

**Smeeth Parish Council**  
**Minutes of a Meeting held on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020 at 7.00pm**  
**By Zoom**

**1. Present**

Cllr Herrick (Chairman) (DH), Cllr Mrs Morey (JM), Cllr Mrs Pereboom (VP), Cllr Mrs Alford (HA), a member of the public and Mrs Block (Clerk) (TB).

It is with regret that we minute the resignation of Russel Kimpton and thank him for his input over the past few years. It was agreed that Cllr Herrick and the Clerk would discuss the issues raised by Mr Kimpton in the first instance.

**2. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Thorpe (Vice-chairman) (GT) and Cllr Mrs Moo (YM)

**3. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest to be raised.

**4. Minutes**

The minutes had been circulated.

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020 be approved and confirmed as a true record.**

**5. To receive any matters arising from these minutes**

VJ day update has been circulated and an article put in the eNewsletter. The Parish Council is pleased that the day passed having been acknowledged.

eNewsletter and Photo competition update – there was a winner and a runner up for each of the Parishes. Overall, we were disappointed in the number of entries received and wonder if the terms and conditions were off-putting although it might just be apathy. Need to be careful that this is not too formal in the future.

Village Hall – Confirm that £800 is to be paid by Smeeth Parish Council towards the upgrading of the Hall. All Councillors were in favour and a cheque is to be raised accordingly. Same amount to be paid by Brabourne PC and Cllr Howard (ABC).

The noticeboard for Smeeth Parish Council at Brabourne Baptist Church has been removed.

**6. Open Session**

The member of the public in attendance did not wish to make comment. HA suggested that the link for the next meeting could be added in to the minutes and made available through the Parish Magazine. The meetings can be accessed by Smartphones, tablets etc.

## 7. War Memorial

After the VJ Day commemoration, George Taylor told DH that the Royal British Legion was stepping back from the maintenance of the War Memorial.

It transpired that the Parish Council had accepted responsibility for the War Memorial in order for the maintenance work to be undertaken. The memorial is not on land we are responsible for and we are not certain we own the memorial.

DH is exploring with Chris Denyer (Priest in Charge) as to whether the Stour Downs would like to take this on.

It is covered under our Public Liability insurance but not if it is damaged/vandalised.

It was questioned as to who historically insured it. There has been a presumption that the Parish Council is responsible for it. We would need to look to having it valued and then insure it if we are to take this on.

HA asked is it worth offering to pay towards the upkeep? DH explained that he would contact Chris Denyer.

JM explained that in 2017/18 it was recognised that the land is owned by Church and it was minuted that a faculty would be required. It is later noted that to enable funding of the upgrading the War Memorials Trust required written permission from the Parish Council and a letter was written as a matter of expediency. The letter was read to the Council and states, "as the body responsible for the monument..." This was to secure money from the War Memorials Trust. It is unfortunate that at that time the faculty was still awaited from the Canterbury Diocesan Association. The work then was carried out without the faculty. It is not known whether the outcome of the faculty application was ever received – DH will pursue with Chris Denyer.

JM is anxious about taking on the responsibility of this grade II listed monument. A value, therefore, must be put on it and it is a potentially onerous task. The Caretaker could take on light maintenance of it at the moment but the actual lettering requires special knowledge and skills. It is clear from the Land Registry that we do not own it or the land it stands on. There is a presumption we own it but we do not.

The caretaker currently tidies up the Memorial – leaf blowing etc., but it is done only on the area that the Parish Council is responsible for.

Councillors must understand the implications of taking responsibility for the Memorial.

VP queried what has happened since 1919 (when the Memorial was consecrated) until now? DH explained that nothing has really needed doing to it until very recently. A discussion continued and DH will look into whether the faculty was ever granted.

DH

**It was resolved that Cllr Herrick will discuss the matter further with Chris Denyer. The matter will be raised again at the November meeting.**

## **8. Planning Proposals**

There are 2 papers for discussion at the moment - The White Paper from Central Government and a paper produced by a group of Ashford KALC representatives that have examined the 2030 Borough Council plan.

### **KALC Discussion Document**

There are a number of areas that the KALC group would like to pursue and they are looking for confirmation from the Parish Councils in order to take these issues forward.

Papers have been circulated and a questionnaire has also been circulated – a response from Councillors to KALC is asked for before the deadline of 9<sup>th</sup> October.

JM explained that the basic principal is to ensure gaps are maintained between settlements to maintain their individual identity. JM urges Councillors to read the KALC document and respond to the Clerk. It is hoped that this will go forward and will benefit all parishes, not least those on the A20 corridor.

Please submit views to the Clerk and answer the questionnaire too.

DH explained that this is a local issue and that there is a real need to consider the document. DH and JM would be happy to endorse the document – both regard the “in principle” aspect of the proposals a must. Brabourne and Smeeth are not noted as being affected by Otterpool. Whilst there is currently a buffer between us and Otterpool we certainly will be affected.

VP asked – How does this go together with the Governments plans? How will they work together?

JM explained that this is about keeping villages separate and maintaining green corridors and is completely separate from the Government document.

