

Smeeth Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting

Held on Wednesday 8th November 2023 at 7.00pm at Brabourne Baptist Church.

Cllr Herrick welcomed everyone to the meeting. A special welcome was given to Yvonne Bramwell.

1. To note those present.

Cllr Herrick (DH), Cllr Baker (RB), Cllr Bramwell (YB), Cllr Denyer (CD), Cllr Graham (RG), Cllr Grant (SG), and Cllr Mrs Morey (JM).

3 members of the public and Mrs Block (Clerk) (TB).

2. To receive and approve apologies for absence.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr S Betty.

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 13th September 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.

Quinn Estates and the piece of land behind Ramstone Close – no update from them regarding a meeting.

Bus Shelter request – no response from Kent Highways

Electric Vehicle Points – Clerk has been asked for installation quotes from a pre-selected installer.

Salt bag – 1tonne bag now delivered.

No. 10 buses are now running more regularly.

6. To receive report from the Borough Councillor

STODMARSH UPDATE

As widely reported, the Government's proposed amendments to the emerging Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill were defeated in the House of Lords. It is unlikely there will now be enough parliamentary time for the Government to introduce a new bill to address the issue.

It was never appropriate for government agencies such as Natural England and the Environment Agency, together with the water companies to simply pass this issue onto local authorities to resolve. A new bill would have been welcomed because the nutrient neutrality issue should have always been an issue for the highest levels of Government, with the key bodies responsible for water quality being accountable and delivering the solution.

Accordingly, the Council is now pausing work on progressing strategic wetland mitigation schemes within the brough with immediate effect because it cannot be expected to invest significant sums of money at its own risk.

BRING BACK EUROSTAR CAMPAIGN

A local petition has been set up by residents to bring back Eurostar services to Kent and is currently at over 35,000 signatures. Ashford Borough Council is promoting this to residents via Ashford For You magazine, the Council website and social media channels. If residents would like Eurostar stopping at Ashford International station again, please sign the online petition.

[Petition · Bring back Eurostar train services to Kent · Change.org](#)

If you would like to get more involved, share any information or help in any way please email: info@bringbackeurotrains.com.

RECYCLING OF ELECTRICAL ITEMS

Ashford Borough Council is running six community electrical repair, reuse or recycle events 'E-Cycle Revival', across the borough.

This is made possible due to funding from Material Focus; Ashford Borough Council has been chosen as one of over 40 projects allocated a portion of £2.5 million, to encourage Ashford

borough residents to recycle their electricals. The first event took place in Wye on 14th October with other events being announced in rural locations around the borough soon.

If residents have electrical items in need of repair, they can contact the Repair Café at Singleton Environment Centre which is organised by and for residents. They can take almost any item suitable for repair, putting it back together again for reuse, with the aim of reducing waste and maintaining repair skills. If residents would like to find out more, please visit their Facebook page @RepairCafeAshford or head to their website:

<https://www.singletonenvironmentcentre.org.uk/join-in/repair-cafe-ashford/>

Alternatively working but unwanted items can be donated to the Pilgrims Hospice.

No 10 BUS SERVICE

I have been contacted by residents in Smeeth and Brabourne Lees who expressed concern that the number 10 Stagecoach service Between Ashford and Folkestone was no longer stopping at Lympne.

Having contacted Stagecoach on their behalf, I was advised that the company is carrying around 80% of pre-Covid customers (and only about 65% of concession pass holders). Coupled with this, its costs have risen by about 20%. This route is operated on a commercial basis and notwithstanding the intervention of KCC to fund a school-time journey the number of people using the service at Lympne was not sufficient for Stagecoach to recover the running costs associated with sending the buses through the village, hence the decision was made to withdraw the daytime and Sunday service.

I am pleased to report that Stagecoach has advised me that the stop in Lympne is being reinstated from mid-November on a trial basis. However, Stagecoach has emphasised that the continuation of the service will be dependent on daytime demand, so it is essential that as many people as possible use the bus to retain the stop in Lympne – it really is a case of use it or lose it!

