

Harrietsham Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 30th March 2022 at 7.30pm in
St John the Baptist church

Cllr Powell welcomed all present to the meeting and reported that Vic Foster had resigned from the Parish Council.

The Clerk reported that she had two urgent items to be added. A grounds maintenance issue arisen, close to the allotments, to be discussed under Agenda item 6.1 (Other Environmental Matters) and a donation from the PTFA, to be discussed under Agenda item 7 (Other Financial Matters). Councillors were in agreement with these being added.

Public Discussion

The Editor of the Downs Mail, Simon Finlay, had been invited to the meeting to discuss the Parish Council advertising in the paper. Mr Finlay suggested that the Parish Council advertise 6 times a year, with one of their team attending the Parish Council meeting to produce the content. This would be sent to the Council who could make minor grammatical amendments and approve before it is published. If this amount of advertising was approved, additional content can be added between the 6 prints. Cllr J Sams queried whether this was good use of public money, as there is already a Parish section included in the paper and Mr Finlay stated that this may be phased out in the future. It was noted that there are 2m page views online and that it was no longer cost effective to distribute a copy to each household. Cllr Griffiths queried how the Parish Council would be able to gauge how many would be reading the article from the village and it was noted that around 800 copies are delivered to pick up points in Harrietsham and, overall, 98.6% of the papers are taken across Kent. Cllr J Sams raised concerns that Network has published its last edition and residents may query why the Parish Council isn't using the money to support the village magazine. There was general discussion regarding the use of social media and how residents keep up to date with news events.

Cllr Powell reminded all present that information had been circulated regarding the current MBC Boundary Review. Cllr John Britt, Chairman of Lenham Parish Council spoke to Councillors about Lenham Parish Council's response and the fact that the Boundary Commission has stated that 'the status quo' will not automatically be reverted to. MBC has an exemption until the 13th April, to ratify their comment at a Full Council Meeting. Lenham has a live petition, which has resulted in them being able to speak for 5 minutes on the subject at the meeting. Cllr Britt stated that it would be beneficial if both Council's responses were in sync, as Harrietsham and Lenham are most affected by the proposed changes.

Cllr Dean asked whether Lenham Parish Council will support Harrietsham by submitting comments to applications along the A20 and Cllr Britt confirmed he would speak to the Chair of the Planning Group.

1 Present

Cllr E Powell, Cllr G Dean, Cllr J Sams, Cllr F Stanley, Cllr C Roots, Cllr T Griffiths, Cllr S Luck, RFO/Amenity Manager Mr M Cuerden and the Clerk Mrs A Broadhurst

2 Apologies for absence

Cllr T Sams, Community Warden Martin Sherwood, County Cllr S Prendergast

3 Minutes of the last meeting

Parish Council Meeting 23rd February 2022 - The minutes were proposed as accurate by Cllr Dean, seconded by Cllr Griffiths; with all in favour.

4 Disclosures and confidential items

Changes to the Register of Interests

There were no changes.

Declarations of Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations.

Requests for Dispensation

No requests were submitted.

5 Planning

5.1 The outstanding planning applications were noted.

5.2 The refused applications were noted.

5.3 Other Planning Matters

- The Clerk reminded all present that a representative from MBC was attending the Planning meeting on Friday morning. All Councillors wishing to attend should be at the Parish Office by 9am.
- The Clerk reported that the owner of the old School site will be attending the meeting to be held on Friday 22nd April (moved due to Good Friday Bank Holiday).

6. Environmental

6.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 11th March 2022 - The minutes were proposed as accurate by Cllr Dean, seconded by Cllr Luck; with 3 in favour (those present at the meeting).

