

Smeeth Parish Council
Minutes of the Meeting
Held on Wednesday 11th January 2023 at 7.00pm at Brabourne Baptist Church.

Cllr Herrick welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Cllr Herrick explained to the Councillors that Cllr Pereboom will not be standing at the election in May so the Parish Council will need a Councillor to take the lead on planning and the newsletter. Cllr Herrick thanked Cllr Pereboom for all she had done during her time as a Parish Councillor.

1. To note those present.

Cllr Herrick (DH), Cllr Mrs Alford (HA), Cllr Roger Baker (RB), Cllr Rev Denyer (CD), Cllr Grant (SG), Cllr Mrs Morey (JM) and Cllr Mrs Pereboom (VP).

1 member of the public and Mrs Block (Clerk) (TB).

2. To receive and approve apologies for absence.

There were no apologies for absence.

3. To receive declarations of interest (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests). The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared.

JM declared a personal interest in the grant application for the Brabourne Baptist Church as she attends the Church.

4. To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 28th November 2022.

The Parish Council approved the minutes as a true record and the Chairman signed these.

5. To discuss matters arising from previous minutes that are not covered by the agenda.

The new village notice-board will be installed when ground conditions improve.

Quinn Estates meeting - William Howard has emailed to say there is no update.

Young Persons Award – The group of Councillors has been liaising to set a date for a virtual meeting, this is progressing.

Caldecott visit – CD has not yet arranged a meeting.

Fordred's money – the deliveries went ahead.

6. To receive report from the Borough Councillor.

There was no Borough Councillor Report.

7. Public session: To receive questions and comments from the public on any agenda item.

The member of the public had nothing specific to report.

8. Financial report.

8.1 To approve the Financial Statement.

To note the Parish Council's financial position as at 31/12/2022.

The new bank accounts are up and running and seem to work well.

The current financial position of the Parish Council was noted. The Parish Council has a balance of £99,341.90 as of 31st December 2022.

Defibrillators.

The defibrillator for the Village Hall has been purchased and is with David Smith for external wiring and fitting. More detail later.

Brabourne Baptist Church was unable to take advantage of the offer by KALC because there is too much red tape to leap through. Rev Jerry Newson says he will continue to pursue the plan of having a defibrillator at the site.

8.2 To agree payments in accordance with the Budget.

Paul Rodway	£1497.70
HMRC	£ 325.92
T Denne and Son	£ 118.80
Lister Wilder	£ 78.92
Kent Pension Fund	£ 577.00
Bank charges	£ 9.00
Halfords	£ 3.58
Hastingleigh Garage	£ 210.00
HMRC	£ 352.49
Kent Pension Fund	£ 577.01
P Rodway	£1460.34
T Denne and Sons	£ 118.80
Green Flag	£ 115.00
HMRC	£ 142.40
Mrs. Podd – litter picking	£ 199.50
T Block	£ 285.00
T Block	£ 285.00
HMRC	£ 142.40

8.3 To discuss and agree amounts requested in grant applications.

Scouts and Guides - £500.00 towards improved lighting at hut.

Brabourne Baptist Church - £500.00 towards external lighting.

Brabourne and Smeeth Village Hall - £1000.00.

PFA - £2333 towards annual maintenance and additional works this year.

Following a full discussion on each of the applications, the Parish Council approved the applications. It was noted that the grant application policy states: All awards must be properly accounted for and evidence of expenditure should be supplied to the Council where requested. Where the grant awarded exceeds £2,000 a report must be provided to the council within twelve months of the date of the grant. This may take the form of an annual report or set of accounts which clearly identify the manner of spending. This written report has to be deposited with the Parish Clerk. Applicants should be aware that this becomes a document which members of the public have the right to inspect under provisions of S228 of the Local Government Act 1972. The council may extend the reporting condition to other grant recipients as part of the awarding process.

9. Planning.

9.1 Planning Committee report.

The Planning Report was circulated and is available as Appendix 1 at the end of the minutes. There was some discussion surrounding the applications.

It was noted that the Parish Council had declined to assist the Stop Stonestreet Solar group financially at this time.

The Otterpool consultation for 8,500 homes was discussed.

