

Minutes of the Monthly Council Meeting of Lower Halstow Parish Council held in the Memorial Hall at 7.00 pm on Tuesday 7th February 2023.

Present: Cllrs: K Howard-Challis (Chair); M Szabo (Vice-chair); T Portman; A Smith; A Groves; Mrs A I Smith (Clerk)

In attendance: 8 members of the public

1. To receive **Apologies for absence.**

Apologies were received from Cllr Baldock and Kirsty Linge (PCSO).

2. To receive any **Declarations of Pecuniary or Non Pecuniary Interest**, and any Applications for Dispensation on Agenda Items. (Requirement of the Localism Act 2011.)

Cllr Smith declared interests in items 10(a) and 7(c)

3. **Public session.**

A resident from School Lane reported that she dived with death when trying to negotiate the junction of School Lane and The Street and understood that instructions from the Parish Council to commence the work for the 20 mph speed restriction had been sent to KCC.

A resident of Heron Close gave a vote of thanks to the Parish Council for the support in his objection to the building works at 17 Heron Close. An amendment had recently been sent to Swale Borough Council, but that the changes made no difference to the amount of daylight he would get to his property and that the balcony to the rear extension would destroy any privacy expected by the residents of the adjacent properties destroying their rear garden environments. He is seeking support from Cllr Woodford and the Parish Council.

A resident from Sheerness Rd would like to be re-assured that when the council discusses item 7 that the council know what the changes are that are being requested.

A resident reported that he had written to both Cllrs Baldock and Woodford regarding information regarding planning within a six-mile radius of Lower Halstow but had no response. He has had a response from Gordon Henderson who suggested a freedom of information request to Swale and Medway Councils. He asked how long such a request may take. It was explained that the process was quite a long one and to make sure it was sent to the right team, but it was a good suggestion.

4. **Visitors.** Reports or comments from:

a) KCC Councillors;

Cllr Baldock sent the following report:

Much of the last month has been taken up with budgetary issues on both Councils, and the story is much the same - strong inflationary pressures combined with reducing Government Funding, increasing Council contract costs and a Council Tax that is capped way below inflation means both Councils are facing significant budget gaps going forward.

This means considerable reductions in the services provided over coming years, and a feeling across Local government that unless radical changes are made in Council funding many councils may be facing the Government Commissioners taking over.

KCC

Locally I am still being involved in School Transport cases and these seem to be coming later in the year than I've ever previously experienced which may indicate that cases are not being highlighted early enough for greater intervention at an earlier stage to be considered.

KCC are proposing to increase the charges for taking soil, rubble, hardcore and plasterboard to KCC tips and also for Tyres. I voted against this increase arguing that it is likely to increase flytipping which is a serious problem in Swale West already, and prove counter-productive in the long run, as costs to local communities when their roads get blocked is significant but is not factored into KCC's cost analysis.

To avoid having to publically make such embarrassing decisions in the future, KCC Councillors voted to delegate future increases to Officers, which I also opposed and spoke against.

I have raised the issues of 20 MPH areas with the Cabinet Member, arguing that KCC should give fuller weight to schemes drawn up by Parishes and promote such schemes where there is local support, rather than continue to block them or put up tedious obstacles which either result in greater costs or more time wasted. There is a progression nationwide in this direction and KCC needs to engage with that sooner rather than later as in the long run further delays will increase costs. The Cabinet Member agreed in principle with this and promised to look into it further. I have also raised concerns about utility road closures and the frequent inadequacy of their diversions, signage, and overall consideration of the areas they are working in. There is to be an all-Members Briefing on this to be arranged and I will report back further following this.

b) SBC Councillors;

Cllr Baldock sent the following report:

Swale

Swale have received £20million from the Government's Levelling Up fund to improve facilities at Sheerness making it, amongst other things, a greater visitor attraction and I hope people will take the opportunity to visit the area once the investments have been brought forward.

There have been two meetings to oppose the Bobbing Garden Village recently and a group called CABE has been established to fight the proposals. Attendees came from many of the affected parishes including Lower Halstow. This will be an ongoing process as the application is likely to take at least 18 months to get a decision.