KCC WINTER HIGHWAYS UPDATE

We are now entering the winter period for 2023-24 and I would like remind residents about the KCC Highways & Transportation's winter service provisions. This year the season runs from the 20th October 2023 to 19th April 2024. Information can be found on the KCC website below:

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/what-we-look-after/winter-service>

The website will provide useful information on:

- Salt Bins (including locations)
- Gritting Routes
- How and when KCC salt the roads
- Clearing snow in the community
- The latest weather updates.
- How KCC deal with rural roads with help from the local farmers
- Tips on Winter Driving

Please also have a look at the Direct Gov Snow Code web site below, which you may find has some useful information and hints:

<https://www.gov.uk/clear-snow-road-path-cycleway>

KCC also work closely with local farmers and provide them with the necessary equipment in order to clear country lanes and act as extra resources during a snow emergency. The website also provides information on all aspects of highway management, such as tree policy, information on road works and planned works, crash and casualty data. It also allows faults to be reported online at

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem>

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

The daughter of Eddie Joynson has said they are very pleased that a tree is still planned to be planted on the Warren and suggested that 27th or 29th November are both suitable dates for the family to attend a planting.

8. Co-option of Councillors

CLlr Bramwell completed the relevant paperwork and was co-opted to the Council.

9. Financial report

9.1 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 £96281.16 as of 31st October 2023.

9.2 To agree payments in accordance with the Budget

Paul Rodway	£2304.44
HMRC	£ 946.95
T Denne and Son	£ 118.80
Kent Pension Fund	£1065.84
Lister Wilder	£ 7.01
HMRC	£ 185.00
T Block	£ 290.30
T Block	£ 449.60
Tim Stanyon	£ 68.25
T Block – expenses	£ 214.26

9.3 To receive grant applications

The Clerk had received the grant applications from 5 groups totalling £5150.00

9.4 To agree the draft budget for 2024-25 and the precept amount for 2024-25

The Parish Council agreed the budget for 2024/25 and agreed to keep the precept at £23738 for 2024/25.

The Clerk was given delegated powers to purchase a tree for up to £100.

There was a discussion about where dog poo bags could be placed as many dog owners are not using dog poo bags. It was agreed that a request to place a poster in the shop window would be made highlighting that the dog bags are available.

10. KALC representative report

Cllr Morey reported:

I attended the Ashford Area meeting of KALC on Wednesday evening 1st November at the Civic Centre.

There was no Kent Police representative present due to operational commitments but a full written report had been sent out earlier to the Parishes and was circulated by the Parish Clerk, in addition to the newsletter in "My Community Voice" from the police officer covering the Ward for the parish of Smeeth. If anyone has not yet signed up to receive the "My Community Voice" newsletter I would encourage them to do so. The last one contained information on how to stay safe from the latest 5 fraud schemes that have been circulating in this area recently, as well as information about the residents' survey from the Kent Fire and Rescue Service to create a safer future. The Annual Policing Survey has already received 4000 responses and is still ongoing if residents wish to respond.

An update on Action with Communities in Rural Kent was given by Mr Jeremy Smith (KALC Chairman) and a further application will be made to the Charity Commissioners.

Simon Cole Head of Planning at Ashford Borough Council gave a presentation and update from the Planning Team.

1.A call for sites has been made for housing as well as other land uses such as employment/ retail, gypsy and travellers' sites, tourism, nutrient neutrality and biodiversity, in readiness for the start of the local plan process for the 2041 Local Plan and there will be local consultation

- events held in 2024, probably covering groups of parishes throughout the Borough, to share information and receive feedback.
- 2.The Parish Subscription option with the ARCUS system should be ready for testing in midNovember and Parish clerks will be invited to test it and highlight any glitches and feedback their comments before it is publicly launched.
- 3.The problem encountered with granting extensions of the time limit for comments on planning applications was explained and it was stressed that the time limit is a statutory one and a definitive date therefore had to be given - it could not be open ended. It was noted that sometimes Parish comments submitted in response to applications had been omitted from Officers reports. All consultees should submit responses to ensure they were received in due time to enable Officers to determine applications within the statutory time limit.
- 4.Website improvements are being made to make planning pages more easily accessible and focus on the information and advice that parishioners or their agents need. It was suggested that it might be helpful if a small user group from KALC could road test the revised site in due course from the customer / user perspective.
- 5.The update on Stodmarsh was that the schemes caught by Stodmarsh unfortunately remain stuck and so Stodmarsh continues to have implications for housing delivery.
- 6.It was hoped to give further clarity of information about what sums of s. 106 monies would be available to enable parishes to bid.
- 7.Enforcement- ABC are recruiting a senior enforcement officer.

There was a short presentation from Beth Peal, Chief Executive of Ashford Volunteer Centre, who will return to the next meeting with slides to further explain the work of the Volunteer Centre, and its community car service for people unable to use public transport, befriending service and how they assist volunteers.