The Chairman explained to the Parish Council that the S106 agreement for Church Road was now in its final draft form.

The Chairman noted the publication of the draft KCC Developer Contribution Guide and the availability of KALC Planning Training.

9.2 To agree any outstanding planning responses.

There were no outstanding responses to discuss.

10. To receive the KALC Representative Report .

Cllr Morey had attended the meetings of the Ashford Area Committee of KALC on 10th November 2022 and 4th January 2023 at the Ashford Civic Centre.

The minutes of the meeting on 10th November have been circulated to councillors - there was a presentation from ABC about climate change following which there was a decision to start a KALC working group on that theme. As Smeeth PC has no responsibility for/ownership of land or buildings it cannot take advantage of any scheme such as tree planting or installation of electric vehicle charging points. A working group will be of more use to larger parishes such as Tenterden, Wye, and Kingsnorth, which have already started schemes and measures of their own. However, if subsequently there should be schemes of use to other parishes, KALC would no doubt keep us informed. The 4-page document produced by Tenterden Town council has been circulated to councillors. There was no further update from the climate change working group at the KALC meeting on 10th November.

An update was given by Ashford Police on the neighbourhood policing review. The Community Safety Unit is merging their work with that of the PCSOs to share tasks. At present the consultation process is continuing and it is likely to be June before the review will be completed and the new structure finalised.

There was no update on developments on the new Borough Council Planning Portal. Anyone wishing to join the next Planning Portal training session should contact KALC Secretary, Paula Cowperthwaite. Details of future online training on various topics have been circulated to councillors, including one of interest for potential councillors, as well as new councillors.

Next meeting of Ashford Area Committee of KALC will be 1st March.

11. To receive an update on Footpaths and Highways (to include the Highways Improvement Plan).

The Ridgeway footpath - TB followed up on 5/1, KHS reported the path to be clear of vegetation.

Church Road footpath - TB chased on 5/1 - TB to meet with Lee Goodman (Highways Engineer) on site at a date to be arranged.

Smeeth School/Brabourne School footpath proposal - TB received no response from the lady proposing the path - Brabourne PC have expressed dissatisfaction with the idea of footpath trading as suggested by the landowners in the response letters. Also, the landowner of Hospital Field is not prepared to be involved.

Plain Road/Canterbury Road lorry movements - TB has chased - email received on 9/1 to say that Planning Enforcement Team Leader had asked Officer to communicate with TB - still waiting but have chased directly with Enforcement Officer. William Howard has also communicated with Enforcement Officer.

Plain Road 30mph works (SPC funded) - TB chased on 5/1, Invoice to be sent to Smeeth PC and then works will be planned.

There was a discussion regarding the difficulty of navigating Church Road when vehicles are

parked opposite the turning into The Ridgeway. TB to contact ABC and request parking restrictions.

A communication had been received from a local resident regarding the apparent non-functioning of the 30mph speed indicator in Church Road, along with a suggestion that the speed limit should be reduced to 20mph. KCC Highways will be contacted for further information.

The proposal from a local resident to create a footpath between Evegate and the A20 has been referred to the Highways Improvement Group but is yet to be discussed.

12. Village Caretaker Scheme .

The Village Caretaker scheme continues well and if anyone has noticed anything that requires the attention of the caretaker, please contact the Parish Clerk.

Unfortunately, the Caretaker's trailer was stolen in November. The theft was reported to the police by the Parish Clerk and an insurance claim was made. I am pleased to report that a new trailer was very quickly sourced by the Parish Clerk so that the Caretaker was able to operate his normal routine using the new trailer by early December.

In December when the weather was icy the Caretaker put salt into the empty salt bins where necessary and also dug away ice and cleared the pipe to allow water to clear from the road at the pond.

13. Newsletter update.

Cllr Pereboom had met with the previous magazine (Parish News) editor and a resident of Smeeth. VP will put together a skeleton proposal for a new online newsletter for everyone to look at. Following this a working group from the 2 Councils can be formed.

14. Smeeth Sandpit.

Report from Dave Jones:

As our ninth year of looking after the sandpit draws to a close, plenty of work has been done to sustain and enhance this valuable area for the local community.

