

Minutes of Mersham Parish Council
Meeting held on Monday, 16th November 2020 via Skype

Present	Peter Turley (Chair)	Geoffrey Fletcher
	Peter Hawkins	Gavin Murphy
	Stewart Ross	Kenton Stewart
	Melanie Wells	

In attendance: Borough Councillor Paul Bartlett, 1 member of the public and Tracey Block (Clerk)

To be actioned by:

<p>To receive and approve apologies for absence.</p> <p>There were no apologies for absence.</p>	
<p>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.</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest to note.</p>	
<p>To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 19th October 2020</p> <p>Minutes of the Meeting of the Mersham with Sevington Parish Council on 19th October 2020 were approved as a true record and were signed as such. Cllr Turley proposed approval and Cllr Stewart seconded this.</p>	
<p>To discuss matters arising from previous minutes that are not covered by the agenda.</p> <p>Mersham Manor – Cllr Turley and Cllr Bartlett have a call with the new Officer on the case on 2nd December. The basis for the listing is being investigated.</p> <p>The stiles are listed as requiring attention but with over 800 outstanding jobs in the area they are not yet allocated. Clair Bell is aware of the issues but due to being severely understaffed the problems are not being rectified at speed. Find out who the land owner is but could consider whether the caretaker could make it robust but then the liability becomes ours. Land Registry is to be checked for land ownership and then contact will be made with the land owners. One is on the Churchyard boundary and it is a public footpath. The other stile is owned by the track, this could belong to Mersham Manor.</p> <p>Street light has been fixed on Bower Road, the power had been removed. A special part had to be ordered.</p> <p>A20 road surfacing, no resurfacing has yet been planned – this matter is on-going. Clerk to enquire re schedule for J10A works completion which is precursor to A20 repairs</p> <p>Cllr Ross has agreed to step in as an off-shoot on the Operational management Plan for the Inland Border Facility at Sevington. It would be useful to know if Sevington has been consulted. A copy has been circulated in Sevington and comments are to be copied to Cllr Ross.</p>	<p>TB</p> <p>TB</p>
<p>Public session: To receive questions and comments from the public on any agenda item.</p> <p>The member of public wished to raise an issue re: Kingsford Street. A letter has been received regarding the verge at Kingsford Street to install ducting. The verge has been left in a dismal state until now and Paul Osbourne at Vinci has been asked to request the verge to be rectified. Cllr Turley has contacted Clair Bell previously so has sent emails on to her to request that she pushes this forward.</p> <p>Cllr Bartlett explained that there is a similar problem at Sevington Church. Therefore, this is not a unique issue and just seems to be a poor completion problem with Highways England. It is hoped that the work on 23rd November is successful, if not this needs to be taken up directly with Highways England. The issue will be handed over to Area 4 as there are still issues with J10a and people on site. Vinci should be involved but</p>	

