

Minutes of the Annual Council Meeting of Lower Halstow Parish Council held on Tuesday 3rd September 2019 in the Memorial Hall, Lower Halstow.

Present: Cllr K Howard-Challis (Chair); Cllr R Smith (Vice-Chair); Cllr A Beerstecher; Cllr E Stiles; Cllr M Szabo; Cllr A Smith; Cllr T Portman; Mrs A Smith ((Clerk); Swale Borough Cllr C Woodford; PCSO Lee Fennell and 8 members of the public.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from KCC Cllr Whiting and SBC Cllr Clark

2. Declarations of Pecuniary or Non Pecuniary Interest

Cllr A Smith declared a pecuniary interest in items 7 c and d. Cllr R Smith declared a pecuniary interest in item 10 a (ii) and Cllr K Howard-Challis declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 8 b.

3. Public Session

A knocking manhole cover outside the Three Tuns was reported as being repaired.

The hedge between Egret Court and Westfield Cottages is severely overgrown, together with parked vehicles, the footpath is obstructed.

The wording for the planning application for 9 bungalows in School Lane has been clarified and the ecology report has been updated. It is likely to go before the October Planning Committee.

The newly installed sluice gate has dramatically changed and improved the situation regarding the rising water upstream. It also has a scouring effect when the tide goes out.

4. Visitors reports or comments

a) KCC Councillor.

KCC parish council report – September 2019 Below is a summary of my work on behalf of the residents since my last report. Sorry I cannot be with you this evening, I am on holiday with my family, but here are the important items I have dealt with over the summer. As usual, please raise any questions through your clerk and I hope to be with you for your September meeting. The first and major item is of course the replacement gas main. I am grateful to those that filled Newington Village Hall to hear from SGN, the Police and Kent Highways. In short, the plan is to replace the 80 year old gas main along the A2 from Oak Lane Upchurch to Key Street roundabout with a new one. This will protect the residents locally from further leaks and danger of explosion, and protect the supply to the 40,000 households served by the main. It is work SGN is prioritising because of the risk of further leaks and the danger to workers and to residents. Because this is such a large main, the work on it is slow and complicated, SGN says it will take up to 42 weeks to complete the project. They intend doing this in 11 sections, one at a time starting at the Upchurch end on 16 September. They will work their way to Key Street over the next 42 weeks. They do not intend closing the A2, but having two-way lights where necessary. A lot of the meeting was taken up, rightly, discussing traffic chaos during the emergency closures recently. I said this had been unacceptable and agreed that SGN, working with KCC needed to ensure signage and general traffic management for each of the 11 sections of the planned works was the subject of detailed audit and discussion between all parties. Both organisations said they would work on that basis and public proposals soonest. If anyone has suggestions for managing traffic, then please let me know and I will happily pass them on and add to those I have already received from residents. One thing that was agreed was for KCC to look at making traffic orders banning HGVs from using the A2 as a through route during the road works. The suggestion is they should use Hoath Way in Rainham and the A249 from Stockbury via the M2 instead. I have concerns over the early schedule, traffic management and mitigation proposed and have asked the works be postponed until all those things raised by the public have been properly investigated. I have this afternoon had the following response:

September 2019 To: Chairman and Members by email Dear Mike Apologies for the delay in getting this to you. I can confirm that SGN have been advised that no planned works will be taking place on the A2 until next year. This will allow more time for the complex traffic management needs to be fully explored and addressed in a plan. SGN have made Sharron aware today that some sections of this main may not survive the higher pressure demands of the autumn and may become emergencies. I think we are all aware that this is a risk and we will need to see what happens. As discussed, all of the comments and suggestions from local residents and businesses will be fully explored as part of this process. The planning is unlikely to have any aspects for discussion for several weeks as the project managers investigate issues and design solutions. Regards Kirstie

Related to the gas main repairs, KCC has agreed to delay the resurfacing of the A2 from Key Street to Upchurch until the SGN works are completed, for obvious reasons. An application has been submitted to Swale Council for a permanent site for eight homes at Spade Lane. I have submitted an objection to the proposal, requesting Swale refuse this application on the grounds that it is in an area not designated for development, is wholly inconsistent with its setting, and that the size of the development will result in a level of vehicle movements that is inappropriate for access via the country lanes in which it sits. The application reference number is 19/503964/FULL, New Acres, Spade Lane, Hartlip, ME9 7TT. I continue to support Parishes wishing to create their own Parish Highways Improvement Plans (HIP) and have referred a resident's enquiry to me to Borden PC for it to consider. I was also grateful to Upchurch for providing me an early draft of its HIP proposals. I continue to be happy to help other Parishes in developing their plan, which I believe is the best and most democratic way locally to identify the important projects and to work together to seek the required funding. I am pleased to have secured home to transport for three families at various appeal hearings at County Hall. As mentioned previously, KCC is working with the police and Swale Council to monitor fly tipping and to assist financially in increasing enforcement and communications around the issue. The police are looking to increase their enforcement action days across the county, and the Borough Council has recently published details of its further successful prosecutions of offenders – this time the offenders were based and collecting in London and dumping on an industrial scale in Swale and Medway. KCC is announcing this week a £60m highways repair programmed over the next two years – a record amount that I am pleased to have helped secure wearing my Cabinet Member hat. I hope this is helpful, please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance in these or any other matters raised during your meeting this evening.