Ninety, Year Two children from Victoria Road and Ashford Oaks primary schools spent the day at Smeeth Sandpit on Thursday 8th December.

To develop their understanding of Animal Survival, the pupils had fun making nest-boxes and wooden shelters on the coldest day of the winter so far. The activities form part of a project involving the two primaries and Highworth Grammar School.

Links have been made with schools in France and Nepal as a global community of children come together to promote international co-operation and environmental awareness.

Happily, the pond we constructed in 2021 was able to maintain some water throughout the summer of 2022 during what was surely the longest, driest period for years, ensuring a safe haven for aquatic life. Hopefully the pond will continue to provide an exciting diversity to the sandpit ecology.

Conservation work has continued this winter as we have planted more trees and kept on top of pernicious weeds and invasive plants.

Unfortunately, despite the generous provision and continual emptying of a dog waste bin, the issue of owners leaving their dog poo around the paths remains.

15. Royal British Legion.

There was no update for the meeting.

16. Playing Field.

The Beavers are looking at working on a community initiative. The Clerk had sent the communication to the PFA. An enquiry had also been received about football practice, which the Clerk has sent on to the PFA.

17. Speedwatch.

The Speedwatch team has lost 2 volunteers recently and is desperate to recruit new helpers.

18. Community Led Plan.

The memorial bench for Michael Hinchliffe is to be installed in the Spring.

19. Correspondence.

The Clerk had circulated Flood Warden Training information.

It was noted that Action with Communities in Rural Kent is closing down. The organization had helped the Parish Councils with Local Need Housing Surveys in the past.

A communication had been received requesting a bus shelter. There was some discussion regarding this and where it might be sited. The Clerk was asked to contact Kent Highways to suggest the Woolpack and opposite the Woolpack as ideas.

Update re: Scouts and Guides.

Report from Jon Rose:

(i) Membership

The number of young people continues to rise and has largely recovered from the dip we saw at the time of Covid restrictions and online meetings.

Our Brownie Pack is if anything over-full with 28 members and the Guides are at 20 which is very good.

On the Scout side of the Group, we have 14 Beavers with enquiries for new joiners almost weekly. Cubs are down at 8 which is the lowest we have had for a long time.

Scouts stand at 25 and Explorers have about 12 on their books which is as many as they have had in some time.

This means that 107 young people from around the area attend our meetings each week. This is a strong membership. We also enjoy support from several of the Explorers and others involved in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme who take the role of Young Leader as part of their volunteering commitment. This also helps them develop leadership skills for the future.

For both Scouting and Guiding the greatest challenge is finding leaders to continue to maintain and grow the groups. We are all in desperate need of new leaders and helpers. At this time our Cub Pack is likely to close at the end of February as Katrina Devenport has handed in her notice (after over 10 years as leader) and without a replacement there is no other option – all other leaders are already fully committed.

In common with many village organisations, it seems to be very difficult to secure the commitment and engagement that we would like and need from residents / parents.

(ii) HQ Maintenance

Our HQ, now well over 20 years old, is in need of refurbishment in some respects. For example, the soffits and fascias either need replacing on a like for like basis or with long lasting plastic that will be easier to maintain in the long term.

We are also upgrading the lighting which is not bright enough at a cost of about £1,000.

One issue that we would like to find time to investigate and resolve is that of excessive noise in the building. As you might imagine 25+ young people can make a huge din when running around

and undertaking activities. There has always been a considerable echo in the main hall due to the nature of its construction and we have often spoken of addressing this problem which is a serious issue for anyone with a hearing impediment. Sound deadening is very much on the agenda.

(iii) **Cost of Living Considerations**

We are aware that even in this apparently wealthy area, there are some serious issues for families facing rapidly escalating costs for everyday basics such as food, heating, travel and so much more. As a Management Committee we have always striven to keep our membership fees as low as we can and they remain at £35 per term making £105 per annum. These are the cheapest in the area for Scouting and Guiding. We have committed for now not to increase this cost.

We expect to be paying our census for membership and insurance to the national organisations very shortly and this will run to about £5,000 which will come from our bank account. Luckily we are able to cover this cost at the moment without asking parents for more money.

Until now we have been fortunate in that our electricity costs have been fixed but that “luxury” ends in February.