<p>we are without a contact there. Area 4 is poor at responding and resolving issues.</p> <p>Would be useful if PC write to Paul Osbourne by email that would be most helpful in the hope that this will resolve the problem.</p> <p>If this fails Cllr Bartlett recommended escalation to Toby Howe at KCC.</p>	PT
<p>To receive report from Borough Councillor</p> <p>Detailed report attached below</p> <p>There is a speed investigation being undertaken on A2070.</p> <p>There has been a Highways inspection on Bockham Lane and works are to be completed in November.</p>	
<p>Creation of a green buffer zone in High Field</p> <p>Cllr Turley, Linda Arthur of village alliance and Cllr Bartlett have discussed engaging Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT)(Vincent Ganley) to develop a vision and benefits case for the green buffer zone. After discussing our requirements VG agreed to resubmit his proposal. We also requested example deliverables of similar previous work.</p> <p>The PC needs to be very clear what we want the site to be used for in the hope that the consultant will be supportive of this use</p> <p>Cllr Bartlett has asked for site visit on 11/17/18 December with Haroona, this will also have Kent Wildlife Trust, Paul Bartlett, Clair Bell, Pete Turley and Linda Arthur. This is to enable Kent Wildlife Trust to go forward with engagement.</p> <p>It is anticipated that ABC will fund the KWT engagement however the PC may need to make a contribution. Cllr Bartlett will advise. .</p> <p>There are public access issues.</p> <p>Cllr Turley wrote to Gerry Clarkson, this prompted progressing the resolutions through a sub-committee and an Officer has been allocated to build the case. Thanks to Cllr Bartlett for that. The organisation has been put in place to progress this. We will raise concerns through Cllr Bartlett, Gerry Clarkson, our MP and the DfT Minister if progress is not forthcoming.</p>	
<p>To receive an update regarding the position of the broadband project for Mersham</p> <p>Cllrs Well, Fletcher, Turley and Stewart have been in discussions with regard to this.</p> <p>One project in the Parish is already underway but it is only part of the houses served by Aldington exchange but excludes everything from the Sports Club to the School and some other properties out near Chequertree plus all of “upper” Mersham which is served from the Sevington exchange. This project was initiated by a resident and the PC only recently became aware of it. To date this is circa 77% funded by online service pledges made by the addresses it covers.</p> <p>A second project request is in progress for the “upper” Mersham, Sevington exchange addresses.</p> <p>A third project request to be raised to cover the missing addresses south of the school</p> <p>Open Reach will only work with one exchange which means that some addresses are coming forward from Kingsnorth and Sevington etc.</p> <p>Open Reach estimate 14/15 months to be complete build.</p> <p>PC wants to assess alternative suppliers. Cllr Stewart spoke to one company who did not have correct code of practices in place. He also spoke to another company who only really look at areas with 2500 homes. Cllr Stewart will chase them up to see whether they can come forward.</p> <p>Cllr Turley explained that we need to find a solution for as much of the Parish as practical.</p>	

To discuss options re: Speed Indicator Device

The Clerk believes we will be able to sell the old speed sign for £1000 and we already have Cllr Bartlett's funds for £2140. Further Ashford Borough Council's funding is unlikely due to demands following the pandemic. Historically however there are pots of money that people need to allocate as we near financial year end, so there may be funding available. PC decided to postpone the purchase until Q1 2021.

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:

20/01462/AS and 20/01463/AS	Longthorne Farm, Kingsford Street, Mersham, Ashford, Kent, TN25 6PF	Single storey rear extension
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The Parish Council supports this application and feels that this extension will provide a more useable space.

PT

20/00601/CONA/AS	Red Barn Farm, Laws Lane, Mersham, Ashford, Kent, TN25 7HG	Discharge of conditions: 5 & 6
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No objections raised, however, Council requests that comments by the neighbours be taken note of.

20/001485/AS	Mersham Sports Ground Stone Green, Flood Street, Mersham, Ashford, Kent, TN25 7DE	Proposed storage portacabin (temporary use)
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The Parish Council supports this application. This will be placed beside the current club house.

PT

20/001482/AS	Cranwell House, The Forstal, Church Road, Mersham, Ashford, TN25 6NU	Two proposed detached dwellings and associated external works.
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The Parish Council raises no objections and historically the Parish Council has raised concerns regarding the access to/from the site. The Parish Council would like the access to be fishtailed to allow for easier access/visibility. From the Landscape Plan the first house looks like it will have a turning area but the second property may be more of an issue. We would look for a position where the plans negate the need for a sharp turn.

PT

There is some work being undertaken by the Village Hall and the entrance to the new build is going to be off Blind Lane. It is expected that the land has been sold and that the developer needs to begin the build.

