

# Harrietsham Parish Council

## Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2021

### held virtually via Zoom at 2.00pm

The Chair, Cllr Dean, welcomed all to the meeting.

The Clerk asked for an urgent item to be discussed under Agenda item 6 - Finance (CPRE Annual Subscription). All Councillors were in agreement.

#### 1 Present

Cllr G Dean, Cllr T Sams, Cllr J Sams, Cllr C Roots, Cllr F Stanley, Cllr V Foster, Cllr R Dayes, Cllr S Luck, RFO Mr M Cuerden and the Clerk Mrs A Broadhurst

#### 2 Apologies for absence

Cllr E Powell, Cllr T Griffiths, Cllr J Moore

#### 3 Minutes of the last meeting

Parish Council Meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2020 - The minutes were proposed as accurate by Cllr Dean, seconded by Cllr Luck; with 4 in favour and 4 abstentions. (The minutes will be signed by the Chairman when Covid restrictions allow.)

#### 4 Disclosures and confidential items

##### Changes to the Register of Interests

There were no changes.

##### Declarations of Pecuniary Interests

Cllr Dean Agenda Item 6.1 (Finance - F&GP Recommendations - Woodlands Walk Fund) as she lives close to Woodlands Walk

##### Requests for Dispensation

No requests were submitted.

#### 5 Planning

5.1 The current planning applications were noted.

5.2 The approved planning applications were noted.

5.3 The refused planning applications were noted.

5.4 The withdrawn planning applications were noted.

5.5 Other Planning Matters: The Clerk was asked if there was any update on the Old School site. The Clerk reported that the school building and house had been purchased by two separate bidders at the auction. There had been a TPO on several trees on site and, after the sale, the area was being cleared. MBC was informed with the Tree Officer arranging a stop notice and starting the process of obtaining a further TPO for the site. Unfortunately, on the same day, the large number of trees were felled. The Clerk had discussed this at length with the Tree Officer and it is being investigated. However, due to the timing, it may be that the only action would be to ensure that new trees are planted during the planning stage. The Clerk added that this was still being investigated therefore it is only a possible outcome at this stage. On the day of the meeting the Clerk had been contacted again due to work being completed at the old schoolhouse. The new owner does not have access through the old school gates and is gaining access to the site via the A20 which is dangerous, as it blocks the sight line for vehicles coming out of Church Road. The Clerk stated that, unless construction work commences without a planning application, Enforcement would not get involved at this stage. The works are to be monitored and the Clerk asked for any concerns to be reported to her so that she could contact MBC straight away.

#### 6 Finance

6.1 The Income/expenditure finance sheets were proposed as accurate by Cllr Foster and seconded by Cllr Roots, with all in favour.

##### 6.2 Other Financial Matters:

- Budget & Precept for 2021/2022: The Clerk reminded all present that the proposed budget and Precept for 2020/2021 had already been circulated to all Councillors. The proposed recommendation is that the precept cost per band D property be held at £95.47 for 2021/2022 giving a precept of £126,258. This will result in there being no increase to residents during an uncertain period but would result in the precept funding being reduced by £1,900 for the forthcoming year. It was proposed by Cllr Dean that **the precept for the forthcoming year be set at £126,258, with no increase per Band D household**. This was seconded by Cllr Dayes, with all in favour.

- Woodlands Walk Restricted Fund: Three recommendations had been put forward by the F&GP committee relating to the fund.
    - To repay the outstanding loan to the fund: It was proposed by Cllr Foster that the loan should be repaid in full. This was seconded by Cllr Luck with 8 in favour and 1 abstention.
    - Ongoing maintenance costs: It was proposed by Cllr Dayes that the ongoing maintenance costs for Woodlands Walk be taken from general reserves, rather than the restricted fund, to ensure it does not become depleted. This was seconded by Cllr Foster, with 8 in favour and 1 abstention. Before moving on to the 3<sup>rd</sup> recommendation, Cllr Dean highlighted that she had misunderstood the third item as she had assumed that repaying the loan would bring the fund back up to the original £70,000 level. The RFO confirmed that, when the loan is repaid, the fund is still approximately £22,000 short. Cllr Foster added that she too had thought that the higher limit would be reached.
    - Adding additional money to the fund: Taking the previous comments into account the matter was discussed further. Cllr Stanley proposed that the fund be topped up to reach the original level of £70,000 immediately, with a further £5,000 being added each financial year until a level of £100,000 is reached. The financial situation of the fund should then be reviewed by the F&GP Committee. This was seconded by Cllr Dayes with 8 in favour and 1 abstention. The RFO commented that, if nothing untoward happens to the dam, the higher limit should be reached in 6 years.
  - Minutes of the Meeting held 21<sup>st</sup> January: The minutes of the meeting were found to be an accurate record, proposed by Cllr Dean, seconded by Cllr Foster, with four in favour (those Councillors present at the meeting). (The minutes will be signed by the Chairman when Covid restrictions allow.)
- 6.3 CPRE Annual Membership: The Clerk reported that the annual subscription for CPRE is now due at a cost of £36.00 (unchanged from previous years). It was proposed by Cllr Roots to renew the annual subscription. This was seconded by Cllr Dean, with all in favour.

