

**Minutes** of the Monthly Council Meeting of Lower Halstow Parish Council held virtually due to Coronavirus Covid19 restrictions on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Present: Cllrs: K Howard-Challis (Chair); M Szabo; A Smith; E Stiles; A Groves; Mrs A Smith (Clerk); and 10 members of the public.

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Portman, SBC Cllr Corrie Woodford and PCSO Lee Fennell. Due to technical problems Cllr Roger Clark was unable to connect to the meeting.

**2. Declarations of Pecuniary or Non Pecuniary Interest**

Cllr A Smith declared a pecuniary interest in the quote regarding the allotment fencing and gate (Item 9b).

**3. Public Session:**

Before the session was opened to the public the Chair stated: "I am unable to take any comments or questions regarding the Dock Repair or the Edith May as this is now a legal matter. Any ongoing negotiations will be conducted by email or letter only. We will of course keep you in the loop in the future as it goes forward. Thank you very much."

A resident from Lapwing drive has been unable to contact Southern Water about the current status and he was under the impression that they would contact the Parish Council routinely. The Parish Council have been trying to contact them over the last week, but had no response whatsoever. The resident will try to contact them on the Council's behalf to follow up. The resident also asked regarding progress of purchasing the strip of land at the Brickfields site. The Parish Council have again had no response. The resident also asked about the sea wall, but the Parish Council cannot comment on this currently.

Mr E Gransden requested a meeting regarding the Edith May. The Chair informed him that he had been advised not to comment at this time.

**4. Reports from:**

a) KCC Cllr Mike Whiting:

My report looks back at some of the things I have been involved with over the past month across the Swale West Division, which includes the parishes of Bobbing, Borden, Hartlip, Iwade, Lower Halstow, Newington and Upchurch. May I start by wishing everyone a Happy New Year. The lockdown imposed yesterday is not the way any of us would have wanted to start the New Year, but it is vital that we all do what we can to help get the virus under control. The Oxford vaccine this week is, I believe, a game-changer in protecting people against this dreadful disease. Getting it rolled out to millions of people is a big challenge. I have been very disappointed that, to date, there is no vaccination hub in Sittingbourne and have raised this with the Director of Public Health and directly with the NHS. It is not right that those across the border in Medway, and those across the Swale in Sheppey have been receiving the vaccine for weeks, while it is still unavailable here in Sittingbourne and the villages. I will continue to press hard for this to change quickly and for Sittingbourne to be included in the 1,000 vaccination centres the government has spoken about today. For those who want to know more, this page is updated daily and best explains how NHS will roll the vaccines out in the weeks ahead.

<https://www.kentandmedwayccg.nhs.uk/your-health/coronavirus/covid19vaccine> Mass testing is now available to all residents in Swale, with a new test centre opening this week in Kemsley. I would urge everyone to get tested. By identifying those who have contracted Covid but are not showing symptoms we can better control the spread. My family's test results have all come back within half an hour. I wrote to Police Sergeant Jason Hedges, thanking him for his great service to our communities for many years. Jason has now retired from the police, and I am sure we all wish him a long and happy retirement. I have been contacted by residents and Hartlip Parish Council with their concerns over continued development at Spade Lane. On their behalf, I have asked the planning department at Swale Borough Council to investigate this and take action to stop any unauthorised development of the site Councillors and Clerks Swale West Division. I have had a couple

of people contact me to report damage to their cars due to potholes. If you see a pothole then please report it on the KCC Report a Fault webpage <https://www.kent.gov.uk/roadsand-travel/report-a-problem>. This is the best way to get it fixed quickly. If you have suffered damage to your car, then details about how to make a claim are at <https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-andtravel/report-a-problem/claims-for-damage-to-your-vehicle>. I met with Kent Police, Swale Council, KCC and the Environment Agency just before Christmas to discuss the ongoing works at Raspberry Hill. Various actions have been taken in the past weeks will continue, and any reports or photos sent to me by residents are passed onto the relevant authorities. In Upchurch we managed to get the pathway cleared of vegetation in Otterham Quay Lane, and I have written to Swale Council following complaints by residents of lorries blocking the pathway in the Lane. Also, before Christmas, I contacted the company running open air cinemas in Spade Lane following complaints from residents. I was pleased to get a quick response saying the company had cancelled all future showings. I would like to congratulate all at the Borden Wildlife Group for their excellent calendar this year, which sold out and raised £1,200. On the subject of wildlife, I have arranged a meeting with a member of the Wildlife Group and Kent Highways (virtually) to discuss how we might make it safer for badgers and other animals to cross the lanes more safely. Sadly, there have been a number of badgers run over in recent months. The Consultation regarding improvements to Key Street junction and Grovehurst junction runs until 26 January 2021. The Consultation Booklet, is downloadable from the consultation website via the following link: [www.kent.gov.uk/A249swalejunctionimprovements](http://www.kent.gov.uk/A249swalejunctionimprovements). KCC welcomes your input and any comments regarding the proposals, these can be provided through the 'Have Your Say' section within the Virtual Consultation Hall. If you have any questions for the project team or require any of the consultation material printed, please email them at [A249swalejunctionimprovements@kent.gov.uk](mailto:A249swalejunctionimprovements@kent.gov.uk) or leave a message on 03000 42 14 37. Flooding continues to be a problem in Boxted Lane, Newington, Old House Lane and Lower Hartlip Road in Hartlip, and Grovehurst Road in Iwade, in addition to a number of blocked gullies and drains elsewhere. I report flooding to Kent Highways and ask that your parishioners do so as well via the Report a Fault page <https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem>. Thank you for everything you do for the communities you serve, please do not hesitate to contact me if I can assist you in any way. To keep up to date then please follow me on my Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/CllrMikeWhiting> SBC Councillors.