Financial matters:

a. To note/authorise the following:

i. To note the Parish Council's Financial position

The Parish Council bank balance as at 31/10/2020 of £20924.98. There are 2 cheques outstanding. We are currently hoping we will have a surplus as we are looking at Highways Plan, potential spend on the High Field and also the Speed Indicator Sign.

ii. To authorise any payments

Cheque No:	Payee	Amount
502044	HMRC	£ 153.40
502045	Ian King – November salary	£ 118.31
502046	T Block – November salary	£ 321.96
502053	Ian King – December salary	£ 158.31
502054	T Block – December salary	£ 322.16

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

<p>iii. To approve draft budget for 2021/22 The Clerk had circulated this. Cllr Turley explained the thinking behind this. This was approved by the Parish Council.</p> <p>iv. To agree the precept for 2021/22 The Parish Council agreed that Precept would be £26500. The additional grants will be claimed.</p>	
<p>Any Other Business (for information purposes only):</p> <p>The Quarry View junction is flooding – Cllr Hawkins will report this to KCC.</p> <p>Cllr Hawkins asked if Caretaker could help clear leaves on Church Road. Cllr Turley to undertake discussions</p> <p>The Village Caretaker has less workload at this time of year. Previously cleared the brambles at the side of the shop. Cllr Turley mentioned the path that goes from Kingsford Street to the field so this could be looked at. Are there any winter maintenance projects he could undertake?</p> <p>Some work on JPF has been identified. This work is to go ahead, Cllr Murphy is to make sure that the neighbours are ok with this but Cllr Murphy will contact them.</p> <p>Failing anything else, could ask Sports Club if they have any work that is required. Could ask the Parish Church Committee re: Churchyard the same question. Cllr Hawkins to discuss with Mrs Hawkins. Councillors will let Cllr Turley know of any further.</p> <p>Question raised re what is happening to the Royal Oak? It is believed it has been sold, there may have been an application for change of use. As there is a history of this being a Pub, there are mixed opinions. The couple who bought it currently run a pub. If this can be financially viable then it should remain as a pub.</p> <p>Electrical cables in Blind Lane – they are overhead cables that are being replaced with underground cables.</p>	<p>PH</p> <p>PT</p> <p>GM</p> <p>PH</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>Monday 18th January 2021 Monday 15th February 2021 Monday 15th March 2021 Monday 19th April 2021 Monday 17th May 2021</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>The meeting closed at 8.42pm</p>	

COUNCIL UPDATE DECEMBER 2020

HIGHWAYS

1. Parking restrictions are being worked up by KCC for Thompson Road, Barrow Hill Cottages and Quantock Drive. The schemes went out for consultation at the end of October.
2. I reported the broken flag on the Willesborough-bound bus stop on Mace Lane. Stagecoach advise that a replacement will be fitted but they are running a smaller team post Covid-19 lockdown, so repairs like this are taking longer than they would like. Stagecoach prioritise anything that's safety critical and is currently focussing on updating timetable displays.
3. Drainage issues arising from recent wet weather which has caused roadside flooding at Broad Oak, are being taken up with Kent Highways and Transport.
4. Work has been completed on The Pasture to repair the dip in the road near to manhole covers which was causing noise, vibration and disruption to residents.

5. I have asked for speed investigations on Sir John Killick Road as speeding is now a problem as it links into Spindlewood End.
6. I have asked KCC to investigate tree ownership around Loudon Court / Lockholt Close as they need coppicing to avoid root damage to nearby buildings.
7. Further traffic surveys were carried out during the week commencing 12 October 2020 on Bybrook Road. Scheme design for traffic calming should be available shortly.
8. Remedial work is due to take place on the footways in Western Ave, Sackville Crescent and Godington Road.
9. I have asked DfT for a completion date for work to build the new car park at St Mary's Church Sevington, hopefully it will be ready for Christmas services.

SEVINGTON & WATERBROOK FREIGHT BORDER FACILITY

We only had 14 days to respond to the DfT's consultation on the HMRC Border Freight Facilities in Waterbrook and Sevington. For the record here is my response:

The following points are necessary for sustainable delivery of Sevington and Waterbrook Facilities in Ashford.