## 7 Environmental

- 7.1 Verbal Report from Amenity Manager: The Amenity Manager reported that the ground maintenance contracts are ongoing and will be rolling on for a further year with a minimal uplift in cost, due to the current pandemic. There had been concerns raised regarding the footpath behind the Church, which had been reported to the PROW Officer. They had inspected that area and reported that it would need approximately 15 ton of crushed type 1 limestone to be put down and wacker plated in. The Officer has stated that the department has no money and so it would be a low priority job for them, also partly due to the issue of gaining access and suggested that the Parish Council may wish to look into doing something along there. Mr Cuerden had discussed this with the grounds maintenance company who oversee the surrounding contracts (J B Landscapes) and they have quoted £2,200, but it would include a membrane and a more substantial job being completed. Due to the quoted cost, further quotes are required and the other two contractors are to be contacted to submit prices for the work (Kent Valley and MBC). The area to be improved is between the new burial ground and the gate into Teers Meadow. It was proposed by Cllr Dean that a ceiling price of £2,500 be placed on the required works and asked that the Clerk and Amenity Manager progress this. This was seconded by Cllr Roots, with all in favour. The Amenity Manager also reported that, following the Tree Survey completed in July 2020, the required works are underway. He asked whether the Surveyor should come back to check the works after they are complete, to check that everything is satisfactory. It was proposed by Cllr Foster that the Clerk arrange this when the work has been concluded. This was seconded by Cllr Stanley with all in favour. The Amenity Manager added that, as part of the TPO decision, the Officer had requested that 12 new trees be planted. The contractor had discussed this with them and it had been reduced to 6. The contractor has offered to supply one of these free of charge and this work will need to be arranged in due course.

Mr Cuerden reported that the second half of the Teers Meadow funding will be released in April and it is hoped that the deferred projects from last year can progress as soon as Covid restrictions are lifted.

Cllr Dean reported that Sharon Amos is progressing with the 'Friends of Teers Meadow' and had three people interested so far.

### 7.2 Other Environmental Matters:

Works required on Footpath KH287: This had been discussed under the Amenity Manager's report.

## 8 Highways

Cllr J Sams informed all present that the Clerk is kept updated of any issues reported to KCC. The following points were noted:

- Cllr Roots has been corresponding with officers regarding issues with the lights on the A20.
- The recent issue with the Church Road closure was a collective team effort working with Grace Sladden (KCC Drainage Team), the Clerk, Cllr Dean and the County Cllr to ensure that any closure would not affect Harrietsham surgery is a vaccination hub.

- Ongoing flooding issues at the junction of Church Road/Harrison Drive.
- Drainage issues from water passing down Stede hill and entering the gullies in the ditch at the bottom.
- Flooding down Rectory Lane leading to East Street / Sandway Road. (Photos had been passed onto KCC by a resident.)
- Flooding at the junction of Holm Mill Lane/Forstal Lane leading to Garden of England (pictures had been circulated)

Cllr J Sams asked that, if anyone has any highways matters that need looking into, they are sent directly to both her and Cllr T Sams and they will ensure the Clerk is sent details, copied to Highways group and also Cllr Dean, in case anyone comments on Facebook.

The Clerk reminded all present that she had mentioned previously that traffic surveys should be completed on the A20 and Church Road. This had been discussed with Jennie Watson regarding the Church Road footpath. The Clerk had asked KCC to complete one, when the A20 improvement scheme had concluded, but they did not have any funding left to complete this. The Clerk reported that she had previously used a company to have a survey completed and they had charged £255 (+vat). She had contacted Streetwise Services again and they had stated that, if the Parish Council completed both surveys together in the next couple of weeks, they would be prepared to offer a heavily discounted rate. The total for both surveys would be £300 (+vat) as they are significantly below capacity with their workload due to Covid. The Clerk clarified that the surveys would be carried out over a 7 day period, 24 hours a day. It was proposed by Cllr Roots to carry out the two surveys as soon as possible, whilst a cost of £300 was valid. This was seconded by Cllr Luck, with all in favour.

Cllr Stanley asked whether air quality surveys could be completed in the future and the Clerk responded that a different company would need to be found to complete this, but it would be possible.

