

Harrietsham Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 4th May 2021

held virtually via Zoom at 6.30pm

The Clerk asked for an urgent item to be discussed under Agenda item 9 - Finance (Donation Request). 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, Cllr T Griffiths, RFO Mr M Cuerden, Lenham PC Representative Cllr M Ballard and the Clerk Mrs A Broadhurst
1 Member of Public

2 Apologies for absence

Cllr E Powell

3 Election of Chairman & Vice-Chair

Chairman - Cllr Dean nominated Cllr Powell as Chairman and this was seconded by Cllr Roots. With no further nominations, Cllr Powell was duly elected as Chairman for the forthcoming year. As Cllr Powell had given apologies, the Declaration of Acceptance of Office will be completed at the first opportunity.

Vice-Chairman - Cllr Griffiths nominated Cllr Dean as Vice-Chair and this was seconded by Cllr Foster. With no further nominations, Cllr Dean was duly elected for the forthcoming year.

4 Minutes of the last meeting

Parish Council Meeting 25th January 2021 - The minutes were proposed as accurate by Cllr Dean, seconded by Cllr Foster; with 8 in favour and 1 abstention. (The minutes will be signed by the Chairman when Covid restrictions allow.)

5 Disclosures and confidential items

Changes to the Register of Interests

There were no changes.

Declarations of Pecuniary Interests

Cllr J Sams - Agenda item 7.1 (Planning - Outstanding with MBC) as she lives next to Pilgrims Retreat and wishes to give an update on the current application.

Cllr T Sams - Agenda item 7.1 (Planning - Outstanding with MBC) as he lives next to Pilgrims Retreat and wishes to give an update on the current application.

Requests for Dispensation

No requests were submitted.

6 Review of Committees, Working Parties & PC Representatives

The current committees and working groups were discussed. Cllr Dean had requested to stand down as a VHT rep and Cllr Griffiths had offered to fill this vacancy. Cllr Griffiths had asked to come off of the Highways group and it was agreed that Cllr Luck would join. Cllr Dean had asked whether Sharon Amos could be co-opted back onto the Environmental Committee, as she was happy to assist with setting up 'The Friends of Teers Meadow'. Councillors were in agreement with this. Cllr Foster had requested to come off of the VHT Committee, however no Councillor offered to take her place, so it was agreed that she would continue for a further year. The Clerk then read out the draft Committees list (as detailed below) and it was proposed by Cllr Griffiths to approve this for the forthcoming year. This was seconded by Cllr Luck, with all in favour.

Cllr Roots had recommended that the first person listed on each Committee be the Chairman and the Clerk had clarified that the names were in no particular order. After brief discussion it was agreed that each group would decide the Councillor to act as Chair as and when they meet.

Chairman Cllr Eddie Powell

Vice Chair Cllr Glenda Dean

Finance & GP Committee	Cllr Dean Cllr Stanley Cllr Roots	Cllr T Sams Cllr Foster RFO
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Planning Committee	Cllr Powell Cllr Stanley Cllr Roots	Cllr Dean Cllr Moore Cllr Day
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Environmental Committee	Cllr Dean Cllr Stanley Amenity Manager + co-opted Sharon Amos	Cllr Foster Cllr Dayes Cllr Luck
Highways/Transport (inc Church Rd Footpath & Lighting)	Cllr T Sams Cllr Luck	Cllr J Sams Cllr Roots
Law & Order	Cllr Stanley	Cllr Griffiths
Youth Provisions	Cllr T Sams Cllr Stanley Cllr Foster	Cllr J Sams Cllr Dayes + advisors
KALC	Cllr Stanley	Cllr Foster
Charities (inc. Booth & Baldwin)	Cllr Foster Cllr Roots The Rector	Cllr Moore Cllr Dayes
Village Hall Trust	Cllr Griffiths Cllr Dayes	Cllr Foster
Staffing Group	Cllr Dean Cllr Moore	Cllr J Sams
Website/Communication Liaison Committee	Cllr Dean Cllr Foster	Cllr Griffiths + co-opted

