

BARHAM PARISH COUNCIL
PARISH COUNCIL MEETING - HELD TUESDAY 05 March 2015

Present:

Parish Councillors David Wood (Chairman), David Tamsitt (Vice-Chairman), Ernie Mullett, Val Steer, Liz Minter and Murray Simpson, 5 residents, City Cllr Mike Sole, City Cllr Simon Cook and Clerk to the Council, Amanda Sparkes

1. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Parish Cllr Caroline Ridgeway (maternity leave) and Andy McElroy (working away) and KCC Cllr Michael Northey.

2. Declarations of interest – As per previously declared interests this year, with no changes, but notably shareholders in the shop, Cllrs Simpson, Tamsitt, Wood and Minter.

3. Minutes of the last meeting held 05 February 2015 - These were approved and accepted as a true record of the meeting, and the Chairman duly signed them.

4. Adjournment for parishioners' questions and comments.

A resident explained he was very supportive of the parish council trying to establish affordable housing in the village, and that he would also like to see a contested election. Cllr Wood advised he was going to put an article in the magazine and promote standing for election at the annual electors' meeting on 19 March 2015.

The meeting continued.

5. Kent County Cllr Report

KCC Cllr Michael Northey had given apologies but had sent the Clerk a report about the offers of school places in Kent, which had been circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting.

City Cllr report

Cllr Mike Sole read his report to the meeting as follows:

I am very pleased to be able to tell you that after months of chasing up, work started on cleaning litter from the A2 this week. The whole process will take 10 days to complete. As you know I am particularly annoyed that I was told this time last year that a clean would take place twice a year, and when I queried in the autumn why it hadn't been done I was as surprised as everyone else to be told that it was deemed necessary. The verges have been strewn with litter and are an embarrassment to our district.

Last week I attended a workshop with representatives of parish councils, city councillors and council officers to discuss the future of parish council concurrent funding and the process and timing of applying for it. As the chair and clerk attended I won't go into details, but my personal view is that no matter how it is dressed up, we are only looking at different ways of sharing out an ever decreasing budget. The previous week the city council set its own budget and had the opportunity to support an amendment increasing parish council funding but did not do so. My concern is that any change in formula that increase funding for some parishes can only do so by reducing funding from others, and parishes will be fighting each other for the same funds unless there are changes at the City Council that will result in increased funds for the parishes.

Ted Edwards, from the City Council Engineering department is retiring on 31 March. Ted has worked tirelessly during the Nailbourne Floods, often meeting with residents outside of normal hours and his dedication and knowledge will be greatly missed in the villages along the Nailbourne.

The problems with Serco refuse collections being missed on Railway Hill due to parked cars has been explored and Serco are going to build in the use of smaller vehicles to overcome this.

For Gravel Castle unauthorised access, the notice was re-issued on 11 february and comes into effect on 18 March 2015. If there is no appeal by 18 March, the landowner has to put everything back as it was.

Regarding the trees in Crookenden Place, the housing association did inspect them in February. They won't prune for light or a view, and any work undertaken may infact lead to more growth and make them worse.

7. Finance –

NOTED that the Clerk prepared a VAT refund Claim for the period 01 September 2014 to 31 January 2015 totalling £334.18.

NOTED the Clerk's response to Canterbury City Council's letter regarding Concurrent Functions, and RECEIVED the Clerk's report of the city council's Forum on 27 February 2015 regarding the best value review in to the concurrent function scheme

City Cllr Simon Cook spoke at this point and explained that the notes from the forum should be circulated on 6 March 2015. The report will be written by 31 March to go to the Executive meeting in April and to be approved by Full Council. Technically, the new council following the May elections may be able to change things. Cllr Cook also advised that City Cllr Mike Sole had now been appointed to the Panel as the liberal democratic representative.

The cheques totalling £1,090.75 were duly noted and authorised for payment.

PWLB Loan

NOTED that the Clerk has received written confirmation from the Department for Communities and Local Government that Barham parish Council has the secretary of state's approval to borrow the £100k shortfall for the village hall project. Cllr Wood advised he would speak to the hall Chairman about the timescale for the money being required. Ideally the parish council would apply from 1 April 2015 in the new financial year.

The councillors asked that thanks be recorded to the Clerk for her hard work and diligence in securing the loan approval.

Barham Parish Council's Internal Auditor had also given written comments as follows, following sight of all the document relating to the borrowing approval application.

"I have now had a chance to go through all of the documents and I would like to congratulate you and your Members on what appears to be a very thorough process including the consultation with the residents.

