

Minutes of Mersham Parish Council
Meeting held in on Monday, 20th July 2020 via Skype

Present	Pete Turley (Chair)	Geoffrey Fletcher
	Gavin Murphy	Stewart Ross
	Kenton Stewart	Melanie Wells

In attendance: 2 members of the public, Borough Councillor Paul Bartlett and Tracey Block (Clerk)

To be actioned by:

<p>To receive and approve apologies for absence.</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Cllrs Hawkins and Ross</p>	
<p>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.</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
<p>To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 15th June 2020</p> <p>Minutes of the Meeting of the Mersham with Sevington Parish Council on 15th June 2020 were approved as a true record and were signed as such. Cllr Stewart proposed approval and Cllr Murphy seconded this.</p>	
<p>To discuss matters arising from previous minutes that are not covered by the agenda.</p> <p>There were no matters arising to discuss.</p>	
<p>Public session: To receive questions and comments from the public on any agenda item.</p> <p>A member of the public wanted to discuss the MOJO site and the state of Kingsford Street following the contractors work. PT wrote to Cllr Bell regarding this. Cllr Turley has chased this and some markings have appeared on the road.</p> <p>PB confirmed that he has seen clear evidence that Cllr Bell is chasing resolution aggressively.</p> <p>Mrs Arthur also wrote to Cllr Bell , shared the response and is awaiting further communication, PT now copied in. Low level lighting along the footpath has not been undertaken and the planting scheme has also not been completed. PT to follow this up with Cllr Bell.</p> <p>Cllr Bartlett reported that Cllr Bell has contacted Simon Jones at KCC, Cllr Bartlett will also follow this up following a meeting with him on 21/07/2020</p>	<p>PT</p> <p>PB</p>
<p>To receive report from Borough Councillor</p> <p>Detailed report attached below. The open discussion included the following points.</p> <p>The Parish Council has received no information re: MOJO site. PT wrote complaint re the exclusion of the Parish Council from any communication to Rachel Maclean (Under Secretary of State for Transport). No response as yet.</p> <p>PB advised that a lot of people knew about it and should the situation never have been allowed to degenerate to the current level of confusion. PB wants to get people on side to put our point of view across. PB wants to get KCC involved and feels that the on-site workers are very co-operative. PB hopeful that he can work together with Simon Jones (KCC head of Transport) and others.</p> <p>GF wants to know why PB is now so negative regarding the proposals when he came across as positive in the press whereas Damian Green comes across as negative.</p> <p>PB advised that he had been informed this would be a customs checking point with about 100 lorries being checked daily, ie 1 in 500 lorries would be pulled off. There were 11,000 lorry movements per day and if</p>	

<p>this was the case, it would have small specialised operation. PB then learnt that this would be a lorry holding area. The position continues to change. The current focus is on the “west of the site”. It is not known whether the government purchased the remainder of the land between Highfield Lane and Blind Lane.</p> <p>CPRE say there was a meeting last Thursday and there was confirmation that land to the West of Highfield Lane was purchased but not the land to the East. This may be true but there is a real need for clarity. There was an enormous amount of confusion as to what had been bought and what was going on.</p> <p>This has moved from a Customs testing area to a Lorry holding area. It is not clear how a lorry holding area differs from a lorry park, The Customs testing area could have been very positive for Ashford bringing high value jobs further enhanced with ancillary testing operations as ABC are responsible for Trading Standards and the associated testing. Various assumptions were expressed re site capacity but no reliable data appears to be available.</p> <p>Are other lorry park sites under review? PB advised that 4 additional sites being viewed in East Kent. Operation Stack meant 4,000 lorries were going to be housed on Manston site but this is no longer available.</p> <p>PT asked what discussions had taken place with Damian Green. Damian appeared to know this would be a lorry holding area. So the news of HMRC site was incorrect.</p> <p>PB is now pushing for KCC to be engaged and for a professional planning, communication and consultation programme to be put in place.</p> <p>What are we going to do? PB has a meeting tomorrow – ask PB to provide meeting update after this. PT suggests writing to Damian Green about fears/concerns – lack of information etc and asking for consultation. Also worth reminding Damian that there was a consultation in July 2018 about Waterbrook. Full consultation was promised after soil testing letters sent out in November 2018. All agreed to have a follow up meeting on 27/7 at 5pm. TB to book Skype meeting.</p> <p>PT to draft email to Damian, asking how we can help. Concern that there is a lot of misinformation. PT to circulate and hope to get correspondence to Damian by Thursday.</p>	<p>All TB</p> <p>PT</p>
<p>To discuss and agree the options for the Parish Council to take forward a Broadband project for Mersham</p> <p>Following the briefing from Jake Huggett, do we think this would be worth taking forward? Unanimous agreement.</p> <p>Need a quote from OpenReach for Cost estimate. Would like to engage in a Pilot project with OpenReach. There was a discussion regarding the need for this and the increase in property value. Commitment is required from the Councillors to take this forward.</p> <p>TB to ask for costs and to request a pilot project. Specific email to be created to provide updates.</p>	<p>TB</p>
<p>To discuss the Highways Improvement Plan and agree one issue to take forward with KCC</p> <p>Improving signage and road lines at gateways to the village. Suggest that this is progressed, TB to follow this up with KCC.</p> <p>Cllr Fletcher suggested that individuals could set up a speedwatch team, if people are interested in this they can set up a group. Contact TB</p>	<p>TB</p>
<p>To discuss funding options for a Speed Indicator Device</p> <p>Suggest that this is carried forward to the next meeting.</p>	