7 Planning

- 7.1 The current planning applications were noted.
- 7.2 The approved planning applications were noted.
- 7.3 The refused planning applications were noted.
- 7.4 Other Planning Matters: Cllr Dean commented that Plot 100 (Stede Hill) had been refused and there had been great resident support against this application.
Cllrs T & J Sams reported that a further application has been submitted for Pilgrims Retreat, as the current one has been turned away by the Planning Officer. Cllr J Sams added that the Planning Officer would be contacting the Clerk as a matter of urgency. The Clerk had confirmed that an email had already been received asking for an update on the Parish Council's position and members of the Planning Committee had confirmed that they would remove the request to refer an application to the Planning Committee, if the Officer was minded to recommend refusal. Cllr Stanley raised the fact that the materials needed to construct the ditch had not been mentioned and the Clerk responded to say that there may be further information on this point in the new application, which is currently being validated.
Cllr Dean reported that the East Street Conservation Area Consultation is now live on the MBC website. Whilst Councillors commented that they had not had a chance to read the document fully, there are recommendations relating to the street furniture, which may affect the Parish Council.

8 Environmental

- 8.1 Recommendations from the Environmental Committee: No meeting has been held.
- 8.2 Other Environmental Matters:
 - Bench in Cutbush Close: The Clerk reported that an email had been received from a resident relating to the poor state of the bench on the area of grass in Cutbush Close. This is maintained by MBC, who have said they will only remove it. The Clerk added that it had since collapsed. The Amenity Manager stated that there is currently a base there but would need to check whether this is slabs or concrete, as additional works may be required to install a new bench. After brief discussion it was agreed to replace the bench with the same recycled one that had been purchased for the Glebe Field, with the same contractor being asked to install it. The RFO couldn't confirm the cost of the bench at the meeting but added that the supply and installation had been less than £1,500. It was proposed by Cllr Foster to progress with arranging the new bench and this was seconded by Cllr Griffiths; with all in favour.
 - Cllr Dean reported that a resident of Pilgrims Lakes has been given permission to install a fence (at their cost) along part of The Shaws, to maintain their privacy since the tree works had been completed in Woodlands Walk. The rest of the fencing down to the entrance of The Shaws is a low chain link fence, which has been flattened and it was felt that a 6ft green chain link fence would

secure the area better, once the new fence has been installed by the resident. After brief discussion it was agreed that the Amenity Manager should obtain 3 quotes for this work in due course.

ACTION: Amenity Manager

- Cllr Dean asked the Amenity Manager for an update on the submerged duck house. He confirmed that he hadn't heard anything further but was aware that the contractor had been out to look at it. He said that he would chase them, but Councillors agreed that, if it is now damaged, it will not be replaced.
- It was noted that there is an algae build up on the lake but that it is now too late to add chalk again this year.
- Cllr Dean mentioned the possibility of Hogweed on the footpath adjacent to The Shaws. The suggestion had been for the resident to supply a map marked of the location. The contractor will also be asked to check for any that requires treatment on our boundary,

ACTION: Amenity Manager

9 Finance

9.1 Annual Return of Accounts and Audit 2020/2021

- 9.1.1 Annual Accounts for 2020/2021: The Clerk reminded all present that these had been circulated to all Councillors. The approval of the annual accounts for 2020/21 was proposed by Cllr Griffiths, seconded by Cllr Foster; with all in favour.
 - 9.1.2 Internal Audit Report and Recommendations: The Clerk reminded all present that the internal audit report had been circulated to all Councillors and the content was noted by Councillors. The RFO confirmed that he will be contacting the insurance company to discuss increasing the level of Fidelity Guarantee.
 - 9.1.3 Annual Governance Statement 2020/2021: The blank Annual Governance Statement had been circulated and it was proposed by Cllr T Sams that the Chairman tick 'Yes' for boxes 1-8 and N/A for box 9. This was seconded by Cllr Dean, with all in favour.
 - 9.1.4 Accounting Statement 2020/2021: The completed Accounting Statement had been circulated to all Councillors. Cllr Dayes proposed that the Accounting Statements be approved. This was seconded by Cllr Stanley, with all in favour.
- 9.2 The Income/expenditure finance sheets were proposed as accurate by Cllr Dean and seconded by Cllr Roots, with all in favour.
- 9.3 Donation Request: The Clerk reported that the Heart of Kent Hospice was unable to fundraise last year, due to the pandemic and are going to hold a virtual walk this year. They had emailed asking whether the Parish Council could consider giving them a donation. After brief discussion Cllr Foster proposed that they be given a donation of £500. This was seconded by Cllr T Sams, with all in favour.

