

Harrietsham Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Friday 20th March 2020 at 9.30pm in the Parish Office.

1. Present

Cllr E Powell, Cllr G Dean, Cllr T Griffiths, Cllr F Stanley, Cllr C Roots, Cllr R Dayes and the Clerk Mrs A Broadhurst
Due to the developing Covid-19 situation, members of the public were asked not to attend the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

Cllr V Foster, Cllr J Moore, Cllr T Sams, Cllr J Sams, RFO Mr M Cuerden, Community Warden Martin Sherwood, PCSO J Boyd, Lenham Representative Cllr J Britt

3. Minutes of the last meeting

Parish Council Meeting 26th February 2020 - The minutes were proposed as accurate by Cllr Griffiths, seconded by Cllr Dayes; with 5 in favour and 1 abstention.

4. Disclosures and confidential items

Changes to the Register of Interests

There were no changes.

Declarations of Pecuniary Interests

Cllr Dean - Agenda Item 15 (Pre-School); although it was noted that she is not an immediate neighbour to the proposed location.

Requests for Dispensation

No requests were submitted.

5. Co-option of Councillor

The Clerk reported that this would be deferred until the end of the meeting.

6. Planning

6.1 The current planning applications were noted.

6.2 The approved planning applications were noted.

6.3 Other Planning Matters:

Cllr Powell reported that the issues relating to Pilgrims Retreat are ongoing. The owner has been advised to submit a new planning application, otherwise enforcement action will take place.

It was noted that the expected update on the Call for Sites has been deferred until Spring 2021.

The Clerk reported that, until further notice, KCC will not be notifying residents about planning applications.

7. Environmental

7.1 Minutes from the Meeting held 12th March: The minutes were proposed as accurate by Cllr Dean, seconded by Cllr Stanley; with 3 in favour and 3 abstentions.

7.2 Recommendations from the Environmental Committee:

- That the allotment land be re-allocated as community orchard and that the Environmental Committee be asked to pursue this. This was proposed by Cllr Dayes and seconded by Cllr Griffiths; with all in favour.
- That the council has, as a formal target, the acquisition of some new allotments at a more suitable site, with water provided, to be achieved as part of any negotiations should the opportunity arise from further development within the village. This was agreed by all present.

7.3 Other Environmental Matters:

- Interpretation Boards for Teers Meadow: The Clerk had previously circulated a report that had been produced by the Parish Council's Ecology Consultant, Mike Phillips. Five companies had supplied quotes for the work and the recommendation was that Clarity Interpretation be awarded the tender. It was proposed by Cllr Dean that the Parish Council approve the recommendation for Clarity Interpretation be awarded to work. This was seconded by Cllr Griffiths, with all in favour.

8. Finance

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

9. Highways

9.1 Highways Issues: This item was deferred.

9.2 Church Road Footpath: This item was deferred.

10. Covid-19 (Coronavirus) Delegation of Emergency Powers

Members were requested to 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 be given to the RFO, as the roles within the Parish Council are split.

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

11. VE Celebrations

Cllr Dean reported that, in light of the current Covid-19 situation, this event should be cancelled. This was agreed by all present.

12. Big Lunch

Cllr Dean reported that, in light of the current Covid-19 situation, this event should be cancelled. This was agreed by all present.

13. Santa's Grotto

Cllr Griffiths reported that this has now been arranged for Saturday 12th December. The Booth Hall is available from 9am and the Ambrose from 11am. This is a total cost of £116.20, which had been agreed at the February meeting.

There was a brief discussion about the items that would need to be purchased, including 2 gazebos (which can then be used for all events). It was proposed by Cllr Dean to set aside a budget of £500 (money will be reimbursed when receipts are received). This was seconded by Cllr Roots, with all in favour.

14. Annual Parish Meeting

The Clerk reported that the Annual Parish Meeting should be cancelled, but that she could still produce a booklet, as some reports have already been received. All Councillors were in agreement. The Clerk reminded all present that she still required Councillor reports (Environmental - Cllr Foster, Planning - Cllr Moore, Highways - Cllr J Sams, Chairman's report - Cllr Powell)

ACTION: Cllrs Foster, Moore, J Sams & Powell

15. Harrietsham Pre-School

There was extensive discussion regarding a letter that had been received from the Pre-School, following a request for further information, after the previous Parish Council Meeting. Cllr Dayes reported that he had been copied in on an email from the Chairman of the Booth & Baldwin Trust, which had detailed that the Chairman had offered them a period of rent on the Booth field, confirming that the Pre-School would be liable for the costs relating to rent, services, planning and access. A meeting had been declined with the Pre-School as he was unable to offer any long-term prospects. It was agreed that a response would be formulated for the Parish Council Representative to send. The Clerk reported that she had received a call from one of the Trustees before the meeting and it had been noted that the Trust had assumed the wrong location for the building on the Booth Field and had also thought that the Pre-school required financial assistance. It had been pointed out that this was incorrect and that a meeting between the Trust and Pre-school would have confirmed this.

It was agreed by all Councillors that the following response should be sent to the Pre-School:

The Parish Council has carefully considered the content of the letter received from the Pre-School and the subsequent correspondence received from parents. Whilst the Parish Council wishes to fully support the group to secure their future in the village, the proposed location (within a residential garden) is not considered appropriate for this type of development. The Parish Council will continue to assist the Pre-School with finding another location.

It was of grave concern to Councillors, when notice was served on the Pre-School by Harrietsham Primary School, to enable expansion of the site, however the Parish Council has no power to force Local Authorities to ensure the future of charities or businesses within their villages.

As previously discussed with the Pre-School, at the Parish Council meeting held on the 26th February, it is the view of the Parish Council that the options should include trying to fit a temporary building behind the village hall. It is noted that discussions are already underway with regards to this. Alternatively, negotiations should take place with the Booth & Baldwin Trust to allow a permanent building on the Booth Field, where the play equipment was historically located. This area would seem the most appropriate resolution, when keeping in mind that the land is for the benefit of the children within the village of Harrietsham.

With regards to comments that have been made, relating to an individual Councillor, if it is felt that there has been a breach of Member's Code of Conduct, this would need to be referred to the Monitoring Officer at Maidstone Borough Council.

The Parish Council is very disappointed to have received hostile correspondence from individuals who seem to believe that the Parish Council is being obstructive. It will have been noted by other members of the public, who attended the February Parish Council meeting, this is certainly not the case.

16. Climate Change

This item was deferred.

17. Future Events

Due to the current situation, all known events have been cancelled.

18. Items for Future Consideration

No items were to be added to the agenda.

Ms Luck was invited into the meeting.

19. Co-option of Councillor (Agenda Item 5)

Sandra (Sasha) Luck introduced herself to Councillors and gave an overview of her reasons for wishing to join the Parish Council. It was proposed by Cllr Griffiths that Ms Luck be co-opted on to the Parish Council. This was seconded by Cllr Powell, with all in favour.

20. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is to be confirmed at a later date.

With no further matters to discuss the meeting was closed at 10.34am.