However, activities that we arrange for the Young People are increasingly costly and we try to subsidise these where we can to try and ensure that nobody is excluded by virtue of cost. One aspect that is affecting us is transport costs. For example, investigating minibus hire for a 17-seater for a week in the New Forest will cost £900 plus fuel. We will also need to secure a lorry or similar to get our kit there. Rail transport would be an option for young people in normal times but we cannot rely on the service to transport the Scouts and Guides that far ahead. A couple of years ago we budgeted £5 per head per day for food and related costs. Last year we increased this to £7 which proved to be insufficient and this year we calculate that this needs to be a minimum of £10.

Where possible we are running low or nil cost activities but, in order to provide an interesting, challenging and varied programme, we do need to from time to time to visit for example a climbing wall or go canoeing, etc. all of which attract additional (increased) costs.

(iv) **Plans for the year**

These have yet to be decided partly down to the considerations above. Personally, I would like the Scouts and Explorers to get to the New Forest and I know that Julia has investigated the Guides going to a Jamboree in Essex. We will be discussing this at our forthcoming Management Committee meeting later this month.

The Guides are taking part in their local district camp from 9th to 11th June.

We expect 2 of our former Scouts, now both leaders, Sam Smith and Michael Axford to be awarded their King’s Scout Badges with the chance of attending the St Georges Day Parade at Windsor Castle in April.

I would like to find some activity that the Scouts could undertake to support our local community either on a one-off or with a flexible commitment and am open to suggestions. This has always been a difficult area to fill in our programmes.

Update re: Village Hall

Key points from a conversation between the Village Hall Management Chair and SPC’s Village Hall Rep (RB) regarding the Defibrillator plus a few extras.

1. The defibrillator will be in the kitchen for now and I will notify all users of its location.
2. I will send users a link so that they can use the training facility to see how to use it.
3. When installed outside I will sign us into the national scheme and emergency services.
4. I will also put on the village Facebook that it has been installed.

5. The external box will be sited on the outside wall facing the car park and near to the emergency doors. It has to be connected to a power supply and so I will ask J10 electrical to install it on our behalf.

6. I have finished the accounts and will send them to the auditor.

Also -

- Hire charges doubled from £2.3k in Covid affected 2021 to £4.7k in 2022
- A table tennis club has started using the hall from October adding £1500/annum to income
- Surplus for the year was £2.4k but without support from the councils this would have been a deficit of -£1.2k
- Electric and heating increased 4-fold from £354 to £1570.
- Charges for regular users were increased 20% in October (from £5 to £6/hour)
- Most of the grant money has now been used up after purchase of armchairs (for those needing extra support when standing up) and recently the defibrillator and an outdoor cabinet.

20. Any other business

The website needs updating with Councillor information. Some general website contact details are potentially out of date - the Clerk is to communicate with each village organisation.

Brabourne Parish Council has suggested a Community Events Group to facilitate the organising of events. The idea would be to have a representative from each village organisation and some community members so that an event can be organised easily by providing the expertise/knowledge required. There seems to be some apathy in the village and the Parish Council wondered if this would encourage new volunteers to be involved in village events. There was some discussion around this and the idea was met positively. Brabourne Parish Council will approach the village organisations.

21. Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the Council up to and including the next annual meeting of the Council.

Wednesday 8th March 2023

Wednesday 10th May 2023

Appendix 1

Planning Report.

Planning application **NOT/2022/3096**

Date valid: 22/11/2022

Barn at Maid Morton, Maid Morton, Hythe Road, Ashford, TN25 6SS

Prior approval for change of use of one agricultural building and land within its curtilage to one dwelling house and associated operational development.

DH had suggested: There is pre-application advice from November 2021 requiring a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment, an Ecological Appraisal, together with special consideration relating to parking and also to the Public Right of Way. Provided these are adequately addressed in the application it seems that Officers will be minded to approve. Therefore I suggest we say that provided the pre-application advice is fully adhered to we have no objections.

The majority of councillors agreed with this suggested feedback.

Planning application **PA/2022/2701**

Date valid: 27/10/2022

Maid Morton, Barn At, Hythe Road, Smeeth, TN25 6ST

Proposed new access.

