

Minutes of Mersham Parish Council
Meeting held in on Monday, 20th April 2020

Present

Geoffrey Fletcher (Chair)
 Pete Turley

Gavin Murphy

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

To be actioned by:

<p>Apologies for Absence No apologies had been received.</p>	
<p>Declaration of interest in items on the agenda There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
<p>Minutes of the Meeting of the Mersham with Sevington Parish Council on 23rd March 2020 were approved as a true record and will be signed if approved by the newly formed Sevington Parish Council.</p>	
<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes There were no matters arising to discuss.</p>	
<p>Public session: To receive questions and comments from the public on any agenda item. There were no members of the public present</p>	
<p>Mutual Aid Group 40 volunteers have come forward and there are co-ordinators who are allocating volunteers to those in need. Several people have reported that they are very grateful for the help and local reassurance. Cllr Fletcher recorded his thanks to Cllr Turley as he was instrumental in the setting up of the scheme.</p>	
<p>Report from Borough Councillor</p> <p>CORONAVIRUS A 24-hour helpline has been set up to support vulnerable people in Kent who need urgent help, supplies or medication. The helpline – called Kent Together – provides a single, convenient point of contact for anyone in the county who is in urgent need of help during the Coronavirus outbreak. The helpline is a collaboration between KCC, central Government, District, Borough and local councils, the voluntary and community sector, the NHS, emergency services and other partners to ensure help is at hand for vulnerable people. It is also the place to report your concerns about the welfare of someone else. You can contact the Kent Together helpline at www.kent.gov.uk/KentTogether or by calling on 03000 41 92 92. It is a 24-hour service.</p> <p>Ashford Borough Council have set up a new Support Team to assist these people in the Borough and those who ask for help. They do not intend to turn anyone away. If anyone wishes support, they can contact ABC on 01233 331111 or help@ashford.gov.uk.</p> <p>KCC will spend up to £2m on emergency purchase of bulk Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including but not limited to hand sanitiser, wipes, aprons, masks, gloves, and goggles. The additional PPE equipment for use by KCC and for mutual aid to KCC's suppliers where they are unable to source supplies. KCC will pay for the additional cost and usage of PPE during the</p>	

outbreak

If you have been sent home from work you may have been kept on at full pay. Others may be eligible for the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. This means you are "furloughed" - i.e. you remain on the staff but have nothing to do. The scheme means you will be paid 80% of your wages up to £2,500 per month. The Scheme is backdated to the start of March. It covers full and part time, agency contractors and those on flexible "zero-hour" contracts. Your employer does not have to top up the missing 20%. If you have been made redundant or left your job ask your former employer to take you back on and sign up for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the Scheme would enable you to collect 80% of your former salary and would cost your former employer nothing, just effort. The system is trying to help people and not look for ways of not paying people.

A taxable grant is available for the self employed of up to 80% of your average profits for the last three years, to a maximum of £2,500 per month. The scheme will be open for applicants for three months but you cannot apply if your annual profits exceed £50,000. If you have not filled your 2018/19 tax return by the due date of 31 January 2020, you now have 4 weeks to do so. This will enable HMRC to have your most up to date income to validate your claim.

An application form for businesses who qualify for either the small business grants fund (which provides grants of £10,000 for properties with a rateable value of £15,000 or less) and the retail, hospitality and leisure business grants fund (which provides grants of £25,000 for properties in this sector with a rateable value of more than £15,000 but less than £51,000) is available <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/.../coronavirus-advice-for-busine.../>.

Businesses that qualify will receive letters and emails, and the council will also be promoting this through our partners and social media.

Ashford Borough Council, alongside other councils across Kent, have worked with Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and the Kent and Medway Growth Hub to set up a new helpline for businesses. The helpline number is 03333 602300, 8:30am - 6:30pm, Monday to Friday. Webchat is also available on all the relevant business pages on the Ashford Borough Council website.

All Public Rights of Way are open and are in use by the public. Routine maintenance has been halted but emergency work will continue. The pattern of use has changed with routes adjacent to schools seeing much less traffic while the wider recreational paths have had increased footfall. Kent Highways are focusing their efforts on main roads and non-residential areas. The residential network is seeing significant numbers of parked cars and KCC do not want to disturb, upset residents or put their staff at risk by knocking on doors and asking for vehicles to be moved. That said where they can undertake residential works without disturbance they will.

All nine KCC Country Parks remain open for pedestrians and horse riders, however in line with Government advice KCC have closed the car parks.

HIGHWORTH SCHOOL

A planning application was approved in November 2019 for extensions and associated expansion to the school's dining facilities. Due to funding constraints, the school does not seek to expand at this time. In light of this, the school has reviewed its accommodation needs, and whilst the extension to the dining hall is still required, the new block which was to facilitate the expansion to the school is not currently needed.