VP – Will the White paper over-ride this document?

JM – That is possible and quite likely but we should submit our response.

HA – Is this a parish response or individual?

JM – Yes, this is a parish response, please provide the Clerk with your comments.

### **Government White Paper**

JM attended a course on the White Paper - KALC will be circulating further documents for comment. Please do read the documents that will be circulated and the links that might be useful. The course was extremely informative.

VP – Up until now the courses have been inconvenient but VP hopeful that she can attend soon.

All questions/comments need to be directed to the Clerk.

HA - Will this mean that we are in a vulnerable position because of Gladman?

JM - This is potentially possible.

DH – It is to be noted that Gladman have backed out of the Kennington application.

#### **9. New Smeeth PC/Brabourne PC Websites Update**

VP explained that the website sub-group have been continuing to work on this. All of the information has been input and we have got as far as we can go - we have lots of photographs and we have tried to make the sites appealing to look at.

The Clerk has updated all of the formal documents although there are still some tweaks required.

The current plan is to have a soft launch on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> September when we go live, and then we will have a formal launch on 25<sup>th</sup> September when Mike Hickmott will announce it officially.

There is a desk-top and a mobile website so some things are showing when they shouldn't be, so still work to be undertaken.

This is a work in progress. The website is mainly for visitors/interested parties outside of the village.

DH - Villy, Tracey and Mike Hickmott have put in a lot of work and we must thank them for their dedication. Villy in particular has certainly been working very hard on this. VP very glad we chose the company we chose – they have been excellent.

#### **10. Village Caretaker Update**

The Caretaker Committee met on 29th July and heard from Katy Bravery (a member of the public who lives in Brabourne) who gave a presentation about verge management, wildlife, and plant life, and schemes such as Bug Life and Bee Life, and the project Bee Lines, which aims to join up habitats of butterflies and bees. After an explanation of the areas in each of the parishes for which the caretaker is responsible, and the list of his contractual duties to both ABC and KCC, it became clear there were no verges in any of the parishes which required any change in their management. The caretaker took the opportunity to explain his current verge management policy and also some of the common problems he currently encounters in carrying out his duties, such as nitrates from vehicles, litter, Yellow Rattle, and dog poo, all of which cause difficulties for him carrying out his work.

Katy Bravery agreed to contact KCC if she becomes aware of any specific areas of concern over management of verges outside the Parish confines.

Paul's staff appraisal took place. The Committee agreed his work benefited all four parishes of the Village Caretaker Cluster. Paul now has his certificates for chain sawing and spraying. It is likely that capital items, such as the ride on mower, may need replacing over the winter, and quotes for replacement and possible grants are to be sought. The Committee agreed that Paul's working hours do not allow for any additional work to be undertaken at this time.

If there are any matters that require Paul's attention in the village please let the Clerk to the Parish Council, Tracey Block, know.

JM confirmed – it is felt that the Caretaker has no extra hours to undertake additional work.

Verge Management – there was no need to change with the verge management. Katy has gone forward with KCC, it became clear that there were no verges that met the criteria.

The ride on mower will need replacing – it has had a lot of use.

Replacement quotations will be required in the Autumn.

It was suggested that the current mower may be kept for emergencies if storage can be found.

The Clerk is having difficulties obtaining bank statements – DH will try to help resolve this issue.

### **11. Church Road Development Update**

Nothing much has happened except that we have been asked to prioritise the list of wants as some of the items will likely not be funded. We have asked the Playing Fields Association (PFA) to prioritize their wants but we have not yet received a response from the PFA. The Clerk to pursue.

### **12. Financial Report**

#### **a. To approve the Financial Statement**

A copy of the Financial Statement and a current Budget over Expenditure had been circulated to all the Councillors ahead of the meeting for both the Parish Council account and the Caretaker Account. There were no questions raised with regards to this.

#### **b. To agree payments in accordance with the Budget**

The following payments had been approved prior to the meeting and the cheques signed accordingly:

Village Caretaker Account	£1970.00
PKF Littlejohn LLP	£360.00
Tracey Block (August salary)	£239.74
Tracey Block (September salary)	£239.74
HMRC	£120.00
Mrs B Podd	£261.60
P Rodway	£1499.23
HMRC	£401.06
KCC Pension Fund	£606.74
P Rodway (expenses)	£59.25
T Denne and Sons	£108.00

### **13. Planning Report – to agree any outstanding responses to Planning Applications and to note responses sent between meetings.**

A copy of the Planning Report had been circulated ahead of the meeting to all Councillors by VP and a copy is kept on file in the minute book. Regrettably comments against one application were not submitted – a revised consultation procedure has been drawn up (see below). Report received.

**Cllr Herrick had proposed some best practice methods of working:**

- 1) Notification received by Clerk from ABC and emailed to all asking for comments/views to be sent to Planning Lead - say within 5 days.
- 2) Individual comments/views sent to Planning Lead (not copied to all so that no-one unduly influenced initially by views of others).
- 3) Planning Lead collates comments/views and formulates draft response to ABC and circulates to all for any further comments/views - say within 3 days.
- 4) Any further comments incorporated by Planning Lead and final version sent to Clerk.
- 5) Clerk sends final version to ABC/completes entry on ABC website and confirms doing same to all.

