

Minutes of the Monthly Council Meeting of Lower Halstow Parish Council held virtually due to Coronavirus Covid19 restrictions on Tuesday 2nd February 2021

Present: Cllrs: K Howard-Challis (Chair); M Szabo (Vice-chair); T Portman; A Smith; P Miller; Mrs A Smith (Clerk); and 11 members of the public.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Groves and Stiles.

2. Declarations of Pecuniary or Non Pecuniary Interest

None.

3. Public Session:

A resident from Crouch Hill Court wanted to make the Parish Council aware of bottle digging on the Brickfields and suggested a notice to say that the sea wall is soft and not maintained and should not be dug. A resident from Lapwing Drive commented that it does not appear to be digging but where the sea wall is collapsing, because it is so wet.

A resident at Lapwing Drive read a statement to say that he was concerned by the response at the January Parish Council meeting to the issue of the repairs at the dock and quayside, saying that it is very unusual for a Parish Council to be involved in secret negotiations about a Parish asset. He quoted the Chairman's statements from the January Minutes. He accepted the confidential nature of commercial negotiations but that there is no justification for secrecy around the public matter of the repairs intended and the future use of the dock and quayside. He went on to describe the attributes of the Thames Sailing Barge Edith May and saying that it has paid regular fair rent for the 20 years. The resident agreed that the Edith May must leave the dock for the duration of the repairs of the quayside but if she leaves without an agreement to return, that raises the issue of how does the village justify the cost of repairing the quay set against the probability of the dock remaining empty for most of the time with uncertain income. There are economic ways to repair the quayside which he hoped had been considered and that the Parish Council should be involving people from the village in open discussions and not keeping them away under a shroud of unjustified total secrecy.

A resident from Vicarage Lane asked the Parish Council to consider signs to be stored at locations around the village regarding the flooding that regularly occurs in Sheerness Road.

4. Reports from:

a) KCC Cllr Mike Whiting:

RAIL

Members will be aware of the rail works to repair the embankment at Newington. The line is closed until 8 February and a replacement bus services is operating. Network rail is organising Zoom meetings for members of the public to call in and get the latest updates, and I will post details as I get them on my Facebook page facebook.com/cllrmikewhiting.

ROADS

KCC has also announced a further £5 million road resurfacing fund. The A2 from Medway to Newington has recently been resurfaced, and the stretch throughout to Keycol Hill is already programmed. The new fund will ensure the A2 along Key Street and London Road will also benefit.

VACCINATIONS

The Covid-19 vaccination programme in our area is now well underway. I was at a meeting with the NHS last week where they told me that the programme is "patchy" across Kent and Medway, including here in Sittingbourne. However, they are confident they will meet the national target of ensuring everyone in the top four groups will have their jab by the middle of February, and are organising home visits for those who can't get out to get their jab. NHS managers are asking GPs to have reserve lists of people who can come in at short notice to ensure no doses of the vaccine go to waste. While this may mean some in lower priority groups get their vaccine ahead of those in higher risk groups, it is better than throwing doses away. Their priority is to ensure every available dose available is used. Full details at <https://www.kentandmedwayccg.nhs.uk/your-health/coronavirus/covid19vaccine>. I congratulate and thank all of the health professionals

and the army of volunteers that are ensuring this mass-vaccination programme can go as smoothly as possible. The best way you can help is to accept your invitation when you receive it, and get your vaccine. Meanwhile stay indoors as much as you can, wear a mask if you do go out and keep your distance. Infection rates in Swale coming down quickly, down 1/3rd in the past week, but let's not give the virus any opportunity to reverse that welcome trend.

FINANCIAL HELP

Finally, a reminder that anyone eligible for free school meals who needs extra financial support to help feed their children can visit www.kent.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals.

The KentTogether helpline remains open for any other Kent resident who needs support with food, collection of medication and prescriptions and other urgent needs during the pandemic, 24 hours a day. You can get help by visiting www.kent.gov.uk/kenttogether or calling 03000 41 92 92.

