

**Smeeth Parish Council
Minutes of the Meeting
Held on Wednesday 10th May 2023 at 7.00pm at Brabourne Baptist Church.**

Cllr Herrick welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. To note those present.

Cllr Herrick (DH), Cllr Roger Baker (RB), Cllr Grant (SG), and Cllr Mrs Morey (JM).
Cllr Betty (Borough Councillor), 5 members of the public and Mrs Block (Clerk) (TB).

2. Election of the Chairman and any Vice-Chairman for the Council year 2023-24

JM nominated DH to be Chair for 2023-24, this was seconded by RB, all were in favour.
It was agreed that there would be no Vice-Chairman for the year.

3. Completion of the Declaration of Acceptance of Office Form and the Declaration of Pecuniary Interest Form by all Councillors.

The Parish Councillors completed their Declaration of Acceptance of Office forms and the Declaration of Pecuniary Interest Forms.

4. To receive and approve apologies for absence.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Denyer.

5. 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.

There were no declarations of interest made.

6. To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 8th March 2023.

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

**7. To discuss matters arising from previous minutes that are not covered by the agenda.
Quinn Estates meeting**

Quinn Estates – As reported on 9/3, Quinn Estates were waiting for a reply from ABC regarding their pre-app advice. No approach has been made from them.

Community Events Group (CEG)

Matters are progressing. We are currently awaiting involvement from other groups and discussions have been ongoing via email.

KALC Community Award

The Parish Council had nominated a resident and Cllr Herrick presented the certificate to Mr George Taylor for his contribution to the local Royal British Legion.

Damage to The Warren

Brabourne PC is awaiting response from Highways regarding damaged kerb stone and Brabourne PC will then be looking at any remedial work necessary.

Brabourne Baptist Chapel with Willesborough Baptist Church are holding a Community Day on The Warren.

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

A member of the public reported that there had been a topper and woodchipper on the site behind Fortescue Place. Bats are also possibly roosting and there are slow worms on the site. There is concern about the disregard for the wildlife in the location. The location offers natural drainage and there is concern that any building on this site will increase environmental issues in the area.

9. Confirmation of eligibility to use the General Power of Competence

The meeting was informed that with the Clerk holding a recognised professional qualification (Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) and the council now meeting the electoral mandate of having at least two thirds of the council elected, the Parish Council is now eligible to use the General Power of Competence. Resolved – That having met the conditions of eligibility as defined in the Localism Act 2011 and SI 965 The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012, the council adopts the General Power of Competence from 10th May 2023 until the next relevant Annual Meeting of the Council. The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous).

10. Appointment and scope of Internal Auditor

The meeting was circulated with the Clerk's recommendations regarding the Internal Auditor for 2023-24. The Parish Council approved the Mrs S M Lister should be appointed as the Internal Auditor for 2023-24.

11. To confirm the representative to the following posts:

Planning co-ordinator	Cllr Grant
Playing Field Association representative	Cllr Herrick
Village Hall Association representative	Cllr Baker
Village caretaker committee representative	Cllr Morey
KALC representative	Cllr Morey
Community Led Plan representative	Cllr Herrick
Young Person's Award Working group (3 volunteers)	Cllrs Baker, Denyer and Grant

12. To receive report from the Borough Councillor

Cllr Betty introduced himself to the meeting. Currently there is no overall control of the Council, the results of the election are: Conservatives – 19 seats, Labour – 11 seats, Ashford Independents – 9 seats and Green – 8 seats. It will be interesting to see how this develops.

Cllr Betty will provide a written report and attend Parish Council meetings. If apologies are not given, Cllr Betty will attend the meeting.

13. To receive an update on the Newsletter

There is no progress to report. A meeting had been attempted but all necessary attendees could not all make the meeting.

14. KALC Representative Report

JM reported that she attended the Ashford Area committee meeting of KALC on 3rd May at Civic Centre.

Inspector Johnson gave an update on behalf of the police on the Neighbourhood Review which is still on schedule and due to be implemented in June of this year. There has been an increase in thefts of pedal cycles in the town centre and bike marking is being offered. Additional funding has been granted for smart water marking kits. These can be organised via the CSU if a parish is interested in this initiative. The Police continue to use "My Community Voice" to reach as many people as possible and would encourage all to sign up to "My Community Voice".

Mr. J Smith Chairman Ashford Area KALC gave an update on meetings that have taken place in the hope of establishing a replacement to Action with Communities in Rural Kent. There is to be

a further meeting next week.

Solar Together held another round of bids for solar panel installation in March and the next round of the scheme will be in the Autumn.

The ABC Planning Team are to be invited to attend the next Ashford Area KALC meeting in July. The Waste Team will also be invited to give a presentation on the new Refuse and waste contract that has been awarded to start next March.

