

Minutes of the Monthly Council Meeting of Lower Halstow Parish Council held **virtually due to Coronavirus Covid19 restrictions** on Tuesday 3rd November 2020.

Present: Cllrs: K Howard-Challis (Chair); R Smith (Vice-Chair); T Portman; M Szabo; A Smith; E Stiles; A Groves; Mrs A Smith (Clerk); SBC Cllr C Woodford and four members of the public.

1. Apologies

An apology was received from KCC Cllr Mike Whiting; SBC Cllr Roger Clark and PCSO Lee Fennell.

2. Declarations of Pecuniary or Non Pecuniary Interest

None.

3. To agree Minutes of the Meetings held on 6th October 2020

It was resolved to agree the Minutes for the meeting held on 6th October 2020. They will be signed within social distancing rules. Proposed by Cllr A Smith and seconded by Cllr T Portman. Agreed unanimously.

4. Reports from:

a) KCC Mike Whiting:

Here is a summary of the work I have been doing on residents' behalf during October. I hope you find it useful. First, and importantly, KCC has announced its dedicated Helpline for free school meal support to ensure no child in Kent goes hungry during the school half term holiday. Anyone eligible for free school meals who needs extra financial support to help feed their children can visit www.kent.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals or call the dedicated helpline on 03000 41 24 24. This line is open until 5pm on Monday 2 November to assist families during the half term. Meanwhile, 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. Families who require financial assistance can call. I am still getting reports from residents of activity at Raspberry Hill in Iwade. I have written, again, to Swale Council, Kent Police, KCC and the Environment Agency to ask whether the continued activity is authorised and legal, and if it is not, what is being done to stop it. Following complaints about the Key Street roundabout, I have asked for a copy of the Independent Stage Three Safety Audit that KCC commissioned recently. When I get a copy I will publish it and send it to Parish Clerks. Following requests, I made on behalf of Newington Parish Council, SGN (the gas people) have agreed to call a "wash up" meeting to discuss the gas main replacement works that affected us all over the past year. I am awaiting confirmation of that meeting, which will likely be virtual, and circulate details when I get them. KCC is invited to that meeting also. Flooding in Hartlip and Upchurch remains an issue, particularly during the recent heavy rains. KCC is looking again at this and I have asked for an action plan to deal with the issues once and for all. I was pleased to be invited by Borden Parish Council to a meeting in Oad Street to discuss the traffic signs and lines and the possibility of enlarging the Munsgore Lane 20mph zone to include the rest of the hamlet. I have also been discussing with residents repairs to Woodgate Lane, Danaway, and calls for a 40mph limit in Maidstone Road, Danaway. I am looking forward to seeing Borden Parish Council's Highways Improvement Plan, which I hope will include these schemes among others so that I can help take them forward. I have arranged a meeting with KCC highways and Hartlip Parish Council during November to discuss speed reductions in the village, including a new 20mph zone. I am pleased to have been able to offer support to two bee pollinator projects, one in Bobbing Parish and the other in Lower Halstow. KCC is holding a Kent Bee Summit virtually on 16 November. Details at kent.gov.uk. I co-signed a letter with KCC Leader Roger Gough to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick MP, strongly objecting to elements of the proposed changing to the planning system. We believe the proposals would be harmful to Kent. We are also preparing a response to the government's consultation on its Planning White Paper. I have agreed a further £100,000 to support the Kent Covid Helpline for

Business, operated by the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce. The helpline has proved invaluable for businesses struggling with the pandemic and has taken over 10,000 calls. The extra money will extend the helpline until the end of the year. I took up a case on behalf of residents of Hilton Drive, when a replacement sign, showing the wrong information was installed. The correct sign has now been ordered and will be installed shortly. KCC is planning a moratorium on roadworks to the A2 as we approach the New Year and the end of the UK/EU transition period. This is to help protect the area from any possible delays to the M2 that may be caused by congestion at Dover and Operation Brock. KHCC continues to engage with Government to help ensure Kent's roads continue to run as freely as possible after 1 January. Meanwhile, I am awaiting a date for the recommencement of the resurfacing work that was due to take place this week. I have put my submission into the Planning Inspector regarding Highways England's proposed improvements to the M2 Junction 5 at Stockbury. I am in favour of the changes because I believe they will address air quality and safety issues and improve journey times for those using the junction. I hope this is helpful, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the above, or anything is raised at your meeting that I might be able to help with.

b) SBC Councillors

A productive meeting was held at the Dock last week regarding the repairs.

c) PCSO

No report.

d) Friends of the Brickfields

The work party for the coming Saturday has been cancelled due to current Covid-19 restrictions. A wreath will be laid by a member of the Parish Council at the Memorial Wood on 11th November 2020.