A number of conditions attached to the planning consent are no longer considered to be applicable. These conditions include cycle parking and BREEM quality of the new building.

DROP DOWN KERBS

ABC Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) are able to undertake enforcement where cars are parked at places where the footway has been lowered (signified by tactile paving), for example on a bend to facilitate crossing. This is without the need for any lines or signs because it is a contravention of civil parking rules to do so. CEOs can be asked to visit and issue PCNs to any that they find by reporting it to the Parking Customer Care email address, parkingcustomer@ashford.gov.uk.

These sort of dropped kerb are a common feature in recent developments and this rule allows ABC to deal with the worst sorts of parking such as right on junctions and on bends without the need for expensive and ugly parking restrictions. All motorists should already be aware not to park in this way.

DROVERS ROUNDABOUT

KCC and ABC have taken the opportunity of constructing safety critical pull off areas on Ashford's roundabouts to improve the appearance of the roundabouts. In March work has been completed on the roundabout at the A20, Orchard Heights. ABC have installed powder coated metal horses which are most visible when travelling towards Charing and represent the popular Charing races.



TREES

Recent high winds have resulted in residents becoming concerned about the risk of trees falling. Generally, if a tree is on a footway, shrub or grassed area immediately next to a road, it is likely that the tree will be owned by Kent Highways. Problems or faults may be reported by telephoning the call centre on 03000 41 81 81 or by filling out the KCC online report a problem form at <https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem>. If a tree is located in a grassed or shrub area within a park or housing development it is likely to be the responsibility of Ashford Borough Council and can be reported at <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/report/report-environmental-issues/>. If a tree is in a dangerous condition and is an immediate and real risk to people or property please telephone 01233 331111 (including out of hours).

This is the link to KCC website's information 'What we look after' – trees specific which you may find helpful to pass on to any residents who contact you: <https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/what-we-look-after/soft-landscape-maintenance/trees-near-roads-and-pavements#tab-1>
There are some trees along highways that are KCC assets but others may be either private or Ashford BC assets.

ROAD INSPECTIONS

The frequency of KCC Highways' inspections varies depending on the location:

- High speed road network – monthly statutory inspections. Ashford High Speed Roads are listed below:

A20 POTTERS CNR & A292 Maidstone Road, Ashford
Lanes 1 & 2 - Sandyhurst Lane to Orchard Heights Rbt
Lanes 1 & 2 - Orchard Heights Rbt to Drivers Rbt to Chart Road
A20 FOUGERES WAY & A28 TEMPLAR WAY, ASHFORD
Lane 1 and offside lane - A20 Fougères Way
Lane 1 & 2 - A28 Templar Way
A28 SIMONE WEIL WAY, ASHFORD
Lane 1 & 2 - A20 Drivers R/A to Canterbury Road signals

- Resilient Highway Network (defined as the portion of the KCC highway network that is absolutely vital to maintaining economic activity and access to key services during extreme weather emergencies and other major incidents) – three yearly
- Remaining publicly maintainable network – 5 yearly

In addition to the above, ad hoc inspections in response to enquiries received are carried out by Highway Stewards or Tree Inspectors. Following the recent wet weather KCC has created an adverse weather reserve of £500k to provide ongoing operational resilience.

WALLIS ROAD / GORDON CLOSE



There is a missing bollard on Wallis Road and Gordon Close in Sittingbourne. I have asked the relevant council and KCC (Kent Highways and Transport) to replace the missing bollard.

NINE ACRES

Work has been completed on the safety work at the end of Nine Acres, Kennington. The speed reduction measures were put in to reduce traffic speeds approaching the nearby car park where children regularly play.



GOLDWYN SCHOOL, GODINGTON LANE

Following consultation, KCC have changed the age range at Goldwyn School from 11-16 years to 11-18 years in order to add sixth form provision. The designated number of places has been increased by 80 places (35 key stage 3/4 and 45 post-16). This is due to the increased need for specialist places for pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs (SEMH).

FIBRE TO PREMISES

The primary driver of a proposed new planning policy (called EMP6) is to deliver as much Fibre To The Premises ("FTTP") in developments in the borough as possible. By doing so, advanced and high-quality communication infrastructure will be expanded in Ashford. The Council has long recognised the importance of high-speed broadband and its benefits. In 2008, local planning policy required developments to be supported by adequate ducting arrangements to facilitate high speed broadband technology. This has been successful in delivering a connected network around the town of Ashford. ABC would now like to apply EMP6 to all new developments (over 10 houses) to ensure they are connected to fibre. The planning document is available for consultation until 1st May 2020 at 5pm on ABC's consultation portal