The KALC representative from Bethersden gave an update on the increasing problems they have experienced with KCC as a result of the Parish trying to prevent speeding vehicles and trying to establish a pedestrian crossing for the village. The Parish Council bought their own speed indicator device but were told not to install it. They have tried to work with KCC but still have been unsuccessful in being able to get a crossing and currently have £6000 of unused equipment in their possession.

The next meeting will be 5th July.

15. Footpaths and Highways

DH and RB make up the HIP committee at this time. It is necessary to meet and discuss this matter again to review what is on the HIP.

Church Road footpath works – Update requested again on 3/5, no response to date.

The HIP work on Plain Road has begun. One homeowner remonstrated with the workforce on site. A Kent Highways Manager had attended and reports that he is satisfied that the installation is correctly placed. The lining is due to take place in due course.

Church Road speed indicator repair – Update requested on 3/5, no response to date.

Bus shelter proposal – Update requested on 3/5, no response to date.

16. Planning matters: to authorise a response to any application(s) and to note any recent planning decisions by Ashford Borough Council or any correspondence on planning matters.

16.1 To receive the report of the most recent Planning Applications

The following Planning Applications have been responded to following consultation:

PA/2022/2544, PA/2023/0272, PA/2023/0418, PA/2023/0348, PA/2023/0496, PA/2023/0460

Canterbury Road/Chapel Farm lorries – Enforcement sent Planning Contravention Notice in March to owner. Enforcement Officer left the Council so waiting allocation to a new Officer.

17. To review the effectiveness of the system of Internal Controls: Councillors are asked to consider the Statement of Internal Control in support of the Annual Governance Statement The Parish Council reviewed the effectiveness of the System of Internal Controls.

18. To approve the Financial Regulations, Standing Orders, Asset Register and Risk Assessment and confirm arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insured risks.

The Parish Council reviewed and approved the Financial Regulations, Standing Orders, Asset Register and Risk Assessment and confirmed the arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insured risks.

19. To review the Terms of Reference for the Caretaker Committee and the Young Person's Award.

The Parish Council reviewed the Terms of Reference for the Caretaker Committee and the Young Person's Award.

20. Review of the Council's subscriptions to other bodies i.e., KALC/CPRE

The Parish Council reviewed the Council's subscriptions to other bodies, i.e., KALC and CPRE.

21. Financial matters:

a) To approve the following financial documents:

i. To receive the end of year accounts

The Parish Council received the end of year accounts.

ii. To receive the report from the Internal Auditor

The Parish Council received the report from the Internal Auditor.

iii. To approve the Governance Statement 2022/23, section 1 of the AGAR for the year ending 31 March 2023

The Parish Council approved the Governance Statement 2022/23, section of the AGAR for the year ending 31 March 2023.

iv. To consider and approve the Accounting Statements 2022/23, section 2 of the AGAR for the year ending 31 March 2023 and the supporting Bank Reconciliation as at 31st March 2023, the explanation of significant variance. To ensure that the Accounting Statements 2022/23 are signed and dated by the person presiding at the meeting.

The Parish Council considered and approved the Accounting Statements 2022/23, section 2 of the AGAR for the year ending 31 March 2023 and the supporting Bank Reconciliation as at 31st March 2023, the explanation of significant variance. The Accounting Statements 2022/23 were signed and dated by the Chairman.

b) To note the Parish Council's financial position for the beginning of the new Financial Year.

The current financial position of the Parish Council was noted. The Parish Council has a balance of £96,938.12 as of 30th April 2023.

c) To authorise any payments

Paul Rodway	£1796.26
HMRC	£ 588.30
T Denne and Son	£ 118.80
Kent Pension Fund	£ 790.86
HMRC	£ 142.40
Mrs. Podd – litter picking	£ 218.82
T Block	£ 285.00
T Block	£ 285.00
KALC	£ 406.86
Caretaker Part-payment	£1765.00
S Lister (Internal Auditor)	£ 60.00
Caretaker Account VAT Reclaim	£1286.51
Brabourne Baptist Church	£ 140.00

22. Correspondence

All correspondence had been circulated.

23. Local Organisations - Updates

Community Led Plan

The coffee morning was held on 25/5. The Michael Hinchliffe Memorial bench will be installed on 13/05 and dedicated on 20/05. The rewilding at the Playing Field is underway.

Playing Field Association

- Issues remain with the padlock and chain.
- Pitch in better state – onus therefore on clubs to contribute.