<p>To discuss and agree a response regarding Cheeseman’s Green Lane as agreed at the last meeting</p> <p>There is a gate and an area of hard-standing on Cheeseman’s Green Lane, there is concern that this could be a pre-cursor to a building application. This did not come across as a potential planning application. Was it new? This has been raised with ABC, GM to send photograph to TB and TB to take this up with KCC – Kent Highways.</p>		GM/ TB
<p>Update from the Sports Club regarding progress of the club house</p> <p>Fred Ambler to address the meeting.</p> <p>Thank you for the payment, very much appreciated. We redesigned the building, ABC assured it was a minor amendment but in the end it wasn’t and now requires full application again. Have now employed a Quantity Surveyor, this resulted in an increased project cost estimate (£873k). As a result club looking again at reducing the size of the pavilion. .</p> <p>Ongoing discussions with Quantity Surveyor and building company. No update on S106 from ABC, gave information to Simon Harris. No news as yet. <i>PB spoke to Simon regarding this – PB suggests that Fred refers back to PB if ABC is confused.</i></p> <p><i>Todate circa £550k raised or committed. Pavilion revised budget still expected to be circa £700k</i></p> <p>Looking to find further funders as this project .</p> <p>Also need further £150,000 to add the additional playing fields (Land purchase and upgrading).</p> <p>PT asked if S106 money can be increased. PB advised that current £100k from ABC S106 money had £50,000 confirmed but the further £50,000 is dependent on the 67 houses on Finberry which may not come in to fruition.</p> <p>Solution may come from MOJO site. The disconnect between Government and local Council that has come about because of MOJO site, may mean that there will be further funding.</p> <p>Stour Park(MOJO site) was only going to be built on 40% of the land but the future usage may be on 80% of the land as it is a temporary holding area rather than a warehouse. S106 contribution might increase as a result.</p> <p>This may provide further funding. Fred to prepare parameters to ask for funding and provide it in writing to PB and PT, be sure that all required funds are covered. Take the opportunity to make something positive out of a bad situation.</p> <p>Thanks to Fred for attending the meeting.</p>		
<p>Planning matters: to authorise a response to any application(s) and to note any recent planning decisions by Ashford Borough Council or any correspondence on planning matters.</p> <p>A list of Planning Applications was circulated as Appendix A with the agenda, those requiring a response were:</p>		
18/01525/CONA/AS	Highview, Church Road, Mersham	Discharge of condition 5 (partial)
No objections		
18/01016/CONA/AS	Land North of Fairlawn, Blind Lane	Discharge of conditions 14 & 20
No objections		
20/00817/AS	Little Gains Farm, Frith Road, Mersham	Formation of a pond for Greatest Crested Newts
No objections		

