

Smeeth Parish Council
Minutes of the Meeting
Held on Wednesday 12th July 2023 at 7.00pm at Brabourne Baptist Church.

Cllr Herrick welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. To note those present.

Cllr Herrick (DH), Cllr Denyer (CD), Cllr Grant (SG), and Cllr Mrs Morey (JM).

Cllr Betty (Borough Councillor), 1 member of the public and Mrs Block (Clerk) (TB).

2. To receive and approve apologies for absence.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Baker.

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.

There were no declarations of interest made.

4. To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 10th March 2023.

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.

There had been no contact from Quinn | Estates regarding a site meeting for the land behind Ramstone Close.

The Baptist Church Fun Day on the Warren was a successful event.

There had been no update on the bus shelter request for Church Road.

The APM was well attended.

6. To receive report from the Borough Councillor

UPDATE ON APPOINTMENTS TO THE NEW COUNCIL

The first full meeting of the new Borough Council took place on 30th May and Cllr Noel Ovenden was elected Leader of the Council. The Leader has now appointed his cabinet and positions have been allocated to all the main committees. A full list of Cabinet Members and their responsibilities can be found on the Ashford Borough Council website.

STODMARSH UPDATE

Since July 2020, certain planning applications located in the Stour catchment and/or which discharged foul water into the catchment, have been put 'on hold' until they could achieve nutrient neutrality. The Borough Council has been working to deliver a scheme of strategic nutrient mitigation which is in the form of identifying suitable land in the Borough for strategic wetlands. The intention is for these sites to generate off-site nutrient mitigation that could then be secured by developments, allowing them to be granted planning permission. Work has progressed and a draft Nutrient Neutrality Supplementary Planning Document will be published for consultation when appropriate. In the meantime, the Borough Council continues to seek the acquisition of sites for strategic wetlands in the Borough as a means of providing off-site nutrient mitigation.

ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINTS

The Borough Council is continuing to work on a programme to install new electric vehicle charging points (EVCPs) throughout the borough. Nine new points have now been installed by EV dot at the Civic Centre and Stour Centre Car Park, to complement the two points already located at the site, which provides a total number of 37 live council managed charge bays throughout the borough.

HOMELESSNESS IN THE BOROUGH

Following a recent trip into Ashford, a resident expressed her concerns about the level of rough sleeping in the town centre to the parish clerk and wanted to know what the Borough Council were doing to tackle the issue.

I am pleased to report that the Borough Council completed the purchase of Trafalgar House, Bank

Street in May, which comprises 30 one-bedroom flats and 3 studio apartments that offer temporary accommodation for the homeless.

Plans have also been approved to create 23 new high quality short-stay accommodation apartments for homeless people on the under-used Henwood car park on the edge of Ashford town centre. This will be the first-of-its-kind modular development in the borough. As well as all necessary flood risk mitigation measures, these apartments will be highly insulated and triple-glazed, with heat recovery ventilation and integrated solar panels. The fabric of the building is designed to create zero carbon homes with low energy consumption and running costs.

STREETLIGHTING

I am aware that certain parishes in the ward have been contacted by the Borough Council regarding the potential removal of streetlighting that is considered “non-essential”. I would strongly advise that the parish council undertakes a consultation with residents to establish which of the streetlights identified on the list should be classed as essential and that the Council’s Corporate Property Technical Officer is advised of the outcome. I will also add my support by providing the information directly to senior officers.

WARD MEMBER COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEME

I have been granted a total allocation of £3,000 for the current financial year to allocate to community projects in the ward. The minimum grant is £100.00, and I have decided to initially allocate an amount of £750.00 to each of the four parishes. The parish clerk has copies of the application form and the terms and conditions relating to the types of organisations that might apply. Any organisations wishing to apply for a grant are advised to contact the parish clerk in the first instance to check eligibility and to obtain an application form.

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

There were no comments from the members of the public.

8. Financial report

8.1 To approve the Financial Statement

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 £100,075.14 as of 30th June 2023.