5. **Matters Arising**

a) **To consider replacement of fence at rear of Memorial Hall site allotments:**

The posts are rotten and the fence is collapsing where allotment holders tend to climb over it. Cllr A Smith will inspect it with regard to supplying a quote to replace the fence and to insert a gate.

Action: Cllr A Smith

b) **To agree sub-committee in respect of Parish Highways Plan**

It was agreed that Cllrs Howard-Challis and A Smith will form a sub-committee.

c) **To consider producing flyers for distribution to residents regarding Parish Council News.**

Cllrs Stiles and Groves will collaborate to work on producing some information, in the absence of the Village News, with thought for residents that do not have access to the internet.

Action Cllrs Stiles and Groves

d) **To consider the request to berth "Regalia"**

It was decided that the Parish Council could not accommodate their request at this time.

Action: Clerk

e) **To consider the request to berth "Thistle"**

It was agreed that the Parish Council insist on charging Dock fees for the Oyster Smack, already in the dock. The Edith May's docking fees are currently at a special rate. It is not a fair comparison to reduce any subsequent fees against the length of the compared vessel, when a 2/3 discount has already been offered. Due to the required dock repairs it is essential that the Parish Council receive all fair and reasonable fees for the dock usage. The Clerk will email Mr Gransden to this effect.

Action: Clerk

f) **To review Westfield Car Park Policy.**

It was agreed that although residents are "capped" to two spaces to amend the policy to allow spaces to be offered on a temporary basis (T permits) where there are empty spaces and there are no residents on the waiting list. It was also agreed to allow visitor permits (V permits) at a reduced rate of £25.00, to cover essential requirements. Permits

will be reviewed annually. All changes or transfers must be authorised by the Lower Halstow Parish Clerk. Proposed by Cllr R Smith and seconded by Cllr Howard-Challis. Agreed unanimously.

g) **To consider the Village Planning Strategy**

The Parish Council have produced a draft 'Planning Strategy' which sets out its views on what it considers future developments should provide within the parish. This draft document, proposed by Cllr Howard-Challis and seconded by Cllr Szabo was unanimously agreed and will be placed before village residents for their comments. This consultation period will last for six weeks ending on the 15th December 2020. All residents are invited to express their views on the draft strategy by email or in writing to the Parish Clerk. An opportunity for residents to raise questions will also be provided at the 1st December Parish Council meeting. The Draft, together with any selected amendments will be returned to the Parish Council for final consideration and adoption at the 5th January 2021 meeting.

6. **Finance**

a) To consider if there is a budget to implement a full survey/plan and costings regarding seas wall, plus obtaining appropriate authority with all necessary bodies. The costing is £400 plus VAT. It was proposed by Cllr Szabo to undertake this cost, seconded by Cllr Portman. Agreed Unanimously.

b) Review Clerk's Pay – NJC Pay Scales 2020/21 awarded from April 2020. It was proposed by Cllr R Smith, seconded by Cllr Portman to move the Clerk's pay to scale pay point 14 on the above scales backdated to April 2020. Agreed unanimously.

c) To consider Debit/Credit Card for Parish Council use. There have been some issues paying for items on the internet, where companies will not allow payment on invoice, but insist on payment with a card. It was agreed to apply for the Multipay card from Unity Bank Trust. Proposed by Cllr Howard-Challis and seconded by Cllr R Smith. Agreed unanimously.

d) To decide where in the budget to place the £10k grant received from Swale Borough Council for small businesses. It was agreed unanimously to place this in the budget for the Dock repairs. Proposed by Cllr Stiles and seconded by Cllr Portman.

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

a) 1 School Lane, Lower Halstow – TPO application for 1 x Common Ash to cut back to 5.2 metres above the carriageway.

It was agreed not to comment.

b) 4 Heron Close, Lower Halstow – Demolition of existing boundary wall and erection of a new boundary wall.