Cllr Whiting also commented on how important both the Edith May and the Docks are to the village and he hoped that a resolution and way forward could be found.

b) SBC Councillors

The application through the members grant scheme for funding towards the dock project is going through and should be done quite quickly. The sign at the junction of The Street and School Lane has been ordered and will be replaced in the next couple of weeks. The issue regarding glass on the roads following the recycling collection has been reported and is being followed up. The Parish Council requested advice for the Legal Services Framework and the information has been emailed to the Clerk.

c) Report received from the PCSO:

Crimes of note:

- A stolen vehicle was found in Lapwing Drive, after residents reported it had been parked there over a weekend. The vehicle was recovered by police.

Anti-social behaviour and other incidents of note:

- Reports of a possible poaching in fields around Lower Halstow. A patrol attended and spoke to some people, but it was deemed that they were just taking their dogs for a walk.
- One possible Covid breach was called in. This was sent to the Covid team.

d) Friends of the Brickfields.

No report.

5. **To resolve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th January 2021**

It was resolved that the Minutes of 12th January 2021 are a correct record. They will be signed within social distancing rules. Proposed by Cllr Howard-Challis and seconded by Cllr Szabo. Agreed unanimously.

6. **Correspondence**

- a) An email had been received regarding the hedges and a tree in the Burial Ground. Cllr Portman had trimmed the hedge last year which is high and wide. The canopy of the tree would benefit from being raised. Permission will be needed from Swale Borough Council as the Burial Ground is in a conservation area.

Action: Clerk and Cllr Portman

- b) An email was received regarding preventing quad bikes from entering the site. Quotes will be sought for one kissing gate and a locked pedestrian gate for the two access points either side of the main gate.

Action: Cllr Smith

7. **Matters Arising**

- a) Nominations for the KALC Award Scheme.

Cllr Howard-Challis nominated Mr John McGee in recognition of the work done on behalf of the Parish Council for the Lower Halstow Gigabit Broadband project. The nomination was supported by all the Councillors.

Action: Clerk

- b) Service for defibrillator.

The annual service is due on 28th February 2021. It was agreed to ask the Defib Shop to carry out the service.

Action: Clerk

8. Finance

- a) To approve the credit limit for the card application.

It was proposed by Cllr Szabo and seconded by Cllr Howard-Challis to approve a monthly limit of £1000 and a single transaction limit of £200.00. Agreed unanimously.

Action: Clerk

- b) To agree the contract for Treecraft Grounds Maintenance.

Proposed by Cllr Howard-Challis and seconded by Cllr Smith to approve the continuation of the contract at the same cost as the previous year. Agreed unanimously.

9. To discuss and agree response (if any) to the following Planning Applications:

- a) Application ref: 21/500101/full proposal: Demolition of conservatory and erection of single storey rear/side extension. ADDRESS: 21 Burntwick Drive Lower Halstow Sittingbourne Kent ME9 7DX

In accordance with the Village Planning Strategy it was agreed to support this application.

- b) 21/500266/full proposal: First floor side extension and installation of new bay windows to front elevation. ADDRESS: 100 School Lane Lower Halstow Sittingbourne Kent ME9 7ES

In accordance with the Village Planning Strategy it was agreed to support this application.

10. Planning Applications received between producing the agenda and this meeting

None.

11. Reports from Councillors regarding:

- a) **Parks & Leisure**

Under the current Covid-19 rules the children are allowed to use the play area, however, adults are not allowed to use it as socialising period.

- b) **Footpaths Highways Lighting and Hedgerow Maintenance**

Cllr Portman has been unable to report faults on the KCC website, due to a fire there. However, together with her husband they have managed to clear some of the drains in Vicarage Lane, Crouch Hill Court and The Street and including the culverts at the bridge by the Three Tuns, where it easily floods.