6.2 Other Environmental Matters

- Saxon Place Open Space Play Area: The Clerk had circulated images to Councillors to assist with the discussion. The Clerk reported that she had carried out a site visit with Maria Cook, so that she would have a better understanding of the land. Maria had taken the Clerk to view another play area, which contained children's and fitness equipment, as well as a MUGA. Hallett and Co solicitors have confirmed that there are no restrictive covenants that would prohibit the Parish Council proceeding. Cllr Dean stated that there would be a Management Fee for Maria's services and the Clerk confirmed that this would be approximately 10% of the cost. It was felt that this was value for money, as she is an accredited Playground Inspector and would be able to oversee every step of the project; dealing with any issues that may arise. It was proposed by Cllr Dean that Maria Cook be employed to project manage the tender and installation process. This was seconded by Cllr Luck, with all in favour. Following the site visit, Maria has stated that, due to the slope up on to the open space, the work will need to either be completed before late Autumn or in Spring. It was also noted that a planning application will need to be submitted for the new equipment. Cllr J Sams asked whether plans would be available to show to residents at the Big Lunch and the Clerk responded that there maybe at least one or two proposals that could be displayed. The Clerk stated that she would ask Maria to request 2 sets of drawings from each supplier. **ACTION: Clerk**
- Ratify £280 expenditure for clearing & disposing of vegetation on the A20 verge: The Clerk reported that there had been concern raised by HIB, that a large amount of vegetation was on the verge where the bulbs were due to come up. The Amenity Manager had arranged for the contractor to clear this but, once on site, it became clear that it was a much larger job than first thought. They subsequently asked for authorisation to complete the work at a cost of £280. The Clerk had confirmed that this was acceptable, as they were already on site, and informed Councillors immediately over email. All Councillors who had responded had agreed with this course of action. It was proposed by Cllr Roots to ratify the expenditure of £280. This was seconded by Cllr Griffiths, with all in favour.
- Land adjacent to the allotments: Whilst meeting with tenants on the allotments, the Clerk and Amenity Manager looked at a section of stream bank, which has effectively become a 'no man's land', with no one maintaining the area. The Amenity Manager proposed that the contractor be asked to cut back both banks, litter pick the area and complete an additional cut through the allotments at the same time (as this is already looking in need of attention). Cllr Dean proposed that the Council accept the Amenity Manager's recommendation and this was seconded by Cllr J Sams; with all in favour.
- Cllr Dean reported that there are still 6,000 leaflets to be delivered for Teers Meadow and Mike Phillips also has two posters he would like included in the mail drop. There would need to be 3 deliveries at a cost of £559 each and the RFO confirmed that there is £1,200 left in the Lottery publicity budget. All Councillors agreed in principle to the leaflet drop, as long as the funding could be found from the balance of the grant. The RFO will report back at the next meeting. **ACTION: RFO**

7. Finances

- 7.1 Income and Expenditure spreadsheets - The finance sheets were proposed as accurate by Cllr Roots, seconded by Cllr Griffiths; with all in favour.
- 7.2 Amended Asset Register: It was proposed by Cllr Roots to approve the amended Asset Register. This was seconded by Cllr J Sams, with all in favour.
- 7.3 Retrospective approval of Octopus as our new energy supplier for the Parish Office: It was proposed by Cllr J Sams to move to Octopus as the Parish Council's energy supplier. This was seconded by Cllr Stanley, with all in favour.
- 7.4 Delegated authority for the RFO to investigate and appoint new insurers: It was noted that the Parish Council's current insurance company has sent notice that they are withdrawing from the Local Authority market. It was proposed by Cllr Roots to give delegated authority to the RFO to investigate and appoint a replacement insurance company. This was seconded by Cllr Griffiths, with all in favour. **ACTION: RFO**
- 7.5 Grant Request from Harrietsham Schools' PTFA: The RFO reported that the PTFA have requested a donation towards the cost of a new bbq for their May Fair. The cost of the bbq is £791.98 and they have asked whether the Parish Council could consider between £250 - £350, with the rest of the money coming from parent donations. Cllr Griffiths highlighted that the PTFA had been unable to raise funds during the pandemic and that families were struggling with rising bills, so he asked that the Council consider giving more to assist with the purchase. After brief discussion, it was proposed by Cllr Griffiths to make a donation of £500. This was seconded by Cllr Roots, with all in favour.

8. Highways

- Highways Improvement Plan: Following a meeting with Jennie Watson, an update had been circulated to Councillors. There were two items that required discussion at the meeting:

Item 5 - Fairbourne Lane: KHS could install a 'road narrows' sign opposite The Lodge, as it is at this point onwards that the road narrows down and there is land available to accommodate a sign at this point.