Mr. Jeremy Smith (KALC Chairman) reminded parishes of their obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to ensure that their parish websites comply and are updated regularly.

Next meeting is Thursday 4th January 2024

11. Planning

11.1 To receive a Planning Report

Application Reference	Site Address	Proposal	Application Status
OTH/2023/1917	Site of the former Andrews Garage, Plains Road, Smeeth, Ashford, TN25 6RA	Details submitted pursuant to Part discharge of condition 4 (Land and Contamination; Risk Management (Part 1 Desk-Top Study - Land and/or ground contamination & 3 Method Statement - Remediation of Land and/or Groundwater Contamination)) of planning permission 18/01454/AS	
PA/2023/1425	Park Wood Cottage, Station Road, Smeeth, Ashford, Kent TN25 6SY	Lawful Development Certificate - Proposed alterations to existing loft and fenestration	Proposed Use/Development Would Be Lawful
PA/2023/1794	Ashbourne House, Hythe Road, Smeeth, Ashford, Kent TN25 6SP	Lawful Development Certificate - Proposed single-storey side extension following the removal of the existing extension. Changes to the existing fenestration on the rear elevation.	Proposed Use/Development Would Be Lawful

PA/2023/1813	Pigeon House, Hythe Road, Smeeth, TN25 6SS	Lawful Development Certificate - Proposed replacement outbuilding and widening of existing permeable parking area	Proposed Use/Development Would Be Lawful
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Cllr Baker had attended a meeting about the convertor station in Aldington and had circulated a report.
The group behind the Stop Stonestreet Solar Project are holding a meeting on 9/11 at Aldington Village Hall.

11.2 To agree any outstanding planning responses.
There were no outstanding planning responses to discuss.

12. Litterpicker update
A report had been received from the Litterpicker and this was welcomed by the Parish Councillors. The report highlighted:
Due to illness and the appalling weather the litterpicker hadn't done quite as much as he had hoped but had been around all the designated roads at least once.
A vaping and drinking sub-culture having picked up at least 50 discarded vapes and several dozen alcoholic drinks cans and bottles.
A mattress lying on open grass in Calland.
There are number of large toys left on the green in Calland.
A few people had remarked on his work.

It was agreed that the Parish Council should purchase a more substantial litterpicking tool.

13. Update on the Village Caretaker Scheme
The Village Caretaker scheme continues well and if there are any matters requiring the attention of the Caretaker, kindly notify the Parish Clerk Tracey Block.

14. Local Organisations - Updates
Community Led Plan
Clearing of Hospital Field Footpath adjacent to the garden fences Mountbatten Way East to West.
This was a mammoth task undertaken by Neil Hodgkin and his Wife with cutting back of Nettles, long grass and generally improving the surface for safe access by pedestrians. Neil recently joined the CLP and is a valued addition to our team.

Repair to a Footpath gate by CLP member Stewart Grant and his Son.
The gate and frame had been dislodged and was put back in place in good order by Stewart and his Son who is working on his DOE award. Stewart again has become a very active participant in all we do.

CLP team participated in development of the Brabourne School Garden establishment on a number of weekends.
This involved Fences and ground preparation to help create a useful garden space for the pupils earnestly supported by CLP member Lucie.

The Playing field entrance and Southern Edge Perimeter Fence Wilding Project.
We have now reached a stage, if possible, to proceed this Season with the preparation, seeding and planting of the adjacent entrance to the Car Park, having received a £2k grant from the Kent CF Fund which enables us to proceed initially backed by other possible Grant Applications to our two PC's. First step is to plan and execute site preparation with a Mini – Digger to remove grass/weeds and unruly growth in order to soil prep for seeding, etc. The team are looking for some volunteers to assist with the planting phase for which the seeds, etc can be ordered and

delivered at short notice. If we cannot start the work imminently, we will lose the possibility until later in 2024. The other concern area is to establish deterrent posts at low level to prevent cars parking on the entrance verges during PF Football matches, which are both a road safety hazard and a plant damage risk. The perimeter fence will also require some mechanised preparation pre seeding. An update may be forthcoming at our CLP meeting on 7th Nov.

Smeeth School meeting with Vice Chairman CLP.

Laurence discussed with the Head Teacher ways in which the Pupils might help with aspects like part of the Wilding Project at the Playing Field which was enthusiastically received and further the school might like our active support on a Project they have in mind which we will willingly help with if suitable. So now we have good links with both Village Schools for future co-operation.

