

**Minutes of Mersham Parish Council**  
**Meeting held in on Monday, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2020 via Skype**

**Present**

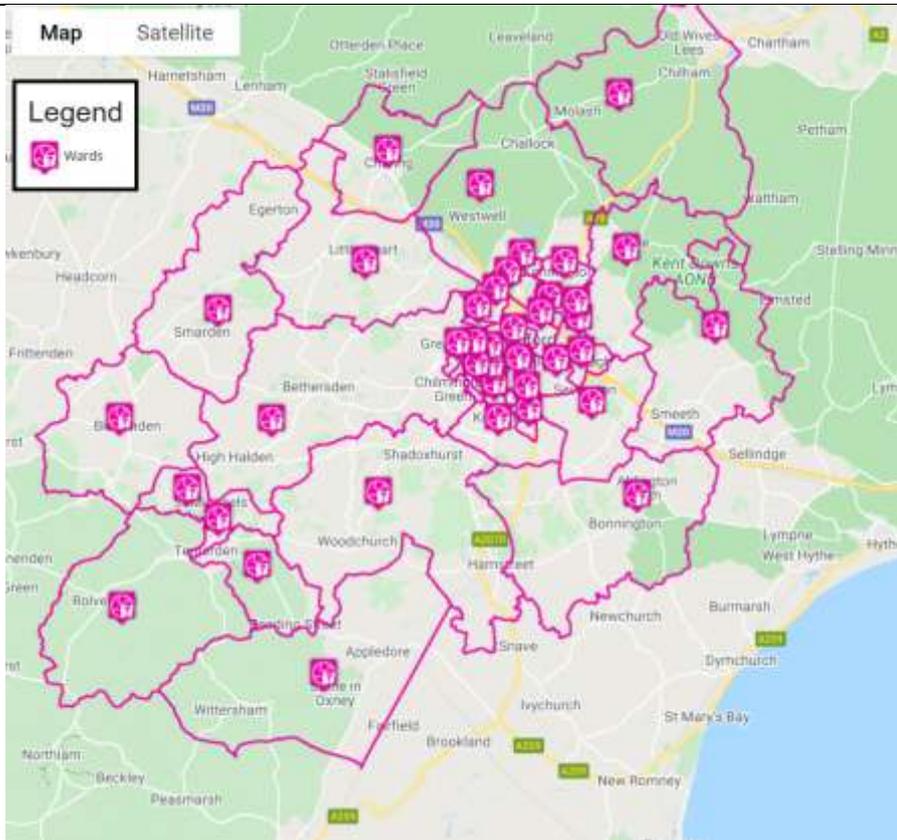
Pete Turley (Chair)  
 Gavin Murphy

Geoffrey Fletcher

In attendance: Borough Councillor Paul Bartlett and Tracey Block (Clerk)

To be actioned by:

<p><b>To elect a Chairman and any Vice-Chairman for 2020-21</b></p> <p>Cllr Fletcher proposed that Cllr Turley be elected as Chairman, Cllr Murphy seconded this proposal and Cllr Turley took the Chair.</p> <p>Cllr Turley proposed that Cllr Murphy be elected as Vice-Chairman, Cllr Fletcher seconded this proposal.</p>	
<p><b>To complete and sign Declaration of Acceptance of Office and Declaration of Interest Forms</b></p> <p>The Declaration of Acceptance of Office and the Declaration of Interest Forms were completed and signed.</p>	
<p><b>To receive and approve apologies for absence.</b></p> <p>No apologies had been received.</p>	
<p><b>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.</b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
<p><b>To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020</b></p> <p><b>Minutes</b> of the Meeting of the Mersham with Sevington Parish Council on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020 were approved as a true record and were signed as such.</p>	
<p><b>To discuss matters arising from previous minutes that are not covered by the agenda.</b></p> <p>There were no matters arising to discuss.</p>	
<p><b>Public session: To receive questions and comments from the public on any agenda item.</b></p> <p>The were no members of the public present</p>	
<p><b>To receive report from Borough Councillor</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>COUNCIL UPDATE JUNE 2020</u></b></p> <p><b>CORONAVIRUS</b></p> <p>Local businesses have worked hard during the crisis. Our pubs provided hot meal deliveries and stalls. Nearby restaurants are providing takeaways with commercial wholesalers delivering to people's homes. The village shop proved to be a lifeline for those unwilling to visit large stores. Well done to all concerned. As we come out of lockdown these are the businesses that will help us stay safe and become independent again, so let's support them to stay in business too.</p> <p>A great map created by Ashford Borough Council highlights what food delivery services are operating, and it's being updated daily. If a local farm shop or pub isn't listed, make sure they sign up. The address is <a href="https://www.ashford.gov.uk/your-community/emergency-planning/health-and-pandemics/coronavirus-covid-19/food-and-essential-supplies/food-delivery-business-search/">https://www.ashford.gov.uk/your-community/emergency-planning/health-and-pandemics/coronavirus-covid-19/food-and-essential-supplies/food-delivery-business-search/</a></p>	