There is a consultation due soon about the Lower Thames Crossing, and I think both KCC and SBC need to consider their current positions of active support. Quite apart from the ecological impact the scheme will have, it is currently another £2.3 Billion above estimates and this is now likely to see a reduction in other infrastructure schemes in Kent. This folly, which I have been arguing against for years, means that more traffic will be channelled into the A2/M2 corridor with very poor links between it and the A20/M20 corridor. The M2 is already overburdened and Brenley Corner is over capacity. Without infrastructure backing this LTC is likely to be a highways disaster. With that backing it will be an environmental disaster. A serious debate needs to start about this!

c) The PCSO sent the following report:

Crimes of note:

- No crimes of note

Anti-social behaviour and other incidents of note:

- 21/01/23 – Lapwing Drive – reports of 2 males in a car inhaling balloons. No officer available at the time however vehicle was tagged for further enquires.
- 30/01/23 – Basser Hill – Reports of stray Horse running in the road.

d) Friends of the Brickfields.

No report.

5. **To resolve that the Minutes** of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 3rd January 2023 are a correct record

- a) It was resolved that the Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 3rd January 2023 Parish Council meeting are a correct record and were signed accordingly.

6. **Matters arising:**

a) New noticeboard for The Green.

Drawings have been received and distributed to the councillors. Cllr Smith will contact the contractor with the changes to the design.

Action: Cllr Smith

b) Power at The Green for lighting Village Sign and Christmas illuminations.

It has been ascertained that the power at The Green is no longer live. Cllr Szabo will investigate the ducting across the road.

Action: Cllr Szabo

c) Plans for The Coronation May 2023

There will be a dog show on the Bank Holiday Monday and the School will be arranging a school street party for the children. The volunteers that arranged the events last year are already busy with the Raft Race and Festival. The Village Hall will be available for the Monday. Any ideas will be welcomed. The Clerk will post an item on the website, Lower Halstow Facebook group and the Village News.

Action: Clerk

7. To discuss and agree response (if any) for the following Planning Application:

- a) 22/506000/FULL PROPOSAL: Section 73 - Application for Removal of Condition (ii) agricultural occupancy condition pursuant to application SW/91/456 for - Minor Alterations to previously approved design of the house (SW/90/992).

ADDRESS: Callum Park House Callum Park Basser Hill Lower Halstow Kent ME9 7TY

The Parish Council have some concerns and will seek clarification before making a decision.

- b) Application Reference: 23/500227/REM Proposal: Approval of Reserved Matters (layout, scale, appearance, and landscaping being sought) for the residential phase of the site comprising 9 custom build dwellings, pursuant to 20/501002/OUT for - Outline application (all matters reserved except for access) for the demolition of a large equestrian centre and construction of a smaller facility enabled by 9no. custom-build homes with associated landscape enhancements. Location: Little Callum Farm Basser Hill Lower Halstow Kent ME9 7TY

It was resolved to support the application.

Action: Clerk

- c) Highways Act 1980 Section 119 - Public Footpath ZR39. Proposed Public Path Diversion Order at Lower Halstow, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 7DB
The Parish Council are content to accept the proposed diversion.

8. To Discuss any planning applications received between producing the agenda and this meeting.

- a) Application: 22/505674/FULL PROPOSAL: Erection of single storey front and rear extensions, first floor side extension and rear dormer window ADDRESS: 17 Heron Close Lower Halstow Kent ME9 7EF
It was resolved to continue to object to this application.

Action: Clerk

9. Finance:

- a) Service for the Defibrillator.

The new pads need fitting. The quote for £165.50 + VAT was accepted. Proposed by Cllr Howard-Challis and seconded by Cllr Szabo. The Clerk will arrange for the Service to take place.

Action: Clerk & Cllr Szabo

10. Correspondence:

- a) Email regarding non-slip strips for the wooden steps from the sea wall near the reed bed similar to those on the bridge between Cumberland Drive and Burntwick Drive.
It was agreed that once the work was completed at the Sea Wall the Parish Council will discuss this again. In the meantime, Cllr Portman will ask if the Friends of the Brickfield can do some preventative maintenance.

