

Minutes of the Monthly Council Meeting of Lower Halstow Parish Council held virtually due to Coronavirus Covid19 restrictions at 7.00 pm on Tuesday 6th April February 2021

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

In attendance: Cllrs Whiting; Woodford and 7 members of the public.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Declarations of Pecuniary or Non Pecuniary Interest

Cllr Miller declared a non-pecuniary interest in items 8c and 13e.

3. Public Session

A resident asked if there was going to be an update regarding the 20mph zone in the village. The Chair replied that everyone will be informed of any progress.

It was commented on that there were some markings on the road on the bend by the old Working Men's Club for some repair work. While that work is being done could the double yellow lines be extended northwards and to add double yellow lines on the bend at the car park end of Westfield Cottages? The Parish Council will liaise with Cllr Whiting regarding all of the highways concerns.

The hedge at the junction of Wardwell Lane and School Lane is about 1.5 metres over the highway and could this be added to the list of hedges that the Parish Council look at?

4. Visitors: Reports from:

a. KCC Councillor:

The main item is the works by Southern Water and this will be discussed at item 7d.

b. SBC Councillors

Cllr Woodford reported that the issue with the blue bins has been resolved. There have been some enquiries regarding litter picks. Swale Borough Council can arrange for bin bags to be delivered and collections made outside of the normal collections regarding litter picks. The details can be publicised via the Parish Council website and the Village Newsletter.

c. PCSO

The PCSO submitted the following report:

- Criminal damage to a vehicle was reported, but this was the result of a domestic incident.

- A resident received several phone calls from a male who said he was a police officer. This would have very likely been the beginnings of a scam, but happily the resident did not believe the caller, especially when he became abusive. A crime report was taken for malicious communications, but all such phone calls should be reported to police.

- Two separate reports of vans driving around the Lower Halstow area slowly, with the occupants paying attention to gardens and sheds. The last report was on 27th March, but there have been no reports of actual burglaries in the area.

- Report of possible poachers on land near the sea wall. A patrol attended, spoke to the males concerned and searched the reported suspect vehicle, but nothing was found.

Cllr Szabo added that there had been some serious aggressive behaviour involving children on the recreation ground. This will be reported to the PCSO.

d. Friends of the Brickfields

Cllr Stiles had a meeting and a walk round and has a list of actions the Friends of the Brickfields would like to do. Hopefully the wild flowers will bloom in the Memorial Wood either this year or next.

5. To resolve the Minutes.

It was resolved that the Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on Friday 26th February are a correct record. Proposed by Cllr Howard-Challis and seconded by Cllr Szabo. It was resolved that the Minutes of Tuesday 2nd March 2021 are a correct record. Proposed by Cllr Howard-Challis and seconded by Cllr Smith. They will be signed within social distancing rules. Both sets were agreed unanimously.

6. Correspondence

- a. Local Planning Consultation: The closing date is before the next meeting and it was agreed that Cllr Miller would respond to include all councillor's comments.
- b. Email from owners of Three Tuns regarding tankers using their car park: This will be discussed at item 7d.
- c. Email requesting a smaller basketball net: There are some residents that would like to do some fundraising for more equipment and this could be included in that project, should it go ahead.
- d. Email regarding purchase of the land at the Brickfields: The last offer made by the Parish Council of £1500.00 has been accepted.

7. Matters arising

- a. It was approved by the Parish Council for the Friends of the Brickfields to carry out routine husbandry at the Brickfields. Cllr Stiles will let them know.

Action: Cllr Stiles

- b. It was understood that the noticeboard for Britannia Green had been made and was awaiting installation. Cllr Miller will contact Mr Norris and suggest that if he is unable to get it installed, that he passes it to the Parish Council for completion. Cllr Smith is able to arrange installation.

Action: Cllrs Miller and Smith

- c. Electric Vehicle Charging:
There are some grant opportunities to supply electric vehicle charging points. The owners of the Three Tuns and the Bed and Breakfast are willing to provide spaces for this. Cllr Whiting had previously sent some information regarding a KCC scheme and will forward this on again. Cllr Miller will look into the subject further.

Action: Cllr Miller

- d. Southern Water Case Ref: GH77108: Mr Barry Woodham and Mr Andy Morris were in attendance from Southern Water. The first burst was in the field by the marshlands by Motney Hill which was being dealt with by isolating the pipe and installing a temporary pipe so that a repair could be made to the damaged pipe. There was a second burst on private land, but within the marshland which is a challenging environment. Southern Water want to install 900m of temporary pipe to completely isolate the affected area of existing pipe, which would mean they would be able to switch Lower Halstow pumping station back on and remove the tankers. They are aware that the feeling locally is that it is only a matter of time before another area of the pipe bursts and are alive to that possibility. Southern Water are working on a long term plan to replace the main from Lower Halstow to Motney Hill, which is 4 kilometres of pumped pressurised main. Mr Woodhams apologised for the poor traffic management on behalf of Southern Water. The sub-contractors have been made aware of the shortcomings regarding the idling engines, communication with residents, traffic signs and traffic lights. All the vans and welfare units will be removed from the Three Tuns car park by Monday 12th April.
An update was given to the Parish council by Mr Morris. Some of the issues are that the burst occurred on an SSSI, it's bird nesting season and the ground conditions make it almost untenable to dig in certain areas. Southern Water have come up with the solution to this with an overland main to mitigate the one that has failed below ground.

Cllr Miller pressed Mr Morris regarding the easements over private land and the timetable for completing the repair works.

Mr Morris explained that there are generic easement rights over land, but they are superseded in cases where there are SSSI issues. Negotiations have to be held with landowners and Natural England. Mr Morris was expecting to have the repair complete by the weekend.