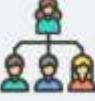
Short term help is available from KCC if you are having serious difficulties managing your income due to a crisis or if you are facing exceptional pressures because of an emergency. Details at <https://www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/care-and-support/benefits/home-essentials-in-a-crisis#tab-4>

If you have applied for, or in receipt of Universal Credit you can get free personalised advice online from the Money Advice Service. This includes budgeting advice and guidance on managing your bills whilst you are waiting for a payment. Simply go to: [www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/categories/universal-credit](http://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/categories/universal-credit) Debt Management/ or 0300 500 5000 or [www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk](http://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk)



## Keeping vital services running during COVID-19

#KentTogether

 <p><b>3,533 online library joiners</b> and 184,064 digital items borrowed</p>	 <p>KCC supplied over <b>2.4m</b> pieces of PPE in over 1,300 separate deliveries</p>	 <p><b>Over 230 bus services supported</b> to operate across Kent, helping essential shopping trips and key worker journeys</p>
 <p><b>Over 950 adult education courses</b> converted to online delivery</p>	 <p><b>89,212m<sup>2</sup> of roads patched</b> <b>5,669 potholes filled</b></p>	 <p><b>Online youth hub sessions</b> More than 1,000 young people accessing and taking part</p>

Data correct as of 6th May 2020



## Supporting Kent's businesses during COVID-19

#KentTogether



**250** local food producers supported  
through #helpkentbuylocal



**1,800** hours of advice  
provided by our Business Advisers



**£8m** of grant funding  
accessed by Kent businesses with help from the Kent & Medway Growth Hub



**4,589** enquiries handled

by Kent & Medway Growth Hub Covid-19 Business Support Helpline

### Highways

**2,000** permits for roadworks issued every week



ensuring that gas, electric, telecoms and other utilities keep their services available for everyone.

### 34 COVID-19 related scam alerts

provided to Kent residents and businesses



Data correct as of 6th May 2020



## Supporting the most vulnerable during COVID-19

#KentTogether



Kent Together helpline has **helped 3,481** people get the support they need



**116** customised activity packs provided to adults with a learning disability to help support them and their wellbeing



**15,000** calls made to check vulnerable children remain safe



**1,184** vulnerable people\* supported

by Community Wardens (food, prescriptions, advice, welfare support)  
\*Non-shielded

### 47,000 hours of social care

provided in people's homes across Kent each week



### 70 community day care service users

having online sessions with our staff around arts, technology and gardening

Data correct as of 6th May 2020

Details of new testing arrangements have become available and from 18 May 2020 everyone in the UK who is showing coronavirus symptoms is eligible to book a swab test to find out if they have the virus. The primary registration route will be via [www.nhs.uk/coronavirus](http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus), but people in Kent who do not have any access to the internet, or who have difficulty with the digital portals, will be able to ring a new national 119 service to book their test.

### TESTING POSITIVE FOR CORONAVIRUS IN ASHFORD

You may have seen press reports highlighting government figures showing that Ashford has the third highest infection rate for Coronavirus in England, with nearly 493 confirmed cases per 100,000 people. At first glance this may be alarming news but these are confirmed cases, not deaths. The council is in daily contact with the Kent Resilience Forum and Public Health England and neither have flagged up any abnormalities with Ashford's rates of confirmed cases or fatalities. There are many factors which contribute to the rate of confirmed cases in any particular area – one of the key ones is testing and the fact that we have so many confirmed cases in the borough is a testament to the effectiveness of a testing regime that has been ongoing since the start of the pandemic in March. The William Harvey Hospital has been testing its staff from early on and with many of these workers living locally it has had an obvious impact on the statistics. Ashford has also hosted a mobile testing centre in recent weeks. Ashford has been at the forefront of testing for COVID-19, something which the government is keen to encourage, and testing remains a vital weapon in our battle against the pandemic.