JM – Happy to approve the proposals.

DH – Don't want planning applications to be over-looked and don't want people to feel intimidated when replying to the application.

A co-ordinated response will be circulated prior to submission allowing time for additional comment.

A discussion took place about the working practice. It was agreed to see how it progresses.

**14. Correspondence**

**No additional correspondence has been received.**

**15. Any Other Business**

**Church Road Triangle** – an email had been received asking whether this could be removed on road safety grounds. Suggest first (inexpensive) step is for white lining to be redone at the junction – TB to contact Kent Highways in the first instance. Could ask for cost of removal, this could then be discussed.

Traffic calming issues, including works to the triangle, were discussed when the Church Road housing development was first brought forward. Once the full application is received for the development, this matter can be re-visited. A contributory factor appears to be school parking which

has yet to be resolved.

**Condolence Book** – Following the suggestion from Ashford Borough Council that the parishes could have a local book, it was agreed that the Clerk would ask for more information.

**Operation Brock** – This is in place again now because of Brexit. Operation Stack was in operation today because of a security issue.

**MOJO** – There is some information on the Facebook page regarding the road entrances. Clerk to circulate the link to Sevington website and explained that there is to be a consultation.

**Mobile Library** – the mobile library is coming back to the parish imminently.

**eNewsletter Report** – circulated by VP, noted and a copy kept on file with the minutes

#### **Royal British Legion (George Taylor)**

An informal commemoration took place at the Smeeth War Memorial on V.J. Day morning (15 August) followed by a celebration at The Woolpack in the afternoon. Details have already been published. All formal Legion meetings have now been cancelled until the New Year.

#### **Speedwatch (Graham Snazelle)**

Speedwatch has been dormant for some time now but all being well sessions will recommence in the near future. Two sites have been approved initially but it is hoped that that number will increase in due course. As ever, more volunteers are still needed.

#### **Community Led Plan (Michael Hinchliffe)**

The material needed to facilitate the additional works to the fencing surrounding the basketball hoop is now available on site and a work party is to be arranged in the near future to undertake the installation.

#### **Playing Field Association (Paul Dawson)**

The AGM of the Playing Field Association is to be held via Zoom at 7pm on Wednesday 23 September. It is still anticipated that the Chair, the Secretary, and the Treasurer will stand down at the meeting.

DH is to attend this meeting. The PFA will need new officers – Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary, without these the association could fold. Any parishioners interested should attend this meeting.

What is the consequence of no volunteers? The Playing Field is in Smeeth, the agreement between the parishes and Brabourne Estates is then brought into question. Must have officers.

Should this be communicated to the parishioners? DH suggested that this could be explained on a Newsflash. VP - We were asked to put out a note about the AGM but felt that this was not an appropriate use of the email list however this situation is different - if a lack of officers potentially impacts parishioners, we could legitimately use the email list.

Parish Council could express concern that the AGM may lose 3 key officers and could encourage anyone interested in the continuation of the PFA to come forward. DH to write something for the eNewsletter.

DH will attend the PFA meeting as SPC representative.

### **Report from KALC Representative**

The Government's Devolution White Paper on "Communities framework" and "Local Government reorganisation in the county" were circulated by Tracey to all Councillors in July.

The Government consultation on reform of the current planning system was circulated by Tracey to all Councillors in August.

The documents "Changes to the Current Planning System", "Planning for the Future", and "Transparency in Competition" have been circulated by Tracey so that comment and response could be made by various dates to KALC, NALC, to HM Government and local MP.

KALC held a meeting via zoom on 9th September. KALC is preparing two documents in response to the various proposed changes to the planning rules which will be circulated to Parishes in the near future for discussion and consideration by Councillors before they submit it to MP Damien Green and Central Government.

An update on the Village Alliance petition concerning the field at J10A acquired under the Special Development Order was given. The petition was successful and Mersham and Sevington Parish Councils are hopeful to achieve their primary aim of securing the protection of the green space which is at present being used for storage of topsoil and will be restored when that use comes to an end.

The Joint Parishes Planning Committee met via Zoom on 20th and 27th August and a document has been prepared regarding "Defining Boundaries, Settlements, and Green and Blue Corridors", which has been circulated, together with a questionnaire, to Councillors for discussion and comments at the Parish Council Meeting on 16 September and response to KALC on behalf of Smeeth Parish Council by 9th October.

CI Sparkes gave a presentation on behalf of the Police giving an overview of policing and dealing with crime during COVID-19.

Sue Wood indicated to KALC she intended retiring from her post as Secretary of KALC in Spring next year having served as secretary for some 7 years. A job description will be circulated.

Next meeting of KALC is scheduled for either 4th or 11th November and all future meetings will take place on the first Wednesday of alternate months as from January next year.

**16. Date and time of next SPC meeting: To be confirmed -  
18<sup>th</sup> November 2020 at 7pm, via Zoom unless dictat is received.**

**The meeting closed at 8.40 pm.**