The Swale household recycling centre booking system now allows you to book as many visits as you like, it had been limited to four visits per household a month. This restriction has been lifted. The vaccination centre opens on Saturday in Sittingbourne. Please wait for an invitation from your GP. There have been some flooding issues at the bottom of Basser Hill. KCC are now consulting on their budget. The Country Eye app has had a function added whereby fly parking by HGV's can be reported and KCC now have the power to prosecute.

b) PCSO

Crimes of note:

- Two trials bikes were stolen from a garage in Crouch Hill Court. A patrol attended and a crime report was taken.

Anti-social behaviour and other incidents of note:

- Report of male bait-digging near the Brickfields. No patrols free to attend, so report sent to Rural Unit
- A dog attacked another in the village, causing the dog walker to fall and break a bone. A crime report has been taken and is being investigated.
- After a report of poaching with dogs and guns, a patrol attended and stopped a group. The group did not have any guns and were walking their dogs, not working them.
- Call about a group who were organising fights with cockerels on a farm off Breach Lane. A patrol attended and discovered they were chickens bred for shows.

c) Friends of the Brickfields.

No report.

**5. To resolve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> December**

It was resolved to amend the Minutes for the meetings held on 6<sup>th</sup> October and 3<sup>rd</sup> November, by deleting "in the Memorial Hall", to add "virtually due to Coronavirus Covid19 restrictions" and to resolve the Minutes of 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020 are a correct record. They will be signed within social distancing rules. Proposed by Cllr Smith and seconded by Cllr Stiles. Agreed unanimously.

**6. Correspondence**

- a) Email from resident at Lapwing Drive regarding issues on the Brickfields. Cllr R Smith replied to the resident regarding this. Noted.
- b) Email from resident at The Street, regarding Old Mill and Gibbs Amenity land. A planning application is shortly to be submitted. Noted.
- c) The Parish Council's complaint regarding Barclays Bank. Barclays account has now been closed. However, the only letter received came via the Financial Ombudsman who asked if the Parish Council were happy with the result. It was agreed to request compensation via the Financial Ombudsman.

**Action: Clerk**

**7. Matters Arising**

- a) To consider the applications to co-opt councillors to Lower Halstow Parish Council. The Parish Council had received one application for the position. Cllr Howard-Challis proposed that Paul Miller be co-opted to Lower Halstow Parish Council. Seconded by Cllr Smith, which was agreed.
- b) To nominate and vote in a new Vice-Chair. Cllr Howard-Challis proposed Cllr Szabo for the position. Seconded by Cllr Smith, which was agreed.
- c) Update and report from Michael Van der Straaten on brickfields coastal erosion, options and funding. A report had been received and distributed to the councillors from Herrington Consulting Ltd. To summarise: There is a severe problem with the sea wall along the section where stone revetments finish and the dock. It was estimated that it will be one or two years before it is breached and even today there is more falling away, it is rapidly eroding. The most expensive solution will be to replace the stone revetment all the way round to Twinney which would cost upwards of £200,000 and would last a lifetime, or it could be replaced with cement blocks which would save £30,000 to £40,000. They also investigated raising the beach with rubble but would be unlikely to be given permission. If these are unaffordable it was suggested to use faggots. They would normally fill with sediment to aid the preservation but this will not probably happen in this case. An estimated lifespan is approximately 5 years. The cost would be between £15,000 and £20,000.

**8. Policies**

- a) To adopt the Village Planning Strategy. Cllr Howard-Challis proposed that the Parish Council adopt the Village Planning Strategy, seconded by Cllr Szabo. Agreed unanimously.