### **COBBS WOOD HOUSEHOLD WASTER RECYCLING CENTRE**

The Cobbs Wood Household Waste Recycling Centre reopened for essential use from 15 May. It's important for you to limit use of these restricted slots, as they should be used for emergency waste disposal. To be able to visit a HWRC you must book a slot in advance. Please note that booking slots are very limited to maintain social distancing for staff and visitors. You will only be able to book one trip in any 4-week period to ensure everyone can use the site safely. The restricted vehicle and voucher scheme still apply; if you have a restricted vehicle you must apply for a voucher. Bulk collections remain suspended.

### **HOUSING**

Focus has concentrated on essential repairs, safety, security and hygiene-related issues, being completed on an emergency basis. Other repairs have been undertaken on an ad-hoc demand basis for vulnerable or elderly tenants. Planned maintenance contract has been largely suspended and is not expected to restart until August. The exception to the suspension of works has been service contracts that must be continued either for HSE compliancy obligations, to avoid serious risk or to maintain essential services. These works include gas servicing, lifts, sewerage treatment, water hygiene, door entry systems and communal TV systems and essential works such as adaptations identified by Occupational Therapists as urgent. Access into properties is the biggest issue and has been addressed by our contractors in accordance with best practice.

### **HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING**

Numbers in temporary accommodation have risen following the government's instruction to get all rough sleepers indoors. The number of households in temporary accommodation has ranged from 147-151. Move-on accommodation is a concern but efforts are being made to identify private sector, housing association and social housing stock. There are opportunities for using some void properties to reduce the pressure on the numbers of homeless households in temporary accommodation but there have been practical difficulties in doing so.

### **UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN (UASC)**

Numbers of UASC have been increasing as there has been a steady influx of arrivals by small boat. KCC is the responsible authority to look after UASC and is currently caring for 469 under 18 UASC and 932 UASC care leavers.

KCC's quota of UASC that it has to look after is 231 under a government scheme. The situation is grave because KCC has not been able to move any UASC new arrivals to the care of another Local Authority since April 2018. Most strikingly, KCC has had to cope with 160 new arrivals in 2020 so far. The additional cost to Kent's council tax payers so far of the UASC arrivals, and demands of Covid-19 for isolation, is in the region of £200,000 spent already and £672,000 in future commitments.

### **FINBERRY VILLAGE CENTRE**

The Borough Council planning committee agreed outline planning consent for the village centre to include 67 residential units, a general food store and a pub. An illustration of the development is shown below, the school and play area is to the left. Detailed design will be considered later. The applicant will be encouraged to make a contribution toward churchyard improvements at Sevington Church as part of the diocese's wider plans to improve the Church. At the same meeting a planning application was granted for 100 home on land the Church Commissioners own on the far side of Bridgefield. This development will make a contribution towards the Community Centre at Finberry.



## **VE DAY CELEBRATIONS**

Ashford Borough Council's VE day display in the Memorial Gardens



**Paul Bartlett**

**Mersham, Sevington South and Finberry ward & Deputy Leader, ABC  
Ashford Central Division, KCC**

**01233 500667 or 0773 929 3502**

**[paul.bartlett@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:paul.bartlett@ashford.gov.uk) or [paul.bartlett@kent.gov.uk](mailto:paul.bartlett@kent.gov.uk)**

Cllr Bartlett advised that HS1 is to run a High-fibre cable from London to Paris, it is hoped that there may be portals along HS1 which may be able to benefit residents along the line.

Cllr Bartlett advised that the booking system for Cobbs Wood has not been working very well so the system will be taken off-line for 3 or 4 hours on 20/05/2020 and then it is hoped it will be more stable and work better.

Referring to Broadband speeds – Cllr Murphy explained that only a small number of people were fed from the fibre box at the Royal Oak and access to good broadband speed was impossible for the majority of properties in Mersham. The Clerk explained about the availability of some of the schemes in particular the Rural Gigabit Connectivity Scheme where a project is set up and residents pledge for a voucher that funds the project to achieve fibre to the property. The Clerk will discuss with a couple of contacts she has in the County Council who assist with such projects. These contacts will be invited to join a Skype call/attend a meeting in June or July. Cllr Bartlett is also to update the Parish Councillor on the Borough Councils plans with regard to fibre in the area.

TB

PB

**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.**

A list of Planning Applications was circulated as Appendix A with the agenda, those requiring a response were:

19/01395/CONA/AS

**The Hay Loft, Laws Lane, Mersham, Ashford, Kent, TN25 7HG**

Discharge of condition 4

The Parish Council is to comment to the effect that given the history of the site, the Parish Council requests that the site is visited to ensure that the conditions are met.