SPC: As referred to in the comments to the previous application 18/00874 /AS, Smeeth PC remain concerned regarding the speed and volume of traffic on A20. The Parish Council would expect the new access to have similar visibility splays as the existing access of 2.4m x 215m. A speed limit reduction would benefit all road users on this section of the A20 from junction 10a to 11.

Planning application **PA/2022/2940**

Date valid: 14/12/2022

Highcombe, Plain Road, Smeeth, TN25 6QL

Single storey rear extension.

The majority of councillors had no comments or objections.

SPC: No objection.

Planning application **PA/2022/2236**

Date valid: 22/09/2022

1 The Chestnuts, Smeeth, Ashford, Kent TN25 6SU

Retrospective single storey rear extension.

Decision: approve with conditions.

SPC: Smeeth Parish Council raised no objections to this application.

Planning application **PA/2022/2544**

Date valid: 27/09/2022

Field to West of National Grid Converter Station, Church Lane, Aldington, Kent, TN25 6AF

The laying out of a battery storage facility, intermediate substation, cabling, fencing, access tracks and associated drainage infrastructure on field to west of National Grid Sellindge Converter Substation.

Of 17 comments on the ABC planning site, 13 are objections, of which many are very detailed and substantive.

SPC: Smeeth Parish Council does not object to the development per se but would ask that particular attention is given to the Construction Traffic Management Plan that is to be produced and agreed by the company should planning permission be granted. The rural location of the construction, the width and windiness of Church Lane and access to a dangerous part of the A20 are of particular concern, as has already been proved problematic during the current development work on the converter station.

Planning application **PA/2022/2360**

Date valid: 31/08/2022

Cherry Trees, Lilyvale, Smeeth, Ashford, Kent TN25 6RB

New access & gate to paddock area (retrospective).

Decision notice on 02/12/2022 – Approved with conditions.

Previous application was refused.

SPC: Smeeth Parish Council wishes to express its continuing concerns over highway safety following the previous refusal by ABC.

Planning application **PA/2022/2272**

Date valid: 17/08/2022

Muddy Wellies Community Farm, Hythe Road, Smeeth, TN25 6ST

Proposed design amendment of administration/classroom block (approved under planning application ref: 18/00874/AS).

Delegated decision.

SPC: Smeeth Parish Council raises no objections to this application.

Note: Muddy Wellies is situated within the same land as Maid Morton.

Planning applications **21/00655/AS**

Date valid: 09/06/2021

Smeeth Hill House, Hythe Road, Smeeth, Ashford, Kent, TN25 6ST

Retrospective application for stationing of a static caravan (mobile home) for residential annexe use by the groundsman for a temporary period of 3 years and installation of septic tank (permanent).

Decision on 21/12/2021 – Refuse.

Appeal start date: 15/06/2022

Note: Static caravan/mobile home still on site.

Planning application **22/00668/AS**

Date valid: 27/06/2022

Land south of M20, Church Lane, Aldington, Kent

EDF East Stour Solar Farm.

Installation of a solar farm with a generating capacity of up to 49.9MW comprising: ground mounted solar panels; access tracks; inverter/transformers; substation; storage, spare parts and welfare cabins; underground cables and conduits; perimeter fence; CCTV equipment; temporary construction compounds; and associated infrastructure and planting scheme.

Under consultation.

SPC: Smeeth Parish Council has concerns about the application due to the negative visual impact this application would have for those in the surrounding villages. The proposal substantially affects the enjoyment of public footpath AE459, although EDF have made provision for hedge planting in the vicinity, there is nothing that negates the impact on walkers as they walk along the northern part of this path. This application needs to be considered with the knowledge of the Evolution Power NSIP application, they should be viewed jointly as they both have similar impacts for the parishioners and walkers from Smeeth.

Planning application **22/00001/NSIP/AS**

Date valid: 28/04/2022

Land at Bank Farm opposite Becketts Green, Bank Road, Aldington, Kent

Evolution Power - Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) - Solar photovoltaic array plus energy storage with associated infrastructure and grid connection, with a generating capacity greater than 50MW.

Stonestreetgreensolar.co.uk

Pre-application consultation completed.

See minutes of ABC Planning Committee meeting of 07/12/2022.