It was agreed to comment as follows:

The Parish Council take note of the following Planning Application, and wish to comment. The erection of an altered boundary wall will have a dramatic effect on the "line of sight" around this sharp bend. The Parish Council seek assurance that this proposal is within the acceptable requirements, and will not result in creating a safety hazard."

8. **Reports from Councillors regarding:**

a) **BRICKFIELDS & PLANNING**

The firebreak has been cut. There will be a roll call in the Memorial Wood on 11th November.

b) **PARKS & LEISURE**

Cllr Szabo has repaired the tyre on the see-saw and removed the old goal post nets as they have become a safety hazard. As was agreed previously new nets will be in place in the early part of next year, when and if Covid-19 restrictions allow.

c) **DOCKS & BARGES and CAR PARKS**

A very constructive meeting was held with members from Swale Borough Council regarding the dock repairs and possible funding. A business case is being worked on to that end. Two quotes have now been received for this very specialist work, even

so, there may be some discount allowed to the Parish Council. The quotes have been passed to the project manager.

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

KCC has responded to Cllr Portman's request and cut some of the hedgerows in The Street adjacent to Vicarage Lane. There are still some hedgerows that need cutting in the village and Cllr Portman will keep these under review and will contact the owners should it be necessary. Cllr Portman has planted the hedge at Westfield Car Park. There is some concern about planting trees on this site, as they may cause an obstruction. Cllr A Smith will contact the Parish Council's adviser regarding the landscaping for guidance and keep Cllr Portman informed.

Cllr Szabo reported that the three streetlights that were causing residents a problem because they were too bright have now all dimmed to their lowest setting, which is 13 watts. They cannot go any lower than that.

9. Clerks Report

During October £1200 has been paid into the bank for car park rents at Westfield, allotments rents for the year 2020/21 and £50 donation from the film maker, as agreed. These payments consisted of a mixture of electronic payments, cheque and cash. The Clerk received a query regarding the external audit, which was answered and the paperwork has now been passed on to the next stage. To date the clerk has not received any further communication from the auditors. Three streetlights required some adjustment to dim them and the contractor has been contacted to carry out the work. An engineer was seen working on the streetlight in Cumberland Drive, but at the time this report was produced, the Clerk had not had any confirmation that it was completed.

The bank balance as of 30th September is £101861.02

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.

10. To consider questions received from Lower Halstow Residents

- a) Would the Parish Council please look into the 20 mph zones which was briefly touched on by Cllr Mike Whiting last month and consider setting up a sub-committee to take this idea further.
 - The Parish Council have dealt with this at item 5b in this meeting.
- b) Five weeks have gone by since the new car park opened and I haven't as yet seen anyone park in by 20B, (or several of the other spaces) so I am assuming it hasn't been let to anyone I wondered if the Parish Council wanted to reconsider and have my £50 for it rather than it standing idle.
 - The Parish Council have dealt with this at item 5f in this meeting.
- c) Would the Parish Council look at the trees at Britannia Green which are overhanging the private roadway with consideration to getting them cut back?
 - The Parish Council will arrange for them to be looked at by their contractor.

11. Items for information only:

- a) Items for the website: Christmas Tree Lighting – no ceremony this year.
- b) To receive agenda items for the next meeting: None.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 1st December 2020

The meeting closed at: 8.00 pm

Payments – November 2020

Payee	Description	Gross Amount £	VAT £	Cheque No/Bank Payment
Mr K Howard-Challis	Reimbursement for Batteries for Christmas Tree Lights	14.00		866319269
The Society of Local Council Clerks	Full Membership Invoice:MEM230897	140.00		116426982
Commercial Services Trading Ltd	Grounds Maintenance July, August and September Invoice: LS197667	841.67	140.28	337584986
Mr M Szabo	Reimbursement for purchase from Woodland Trust regarding landscaping at Westfield Car Park - £659.15 and Invoice 49609681 Zoom Service period 31/10/2020-29/11/2020 £14.39	673.54	109.86	600461382
Mrs T Portman	Reimbursement for 2 x Moonbeam Silver Birch Trees, stakes, ties, tree guards and delivery	128.88		497917769

Other payments:

25 November 2020 Standing Order

Clerk's Salary - £644.60

Date:

Signed:

**Cllr. K Howard-Challis
Chair**