved:

That the following payments be agreed:

Payments

Details	£
Zurich Municipal (renewal)	354.18
KALC (subscription renewal)	317.35
Barbara Podd (salary)	132.51
S Wood (gross salary April)	272.95
S Wood (gross salary May)	272.95
Brabourne Baptist Church (hall hire)	104.25

Receipts

Details	£
KCC Member Community Grant (Speedwatch)	700.00
Street cleansing grant	619.71
NatWest (interest)	2.65
Smeeth Field Rent	175.00
Precept	5332.00
Concurrent Functions Grant	310.00
Council Tax Support Grant	320.00

Balance £ 24429.05 as at 14th May 2014

11.4 To consider replacement of the defibrillator cabinet

See item 9.3. Information on costs will be brought to the next meeting.

11.5 To consider a contribution towards the insurance premium for the defibrillator

See item 9.3.

12 Planning Committee report

Cllr Thorpe (Chairman, Planning Committee) reported that one application had been received, but was subsequently withdrawn.

Cllr Thorpe asked for an update on applications 13/00700/AS Home Farm, and 11/00852/AS Ashbourne House; Cllr Howard stated that amended drawings had been received for the latter.

13 Report from KALC representative

The meeting on 26th March discussed Precepts set by member councils, highways issues (with particular reference to drainage issues), and an update on the new waste contract – recycling targets have been exceeded. The Minutes have been circulated. The next meeting is on 21st May.

14 Footpaths and Highways (including parking issues)

14.1 Footpaths and Highways

14.1.1 A recent serious accident at Smeeth crossroads was reported. The need for Improvements to the junction will be discussed at the next PC meeting.

14.1.2 A20 footpath. Repairs to the footpath will be funded from Cllr Wickham's KCC Highways grant; this was welcomed.

14.1.3 Subsidence in Pound Lane has been reported to KCC Highways.

14.1.4 The Ridgeway is to be resurfaced.

14.2 Sandy Place parking Ownership of the verge adjacent to the rear of Harvest Cottages is to be clarified, because this would impact on the width available for the proposed provision of parking bays and a footway - there are set criteria for the width of bays and footways. Probable costs of the scheme will be sought before submission of a planning application to ABC. Cllr Howard advised that if the scheme could not be implemented on cost grounds the PC's proposals should be lodged with ABC, for possible implementation when ABC has the available funds.

SW

WH

SW

15 Community Led Plan and Emergency Plan

Cllr Hinchliffe reported that data analysis from the questionnaires is being carried out by Steering Group members. The results will be used to generate a report and a meeting is being arranged for late May.

Cllr Hinchliffe stated that a pilot project had been carried out in Challock to define the village confines, and that any village included in the Tenterden and Rural Districts DPD could undertake a similar project – it was noted that Brabourne was included in the DPD but Smeeth was not. Cllr Hinchliffe suggested that a similar exercise be carried out in Smeeth and Brabourne. Cllr Howard advised that the ABC Cabinet is in favour of this being repeated in other parishes, but would have to be staggered because of the ABC Officers' time required. Challock PC is developing a toolkit. Cllr Hinchliffe noted that ABC funded the Challock pilot but funding would not be available for schemes in other parishes.

16. Speedwatch

Cllr Hinchliffe reported that up to 4 sessions are being carried out each week, and welcomed the support from PCSO Huckstepp. A noticeable deterrent effect was reported.

17. Localism

A joint meeting with BPC, Brook PC and Mersham PC is to be held on 2nd June, with input from Cllr John Rivers (Chairman, Ashford Area Committee KALC, Wittersham PC Chairman). Cllr Rivers had advised that PCs should produce a Business Plan which should then be sent to ABC for costing. The Clerk is to circulate the list of possible functions drawn up at the meeting in August 2013 for comment in advance of the meeting.

18. Playing fields

The Chairman reported that refurbishment was put out to tender and a contractor selected. The works will cost approx £77,000 and grant applications have been submitted; a decision is awaited.