20/00543/AS

**Hillcrest, Blind Lane, Mersham, Ashford, Kent, TN25 7HA**

Erection of caravan for ancillary use

The Parish Council is to comment that should the application be permitted, the Parish Council wishes to see conditions placed on this application that reflect the limited use that the applicant has requested in the application. Additionally given the temporary nature of the additional accommodation, any permission is granted for a limited time only, ie 10 year maximum after which permission is withdrawn.

**Financial matters:**

a. To note/authorise the following:

i. To note the Parish Council's Financial position

*The Parish Council bank balance as at 30/04/2020 was £17849.20*

ii. To authorise any payments

Cheque No:	Payee	Amount
501998	Internal Audit	£ 65.00
501999	Thomas Saint	£ 98.09
502000	Tracey Block	£ 254.36
502001	I King	£ 118.31
502002	Tracey Block	£ 254.36
502004	HMRC	£ 216.20
502005	HMRC	£ 159.40
502006	Fast Hosts	£ 25.18

A copy of the budget v expenditure was distributed to all Councillors.

Cllr Turley is to provide the Clerk with receipts for items bought as part of the Covid-19 response, the Parish Council will reimburse and will then contact the Borough Council for grant funding to cover these purchases.

The Parish Council would like to express its appreciation to the 3 co-ordinators and 40 volunteers who stepped forward to help during this pandemic. The Parish Council is also very grateful for the community spirit that is evident across the village.

TB

**To receive update on the Village Caretaker Scheme**

Cllr Turley presented a review on the Village Caretaker Scheme.

The scheme has proved very successful and additional work/income has been sought for the Caretaker. Both Mersham Church and Smeeth School have joined the initiative to have work undertaken by the Village Caretaker.

The working group has been trying to build up the reserves to replace capital expenditure. A thank you is extended to Sue Wood who has undertaken the administration of this post until April this year.

<p>The Councillors reviewed the recommendations going forward and suggested that a mower could be leased as a financing option. Succession planning was also suggested as an item for review, how the project would run if the Caretaker was ill/left very suddenly. It might be worth also undertaking some contingency planning. There is no adequate resilience plan and this is a single resource so should be looked at with Paul.</p>	
<p><b>To receive any response from advertising the Parish Council Vacancies</b></p> <p>The Clerk has received notification that the Parish Council is now in a position to co-opt. Cllr Turley is to speak with Mr Stewart, Mrs Wells and Mr Hawkins and Cllr Murphy is to discuss with Mrs McBarnett. This is with the aim to co-opt at the next meeting.</p>	<p>PT GM</p>
<p>Any Other Business (for information purposes only):</p> <p>Cllr Murphy considered it appropriate that the Clerk should purchase a Zoom account for future meetings. The Clerk advised that it is likely that PC meetings will not run electronically in the future so this might not be a necessary expense.</p> <p>There was a diesel spillage in the parish, the Clerk had advised on whom to contact and Kent Highways had attended within an hour of the spillage taking place. Thanks were extended to all who helped this situation resolve so effectively.</p> <p>There had been some disturbance at the Bower Farm site, one weekend there had been a breach of planning permission with demolition taking place over a weekend which is not allowed in the terms of the permission granted. Ashford Borough Council had been responsive and had contacted the owner who didn't realise the demolition was part of the application. Concern had been raised regarding asbestos panels being removed from the site, these must not be used the rebuild and Environmental Health had been involved. Cllr Turley had fed back to the witnesses this information. The Parish Council would like to thank Ashford Borough Council for their prompt response and for being prepared to action the issues raised.</p> <p>The Parish Council had been disappointed with the results of the Highways Improvement Plan following the discussion with Kent Highways the Councillors had hoped that there would be a meeting on site to enable a collaborative response to feed back to the parishioners. There can be one project taken forward from the plan this year and it was agreed that the Councillors will discuss which item to take forward at the June meeting, this will mean the Councillors need to select an item to review and carry forward this financial year. The Clerk will send the plan around to Councillors again.</p>	<p>All</p>
<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><b>Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020</b>  <b>Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020</b>  <b>Monday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2020</b>  <b>Monday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2020</b>  <b>Monday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020</b>  <b>Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021</b>  <b>Monday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021</b>  <b>Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021</b>  <b>Monday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2021</b>  <b>Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021</b></p>	
<p><b>The meeting closed at 9.15 pm</b></p>	