**9. Finance**

- a) To agree the precept request from Swale Borough Council. The budget had been circulated to the councillors prior to December 2020's meeting. The precept request of £37740.00 (frozen at last year's amount) and the budget for 2021/22 was formally approved. Council Tax Band will be £82.59, a percentage increase of 0.84%. Proposed by Cllr Howard-Challis and seconded by Cllr Stiles. Unanimous.
- b) To consider the quotes for the fence and gate at the rear of Memorial Hall allotments. Two quotes have been received. It was agreed to accept the quote of £450.00 from ATS.
- c) It was agreed to approve the rent increase to £200 per annum for the land rented at Westfield allotments and car park.

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

- a) Any applications received between producing the agenda and this meeting.

None.

**11. Planning Applications received between producing the agenda and this meeting**  
**20/506122/PNQCLA**

Address: Little Barksore Farm Sheerness Road Lower Halstow Sittingbourne Kent ME9 7ED  
Noted.

**12. Reports from Councillors regarding:**

a) **PARKS & LEISURE**

No report.

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

Report from Cllr Portman: I have had to re stake one tree on the Rec as it was broken previously. They continue to thrive. A member of the village asked for my help to report blocked drains on Sheerness Rd, (she doesn't have access to the internet). I had a look and reported the problem on the KCC website. My daffodils planted in October are starting to emerge around the village. Something to cheer us up.

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

a) KALC Rep. No report but a second representative from Lower Halstow PC would be appreciated for future meetings. Cllr Miller volunteered.

b) Memorial Hall Rep. No report.

**14. Clerks Report.**

Cllr Rob Smith tendered his resignation on 9th December and the casual vacancy notice was posted on the noticeboard and website accordingly.

A resident reported a yacht which had moored at the end of the dock in an unsafe manner.

The skipper was asked to slacken off the ropes he had attached to the lifebuoy holder as the weight was causing great strain to it. The PCSO was informed and the yacht has now left the dock.

The bank balance as of 31st December is £99071.05

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.

**15. Items for information only:**

Cllr Howard-Challis delivered a brief update on some of the projects and successes that the council has achieved in 2020 for the village.

"These have all been possible due to a collaborative approach of reaching out to the talents and skills of our residents, to support the normal land on-going work of the Parish Council.

The three big examples I would like to highlight are:

1) **The Village Planning Strategy**

As adopted by us this evening, this strategy will for the first time ever provide us with a clear set of objectives to both protect and enhance our village. We are now one of the very few villages in Swale to have a documented position on development and we hope that it will encourage decision makers to take our views into account more seriously in the future.

2) **The Dock Repair Project**

This was of considerable concern to the council for some time as you will all know, and it was looking increasingly unlikely that we could raise the significant capital for the work to be done until we called upon a resident for help. This resulted in the discovery of a funding route and in turn led to funding being obtained. Such a brilliant result and one that will now save one of the village's most important and treasured assets.

3) **The Village Gigabit Project**

This project followed an opportunity presented to the council last March by Councillor Mike Whiting. Once again, we approached a resident with the necessary skills who took on this project and we are delighted that Lower Halstow is now set to become one of the

only villages in Swale to enjoy the fastest and most reliable broadband connections available in the UK.

All three of these projects are of enormous benefit to our community and I am sure that you will all join me in thanking those who stepped up and put in such a massive effort for the benefit of the entire village for decades to come. This collaborative approach is one that I, as Chairman am keen to continue in 2021.”

Keith

- a) Items for the website: Cllr Groves is working on an item regarding the achievements of the Parish Council over the last year. Flyers are not practical at this time.
- b) To receive agenda items for the next meeting: None.

**Date of next meeting:** Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2021

The meeting closed at: 20.11

## Payments January 2021

Payee	Description	Gross Amount £	VAT £	Cheque No/Bank Payment
Mr J Knott	Village Cleaning and Play Area Check Oct – Dec 2020	<b>225.00</b>		609950708
Mrs A I Smith	Salary and Expenses Reconciliation Oct – Dec 2020	<b>450.42</b>		408309252
HMRC	PAYE Income Tax	<b>210.36</b>		379469547
Mr M Szabo	Reimbursement for Zoom Meeting Invoice 60332700 Dec 2020	<b>14.39</b>	<b>2.40</b>	253502887
DCK Accounting Solutions	Payroll Services fee Oct-Dec 2020	<b>42.00</b>	<b>7.00</b>	239108290
Commercial Services	Grounds Maintenance Oct-Nov 2020	<b>195.56</b>	<b>32.59</b>	901662079
Herrington Consulting Limited	Brickfields – Coastal Management Services Invoice 5107	<b>480.00</b>	<b>80.00</b>	301560286
Business Stream	Water Supply 5 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2020– 5 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2021 Invoice: 11	<b>81.70</b>		26842401

Other payments:

18 January 2021 Direct Debit

Electricity Supply - £191.09

25 January 2021 Standing Order

Clerk's Salary - £644.60

**Date:****Signed:**Cllr. K Howard-Challis  
Chair