8.2 To agree payments in accordance with the Budget.

Paul Rodway	£1796.46
HMRC	£ 589.10
T Denne and Son	£ 118.80
Kent Pension Fund	£ 790.86
Lister Wilder	£ 128.32
HMRC	£ 147.60
Mrs. Podd – litter picking	£ 250.08
T Block	£ 300.50
T Block	£ 290.30
Information Commissioners Office	£ 40.00

9. KALC representative report

I attended the Ashford Area Committee meeting of KALC on Wednesday 5th July at the Civic Centre.

Jeremy Smith (Wittersham PC) was re-elected Chairman and Andy Rogers re-elected Vice Chairman.

Police Inspector Simon Johnson gave a comprehensive update on the new Kent Police Neighbourhood Policing model which started this month. There are to be three teams:

Beat Team providing a highly visible presence within communities. Each team has a responsibility for a geographical area and has responsibility for local issues with the aim of prevention intervention and deterrence.

Child centred Policing Team which will be visible within schools engaging with young people and dealing with prevention and intervention with repeat offenders and victims

Neighbourhood Task Force which is a mobile team of PCs PCSOs able to respond to issues quickly. It will focus on repeat victims' offenders and locations to reduce demand and support beat officers with problematic issues.

Each of the teams will be headed by a Sergeant and supported centrally by (i) a Prevention Hub which can give advice and assist with complex problems including licensing issues and (ii) a Rural Task Force consisting of PCs and PCSOs with knowledge of rural matters and rural engagement. Smeeth is within Bircholt Ward part of the Rural North Ward for which the responsible Beat Officer is PC Natalie Faiers.

The Police continue to encourage all to use the App "My Community Voice ".

There was a presentation by the Digital Inclusion Team that hold Digital Skills Workshops, Ben Robinson-Digital Transformation Manager and James Sloan Digital Improvement and Development Officer.

They offer training sessions of skills in topics such as Communication, Handling information and content, Transacting, Problem Solving, Being Safe and Legal Online. They are recruiting people to become Digital Champions and invite parishes to contact them if any are interested in hosting pilot sessions. Digital Kent is able to recycle any old unwanted computer hardware.

The Waste Team gave an outline of the likely changes that will occur in March 2024 when the old contract with Biffa ends and the new contract with Suez begins. They were anxious to communicate to the public the importance of ensuring only the correct items were included in the correct bins. They explained that problems are caused when for instance, black sacks and nappies were put into the wrong bins - and they are willing to provide extra bins to any household in need rather than have inappropriate plastic items put into recycling bins. If any parishes organise litterpicks please let them know so that they can organise collections appropriately.

Although street lighting was back on the ABC agenda, KALC was still unclear about all details from the officers and there was no update on costs involved. It was clear that KCC would not be taking responsibility for maintenance of any streetlights currently attached to telegraph poles and so ABC would be seeking to pass responsibility for such lights over to parishes.

There was no further news on Action with Communities in Rural Kent.

All Parishes were to be aware of the importance of registering their Defibrillators to ensure Ambulance crews knew where they could be located, and ensure they were updated, and returned after use.

Next meeting of KALC will be Wednesday 6th September at 7.30pm

Resolved: Smeeth PC will consult on the streetlights in the parish and respond as appropriately to the Borough Council. The Clerk is to organise the consultation process and collate the responses.

10. 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.

10.1 To receive the report of the most recent Planning Applications

The Planning alert system is working again.

There have been some planning training sessions planned, RB has attended one and JM is to attend on 18/7.

There have been 2 applications between meetings, one at Manor Leaze and one at Netherfield.

10.2 To agree any outstanding planning responses.

There have been 2 consultations: - Aldington and Bonnington Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council has considered this document and is content with the approach. Stonestreet Green Solar, there has been no change to the opinion already stated by the Smeeth Parish Council.

11. Village Caretaker Scheme

Please find below my Village Caretaker scheme report and KALC report for use at the next Smeeth Parish Council meeting and I should be grateful if you could circulate them to the Parish Councillors prior to the meeting.

The Caretaker Committee will review the forward plan on 20/7. The Caretakers appraisal will be undertaken soon afterwards.