Cllr Whiting queried the extension to the road closure and Cllr Stiles commented that communication was not clear. Mr Woodhams said that he was not aware of the extension request, but would look into it and explained the role and remit of colleagues who were in the village talking to residents about the tankering. He thanked the Chair for being allowed the chance to speak to the Parish Council.

- e. Currently the government is not extending the legislation that allows remote meetings for Local Councils beyond the 7th May 2021. Cllr Howard-Challis is also the Chair for the Village Hall Committee and the responsibility falls to him as to whether the hall re-opens. Currently the playgroup is using the hall, but with a very rigorous cleaning regime. Cllr Miller put forward the idea that hybrid meetings may be an acceptable alternative. Generally, it was felt that the data would need to be watched and the risks weighed up carefully before making a decision.

8. Finance

- a. It was agreed to give a donation of £750 to the poetry festival.
- b. The Parish Council already own a battery strimmer which is available for Cllr Portman to use to tidy the graves in the Burial Ground.
- c. It was agreed to give a donation of £100 to Citizens Advice Bureau.
- d. The Internal Auditor's report for 2019/20 was noted.
- e. The Clerk read out to the meeting the assertions in Section 1 of the Annual Governance Statement which was approved.
- f. It was agreed to continue as members of Kent Association of Local Councils and National Association of Local Councils.

9. To discuss and agree response (if any) including the following Planning Applications:

- 10. 21/500911/FULL PROPOSAL: Conversion of existing garage into habitable room including extending the garage to the front. 15 Burntwick Drive, Lower Halstow, Sittingbourne, Kent. ME9 7DX.

It was agreed to support this application in line with the Village Planning Strategy.

11. To discuss any applications received between producing the agenda and this meeting

None.

12. Policies:

- a. Model Publications Scheme
- b. Social Media Policy
- c. Freedom of Information Policy

The Clerk had circulated information regarding all of the above policies. It was agreed that the Clerk will arrange for the policies to be written for approval.

Action: Clerk

13. To receive reports on the following:

- a. Parks and Leisure
The football nets and the basketball net and backboard will be ordered.
- b. Planning
Nothing to report.
- c. Footpaths, Lighting, Hedgerow Maintenance, Burial Ground and Allotments
Cllr Portman has marked out some boundaries at Tutt's allotments and is considering organising a competition for the allotmenters if there is support. Some of the trees at Westfield have not taken but there are some spares, so this will be looked at this month. A litter pick will be organised for after 17th May. Some information regarding environmental stations have been received and some dog poo bags might be

appreciated for the Recreation Ground, Gibbs amenity area and at the end of the lane at Elm Farm. The Chair has a supply of bags which he will make available.

d. Parish Highways Plan.

Cllr Whiting is liaising with KCC Highways regarding speed limits, but during lockdown there are no speed surveys taking place. There is some controversy regarding 20 mph and differing views as to where it is feasible to implement. Parts of Vicarage Lane and School Lane have blind bends and no pavements. Cllrs Portman and Groves both stated that they support a 20 mph limit for the village. Change to the speed limit will need a formal consultation. Prior to that the councillors will ask informally, via the website, to gauge feeling amongst residents.

Action: Clerk

e. Docks, Barges and Sea Wall

A series of shots were taken of the dock area and the collapsed area with a drone. A brief and a draft heads of terms for the Edith May will be circulated before the next meeting. Cllr Miller together with Mr Van Der Straaten will put together a campaign together with a view to putting some pressure on the Environment Agency for work to be done on the sea wall.

f. Car Parks and Brickfields

Nothing to report regarding the car parks. One of the concerns regarding the brickfields is that Southern Water are re-instating the hole dug for an earlier leakage, which is now a pond.

14. To acknowledge Reports on meetings attended on behalf of the Parish Council

a. KALC Rep

No report.

b. Memorial Hall Rep

No report.

15. To receive the Clerk's report, include:

The Clerk has paid in £50.00 in respect of the Burial Ground.

The Corporate Multipay card account has been set up, but the Clerk is still awaiting receipt of the credit card through the post.

The Village News is being published again and the first issue for this year has been uploaded to the Parish Council website. The School Lane sign at the junction with The Street has been replaced. A resident has reported that the "Give Way" sign at junction of Breach Lane with The Street has been knocked over to KCC, via the website.

The Clerk attended the KALC course "All about the AGAR" in preparation for the coming audit.

The bank balance as of 31st March 2021 is £91855.19

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.

16. Items for information only:

a. Items for website and Village News

None.

b. To receive agenda items for next meeting and agree date of next meeting:

The meeting ended at: 21.00 pm.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 4th May 2021

Payments April 2021

Payee	Description	Gross Amount £	VAT £	Cheque No/Bank Payment
Mr J Knott	Play Area Checks and Village Cleaning January – March 2021	225.00		412322963
DCK Accounting Solutions	Payroll Services Invoice: P2280	42.00	7.00	419075515
Mrs A I Smith	Salary and Expenses reconciliation January – March 2021	376.80		24230184
HMRC	PAYE	169.27		827888433
Mr M Szabo	Reimbursement for Zoom Meeting Charges March to April 2021 Invoice: INV77571664	14.39	2.40	91518284
Mr M Szabo	Reimbursement for No Idling Signs Invoice: WC22798	182.34	30.39	79574158
KALC	Training: All about the AGAR Invoice 1648740249	42.00	7.00	904568563

Other payments:

25 April 2021 Standing Order

Clerk's Salary - £644.60

Date:

Signed:

**Cllr. K Howard-Challis
Chair**