ACTION: Clerk

10 Highways

Cllr J Sams had circulated a report before the meeting which detailed the efforts of the litter picking volunteers and the vast number of potholes that have been marked up around the village. Cllr Roots queried whether uneven road surfaces are reported as well as the usual potholes and Cllr T Sams confirmed that they are, however, they rarely meet the KCC criteria for remedial work.

- 10.1 Church Road Footpath: Cllr T Sams reported that a further meeting should be held with Jennie Watson and an engineer, to discuss the streetlights that are going to be required along Church Road. Cllr Dean raised concerns that the local residents will not want additional lights, as it is within a Dark Skies area. Cllr T Sams responded that the lighting will not impact residents but, as the footpath is now road markings rather than an actual path, the safety of pedestrians is paramount. All Councillors were in agreement that a meeting should take place.

ACTION: Clerk

Cllr Dayes left the meeting at 7.20pm

- 10.2 A20 - Speed, Noise and Pollution: Cllr Roots had circulated a report before the meeting. He said that residents are always saying that the Parish Council must do something about the speed along the A20. It was noted that the average speed in the recent traffic survey was 35.2mph. Cllr Roots proposed that the Parish Council consider purchasing a SID that can be moved around the village, with the cost being between £3,000 and £10,000 (depending on type). It was noted that the one purchased by Lenham Parish Council had cost £8,000 and is moved every 6 weeks. It was agreed that this should be discussed at the meeting to be arranged with Jennie Watson. Cllr Roots added that other options to deter speeding could also be included.
- Cllr Roots then discussed the issue of noise and pollution along the A20; especially due to M20 closures and issues around Brexit. It was noted that these should improve now that Operation Brock has been removed. Cllr T Sams stated that the issue is worse when vehicles are idling in traffic and that maybe an option would be to purchase signage asking for drivers to turn off their engines. Cllr Roots asked that the Clerk monitor any complaints and report these to the appropriate authority.

ACTION: Clerk

Cllr Dean commented that any information relating the air pollution can be used against further housing development and the Lenham Cllr Ballard confirmed that KALC had successfully stopped a development due to pollution levels in the area. Cllr Stanley added that KALC are heavily involved in this issue and that a Borough wide complaint should be lodged to try to tackle this issue.

Cllr Dean queried how the pollution levels can be monitored and Cllr Roots responded that there is a monitoring station on the railway bridge by Church Road; however, he did not know how the information logged can be obtained. The Clerk was asked to contact the Glebe medical Centre to ask whether they have had more patients suffering with asthma or other breathing related issues, which could be due to pollution levels.

ACTION: Clerk

The Clerk reported that an email had been sent to Cllr Roots, which listed all the streetlighting issues along the A20. She will be forwarding this to Steve Henson in the first instance to see how much is outstanding work from the A20 highways improvement project.

ACTION: Clerk

11 Glebe Medical Centre Lease

The Clerk reminded all present that the RFO had circulated a further report, following a meeting with Rosemary Jones regarding the draft lease. The outstanding issues had been resolved and the lease was now ready to be approved by the Parish Council. Due to the need to progress this as soon as possible, the Clerk had asked Councillors for their views of the lease over email and had subsequently been able to confirm that the Parish Council is happy for Brachers to arrange for the approval of the lease. An email had then been received stating that the lease now has to go to the District Valuer for them to complete a value for money report. This will take approximately 4 weeks and then the report will go through a CCG governance process. It is hoped that the lease can then be added to the Primary Care Operational Group meeting agenda in June.

Cllr Dayes re-joined the meeting at 7.45pm

12 Delegation of Emergency Powers

The Clerk explained the current situation with Central Government ending virtual meetings for Parish Councils from the 7th May. This has caused a large amount of discussion between NALC, area ALCs and Town/Parish Councils across the country, as it is not yet deemed safe to be holding meetings face to face. The Clerk explained about the process that would need to be followed in order to be able to safely meet (including risk assessments approved by the insurance company, social distancing, one way system, sanitizing of chairs and touch points before and after the meeting etc). The Clerk added that Clerks are reporting that some Parish Councils are already deciding that they will not meet until all members have received both vaccination doses + 3 week. After numerous discussions with KALC, the Clerk has been informed that there are two options available. One would be to post up an agenda, in the usual way, and then cancel the meeting before it takes place on Health & Safety grounds. This would result in no Parish Council business being progressed. The other option is that the Clerk continues with emergency delegated powers so that any work required can be actioned. Parish Council could still technically meet virtually, but to only make recommendations for the Clerk to action. The Councillors would be unable to approve agenda items in the normal way. The Clerk added that the system used over since March 2020 has worked extremely well, with there being a full paperwork trail for every decision that has been made by the Council. It was noted that the Parish Council has just had an internal audit, which has not raised any concerns with this process.