20/00802/AS	Proposed telecoms Mast, land South of Bower Road, Mersham	Prior notification of the removal of existing 15m OPCS Greenfield column and replacement with 25m EE lattice tower and associated equipment													
No objections															
<p>Financial matters:</p> <p>a. To note/authorise the following:</p> <p>i. To note the Parish Council's Financial position <i>The Parish Council bank balance as at 30/06/2020 of £15784.20 with outstanding payments of £5076.80 still to clear. Therefore available monies are £10707.40</i></p> <p>ii. To authorise any payments</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="193 703 1270 853"> <thead> <tr> <th>Cheque No:</th> <th>Payee</th> <th>Amount</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>502019</td> <td>Ian King</td> <td>£ 118.31</td> </tr> <tr> <td>502020</td> <td>HMRC</td> <td>£ 76.80</td> </tr> <tr> <td>502021</td> <td>Tracey Block</td> <td>£ 321.96</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>A copy of the budget v expenditure was distributed to all Councillors.</p>			Cheque No:	Payee	Amount	502019	Ian King	£ 118.31	502020	HMRC	£ 76.80	502021	Tracey Block	£ 321.96	
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<p>Any Other Business (for information purposes only):</p> <p>Caretaker Appraisal will take place on 29/07/2020. Any comment/input? He has done a fantastic job, all very happy.</p> <p>We objected to the Stables at Mersham Manor, GM and PT met with Tim Naylor in ABC and this was all going to be resolved very soon. PT to contact developer with Mersham Manor and take forward with Mr Naylor.</p>			PT												
<p>Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the Council up to and including the next annual meeting of the Council.</p> <p>Monday 21st September 2020 Monday 19th October 2020 Monday 16th November 2020 Monday 18th January 2021 Monday 15th February 2021 Monday 15th March 2021 Monday 19th April 2021 Monday 17th May 2021</p>			All												
The meeting closed at 9.20 pm															

Post meeting note:

The Clerk will be on holiday from 3rd August for 2 weeks.

Report from Paul Barlett ABC Councillor

STOUR PARK

This letter is expected to go out to residents near Stour Park. It finally ends the uncertainty that residents have suffered since 2012 on what will happen there and explains why the Department of Transport were carrying out all those soil tests in the village 18 months ago. Now the site is in public ownership there will be greater accountability and we can influence, through Damian, that the eastern end will NEVER be developed, protecting the integrity of Mersham Village and removing the blight.

Dear Residents

We are writing to inform you that the Department of Transport has purchased the site known as 'MOJO' (Church Road, Sevington Ashford). Preliminary works are scheduled to take place on the western parcel from Monday 13 July 2020, this will include: securing the site with fencing, grass and weed vegetation cutting, extensive survey work, the constructing of a temporary site office, and the constructing of a temporary access to the site from the A2070 link road.

Why this site?

The MOJO site is situated in a strategic location given its proximity to the new M20, which is a major route that provides access to and from key ports within the Dover Straits.

What is the planned use of the site?

Plans have not yet been finalised for the use of this site but is anticipated to form part of the Department's strategy to minimise potential disruption at Kent Ports for the end of the Transition Period. This is likely to involve temporary capacity for the holding of delayed HGVs and facilities for border-related controls to be carried out by Government Agencies (e.g. HM Revenue and Customs). More detailed information will be provided in due course.

What kind of disruption is expected in the area?

Initial disruption will be from Church Road into the southern part of the site until access is created from A2070 J10A link road. During Church Road access, there will be traffic lights during the day, but will be manually controlled to minimise delays to residents living on the road. Once the access from A2070 J10A Link road is in place, Church road will be opened to traffic.

During works on the site, to ensure minimum disturbance to the local community, working hours will be restricted to between 07:00-20:00, Monday to Friday, 07:00-17:00 Saturday and no work on Sunday.

The existing Public Right of Way AE639 has been diverted to avoid the working area. Access along Highfield lane will be restricted as this will be part of the site.

Soil bunds will be created adjacent to local residencies to reduce the noise impact from the site.

A map of the affected area is attached to this letter.

What happens next?

Preliminary works will start from 13 July 2020 to begin preparing the site. While we do not expect the works will have a significant impact on the surrounding roads, we will continue to monitor the situation closely to ensure any noise and disruption is minimised.

As the scheme begins to develop and construction is due to begin, more information will be provided to you.

Yours sincerely,

RACHEL MACLEAN MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT



RECOVERY – MOVING FORWARD FOR KENT & ASHFORD

A new campaign has been launched to help get the Kent economy back on its feet again and support businesses and residents in Kent. Moving Forward for Kent, which is being rolled out by KCC and supported by organisations including Visit Kent, Produced in Kent and Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, is a simple but flexible marketing tool to help build confidence in Kent's economic recovery.

The aim is to showcase how businesses are "Moving Forward for Kent" as the county recovers from the economic impacts of an unprecedented pandemic and encourage people to safely return to the economic success that made Kent one of the most dynamic local economies in the country. You can download the free toolkit at www.kent.gov.uk/forkent and be part of this ambitious campaign to recover from one of the biggest challenges faced in Kent in a generation.