Parking and Access

- A hotline number to be set up (similar to what was used during CTRL construction) to report lorries parking to wait their entry time at Sevington / Waterbrook in adjoining rural roads. ABC can assist with parking enforcement and have a strong track record of working with KCC and DfT on this, the areas where there are enhanced restrictions on lorry parking in Ashford should be extended to all roads in Sevington.
- Highways England to bring forward the "Bellamy Gurner" Scheme of traffic lights at the McDonalds/Orbital roundabout. The trigger point for this is 500 occupations at Finberry which Crest are close to, and now needs to be urgently delivered with additional lorry movements in the area. This is of most relevance to the Waterbrook site.
- Freight vehicles to use the A2070 only to access the Sevington Border Facility, not Church Road which must be for staff car park access only. ANPR to be located at Church Road car park to enforce. Signage will be required in A20 in Mersham and surrounding roads. Particular care is needed to ensure no adverse impact on access and egress to the William Harvey Hospital, 111 Contact Centre and SECAM "Make Ready" Centre.
- The DVSA to have additional enforcement powers to ensure that vehicles use only the proscribed route to enter Sevington and Waterbrook beyond October 2021 to cover the full 5 years of operation.
- Deceleration and acceleration slip roads to be considered for the A2070/Church Road exit to avoid accidents from the increased traffic usage from the Sevington staff car park. Routes through the staff car park should be designed to ensure congestion at shift change over dates is avoided.
- Staff parking will be required at Waterbrook, the adjoining roads cannot cope with the number of staff required.

On-site Activity

- A system of marshals on each site to ensure lorry engines do not idle and sufficient electric charging points must be provided for refrigerated lorries (is 20 really enough at Sevington and 7 at Waterbrook?) New generation "whisper" generators are proposed, rather than noisy diesel generators, but embedded mains connection would be preferable. All lorries arriving on site should immediately turn everything off once marshalled to parking.
- Neither Border Facilities are to be used as a rest area, lorries which need to spend rest time due to tachograph rules to be directed to the Truck Stop in Waterbrook. Three separate postcodes to be provided from the Royal Mail for the Sevington & Waterbrook Border Facilities and the Truck Stop so that drivers know which site to go to without disrupting local traffic.

- The office buildings on site at Sevington to be ground floor only, addressing concerns over height and setting near to St Mary's Church, Sevington. The sheds used for checking vehicles should be no higher than the VOSA site in Waterbrook and as far away as possible from listed buildings in Church Road / Highfield Lane.
- Sophisticated containment cells are required for drainage at both sites and the design must address the "Stodmarsh" pollutant issue which Stour Valley developments need to address. If filters get blocked there needs to be a timetable and commitment to fix this quickly. If there is a spill, we must have confidence that the system will protect the environment.
- On-site lighting at Waterbrook and Sevington to be angled downward to ensure there is no adverse impact on nearby properties and ensure it complies with ABC's dark sky policy. 12m high lighting columns are not acceptable.

Boundary & Site to the East of Sevington

- The footpath across the Sevington site will be diverted towards Church Road which should become an amenity, perhaps something along the lines of the old fishing lakes in Eureka Park, managed by Quadrant. The design should allow subsequent occupiers can build on the initial DfT scheme as far as they can.
- The site east of The Sevington Customs Border Facility to be designated as a green buffer area as part of Ashford's Local Plan and work to be started immediately with ABC/KCC to identify ownership / management options for the site in conjunction with the Parish Council. By designating the land to the east of the Sevington Border Facility and managing it sustainably, it will give residents confidence that DfT are serious about carbon offset, wildlife habitat protection, visual and noise impact minimisation for Mersham and nearby ANOB, and to replace trees lost in construction of the Border Facility/J10A. This can set the scene for how the rural areas of the Borough will be protected as we move into the new planning regime set out in the Planning White Paper. DfT to inform ABC who is responsible for taking forward discussions with DfT to achieve this.

We have had a series of very helpful Stakeholder Engagement meetings, including one with the Minister on MS Teams. These discussions are integral to get community buy-in and enables the Border Facility to be delivered sustainably. Emerging activities on site and detail have been adjusted to take into account of the feedback received. This is welcomed, and I would like to thank the Team for engaging in discussions.