Benches and Seating noted for some re painting and maintenance in the Smeeth area.

We have this down for a Spring 2024 project with requirement for preparation materials and suitable paint for a couple of locations plus of course our volunteer team.

Continuation of the clearing and cleaning on the Church Road Footpath.

This work will carry on once we have better weather it is very much on our active list!

Liaise with two PCs re possible additional Notice Boards.

The CLP feel some additional Notice Boards to the existing location by the Village Green would be a community asset. One location is outside Smeeth School and a further one perhaps adjacent to the Five Bells at Brabourne.

Lastly as Chairman of the CLP can I give my sincere gratitude to all members of the CLP Team and those who volunteer to help us on Projects plus the support we get from our two Parish Councils and ABC Ward Councillor. I have the easy job but it is the Team and Committee that makes it happen.

Playing Field Association

There are no major updates from the PFA for the November meeting. The football season is in full swing with B&S FC and Rush Youth FC having played a number of home games so far. The hedge was cut in September; our current contractor does an impressive job at a very reasonable price. As mentioned previously, a further round of seeding is planned, as are repairs to the car park, but these will both take place during the Spring.

Royal British Legion

Door to door collections continue. The collection at Tesco's has been successful whilst using the card reader now available. So far this year, the community of Brabourne and Smeeth has raised 10,000 pounds for the RBL and there is more to come.

Scouts and Guides

The group is in good health on the Brownie and Guide side but Scouts are light on adult leaders and have a few spaces. The Explorers group has swollen and is progressing very well. The management committee are looking at soundproofing for the ceiling and installation of new flooring, the flooring costs look to be about £7,000. The group will be supporting the Royal British Legion at the service on Sunday.

Smeeth Sandpit Company

No update received.

Smeeth Women's Institute

The WI I have been enjoying the meetings and luncheon club this year. Membership numbers are consistent and there are two theatre events planned. The WI is hoping to do well at the craft fair on the 25th of November.

Speedwatch

There was nothing specific to report some sessions are planned but volunteers remain limited in numbers.

Village Hall

David Smith has applied for a grant of £1000 from Smeeth PC (£1750 from Brabourne Parish Council). These grants contribute to the running of the Village Hall to support local groups. They are also building a fund to either add a storage area and / or solar panels to the hall. Estimated costs for these are £20k and £16k respectively. The storage is needed as they have now filled the entrance hall (Howland Hall) with chairs, tables, and table tennis tables; the back-room area's toilets are full of chairs and the larger tables are also stored there.

The Village Hall electricity costs will double when the contract is renewed next June - anticipated costs £4000 per annum on that alone.

David is investigating whether the hall is big enough to set up a pickleball court (44 feet (13.41m) long and 20 feet (6.09m) across) and if there is enough interest.

He is quite happy for me to represent the Village Hall on the Community Liaison Group- I had had reservations about my ability to do that. The committee's view was that they just caretaker a facility. They do not actively run any groups and are not a society.

15. Information Sharing – update from Working group

There was no update from the Working Group.

16. Update re: Highways Improvement Plan

The Clerk reported that the planned signage on Church Road was to go ahead and a speed survey is expected on Church Road imminently.

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

The drainage around the path and ponds on Church Road remains an issue. It was noted that there had been another accident at the Church Road crossroads.

18. Correspondence

The Clerk reported that a road closure along The Ridgeway is expected from 9/1 – 16/1 due to a gas connection.

19. Any other business

The Brabourne Baptist Church fun day is planned to take place on the 18th of May 2024.

The Clerk has created a policies web page, a safeguarding policy is to be created and will be approved in the future.

Parish seminars were noted to be taking place on the 22nd of November 29th November and 1st December.

A nuisance motorbike has been spotted in the area; the motorbike has been riding on the Warren tracking round the new bench.

A member of the public reported that the problems with the telephone lines in the area known as the "Sellindge buzz" Are due to problem with the degraded power cable being near a telephone cable causing resonance on the line. OpenReach and the power company are in legal dispute over who is responsible for this issue. It was suggested that the Chief Executive of OpenReach should be emailed because members of the public are paying for a service that they're unable to use.

20. Date and time of next meetings: January 10th, 2024, March 13th, 2024, and May 8th, 2024**21. 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 22 Fordred's Charity.

22. Fordred's Charity

A brief history of the Fordred's charity was provided to Councillors, seven parishes benefit from the funds and the funds arise from the rent of a field. The parish council agreed how to circulate the Fordred's charity money.