<https://haveyoursay.ashford.gov.uk/consult.ti/FTTP.SPD>

KENT COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Kent Community Foundation improves the lives of local people and communities, particularly the most vulnerable, isolated and disadvantaged. Since it was established in May 2001 it has distributed £35m in grants and financial support to charities and deserving small local charities where a small amount of money can make a significant differences. Find out more at 01303 814 500 or development@kentcf.org.uk

THE KENT FOUNDATION

Are you looking for business advice and mentoring? Contact The Kent Foundation which is dedicated to providing support to young entrepreneurs and business owners who are under 30 and wish to start or grow a business in Kent. Check out if you are eligible and find out more at www.kentfoundation.org, or 0300 0421163 or hello@kentfoundation.org

SHARED LIVES

The shared lives service offers people daytime support, short breaks or long term placements in

family homes with KCC's fully trained Shared Lives hosts in Kent. This is for people over 18 who live with a physical or learning disability, mental health problems, autism or dementia and would benefit from the support and companionship from a Shared Live host who can offer them into their home for long or short term periods. Find out more on 0300 0412400 or visit kent.gov.uk/sharedlives

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At the meeting Cllr Bartlett added that Ashford Borough Council are offering grants of up to £200 to cover expenses incurred in the setting up of any community effort to help residents. *As the Parish Council had funded the printing of the leaflets and bought gloves and hand-sanitizer for the volunteers, it was agreed that the total costs would be evaluated and the Clerk would then contact Michelle Byrne to apply for the grant.*

PT

Food parcels are being given to those on the Government list, Ashford Borough Council is facilitating this and if people are not receiving one when they should, contact Ashford Borough Council, there are many that do not take up the offer, there are 1193 in Ashford. Ashford Borough Council is working on grant distribution to qualifying business'. The business' should have been contacted, this is for those in the retail and leisure sector and they are being contacted from the business rates list – check whether people you know have been contacted, applicants are entitled to about £12,000.

28 pallets of PPE have been handed to KCC adult social care workers so the negative press does not seem to be valid in Kent. In addition to this, Highways have been continuing to work as best as they can but have had some negative comments and have been subjected to some challenging behaviour. The Police do not want the press to be involved in this. There are also issues with rural speeding and people parking in places they shouldn't. Private landlords have also taken the opportunity to inappropriately issue eviction notices.

The Government are yet to inform the Council when they might be recompensed for the loss of funds as they have no business rates being paid, and they have also lost planning application money and parking rates etc.

Footpath obstructions – KCC take obstructions of the footpath very seriously but caution needs to be had that we are not putting pressure on the Paths Officers to visit sites at this time. *It was noted that the Council had sent photographs to the Officer and copied in Clair Bell and Cllr Bartlett. Faye had agreed to write to the land owner concerned.*

Any news on the Chequer Tree site?

The Head of Legal Services at Ashford Borough Council has now moved on so Cllr Bartlett is hopeful that the next person in this role will be more aggressive towards transgressors.

Planning Matters:

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

20/00310/AS

Longthorne Farm, Kingsford Street, Mersham, Ashford, Kent, TN25 6PF

Single storey rear extension

The Parish Council raises no comment

20/00328/AS

Sancler, 1 The Forstal, Blind Lane, Mersham, Ashford, Kent, TN25 6NY

First floor side extension

The Parish Council raises no comment

20/00148/AS

1 Chequer Tree, Colliers Hill, Mersham, Ashford, TN25 7HT

Two storey side extension and extension to existing garage; part change of use of land for the keeping of horses and erection of stable, alterations to driveway

The Parish Council raises no comment

Financial Matters

a. To note/authorise the following:

i. To note the Parish Council's Financial position

The Parish Council bank balance as at 31/03/2020 was £5,057.96

ii. To authorise any payments

Cheque No:	Payee	Amount
501990	Ian King	£ 118.31
501991	Tracey Block	£ 398.76
501992	Omicrom – printing of leaflets	£ 60.00
501993	Kent Association of Local Councils	£ 481.34
501994	Came and Co Ltd	£ 330.00
501995	Thomas Saint	£ 129.33
501996	Tracey Block	£ 398.76
501997	Kent Association Local Councils	£ 458.36

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

To consider any changes to the Risk Assessment

There were no changes to the Risk Assessment at this time

Any Other Business

Cllr Turley is to report back to the meeting next month regarding the Caretaker review.

It was agreed that the Highways Improvement Plan would be reviewed at the next meeting as the Parish Councillors felt it was disappointing that the Highways Officers involved had not met with the Parish Councillors on site.

There has been some interest in the vacancies that are to be advertised for new Councillors for the parish. Cllr Bartlett is to approach the Electoral Officer at Ashford Borough Council

PT

All

Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the Council up to and including the next annual meeting of the Council

Monday 18th May 2020

The meeting closed at 8.45pm