LAND ACQUISITION BETWEEN HIGHFIELD LANE AND BLIND LANE

Ashford Borough Council's Cabinet received a petition from the Village Alliance promoting the creation of a green buffer zone between Sevington Inland Border Facility and Mersham. This was debated at the Full Council meeting 15th October 2020 when it was resolved that:-

'the site to the east of the Customs Clearance Border Facility be considered for designation as a green buffer area as part of the next review of the Local Plan. Work should also be started by Council Members and Officers, with the Department for Transport (DfT) to identify ownership and management options for the site, in conjunction with the Parish Council.'

The Council has written to the DfT and Mott McDonald to explain that they wish to secure the delivery of the green buffer zone and the transfer of land at the earliest opportunity, particularly as it has potential to tie in with site restoration post-top soil removal and would secure a positive legacy for the community from the project. I met with Grant Shapps (Secretary of State) on 22nd October and raised this with him. It was noted at the meeting that the land is needed for soil storage for up to 12 months or until the soil is sold.

The following work streams will be commenced as soon as possible.

- Explain in detail why the DfT should sell the land to ABC and how this can be reconciled with the DfT's fiduciary duty to maximise return from its assets. This can include carbon offset, wildlife

habitat protection, visual and noise impact minimisation on Mersham and nearby ANOB, and replace trees lost in construction of the Border Facility/J10A but may need to be quantified.

- Create a vision for the site explaining what the community would like to see created including how it will be managed, what public access there would be and who will cover the costs.

A budget, dedicated officer time and scrutiny process will need to be agreed including a clear timetable so that all stakeholders can be consulted.

HOLIDAY MEALS

Kent County Council provided supermarket vouchers for food during October half-term for families whose children are eligible for free school meals. One £15 voucher was available for each eligible child to ensure they are able to feed their children outside of term time. It is hoped that Government funding will be provided to cover the Christmas holidays.

The Kent Together helpline remains open for any other Kent resident who needs support with food, collection of medication and prescriptions and other urgent needs during the pandemic, 24 hours a day. You can get help by visiting www.kent.gov.uk/kenttogether or calling 03000 41 92 92.

COUNCIL TAX 2020/21

Kent County Council is facing its toughest financial challenge for many years – greater even than any it faced during 10 years of austerity. Coping with the demands of Covid-19 has required a huge increase in spending and has come at the same time as reductions in its income from council tax and business rates. KCC is now looking ahead to its budget for 2021-22 and is launching a countywide consultation running until 24 November 2020 asking residents about their preferences on the tough decisions the council will have to consider in order to balance its budget.

The government has traditionally set a maximum limit for council tax increases without holding a referendum and assumes KCC will increase it by that amount. Last year this limit was 2% and the government has not yet confirmed what this limit will be for next year. An increase of just under 2% would add £24 per year (or 46 pence per week) to the KCC element of the bill for a typical band C property and take the total KCC element of council tax to £1,225.12 (or £23.56 per week). Such an increase would raise £14.4million towards the council's rising costs.

At the moment, the government has not yet confirmed whether councils will be able to continue to levy an additional charge for adult social care costs. A 2% increase would raise a further £14.4million to be spent on adult social care services and increase the KCC element for a band C property by a further £24 (or 46 pence per week). This would make the final estimated band C bill, after the social care levy, to be £1,249.12. The document and questionnaire can be found at www.kent.gov.uk/budget.

COLD WEATHER SERVICE

Public Health England's cold weather alert service, operated by the Met Office, is moving to a new, upgraded platform. Current and new users must register their email address with the new system by the 1st November. Due to compliance with GDPR, it is not possible to subscribe current users to the new system automatically. The service began on 1 November 2020 when the old current distribution list was retired and the service will only be delivered to those who have signed up via GovDelivery. Visit here to register <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKMETOFFICE/subscriber/new?qsp=PHE>

COBBS WOOD

A useful “all-party meeting” was held on 19th October to bring residents concerns over dust, noise and smells during the summer to the EA, KCC and ABC. The meeting was helped by the amount of emails and the extent of residents' concerns including those that are unable to open their windows; some with concerns for asthmatic family members to others who are fed up enough to consider moving. Numbers count!