b) SBC Councillors

Cllr Woodford confirmed that the proposed gas works on the A2 have been postponed to the New Year.

c) PCSO

During July and August there was some trouble with young people. There was a theft from the shop which has been captured on CCTV and the perpetrators have been identified. There was also theft of an outboard motor and a car fire which is still being investigated.

d) Friends of the Brickfields

The Kent Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency (EA) have been contacted regarding the cutting of the vegetation on the sea wall. The EA have a cutting regime which stipulates three times a year but their own guidelines say they should not cut in midsummer and they have ignored their own guidelines. The new cutter has cut too low, the damage has been done and it needs to be prevented from happening again. There are four work parties planned for September, October, November and December, details will be in the Village Newsletter. There has been no progress on the signage.

5. To agree Minutes of the Meetings held

It was resolved to agree the Minutes for the meeting held on 2nd July 2019 and they were duly signed.

6. Correspondence

- a) Request for permission to erect a temporary structure to cover the barge 1 Oct – 30 April.
Not discussed. Drawings are still awaited.
- b) Request for Memorial Tree for dogs in the Memorial Wood
It was agreed unanimously not to grant the request.
- c) Complaint regarding parking outside Three Tuns
It was observed that there were only four cars parked in the Parish Council car park which had been opened specifically for the Three Tuns during the Beer Festival. Cllr Whiting will be contacted regarding the possibility of yellow lines on one side of the road, although this may move the problem to another area.
- d) Discussed at 4d.

7. Finance

a) Insurance Renewal

It was proposed by Cllr Stiles and seconded by Cllr Beerstecher to accept the long term agreement for £1105.09. Agreed unanimously.

b) Planning Services regarding proposed extension to Westfield Car Park

It was proposed by Cllr R Smith, seconded by Cllr Portman to accept the quote for £1912.50 (10% reduction, included) plus disbursements and VAT. Agreed unanimously.

c) Quote for Bollards

In principle it was proposed by Cllr Stiles and seconded by Cllr Beerstecher to accept the quote for the bollards of £75.00 each fitted. Agreed unanimously. The Clerk will write to KCC Highways to seek permission to install them.

Action: Clerk

d) Quotes for Tree and Hedge Cutting at Westfield Car Park

It was proposed by Cllr Howard-Challis, seconded by Cllr Stiles to accept the quote for £100.00. Agreed unanimously.

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

a) Ref: 19/502687/FULL – Land at Woodgers Wharf, Horsham Lane, Upchurch, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 7AP.

It was agreed to support Upchurch Parish Council. Proposed by Cllr Beerstecher, seconded by Cll Smith and agreed unanimously to object to the application.

Action: Clerk

b) Ref: 17/505019/FULL – Ridgedale Riding School, Halstow Lane, Upchurch

This item of the meeting was handed over to Cllr R Smith to act as Chair.

The Council agreed to re-affirm their previous objections.

Action: Clerk

9. To allocate responsibilities to Councillors:

- a) It was agreed that Cllr Szabo would take responsibility for Parks and Leisure.
- b) It was agreed that Cllr Portman, assisted by Cllr A Smith would take responsibility for Footpaths, Lighting and Hedgerow Maintenance.
- c) There were no volunteers to take responsibility for Flood Plan and Emergency Plan.

10. To discuss and agree action on the following:

a) BRICKFIELDS & PLANNING

- i) The Clerk has reported the hole in the fence at the Memorial Wood.
- ii) It was proposed by Cllr R Smith, seconded by Cllr Stiles to go ahead with the purchase of the land currently leased at the Brickfields Site and to pay the owners reasonable legal conveyancing costs. The offer made to the owners has been accepted. Agreed unanimously.

b) PARKS & LEISURE

The logs set in a circle as seating have been vandalised. The RoSPA report has suggested that they should be removed, as they had rotted. The handyman will remove these shortly.

c) **DOCKS & BARGES and CAR PARKS**

The specification for the extension of Westfield Car Park is still to be agreed. Grants and a Public Works Loan will be applied for in respect of the repairs to the dock.

Action: Clerk

d) **FOOTPATHS HIGHWAYS LIGHTING and HEDGEROW MAINTENANCE**

No report.

e) **FLOOD PLAN, EMERGENCY PLAN, TOTAL QUALITY ITEMS (POLICY, SAFETY, AUDITS).**

No report

f) **VILLAGE INVENTORY, PARKING and HANDYMAN LIAISON**

The following report from Cllr Stiles was read out to the meeting:

The Major road works replacing the Gas Main between Oak Lane and Key Street. The works are to be carried out in a number of phases over a projected period spanning 42 weeks. With the traffic flow controlled by temporary traffic lights it is very likely that the resulting "traffic jams" will prompt drivers to divert in an attempt to avoid delays to their journey time. This will undoubtedly increase the volume of vehicles using the Lower Halstow roads.