The Clerk therefore asked that Councillors readopt the following statement, to continue the delegated powers:

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 Stanley, with all in favour.

It was then proposed by Cllr Griffiths that the Parish Council also makes the decision to not meet face to face until all members of the Council have received both doses of the vaccination + 3 weeks. This was seconded by Cllr Dayes with all in favour.

The Clerk added that the Government guidance is continually being updated and that Councillors will be kept up to date with any developments relating to meetings.

13 Renewal of Annual Subscription to the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC)

It was proposed by Cllr T Sams to renew the annual subscription to KALC at a cost of £1,186.01 (£988.34 +vat). This was seconded by Cllr J Sams, with all in favour.

14 Renewal of Annual Subscription to Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK)

It was proposed by Cllr Dean to renew the annual subscription to ACRK at a cost of £80.00. This was seconded by Cllr Roots, with all in favour.

15 To Ratify Parish Council Decisions (Approved Virtually since January Meeting)

The Clerk reminded all present that the Parish Council had been agreeing decisions via email since the beginning of the pandemic. It was agreed by all Councillors to ratify the following list of decisions:

- Resident request to continue fence line along Parish Council land to improve privacy. (All works to be commissioned and paid for by resident) - *7 in favour, 1 abstention (interest)*
- Request to move North Downs Walk Glebe field hire to 8th August and hold the whole event on there as the VH is unavailable - *10 in favour*
- Repairs required in the play area at a cost of £450 - *9 in favour*

The Clerk then added that, following the very recent repair of the play equipment, there had been a further incident of vandalism, which had resulted in Cllr T Sams having to remove a seat to ensure that no toddlers were injured. The Clerk is trying to have the cctv viewed but needs a time frame for the PCSO. It was believed that the group of youths had been seen in the play area on Saturday 1st May late afternoon/evening. The Clerk added that this incident needs to be reported to Kent Police.

The Clerk then asked whether Councillors wanted the equipment to be repaired straight away or to monitor the area for a while, in case there are further ASB. It was agreed to monitor the area for a month before arranging the repair. Cllr T Sams offered to send the Clerk some photos of the damaged item so that the repair could be discussed with the contractor.

ACTION: Cllr T Sams

16 Future Events

Cllr T Sams wished Lenham Parish Council good luck with their Neighbourhood Plan referendum, which is to be held on Thursday 6th May.

Cllr Dean reported that The Big Lunch can go ahead on any date this year, as long as it is safe to do so. It is hoped that this can be organised for some time during the Summer.

17 Items for Future Consideration

- Santa's Grotto - *Cllr Griffiths*
- Climate Change - *Cllr T Sams*

18 Date of next meeting

To be confirmed at a later date.

Before closing the meeting, Cllr Dean asked that all Councillors answer the Clerk's emails in a timely fashion.

Cllr Dean thanked the Clerk and RFO for all of their hard work during the past year, which has been quite stressful at times.

With no further matters to discuss the meeting was closed at 8.15pm.

Public Discussion

A resident reported on the ridges in the road surface on the A20 close to the railway bridge. When lorries come over these at 5.30am, they cause the vehicles to vibrate through the village causing an unacceptable level of noise. It was noted that the resident has a spring measuring $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick and 3ft long, which has come off of a lorry recently that hit the ridges at speed. The Clerk reported that this issue had been reported to KHS, some years ago, when the resident had raised the matter previously. Unfortunately, no action had been deemed necessary. Cllr T Sams suggested that the issue be recorded so that KCC can be shown exactly how this is affecting the local residents. It was suggested that this could be a further point of discussion at the meeting to be arranged with Kent Highways. The resident confirmed that he is happy to speak to the Highways Steward if there is the opportunity.