All three main companies on Cobbs Wood are now fully aware that KCC and the EA are putting them under close scrutiny, something that they have not been able to do up until September because of the Covid-19 situation. EA are to arrange visits and follow-ups including considerations of dust monitoring equipment at site boundaries for Spring 2021 and review of existing Dust Management System with view to imposing improvements. KCC planning to audit of activity against consent and update conclusions

Advice is to keep up the telephone complaints and email KCC setting out your specific concerns and complaints, phone the EA hotline on 0800 807060 and email your complaints to planning.applications@kent.gov.uk.

The contract at the Household Waste Transfer Centre (HWTC) on Cobbs Wood has robust compliance and competency obligations including performance indicators. KCC Waste Management have a strict inspection regime who routinely visit the site both announced and unannounced to ensure that all compliance with Permit and Planning conditions are being adhered to. They also work closely with the EA and regular meetings are held between KCC Officers and local agency staff to have early warnings of any issues. The site has automatic doors which shut during tipping and bulking, a dust suppression system is in place and the site operates under an odour management plan. Any waste which is liable to have more odour is moved out of the Transfer Station within 24 hours, i.e. food and residual. KCC ensures there are additional resources/haulage during seasonal fluctuations when excessive waste inputs (e.g. post-Christmas) occur. These procedures used by KCC to manage its contractors at the HWTC in Cobbs Wood should be extended to private operators.

PANORAMA LETTING POLICY

The Central Forum was provided with a summary of the letting policies for the two new blocks of flats purchased by the Council in October 2020 which are being completed over the winter. There are 109 flats and the Council will use the Kent Sustainable Communities Protocol to ensure the policy reflects the local community and manages the impact. For the first time in Kent, the policy will be to target key workers. Anyone with a history of ASB or rent reviews may not be successful in securing a tenancy. A 12-month introductory tenancy will be offered. A full-time neighbourhood housing officer who will work from a ground floor flat which will audit tenancies and can assist with social care provision.

BYBROOK-BOCKHANGER COMMUNITY FACILITY BUSINESS PLAN

A business plan has been developed to create a community facility which:

- Supports demands from population growths and demographic changes,
- Mitigates impact of economic shocks,
- Ensures financial sustainability of public services,
- Supports growth and sustainability of business rate growth, and
- Promotes collaboration between authorities across Kent.

LIBRARY WINTER OPENING HOURS

Kent Libraries Winter Opening Hours from 2nd November 2020

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Ashford	10 - 4	10 - 4	10 - 4	10 - 4	10 - 4
Tenterden	10 - 1 1.30 - 4				



E-SCOOTERS

There have also been reports of youths riding these new E-Scooters, but they must only be used on private land. They are not to be used on any public path or road at any time. These e-scooters are currently classified as Personal Light Electric Vehicles (PLEVs), so they are

treated as motor vehicles and are subject to the same legal requirements – MOT, tax, insurance and specific construction. Because they don't always have visible rear lights or a number plate, they can't be used on the road. They must only be used on private property, otherwise PCSO's can issue a section 59 which enables them to give the owner of any vehicle a warning saying should they be caught riding their vehicle again in an antisocial manner (including the e-scooters being ridden on paths and roads) in the next 12 months they can be seized.

URGENT TREATMENT CENTRES (UTCs)

The NHS is introducing urgent treatment centres (UTCs) across east Kent as part of a national requirement to deliver same day minor illness and injury care via UTCs. These centres are required to deliver against a national specification with clear quality standards that cannot be delivered through previous minor injury contracts.

In Ashford, the new UTC at WHH replaced the minor injury service run by a number of GP practices on 1 November. This UTC offers patients more services than the existing arrangements and cover both minor illness and injury, as well as being open 24 hours a day.

Under this change, patients will still have access to their local GP practice at the weekend and evening as extra appointments are available. These were introduced a couple of years ago and will continue across all Ashford practices. This change reduces demand on A&E as the UTC is equipped to diagnose and deal with many of the most common urgent conditions that people might otherwise have attended A&E for.

Appointments at a UTC can be booked by calling 111 which means patients will not have to wait once at the centre. This booking system will ensure Covid-secure services.

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