- Clubs still turn up without notice.
- Booking system to be put in place for next season.
- Chairman made to feel accountable.
- Wildflower project – underway (including verge on Church Road. Hedge to be cut only between October and January.
- Repairs to park, area around gate and potholes – quotes requested. 30K to tarmac carpark – chippings are free from Trevor! Rabbit fencing / boards to be replaced (£1100 + VAT). Wooden playground and gate post (£800-£1000). Reseeding of field – new quote required.
- Finances – repairs and grass cutting (£120) is eating into budget - very grateful for continued support of both PCs.
- Playground – passed safety review, but equipment is tired; some remedial work is required now. One piece of equipment has had to be removed. £60k-£70k current quote to replace equipment. No success as yet with bids to Sport England and the lottery
- Discussions took place regarding possible sources of income to cover the required costs.
- Working party needed to allow workloads to be shared, build up community interest/spirit. School PTAs to be contacted?
- Welcome leaflet?
- Noticeboard to be replaced.
- Claire Harvey's resignation was confirmed - to be replaced by Mrs. Dawes.

Royal British Legion

Mr Taylor reported that there will be a trip to Dover Transport Museum on 6th June at a cost of £30 which includes entry to the museum, tea/coffee and lunch at The Valliant Sailor. There are spaces on the coach if anyone would like to join the group.

Scouts and Guides

The Scout & Guide Group continues as ever providing a range of activities for about 100 young people from the villages and beyond.

I can only comment in detail on the Scouting side of the Group and on matters relating to the building and infrastructure.

I am very pleased to report that another one of our Scouts has completed his Chief Scouts Gold Award which is the highest achievement available at Scout age (up to 14). Arthur Heckel will be presented with his badge and certificate at our AGM on Friday 19th May 7.00 p.m. We also have a number of other badges and awards to present that night. You are welcome to attend.

8 of our Scouts have just moved up to Explorer Scouts which is in itself very pleasing. We still have 20 Scouts in the Troop. This Summer we are taking the troop to the New Forest for our Summer Camp where there will be a lot of activities on offer including hiking in the forest, cycling, climbing and rafting.

We remain very concerned at the need to find more helpers and leaders to keep the group going for the long term. My biggest current concern is that we desperately need to find new leaders for Cubs. This is a vital section as it links with the Beavers and onwards to the Scouts. Without a Cub Pack the long-term future of the Group is uncertain.

We are actively updating / repairing and renovating the Scout & Guide HQ which has been open for 24 years. We are investigating the installation of noise reduction panels in the ceiling, installing long lasting soffits and fascia to the building. We are also planning on providing a privacy area around the shower in the Gents toilet for leaders to use when running pack holidays for Brownies, etc.

You might not be aware that there has again been damage to the padlock and chain at the playing field. The padlock has, it seems, been smashed off and has now disappeared. We are replacing this and the chain.

Smeeth Sandpit Company

There had not been an update received.

Speedwatch

There had been no activity recently.

Village Hall

- Better attendance this year, though no more volunteers to join the Committee.
- Reports – main points were given at last meeting:
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.
The surplus for the year was £2.4k. 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 the purchase of armchairs (for those needing extra support when standing up) and recently the defibrillator and an outdoor cabinet.
- Accounts have been audited.
- Steady increase in usage over the year and income, but there would have been a £1400 deficit without the support of both PCs. Cost of defibrillator was more expensive (as it was installed outside the building).
- Table Tennis Club is very popular; has provided its own tables, but these need storage space -extension needs to be considered. Plans to be drawn up, hopefully by a kind local architect!
- Solar panels are also being considered, but money will need to be raised!

24. Village Caretaker Scheme

The Village Caretaker scheme continues well. If anyone has noticed anything that requires the attention of the Caretaker, please let the Clerk Tracey Block know.

25. Any Other Business (for information purposes only):

The Parish Council had received and rejected a grant application as it was for a commercial enterprise.

Rubbish/dog waste bin relocation from near The Warren – 23/3 email forwarded to DH. ABC to put through a request to remove and relocate the litter bin.

An email had been received from Cllr Harbottle (Brabourne) suggesting that the Bircholt Ward form a group to compare notes and confer. Cllr Betty felt that there could be some discussions issues that might be common, i.e., site allocations and planning policies. Smeeth PC are happy to be involved as required.

A member of the public was pleased with the arrival of the noticeboard and feels it is very worthwhile, thanks were given to the PCs for installing it.

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

APM – 17/05/2023

Wednesday 12th July 2023

Wednesday 13th September 2023

Wednesday 8th November 2023

Wednesday 10th January 2024

Wednesday 13th March 2024

Wednesday 8th May 2024

27. Resolution to exclude the public

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 28 (To agree the Clerk's salary scale for 2023-24).

28. To agree the Clerk's salary scale for 2023-24

The Parish Council agreed to increase the Clerk's salary to SCP 17.