

## Smeeth Parish Council

### Minutes of the Meeting

Held on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at 7.00pm at Brabourne Baptist Church.

Cllr Herrick welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**1. To note those present.**

Cllr Herrick (DH), Cllr Baker (RB), 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 Cllrs C Denyer, R Graham and Y Bramwell.

**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 8<sup>th</sup> November 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 it is expected that this matter will be absorbed into the Call for Sites for the Local Plan 2041.

Bus Shelter request – no response from Kent Highways despite being chased.

Electric Vehicle Points – The Clerk is to contact the grants office to see whether any locations in Smeeth could be deemed as viable options.

Eddie Joynson tree – this has been planted and a plaque will be ordered in the fullness of time.

A poster has been given to the shop regarding the dog bags and it is hoped that this might be displayed.

Fordred's monies have been distributed.

Remembrance Service was attended by Cllr Herrick.

No update from the Information Sharing Group

Safeguarding Policy has been circulated, a number of alterations were requested, these will be made and a new copy circulated and uploaded under policies on the website.

The new Litterpicker tool has been purchased and is in operation.

**6. To receive report from the Borough Councillor**

**CALL FOR SITES**

The deadline for the current call for sites exercise closed on 20th November 2023. The Council's planning team will be preparing the list of sites submitted and will be contacting parish councils shortly with a list of sites submitted for each parish.

**GRANTS FOR RURAL BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES**

Ashford Borough Council has successfully secured funding from UK Government's Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) specifically to support rural areas in the borough up to March 2025.

The Council's REPF plan, approved by government, sets out four capital grant schemes aimed at filling gaps in support for businesses and organisations and deliver on REPF objectives. These are:

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- Rural Green Business Grant – to provide grants to support energy efficiency or energy transition projects in commercial premises in rural parts of the borough.
- Rural Electric Vehicle Charging Point Grant – to provide grants to support the installation of Electrical Vehicle Charging Points at publicly accessible parking sites in rural areas of the borough.
- Rural Place and Provenance Grant – to provide grants to support rural food and drink producers, hospitality and tourism attractions or venues to increase productivity and sustainability for businesses, support the creation of start-up spaces and tackle the ‘Last Mile’ challenge in rural areas.
- Community Amenities Grant (Round 2) – to provide grants using REPF and UKSPF funding for improvements to community infrastructure such as village halls or outdoor play areas.

The current round for funding applications is now live until 11:59pm Sunday 4 February 2024. Full details regarding the REPF and UKSPF grants, including eligibility can be found using the links on the ABC website. The Rural England Prosperity Fund is linked to the government’s levelling up agenda, with REPF activity falling within two categories, ‘supporting rural communities’ and ‘supporting rural businesses. Further information about these funds, and other government community funds is available on the government website.

#### **WARM SPACES IN ASHFORD**

Four of the Ashford Borough Council run Dahlia independent living schemes have been designated as Warm Spaces this winter to provide a welcoming and comfortable environment for local people to meet and socialise.

A free hot drink and biscuits, a range of activities, support and advice, accessible entrance to the buildings with disabled toilets, parking and free Wi-Fi are all provided. During the time the warm spaces are available, the Council has arranged for other professionals to attend to provide advice and guidance to residents, these include benefits advisors, Hi-Kent which supports people with hearing loss, Kent Fire & Rescue Services, sustainment officers and others.

The nearest Dahlia schemes participating are:

Luckley House, Little Chequers, Wye – open every Tuesday 10.30am-3.30pm from 9 January.

Farrow Court, Stanhope Road, Ashford – open every Tuesday 10am-3pm from 9 January  
East Stour Court, Mabledon Avenue, Ashford – open every Thursday 9.30am-12 noon from 11 January.

Following a successful pilot of the warm spaces scheme last winter, this year it has been expanded to cover more locations across the borough. For information about the national Warm Welcome Spaces campaign visit [www.warmwelcome.uk](http://www.warmwelcome.uk).

#### **POOR TESCO MOBILE SIGNAL IN SMEETH AND BRABOURNE LEES**

I am advised that some residents in Smeeth and Brabourne Lees have been experiencing issues with their Tesco Mobile phone signal which has been intermittent since June. The affected residents have now become very frustrated by the poor mobile signal and one resident has contacted me to see if I can assist.

I understand that Tesco Mobile achieves its wide coverage by “piggy backing” on the O2 network. Many residents have been reporting the poor signal to Tesco Mobile since June and even complaints via the communications ombudsman appear to have got nowhere. The most recent feedback from Tesco Mobile to customers has confirmed that there are 2 mobile phone masts not working properly in the area and there was no indication as to when the problem would be fixed.

I have emailed the CEO of Tesco UK who has passed my comments onto the CEO of Tesco Mobile and the CEO's team are trying to resolve the issues with O2. I am continuing to communicate with the CEO's office and keeping the resident updated on progress.

**7. To discuss the Playpark upgrade with attendance of Sara Emmerson**

Sara introduced herself and explained that the play park equipment needs replacing. The PFA are holding an AGM in the Village Hall on Thursday 18th of January at 7:30 PM where this will be discussed. Sara has approached Wicksteed for a quotation for play park equipment, they have also supplied potential funding avenues. Sara asked if there's anything that the Parish Council could help with.