Inconsiderate parking continues on Breach Lane blocking the pavement, causing pedestrians, wheel chair users, parents with pushchairs, parents shepherding their young children to primary school, and partially sighted persons, with no other option than to walk in the road. The predicted increase of traffic volume increases the risk to life to an unacceptable level. This footway did not exist 35-40 years ago; it was constructed by the highways authority for safety reasons, some of those who campaigned for this still live in Westfield Cottages.

At present the law prohibiting parking on the pavement is a very grey area, except in London. "Driving onto a pavement to park on it" is a criminal offence, under section **72 Highways Act 1935**, local authorities and the Police do have powers to remove vehicles or ticket them, if causing an obstruction. But historically they don't.

Persuading the Police and Swale Council to prosecute these offenders, a further issue will be created i.e. providing a suitable alternative.

It would be good if during this period of the heightened risk to our residents, the Gas Company SGN in conjunction with the KCC and Swale Borough Council, temporarily requisition the land, formally a car park (previously the Working Men's Club) and reinstate it for the period of these works at SGN's cost. The substrate for this facility still exists. Also introducing a No Waiting and Parking Ban for this section of the road, with yellow bollards placed in situ.

In order to avoid another grid lock, suitable signage prohibiting HGV's from Lower Halstow, and enforcing 30 mile speed limit is essential, especially along the whole stretch of Breech Lane rather than the national limit 60 mph.

In the long term LHPC are about to engage a professional planning consultant, with a view to constructing a new car park extension, at the southern end of Westfield Cottages, see item 7C Agenda meeting 3rd September.
Councillor E Stiles.

At this point in the meeting, the owner of the land opposite Club Cottages, informed the councillors that he would not agree to reinstating it as a car park.

- i) Cllr Portman reported that there is a lot of litter along The Street, by the Three Tuns. As it is quite a treacherous stretch of road to litter pick perhaps a litter bin would be more appropriate.

- ii) It was also reported that there are weeds along the kerb in Lapwing Drive and Burntwick Drive. The Clerk will liaise with Cllr Woodford regarding a road sweeper.

Action: Clerk

- iii) Cllr R Smith requested that a letter is sent to the Green Farmhouse requesting that their perimeter hedge is cut back.

Action: Clerk

11. To acknowledge Reports on meetings attended on behalf of the Parish Council:

- a) **KALC Rep**
No report.
- b) **Memorial Hall Rep**
No report.

12. Clerks Report:

The Clerk has paid into Unity Trust Bank £550.00 in Westfield Car Park fees. The change to internet banking is still ongoing, but should be brought to a conclusion as soon as the balance from Barclays Bank is transferred. Some information is being sought from those companies the Parish Council pays direct debits to. There is a problem at Tutt's allotments with what appears to be some subsidence, possibly due to the ruins of a cottage that was previously on the site.

Barclays Bank balance is £64851.00

Unity Trust Bank balance is £1050.00

13. Items for information only:

Cllr Stiles reported that two low loaders carrying two halves of a large static caravan came through Lower Halstow causing an obstruction outside the Three Tuns. It appeared that the destination was Bassar Farm and that there is no planning consent.

Cllr R Smith reported that there is a Planning Application in Iwade. (19/503974/HYBRID.) This application includes the new build of 446 houses, although this application is not in our Parish, if approved the scheme would have a significant effect on our Village, particularly in terms of high traffic increase, especially if problems are experienced on the A249 (Main road between Key Street and Sheerness.)

14. To receive items for Village News and the Website:

Flowers for next year to decorate the village

Date of next meeting: 1st October 2019

The meeting closed at: 8.30

Cheques – September 2019

Payee	Description	Amount £	Cheque No.
Lower Halstow Parish Council	Deposit to Unity Trust Bank to open new account	500.00	100455
Mrs A Beerstecher	Reimbursement for Best Front Garden Prizes	105.00	100456
Lower Halstow Memorial Hall Trust Fund	Hire of Hall Invoice 63: 4 th June 2019 - £25.50 Invoice 73: 2 nd July 2019 - £25.50	51.00	100457
Commercial Services Trading Ltd	Second Quarterly Invoice for Grounds Maintenance 2019	978.48	100458
Playsafety Limited	RoSPA Annual Inspection of Play area, School Lane	94.80	100459
JRB Enterprise Ltd	Supply of 4 x 800 Economy Dispenser Dog Gloves	118.92	100460
Kent Association of Local Councils	Invoice: 976970366: - £144.00 An Introduction to Planning for Local Councils' x 2 Invoice: 976983269: - £72.00 Clerks' Conference 17 Sept 2019	216.00	100461

Other Payments:
Standing Order

Clerk's Salary £300.00

Date:

Signed:

**Cllr. K Howard-Challis
Chair**