DH asked whether the Caretaker could keep the new village gateways clear of vegetation, the Clerk confirmed this is being done.

12. Local Organisations - Updates

Community Led Plan – minutes of the latest meeting had been circulated. These had raised the following:

- Gateway planting – The CLP would need permission from KHS to place any planters on the roadside.
- The Caretaker does clean road signs but as part of his winter maintenance program.
- Hoskins pond – this is not under PC ownership. There are records dating back to 2017 where the pond was discussed and ownership issues investigated. The costs produced by CLP involved in the Hoskins Pond work seem high.
- The Michael Hinchliffe Memorial bench has been dedicated to him.
- JM asked SG to ensure the CLP are aware of the potential impact of the Church Road development on the planting of verges.

Playing Field Association – The Parish Council had been made aware of a consultation asking what play equipment is required at the Playing Field. This is due to close in early September.

Royal British Legion – No update, Mr Taylor had messaged to say he was unable to attend.

Scouts and Guides – No update.

Smeeth Sandpit Company – A report had been sent to highlight that they are having issues with dog walkers not clearing up after their dogs and also, trial bike riders causing problems in the area.

Smeeth Women's Institute – No update, Mrs Taylor had messaged to say she was unable to attend.

Speedwatch

Date/Time	Site	Offenders	Vehicles Passing	Letters Sent
14 June 10.00 to 11.30	Church Road	14	149	1
26 June 8.30 to 10.00	Ridgeway	13	43	0
Totals		27	192	1

A session was also arranged at Warren Heights, Plain Road for 29 June, but was cancelled due to rain.

We now have a new member, Marion Temlett, who has joined the group. However, we are still well short of the desired number of volunteers and struggle to find suitable dates when all are available to attend.

Village Hall - David is planning to change the Village Hall's insurer from 1st August which will result in saving the Hall nearly £600/annum.

One of the requirements of the new insurer is that he needs evidence that everyone using the hall has read and agreed the terms and conditions. He has proposed two ways in which this condition

can be met. Users have to sign up for one of them. His preferred option is that users undertake to enter all the bookings themselves. He will set them up with an account (easy!) and they will be emailed with a password which they can change. They can use the account to make repeat bookings on-line which can be made daily, weekly, monthly or whatever they wish. The terms and conditions include a request to clean the hall after use!

Apart from this, nothing of significance has been happening since the AGM.

13. Information Sharing

At the APM an individual had asked about sharing event information and possibly contact details.

To date there is no news about a Parish News replacement or eNewsletter editor.

There has been no movement on the Community Events Group

There was a discussion regarding Facebook, using the shop now it is under new management.

Resolved: The Clerk will send a Newsflash when the minutes are published to see if that encourages interest.

14. Approval of Highways Improvement Plan and agreement to take this forward.

The HIP working group had discussed some items to take forward which had been circulated. The Clerk has arranged a discussion with KHS regarding this on 28/7. The Parish Council was happy for the items to be taken forward.

The lining from the previous HIP is still awaited.

15. Footpaths and Highways (including parking issues and bridleways)

Potholes continue to be an issue in the County. The footpath on Church Road was discussed.

It was noted that Pound Lane has been resurfaced.

16. Vacancies

There are 2 Councillor Vacancies and the Litterpicker has decided it is time to stop so we now have a vacancy for that too.

Resolved: Notify the public of the vacancies via Newsflash.

17. Correspondence

The Clerk made the Councillors aware of a Health and Wellbeing Conference on 17/7 at 9.30-12.30.

18. Any other business

The Brabourne PC Citizenship Award was presented to David and Maggie Smith this year.

D-Day 80 Celebration ideas have been circulated – to be discussed at a later date.

Rural Policing update – consultation was not very relevant.

KCC Community Warden Service Review – Likely to require cutbacks so less Community Wardens expected.

19. Date and time of next meetings:

Wednesday 13th September 2023

Wednesday 8th November 2023

Wednesday 10th January 2024

Wednesday 13th March 2024

Wednesday 8th May 2024