Ashford may look very different after the coronavirus outbreak. A temporary bus gate at Elwick Square is being considered as part of a scheme to encourage cycling and walking. ABC and KCC are acting to prepare for recovery and longer-term transformation and has been helping businesses throughout the lockdown and with their preparations to reopen.

The pandemic has had profound impacts on behaviour and accelerated trends that were already happening, especially the growth of the digital economy with online shopping, cashless transactions and home delivery dining apps among key trends. COVID-19 may also have changed people's priorities towards health, happiness and social connection over consumerism. Traditional high streets and town centres already faced significant structural change before COVID-19, but the pandemic may have ruled out any hope of reviving the town centre in its current retail-oriented form. High streets are expected to become spaces for community, connection and local identity. The town centre needs to be more than a shopping centre with more housing, health and wellbeing services, shared workspaces, gyms, markets and green spaces.

LIBRARY SERVICE

KCC reopened Ashford Gateway Plus on Monday, 13 July. It started with a new 'Select and Collect' service that temporarily replaces bookshelf browsing. The Select and Collect provides a book-borrowing service where orders can be made both online and over the phone, allowing customers to pick their items up from one of 12 libraries in Kent (including Ashford) at an agreed date and time. KCC has also restarted its Home Library Service deliveries, along with its postal loan service to the blind and partially sighted. The mobile library service started in late July.

STOUR CENTRE

The Stour Centre Leisure Centre in Ashford will close ahead of a major refurbishment programme which will transform the way leisure facilities are provided in Ashford. The £6.5m investment will include refurbishment of the gym and a new soft play and clip and climb centre at the Stour Centre and a new fitness suite at the Julie Rose Stadium, while both reception areas and the catering offer will be improved with the introduction of Costa Coffee.

By closing the centre, the works will be finished sooner and will greatly enhance the leisure offer when they are open. While the works to the Stour Centre take place, the Julie Rose Stadium will be expanding its activities and gym facilities. The centre will close for around a year, with the anticipated reopening date around mid-2021. It was felt that with the ongoing uncertainty on demand in the short term and the additional social distancing measures as that are likely to be required a result of COVID-19 during the construction, closing the centre is the best option. Without closing the centre the works were expected to take around nine months longer, with the new improved facilities not being available until March 2022.

OVERHANGING VEGETATION

Every year throughout the spring and summer KCC Highways & Transportation receive numerous complaints regarding trees, hedges and other vegetation, which overhang the highway from private property. This matter can pose a number of problems for people trying to use the footways, especially if they are trying to pass with buggies, wheelchairs and scooters. It would be greatly appreciated if you could ensure that any trees and hedges that are bordering the Highway are maintained and cut back to your boundary which would greatly benefit all Highway users. This will help KCC keep the highway safe and prevent the need for KCC writing to you requesting that you cut back your vegetation. KCC's requirements are as follows.

If the boundary of your property borders footway,

- The full width of the footway/pavement must be available for use by pedestrians.
- As well, there must be a minimum height clearance over the footway/pavement of 2.1 metres/7 feet for any vegetation.

If the boundary of your property borders the carriageway,

- If you have vegetation that overhangs into the road, there must be a minimum height clearance of 5 metres/16 feet to accommodate buses and HGVs that may use the road.
- If your property is rural, then vegetation should be 0.45 metres/1.5 feet behind the edge of the road and all signs need to be kept clear of foliage.

Please pay special attention to your trees, hedges and vegetation if your property is on or near a junction, and/or inside the bend of the road, to maintain maximum visibility for road users.

In normal circumstances, there is no legal requirement for an owner of a tree to carry out works to abate overhang nuisance. However, the adjoining land owner has the right to cut back the branches that overhang their property. Any debris that is removed should be offered back to the owner who is entitled to advise that it is not wanted. Additionally, the owner of the tree is not legally responsible for the fees/costs to remove the branches overhanging the neighbouring property providing that no damage has occurred to that property.

The only reason KCC requests an adjoining landowner to cut back hedges and tree branches is because KCC is a Highway Authority and therefore has a statutory legal duty under the Highway Act 1980 to ensure the road is not obstructed or highway users endangered by vegetation/trees. KCC can use section 154 to enforce this duty if an owner does not wish to comply. However, KCC prefers to work with landowners to get the necessary work completed rather than issuing section 154 notices.

ROADSIDE DITCHES

Blockages in roadside ditches can cause significant drainage issues for roads and nearby properties. KCC is only responsible for maintaining a roadside ditch if it was constructed as part of the road and forms part of the highway. In other cases, responsibility for the ditch falls to the "riparian" owner, normally the owner of the field next to the road.