You appear to have considered all the costs and the affordability of the repayments and I was pleased to see that consideration and agreement for the borrowing term to be reduced to 25 years with the good use of the unreserved balances as 50 years would have been the maximum allowed and ties future residents and the Parish Council to a much longer period of repayments.

From what I have read I am happy to confirm that the Parish Council has carried out due diligence on the financing of the project and I look forward to being able to see the end result. Since receiving you email you have confirmed that the borrowing approval has been given by the Secretary of State. Congratulations!"

Shop grant

Feedback from the shop committee had been received and circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting, together with current financial forecasts and estimated capital expenditure. The committee has raised £36,000 by fund raising, grants and donations. Additionally the majority of loan note holders have agreed to waive repayment altogether and some have agreed to only be repaid when NCS is in a strong enough position to do so. This has resulted in a net gain on the balance sheet of approximately £4000 which leaves a funding gap of approximately £11000. This amount is being sought from the Parish Councils of Barham and Kingston. The Chairman of Kingston parish council has agreed to put the request before their next meeting but it does not seem that they are in a position to consider more than about £2000. (Only a very small percentage of Kingston residents are shareholders.) None of the lottery or other funding obtained by the village hall trustees has been utilised for the creation of the shop, apart of course from the building of the extension in which it will be housed.

As the original request was for £5,000, Councillors were concerned about the relatively significant increase. All councillors were happy with the principle to support the project and ensure its success, but sought greater clarity on what the council is being asked to fund. Councillors resolved to suggest a meeting with some shop representatives on 16 March 2015. The final decision will be taken by the outgoing council at their meeting in April, prior to the elections in May.

8. Planning - Enforcement: The Clerk advised that members of the public has raised concerns about works to the Old Post Office, Valley Road, where there is some uncertainty that the front elevation matches that of the permission. The Clerk has asked the city council to check and clarify.

Planning controls for houses in multiple occupation

NOTED that the Clerk received a letter on 26 February 2015, that CCC is making a Direction Under Article 4 of the General Permitted Development Order. This will bring planning controls for houses of multiple occupation (HMO) for the Canterbury City Council area.

This will remove the existing permitted development rights for the change of use from dwelling house (Class C3) to small HMO (Class C4) with effect from 25 February 2015. From now on, a planning application for a change of use will be required.

Rural Exception Site for affordable housing

At the February 2015 parish council meeting, Councillors agreed that the following three sites all had equal weight and that the parish council would like all three to be explored further.

- i) Land rear of Crookenden Place and Oxenden Way;
- ii) Land between the end of The Grove and the Nailbourne; and
- iii) Land at Derringstone Downs (either North or South of the existing row of four terraced houses)

CCC officers have now given written comments on all the sites, and have dismissed many of them. They have agreed that (i) and (ii) are suitable to be explored further to see if the landowner will sell the land. They have also suggested Barham Court Farm.

Barham Parish Council need to seek clarification that if the Barham Court Farm site was used for the six units identified in the housing needs assessment, that if subsequent development of Barham Court Farm was progressed whether there would still be further affordable homes as part of any planning application. The Clerk agreed to seek clarification and will also email the rural housing enabler and also ask that City Cllr Mike Sole be kept in the loop.

9. Streetlighting – The Clerk explained the order for five replacement columns and nine additional LED lanterns had been placed for completion by 31 March 2015. The upgrade programme will continue in to 2015-2016. Cllrs agreed that the nine lanterns and any future replacement lanterns to LED should start firstly in The Street, where some columns are being replaced in Phase I, then The Grove and then Crookenden Place. The Clerk and Chairman will walk these roads and establish a column order.

10. Highways

The Clerk has received a complaint about the state of the grass verge under the trees along Valley Road. Where there is no bollards cars park and the verge gets rutted and muddy, and looks dreadful. The suggestion to extend the bollards was supported by the parish councillors. Posts do mean that there is parking on only one side of the road. The existing posts were paid for by the parish council about ten years ago, and Kent Highways installed them.

The Clerk will make enquiries with Kent Highways to see if they would provide more bollards or would allow the parish council to provide them.

Once the village hall works are completed, a walking bus to the school may be set up.

11. Open Spaces

Allotments

The allotment holders have now appointed a Treasurer. They have asked for an idea on what the rent of the plots will be. Cllr Wood and Cllr Tamsitt will meet the allotment representative.

Flood Plan

The Clerk finalised and circulated the Flood Plan before the meeting and has also uploaded the document to the website. Printed copies will be available to the annual electors' meeting.