- c) **Parish Highways Plan**

The non-idling signs for near the School is still being investigated. The Chairman is still awaiting to hear from KALC about further 20's plenty meetings. Cllr Smith would like to get the 30 mph signs moved to a further out than they are now and then move to putting the 20 mph zone within that. Speeding surveys which can only take place when the children are at school, will be required. A (virtual) meeting with Highways will be necessary. Cllr Howard-Challis will liaise with KALC regarding the 20's plenty meetings.

Action: Cllr Howard-Challis

- d) **Dock and Brickfields**

Cllr Miller has taken over this matter. Funding has been obtained for the Dock project. Cllr Miller felt that he could not respond to the resident regarding secrecy as he was only co-opted to the council at the last meeting. However, commercial negotiations cannot be conducted in public because of the confidentiality of the rates of the contractor's tenders; keeping negotiations confidential is not uncommon to all local authorities. Declaring a project budget can lead to difficulties when trying to obtain best value for money. Cllr Miller will provide monthly updates and he will try to make sure the negotiations go well regarding the Edith May and that the right solution is reached.

12. To acknowledge reports on meetings attended on behalf of the Parish Council:

- a) KALC Rep.

No report

b) Memorial Hall

No report.

c) Clerks Report.

The Clerk has re-let Plot 1 at Tutt's allotment site. A resident kindly removed the rubbish that had been left there by a rough sleeper, free of charge. All allotments are currently let and there is a waiting list in operation.

The contractor who has made the new noticeboard for the Parish Council has completed it. There have been some changes of plan to its construction due to difficulties caused by the Covid pandemic. He is now awaiting a date from a contractor for it to be concreted in place.

The bank balance as of 31st January is £96765.93

The accounts were sent to the Councillors by email and the payments have been noted by the Councillors. Cllrs Howard-Challis and Szabo will authorise the payments as per the list (attached) by internet banking.

13. Items for information only:

Cllr Miller had received a call from Mr Norris regarding the noticeboard, who apologised for the length of time it has taken. The noticeboard will be erected before the next meeting.

a) Items for the website.

The Clerk read the following email that had been received:

Good afternoon. I just thought you might want to know that Mary Moore (the designer of your wonderful Village Sign, along with her husband - Hector Bradlaugh Moore) of The Forge, Brandeston, Suffolk, has very recently died. She was a relation of mine by marriage (my Grandmother on my Father's side being a Bradlaugh), and she was a remarkable, very talented and lovely lady. She and Hector designed and made over 50 village signs, mostly for Suffolk villages, but a few years ago she told me about your Village Sign as being the only one they ever made for Kent. I took a photo of it for her, and she was thrilled to see how well it was lasting. As it happens, when my Sister and Brother-in-Law were visiting her on one occasion and went into her Studio, she just happened to be painting your Thames Barge! I just thought you might want to know about her death. Very best wishes to you and everyone in Lower Halstow, Isabel Pearce, Sevenoaks, Kent.

Cllr Smith has collected the gate for the rear of the allotments at the Memorial Hall site and will be erected next week if the weather is favourable.

The meeting closed at:19.55

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 2nd March 2021

Payments February 2021

Payee	Description	Gross Amount £	VAT £	Cheque No/Bank Payment
L Stevens & Sons	Rent for Westfield Car Park and Allotments Oct 2020 – Oct 2021 Invoice 0273	200.00		695833092
Treecraft	Grounds Maintenance for the year March 2020 – February 2021 Invoice 2101211	4895.00		904721768
Kent Association of Local Councils	Course: Dynamic Councillor Invoice: 1579553273 £60.00 and Course: Delivering the Green Agenda for Local Councils Invoice: 1577142241 £60.00	120.00	20.00	523704386
Mr M Szabo	Monthly Zoom Meeting Invoice: 66135202	14.39	2.40	937416890

Other payments:

25 February 2021 Standing Order

Clerk's Salary - £644.60

Date:

Signed:

**Cllr. K Howard-Challis
Chair**