DH explained that the Parish Council is waiting to ensure that the s106 funds due from the Church Road development come forward for use at the play park. This is in the hands of the solicitors at Ashford Borough Council. The PFA must apply for grants with prepared proposals and when applying for grants the s106 funds must be considered. The Parish Council can accept grant applications and also suggested that Sara contact Brian Sanders who may be helpful with applying for grants.

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

Sara was asked for an update on the local solar development. Sara explained that she had stepped back from the group and that Jerry Newson from Aldington is now leading this. The group are putting together information, the NSIP has not yet been submitted.

The developers have been asked to undertake further consultation with specific bodies and it is understood that this is happening now. It is expected that the developers will be nervous about the potential General Election and that may now hold up the application due to the changing government ministers. The developer has listened to some of the comments made and has allowed some hedging to remain and has pulled back from a couple of the fields upon which it wished to develop. Sara hopes that the recent flooding may have supported some of the comments that had been made. It was noted that there are other allocated sites exist in Postling, Court at Lympe and Old Wives Lees so cumulative impact is being used as an argument against this development. Sara hopes that this development will get a fair hearing from the Planning Inspectorate, she is sure that Cllr Betty will know more and will be able to provide updates.

The "Sellindge buzz" was again discussed, the Clerk had spoken to the Chief Engineer at BT Openreach and had provided those attending the meeting with an e-mail chain that offered a voice product that does not suffer with electrical interference for those members of the public who wish to have one. This email will be circulated to all to help out. This product can be used until such time as the electrical interference issue is resolved.

**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 £94452.83 as of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.

**9.2 To agree payments in accordance with the Budget**

Paul Rodway	£1361.23
HMRC	£ 394.16
T Denne and Son	£ 118.80
Kent Pension Fund	£ 654.24
P Rodway expenses	£ 12.10
DVLA (Road Tax)	£ 320.00
Green Flag	£ 115.00
HMRC	£ 152.80
T Block	£ 305.80
T Block	£ 305.80
Tim Stanyon	£ 118.13

### 9.3 To receive and agree grant applications.

5 grant applications had been received. The parish council looked at them all individually.

Brabourne and Smeeth Village Hall, application for £1000.00 was unanimously approved.

Brabourne and Smeeth Scouts and Guides, application for £500 was unanimously approved.

Brabourne Baptist Church, application for £1500 was unanimously approved.

The Community Led Plan, application for £500 was unanimously approved.

The Playing Fields Association, application for £1650 was deferred until the next meeting when it is hoped further information is available.

All

## 10. KALC representative report

Cllr Morey reported that she attended the Ashford Area Committee meeting of KALC at Civic Centre on Thursday 4 January.

An update was given by the Police on the new neighbourhood policing model which is still increasing in staff numbers. Information was given about their work over the Christmas period dealing with drugs offences, shoplifting and licensing in the town centre, speed enforcement in the Singleton area and initiatives on road safety, anti-social behaviour, and violence against women and girls.

The new refuse contract is being introduced in March and there will be a Pre-Cabinet briefing session on 25 January about the implementation of the new contract when any changes to days of collection for household refuse /recycling will be known. In those circumstances it might be best if the Parish Clerk, Tracey Block, sends details of such changes via a "news flash" of the Smeeth Newsletter to let residents know of the changes.

The Chairman of the Ashford Area Committee Mr Jeremy Smith, gave notice that he intends to stand down as Chairman in May. He hoped that the new KALC website will be up and running at the end of January.

The next meeting is to be 7 March at the Civic Centre.

## 11. KALC Community Award Nomination

Nominations for the community award should be emailed to the Clerk as soon as possible.

## 12. Planning

### 12.1 To receive a Planning Report

Application Reference	Site Address	Proposal	Application Status
<a href="#">PA/2024/0007</a>	Pigeon House, Hythe Road, Smeeth, TN25 6SS	Conversion & extension of an existing outbuilding to form a home office, home gym & sun room.	
<a href="#">PA/2023/2320</a>	2 Vincers Cottages, Plain Road, Smeeth, TN25 6QW	Single storey rear extension and side porch.	
<a href="#">PA/2023/2137</a>	Water Farm, Hythe Road, Smeeth, TN25 6SS	Certificate of Lawful Development - Proposed - Conversion of existing car barn & workshop to include a home office, games room and WC/ Shower room	
<a href="#">OTH/2023/2128</a>	Land to the west of Sellindge Substation, Sellindge, TN25 6AF	Details submitted pursuant to conditions 16 (External Lighting) & 18 (Lighting - Passive Infrared Sensors) of Planning permission PA/2022/2950	
<a href="#">PA/2023/1955</a>	Land to the west of Sellindge Substation, Sellindge, TN25 6AF	Installation of a drainage spur to connect the approved grid stability facility surface water drainage infrastructure to an existing drainage ditch.	
<a href="#">PA/2023/2054</a>	Wembdon Farm, Unit 4, Bower Road, Smeeth, TN25 6SZ and Evegate Business Park, Station Road, Smeeth TN25 6SX	Change of use of land and the installation of Solar Panels.	Approve with Conditions

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## 12.2 To agree any outstanding planning responses.