- 8.1 Church Road Footpath: Cllr T Sams reported that, following a Highway's meeting in October, the Parish Council wished to progress with the third option that had been offer by KHS. This would include having pedestrian markings on the road (approximately £10,000), rather than constructing a footpath (approximately £55,000). The Clerk had subsequently received a further email from Jennie highlighting further issues relating to landownership, utility diversion, the need for the lights to be to British Standards requiring a further electric supply and the question of who would pay for the ongoing maintenance. Cllr T Sams suggested that the Highways group discuss this further to formulate a response for the Clerk to send to Jennie Watson. This was agreed by all present. It was also noted that KCC would not look to progress the project until the new financial year.

## 9 Covid-19 (Coronavirus) Delegation of Emergency Powers

Members were requested to re-adopt the following statement, as advised by NALC:

In response to the Covid-19 outbreak in the UK and in the event that it is not possible to convene a meeting of the council in a reasonable time, the Clerk shall have delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of the council where such decisions cannot be reasonably deferred and must be made in order to comply with a commercial or statutory deadline. This will be carried out where possible by consultation with members by electronic means or telephone. The clerk will further consult with the chairman for guidance as necessary. The delegation does not extend to matters expressly reserved to the council in legislation or in its Standing Orders or Financial Regulations. Any decisions made under this delegation must be recorded in writing and must be published in accordance with the relevant regulations. This delegated authority ceases upon the first meeting of the council after the council meeting at which the delegation was put in place.

The Clerk also requested that financial delegated powers continue for the RFO.

It was proposed by Cllr Dean that the required delegated powers be readopted for both the Clerk and the RFO, until meetings are able to return to normal. This was seconded by Cllr Luck, with all in favour.

## 10 To Ratify Parish Council Decisions (Approved Virtually since March Meeting)

The Clerk reminded all present that the Parish Council had been agreeing decisions via email since the beginning of the pandemic, apart from the requirement to purchase signage for the play area, which Central Government reopened with little notice. In this case, the Clerk's emergency powers were used, with Councillors being kept updated via email. A list of all decisions had been circulated and it was agreed by all Councillors to ratify the following list of decisions:

- Purchase of 4 x Covid-19 Banners - (Lenham PC to order 10 and invoice HPC for 4) - **10 in favour** (no response from 1)
- KALC Annual Subscription - £944.78 - **9 in favour** (no response from 2)
- ACRK Annual Subscription - £80 - **8 in favour** (no response from 3)
- Minor Repairs to Play Equipment (highlighted on safety inspection) - Play Safe Installations £1,675.00 - **9 in favour** (no response from 2)

- Covid Safe Play Area Signs (bulk discount shared between several Parishes) - Total invoice £207.00 - Harrietsham's share £57.50 (*Clerk's powers to open the play area at short notice*)
- Investigative work at Doctor's Surgery for water leak - £550 - *All in favour*
- Woodlands Walk Tree Work (following completion of tree survey) - £8,740 (Treecycle Ltd) - *10 in favour (no response from 1)*
- Use of the Glebe Field for Parking (Bluebell Walk - 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2021) - *9 in favour (no response from 2)*
- Use of the Glebe Field for Parking (North Downs Walk - 13<sup>th</sup> June 2021) - *9 in favour (no response from 2)*
- Teers Meadow to have an additional cut due to the delay in putting cattle on - estimated cost £790 - *All in favour*
- That the allotment rent be increased from £17 to £18 per annum - *All in favour*
- That the open spaces contracts should be extended by one year (due to Covid-19 restrictions) with an increase in value of 2%, if the contractors are willing to do so - *All in favour*
- To request additional costings to incorporate into Church Road footpath scheme option 3 and assurances about the scheme on completion - *All in favour*
- Grant - Harrietsham in Bloom - £100 - *10 in favour, 1 abstention (interest)*
- Grant - Harrietsham Fish Scheme - £600 - *10 in favour, 1 abstention*
- Grant - Harrietsham PCC - £1,610 - *10 in favour, 1 abstention*
- Grant - Royal British Legion - Poppy wreath + donation - £150 - *10 in favour, 1 abstention*
- Grant - VHT - £5,000 (50% towards cost of a new boiler) - *6 in favour, 1 against, 4 abstentions (interest)*
- To readopt Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Risk Assessments, Investment Policy and Asset Register - *All in favour*
- £975 payable to Clerk for extra hours worked on website accessibility compliance - *All in favour*
- £715 + additional costs for glasses for Clerk - *10 in favour, 1 against*
- Home working payment £42 a month backdated to April (for Clerk) - *All in favour*
- Information Board for the War Memorial £730 + £65 p&p - *9 in favour (no response from 2)*
- Grant request from Harrietsham School PTFA for up to £200 for items relating to the Santa sleigh - *All in favour*

## 11 Date of next meeting

To be confirmed at a later date.

*With no further matters to discuss the meeting was closed at 14.42pm.*