Action: Clerk and Cllr Portman

- b) Two emails regarding water pipe leaking at Memorial Hall allotments.
The tap appears to have been fixed. Cllr Portman will check.

Action: Cllr Portman

- c) Email regarding cracks in wall along Church Path over the bridge.
The Clerk has established that this needs to be reported to the Environment Agency.

Action: Clerk

11. To receive reports on the following:

- a) Parks & Leisure & Planning (MS)
The maintenance has been carried out on the play area. Cllr Szabo investigated the idea of obtaining a maintenance contract with one company and found that companies are not interested in doing that as it is a conflict of interest in providing both reports on work needing to be done and then delivering the repairs. Reports and maintenance need to be kept separate, as is the current situation.
- b) Footpaths and Hedgerow maintenance, Burial Ground and Allotments.
Horse riders have been reported along Church Path. The Clerk will post notices on the website and the Village News that there are no Bridle Paths in Lower Halstow. There is a shrub that has been knocked over by the Burial Ground fence and Cllr Portman has concerns that this fence may fall on someone. Cllr Smith will have a look at it. All the hedgerows that had been requested to be trimmed have been done with one exception. The Clerk will chase this.

Action: Clerk and Cllr Smith

- c) Parish Highways Plan
The Parish Council have had an acknowledgement from Highways to say that the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) will be progressed. The Clerk will contact them to see if there is a start date for the work to begin. Cllr Smith has passed some photographs of Breach Lane to Cllr Baldock showing the drop from the road, but so far he has not heard anything further.
- d) Brickfields and Seawall
The Environment Agency have started work on the sea wall. They will be here for about six weeks. There will be heavy lorries in the vicinity. There will be stone boulders along the bank. Safety barriers have been erected and the walkway is being re-routed. Thanks were given to the PC from the floor including Mr Telford in getting this work arranged.

12. Clerk's Report

Payments received during January total £834.00, which includes payments from both barges docked at the wharf and a grant from Swale Borough Council towards the new CCTV at the Brickfields.

A letter of complaint has been sent to Bridger's Law regarding the lack of progress with the proposed purchase of the strip of land at the Brickfields site. To date no reply or acknowledgement has been received.

The bank balance as of 31st January 2023 is £69,045.05

It was agreed that Cllrs Howard-Challis and Szabo will authorise the payments, as per the payment list below, via internet banking.

13. Items for information only:

- a) Items for Website and Village News.
Ideas to celebrate the Coronation in May
Notice advising that there are no bridle paths in Lower Halstow
Commencement of Sea Wall work
- b) To receive agenda items for next meeting and agree date of next meeting.
Non-slip strips for steps on Brickfields by sea wall – for April meeting.
Quotes for work to be done to the slope at the corner of the Recreation Ground to make it safer to use and to include a hand rail.

The meeting closed at 7.58pm

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 7th March 2023

Payee	Description	Gross Amount £	VAT £	Cheque No/Bank Payment
DCK Payroll	Payroll Services Invoice:	36.00	6.00	588286481
Mr M Tidy	Village Cleaning	152.00		193365081
Mrs A I Smith	Clerk's Expenses and. Salary	907.49		390425195
Mrs T Portman	Re-imbusement Bouquet for funeral	42..00		248284044
OLP online Playgrounds	Maintenance Work to playground Invoice: SIN050426	2774.22	462.37	103407271
S & R Parker	Replaced damaged timber at dock	165.00		285302299
JRB Enterprise Ltd	Economy Dispenser Dog Gloves refill Invoice: 24974	133.62	22.27	219791561
Treecraft	Grounds Maintenance Invoice: 230206	5745.00		295676595

Other Payments:

Multipay Direct Debit - 09/02/23

£3.00

EDF: Direct Debit - 17/01/23

£333.84

Date:

Signed:

**Cllr. K Howard-Challis
Chair**