The Parish Council will submit a no objections response to the application at Pigeon House.

### **12.3 Solar Developments**

The Parish Council will keep a watching brief on these developments and whilst it wishes to remain remote from the new action group it is happy to offer appropriate support to any affected residents or neighbouring Parish Councils

### **13. Update on the Village Caretaker Scheme**

The Village Caretaker Scheme continues well using the winter hours schedule. If there are any matters within the Parish that require the attention of the Caretaker, kindly notify the Parish clerk, Tracey Block.

### **14. Local Organisations - Updates**

#### **Community Led Plan**

No update was available.

#### **Playing Field Association**

The AGM is being held next Thursday (18 January – 7.30pm).

#### **Royal British Legion**

George Taylor gave an update; he is Chair again this year and would like more members. They have a full calendar of events, with a Brigadier attending in February and Jan Leeming in April, posters will go up advertising this event. D-Day 80 is coming up and to mark the occasion the RBL will be at Godinton House where they will have afternoon tea and look around the gardens. The RBL is for anyone who supports the principles of the British Legion and one does not need to be ex-servicemen. Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month at 2:30 PM. The running total for the local Poppy Appeal 2023 is £17,000 but the final sums are not yet in. it's hoped that they might reach £19,000.

#### **Scouts and Guides**

Jon Rose reported that the group continues as usual but there is a shortage of volunteers, a leaflet drop encouraging people to get involved is imminent.

#### **Smeeth Sandpit Company**

As our tenth year of looking after the sandpit draws to a close, work continues to sustain and enhance this valuable area for its shareholders and the local community.

The project we formed with two local primaries and Highworth Grammar School to develop their understanding of Animal Survival meant that for the second year, children again spent time at Smeeth Sandpit.

In addition, this year a group of six Beavers from the Brabourne & Smeeth Scouts and

Guides visited the sandpit. The objectives of the visit were to explain to the children, who were seven to eight years old, what a sandpit is, what the sand would be used for and, now that the pit is no longer operated for commercial purposes, what is happening there.

Good behaviour and care for the countryside was also stressed such as don't leave litter, pick up dog poo, keep to footpaths, try not to kill insects and other wildlife, etc.

The Beavers walked past the pond with a chat about what might be living in and around it and then on to the Jubilee tree planting where the children attempted to identify the trees, with some success!

They took the opportunity to look in three of the reptile survey sites and were fortunate to find a grass snake, a slow worm, a lizard, some beetles and a young, unidentifiable snake – great excitement!

The pond constructed in 2021 continues to provide an exciting diversity to the sandpit ecology and is gradually settling into its environment.

Conservation work has continued this winter as we have planted trees to replace some of the Queen's Jubilee trees that had died. In addition, we are managing more mature trees that have died and require felling.

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.

#### **Smeeth Women's Institute**

The WI is looking forward to a good year ahead with well attended meetings. There is to be an open meeting with the East Kent Chorus singing barbershop style songs. George Taylor will be giving a talk about what women did in the war and the group continues to look for new members.

The WI tree planted for the jubilee appears to be sick – it has been watered well and it came in to leaf but lost its leaves in late summer/autumn. The tree has now been fed and it is to be left until spring to see whether it comes into leaf again. Mrs. Taylor is to ask for some advice from the people from whom the tree was purchased.

#### **Speedwatch**

There was no update.

#### **Village Hall**

RB provided an update from David Smith that the bookings are up by 60%. The security lights have needed work and the boiler has required replacing. So far there has been a lack of volunteers coming forward to help with running the Hall but it is hoped that volunteers can be found this year. It was suggested that the village hall could run a stall at the fun day in May to encourage people to become more involved in the hall.

#### **15. Update re: Highways Improvement Plan**

The expected road painted signage has not yet been undertaken; the Clerk will chase this.

The speed survey results have been received and replacement of the illuminated sign is deemed unsuitable and not required. It was agreed that the Parish Council would request the data be removed for school pick up and drop off times as it was considered this might make a difference. An e-mail has been received regarding speeding on The

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Ridgeway - a Highways Improvement Plan meeting is to be requested with Kent Highway Services to discuss this issue.

**16. Footpaths and Highways (including parking issues and bridleways)**

The Ridgeway is temporarily closed until the 16th of January.

RB is to circulate his report following attendance at the KCC Highways seminar.

Trees are impinging on the road along Plain Rd opposite "Forget me nots". The Clerk is to report this.

Kerb stones on the corner of Caroland Close are being broken by vehicles reversing over them. The Clerk will report this to Kent Highway Services and Cllr Betty will report this to Ashford Borough Council's Head of Services.

The kerb stones at the junction off Church Road on the A20 have been damaged, the Clerk will report this.

**17. Correspondence**

There was no correspondence to discuss.

**18. Any other business**

The Clerk will circulate the KALC minutes to all.

**19. Date and time of next meetings: March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

**An APM will be organized for April.**