Litter pick for the village

March is the best time before the vegetation gets thick, and a date of 21 March 2015 has been set. The Clerk has completed the pack and risk assessments from Canterbury City Council to get the litter pick pack and arranged collection of the rubbish collected. Cllr Wood will mention this at the annual electors' meeting to try and get more volunteers.

Residents' concerns about inappropriate use of the play area

Residents have asked if the use of the children's play area by the tennis courts, by residents from Cedar House, could be discussed by the Parish Council. Whilst these adults need to be rehabilitated and are taken around the village always under supervision, there are regularly small groups at the play area, using the play equipment. These are adults with mental health issues, and residents have concerns this may make their behaviour unpredictable at times without warning.

The area is for children, primarily those of primary school age, not adults. Mothers with young children often leave the area due to the arrival of these adults. Barham Parish Council could consider signage similar to that used by Canterbury City Council about the age appropriateness of the equipment. In the first instance, it was agreed that the Clerk should write a letter to Cedar House.

Village Green

The Clerk had received a complaint from a teenager that the village green is very uneven through mole hills, that the grass is not cut often enough and the goal posts are not aligned. Strictly speaking, the village green is not an official football pitch, and there is one at the Recreation Ground. There is little that can be done about the moles, and the school have just changed the contractor for the 2015 season due to unsatisfactory standards in 2014. This may improve things. Cllr Mullett kindly agreed to organise rolling of the ground when it is dry enough. The teenage also complained about barbed wire behind the goal mouth. This was put up by the farmer and should be removed as children play in the vicinity. Cllr Mullett agreed to speak to the farmer for its removal.

The Clerk will do a reply to the teenager.

Dog fouling – request for bin

A resident of Derringstone Downs contacted the Clerk. Derringstone Downs has rear access onto the public footpath that runs from half way up Mill Lane out to Derringstone Downs. The resident collected 23 dog poo bags from the path, over a two week period and all in about a 20 foot stretch of path. And worse some had been semi bagged up (perhaps obviously done in a more public place) but then just thrown as soon as the owner reached the relative privacy of the footpath.

Children walk up and down this path every day. They can't walk round the road because the speed of the traffic on Derringstone Downs would make it unsafe to do so.

The Clerk will ask the city council that if the parish council provide a bin whether Serco could add it to their schedule for emptying. Cllr Wood agreed to write an article for the magazine, and mention this at the Annual Electors' meeting.

Dog walking path at Brickfield Recreation Ground

Cllr Minter asked the Clerk to add an item to the May meeting Agenda for the council to consider a cordoned off dog walking path on the Brickfield Recreation Ground in order to contain dog fouling. Cllr Minter will bring ideas and pictures around this.

Grazing licence

Cllr Wood explained that in view of the dog walking zone the formalising of the grazing licence with Mr Clough would be delayed until after that decision.

Elham walking festival

The Clerk was contacted by Elham 'Walkers are Welcome' group, who are interested in organising an annual walking festival spanning all the villages in the Elham valley, Lyminge, Elham, Barham & Bridge. (see www.walkersarewelcome.org.uk). The main benefits to the community would be to assist the local economy, help keep footpaths open/in good condition, and to help promote usage of the No. 17 bus. The parish council were supportive of the idea. Cllr Minter will be the contact.

May 2015 parish council elections

The Clerk has been sent an information pack about the 4-yearly parish council elections due to be held on 7 May 2015. The Clerk pulled out key information and dates for councillors, for information, and circulated this as a separate appendix.

Clerk attending Coffee Stop

A reminder that the Clerk attends Coffee Stop to provide a surgery between 10.30 and 11.30 on the third Tuesday of each month. Next one 17 March 2015.

Cllrs items

Cllr Minter asked that thanks be recorded to Cllr Mullett for organising the hedge cut for the play area at Derringstone Downs – this looks very much better.

Cllr Wood reminder councillors and the public of the Annual Electors Meeting to be held on Thursday 19 March 2015 in Barham Church at 7pm.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.

Future meetings of the Full Council: 2 April, 18 May, 11 June, 2 July, no parish council meeting in August, 3 September, 1 October, 5 November and 3 December 2015, venue tbc.

(and F&GP or Planning sub-committee dates: if a meeting should be required: 16 March, 20 April, 15 June, 17 August, 21 September, 19 October, 16 November and 21 December 2015, venue tbc.)

Signed.....
Chairman, Barham Parish Council

Date

Please note these Minutes remain as draft Minutes until they are approved by the parish council at their next parish council meeting