The Smeeth and Brabourne Football Club was congratulated on the teams' recent successes.

19. Village handyman

See item 17.

20. Local Needs Housing

See item 8.

21. Correspondence

Correspondence has been circulated by the Clerk.

22. Co-option of councillor to fill vacancy

The Clerk reported that the required number of electors had not made written representations calling for a by-election, and that the vacancy arising from Cllr Mrs Williams' resignation could therefore be filled by co-option.

23. Borough councillor's report

Cllr Howard reported that the Manse Field site had been fenced off for safety and security, but the hoarding would be removed as soon as it was safe to do so. Complaints had been received about glare from the hoarding – Cllr Howard will request that it be painted green.

The Member Grant will continue in 2014-2015.

REME marched through the town centre exercising its right as a holder of the Freedom of the Borough. Cllr Howard stated that other regiments holding the Freedom will also march through the town centre as part of the commemoration of the centenary of the First World War.

ABC has signed the Armed Forces Community Covenant (equivalent to the govt's Military Covenant); this gives support to service personnel and their families. A link on the ABC website has been added to direct service personnel and their families to charities and support organisations. Residents can support the Covenant by signing it on the website.

Richard Graham was thanked for his help in producing the Covenant.

24. Resolution to exclude the press and public

It is 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 25, namely review of the Clerk's spinal column point.

Resolved:

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 25, namely review of the Clerk's spinal column point.

25. Review of Clerk's spinal column point

Resolved:

That the Clerk's spinal column point be increased to 25.

26. Any other business

26.1 Cllr Hinchliffe reported that local organisations were involved in a village event held in Ticehurst and suggested that a similar event be held in the parish to promote the PC. This was welcomed by Cllr Mrs Pereboom, who agreed with Cllr Hinchliffe that a directory of parish assets and organisations, similar to the Domesday Book, be drawn up.

26.2 Cllr Hinchliffe advised that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is to be introduced in the borough; under this 15% of levies from eligible developments would devolve to PCs.

27. Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, July 9th at 7.00pm in Brabourne Baptist Church.

The meeting closed at 9.25pm.

PCSO Huckstepp's report

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

There have been three recorded crimes in the village since the last meeting.

The first is in relation to a theft of some scrap metal from the front garden of a property in Calland. The property is empty as the occupant has moved out and there were some old metal bed frames and an old metal frame from a trampoline. Officers attended and spoke to neighbouring properties, however no one has seen or heard anything.

The second was in relation to a theft of dogs from a garden in the village. The dogs were kept in a pen in the rear garden. It appears that the offenders have gained access through the rear gate from the driveway and removed the dogs from the pen. The dogs were later found and returned.

The third was in relation to a theft of a scooter from the school. The scooter had been left in the bike shed at the school over the weekend and when the pupil returned to school on the Monday it was gone. It was later found, however unfortunately it had been destroyed. As a result I am planning to liaise with the school and plan some property marking events with the pupils at some stage.

This month I have been spending time with the Smeeth and Brabourne Community Speed Watch. We have been making regular checks of the speed of vehicles around the village. All the figures are sent to the roads' policing department and any vehicles that are caught speeding in the village will receive letters in the post.

I have been patrolling the village regularly and I also hold a regular surgery at the local store. This is a chance for residents in the village to come and speak to me about any issues that they may have. I am also able to offer any crime prevention advice that they may need. Please feel free to come and visit me when I am at the store and I will happily have a chat about any concerns you may have.

My next surgery will be on Tuesday, 10th of June at 3.30pm so please come and have a chat with me if there is anything that is causing you concern or you need any advice.

Finally we have been seeing a rise recently in shed break-ins in rural areas. With this in mind I would urge people to consider increasing their security around any outbuildings they may have. A good way to do this would be to install a shed alarm. You can buy them from most DIY stores and they are relatively inexpensive. They are also very easy to install and use and are a very good deterrent when it comes to these types of offences.

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.