KCC is the Land Drainage Authority except where it is an “ordinary watercourse” or “main watercourse” which are managed by the Internal Drainage Board or Environment Agency respectively. Where KCC is the Land Drainage Authority it can serve notice on the riparian owner to have work carried out and if they do not carry out work, carry out the work and bill the riparian owner. KCC also has the duty to keep the highway free from flooding. So, KCC can be the first port of call for road and roadside drainage issues and can navigate through the complexities

HIGHWAYS REPAIRS

KCC will trial sustainable graphene asphalt on roads in Dartford, to prevent cracks and potholes for longer at a greater benefit to the environment. The extra-strong material will be used to resurface damaged roads as the graphene-enhanced asphalt is less likely to soften in the heat or harden and crack in colder temperatures.

If successful, graphene on roads will lower costs for the Council as maintenance for repairs will be less frequent as well as reduce carbon emissions and disruption to road users. It is hoped that the graphene will eventually be rolled out across the county.

DIVERSION SIGNS

Following the reports of diversion signs not being removed, particularly around J9, I have contacted Highways England who have said that more operatives have been hired to travel the Kent Corridor (which includes Ashford) to remove old diversion signage.



BLACKDOWN DRIVE

I am very pleased that a handrail has now been installed in the stepped alleyway between Quantock Drive and Blackdown Drive. This project was instigated by Cllr Euan Anckorn and paid for out of my KCC Community Member Fund allocation. A good example of KCC and ABC councillors working together.



SOLAR PANELS

Over 1,300 new solar panels have been installed on five KCC buildings saving 86 tonnes of carbon emissions a year, equivalent to taking 20 cars off the road. On 22 June 2020, the largest array in the scheme with 608 panels was switched on.

KCC has long supported solar PV – the first installation was at Hever Primary School in 2007. Since then KCC have installed solar panels on all sorts of buildings ranging from the Cyclopark Gravesend to the Highways Depot at Ashford and many more schools.

KCC has committed to work with our partners to achieve a zero carbon Kent by 2050 and to decarbonise its own operations and buildings well in advance of this. Between 2010 and 2019 KCC reduced greenhouse gas emissions on its own estate by 45%.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Kent businesses can apply to trial an electric vehicle for up to two months to see how the switch to electric could benefit their business and Kent's environment. KCC has secured £1.5 million in funding from Highways England to provide 50 electric vans and 12 new electric vehicle charging points for the two-year scheme. This is another important contribution to becoming a zero carbon Kent by 2050.

The scheme complements KCC plans to increase the number of EV charging points for use by business and the public across the county. Each business taking part, will receive a free report, showing how much money and emissions they could save by switching to electric vehicles. They will also benefit from a free fleet review and, if eligible, access to other support through Low Carbon Kent initiatives. Businesses who want to register interest in the scheme, which will start this autumn, should email lowcarbon@kent.gov.uk

WATER CONSUMPTION

Thank you for heading the recent message urging you not to water your gardens or wash their cars during the hot weather. This helped water supply companies to make sure there was enough water for all. Thursday 25th June saw the highest daily demand for drinking water on the south east network in 10 years – 668 million litres! To make sure there was enough drinking water for everyone, an extra 140 million litres of water was extracted, treated and pumped every a day into the network to help cope with the high demand – enough to fill an additional two million bath tubs.

Now the weather has cooled and we've seen some rain, drinking water storage tanks are recovering slowly. Despite this, please continue to head the message on water efficiency throughout the summer and any future hot spells we may have.

Five ways to save water while at home this summer



1 Learn to love your brown lawn

Leave the sprinkler in the shed this summer. Any brown grass will actually provide shade to the newer grass underneath, so it'll bounce back in no time.

2 Water plants after 9pm

The water is less likely to evaporate and will do the most good. You could also use the leftover water from cooking vegetables for extra nutrients.



3 Forget washing the car

Why not put down the bucket and sponge, put your feet up and embrace the dirt during this summer scorcher! Just remember to keep your lights, mirrors and number plate clear.

4 Take a shorter shower or a shallower bath

Just a minute less in the shower can save as much as £50 a year on your water bill.



5 Fix that dripping tap

Dripping taps are just money running down the drain (they waste around 17 litres in just 24 hours). Our leak busters are working around the clock too – if you spot a leak in the street please report it at southeastwater.co.uk/reportaleak

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