Item 6 - East Street: This road is not suitable for a 20mph speed limit, as there are no shops, schools, etc. However, KHS could add some 30mph roundels next to the repeater signs to highlight the speed limit.

The Clerk confirmed that KHS can fund the works and Councillors decided they wished to proceed with the sign in Fairbourne Lane and roundels in East Street as proposed. The Clerk stated that she would update Jennie Watson on these points.

ACTION: Clerk

9. Damage in the Glebe Field Play Area

The Clerk had circulated photos of the damage caused to the play equipment on the Glebe Field. The area had been inspected by the Installation Company, who had been extremely concerned at the malicious nature of the damage. Maria Cook had confirmed that, if a child had climbed on the Diablo unit, which has had wood screws inserted where bolts should be, there could have been a life changing injury or death. This damage had been reported to the Police and the Clerk has chased 3 times since, as there had been the opportunity for finger printing to be carried out and for the CCTV footage to be downloaded. Nothing further was heard for 13 days, until PCSO Boyd had phoned to say that there was footage of 'youths' causing criminal damage. The Investigating Officer contacted the Clerk to say that he has requested the footage and it is hoped that they can use images to identify the suspects. They had confirmed it is being recorded as criminal damage.

The Clerk has spoken with Huck Netting, who supplied the equipment, and they will be arranging a member of staff to come out to reinstate the equipment at a cost of £350. However, this will not be immediate, as there is a waiting time for works to be completed.

The Clerk then updated Councillors on a long-standing issue relating to anti wrap chains, which had been fitted to the HAGS swings. This matter may now be reaching a conclusion, with the chains being replaced, as a good will gesture. The outstanding invoice for approximately £3,500 will then be amended and resent to the Parish Council for payment.

10. Annual Parish Meeting

The Clerk confirmed that DC Newman will be attending the meeting to speak regarding Fraud Prevention. Cllr T & J Sams will arrange the refreshments. The Clerk reminded all present that the meeting will commence at 8pm and will be preceded by the usual monthly meeting at the earlier time of 7.00pm.

11. Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

Cllr Dean reported that she has now arranged a judge for the dog competition. After brief discussion it was decided that the Jazz band should be in the Church. Raffle prizes are needed for the Big Lunch. Cllr Griffiths has organised a dance group to perform at 12.30, but they will require an enclosed area, as some of the children are quite young. This is to be discussed at the next working group meeting.

The Clerk reported that she had spoken to a print company who are offering to produce commemorative Platinum Jubilee mugs at £4.50 (+vat) each and this would include a box for each one. The Clerk showed all present the proposed mug, which the company had produced free of charge and everyone agreed that this was a wonderful idea. It was noted that companies advertising to Local Councils are supplying them at £7+ per mug. It was agreed that one should be given to each child in the village nurseries and primary school (totaling around 400) and that residents could purchase one at £1 above the cost price. It was then proposed by Cllr Griffiths to purchase 700 mugs and this was seconded by Cllr J Sams; with all in favour. Cllr J Sams then asked whether the wording could be amended to "Presented by Harrietsham Parish Council" and the Clerk responded that she would arrange this, when placing the order.

ACTION: Clerk

12. MBC Boundary Review

Various documents relating to this had previously be circulated to all Councillors. These had included a draft response, produced by Cllr Roots. He commented that Harrietsham is now big enough to be a Ward in its own right and that another option would be to have 3 Borough Councillors covering Harrietsham, Lenham and the North Downs, however this would not help with reducing the overall number of Councillors from 55 to 48. After further discussion it was proposed by Cllr Dean to submit the draft response provided by Cllr Roots, this was seconded by Cllr Powell; with 6 in favour and 1 abstention.

ACTION: Clerk

13. Advertising in the Downs Mail

Following on from the earlier discussion, there was further debate regarding how this proposal would offer better value for money than supporting the village magazine and using social media. Cllr Dean stated that information can be passed on immediately through the Downs Mail; especially with regards to planning matters.

It was proposed by Cllr Powell to pay for ½ page advertising at a cost of £200 per edition, to cover the April, May and June meetings (to be published in the early May, June and July editions) to then review the decision at the July meeting, this motion was seconded by Cllr Dean. Cllr Griffiths then proposed that any decision be delayed until the next meeting, when further information may be known about the future of the village magazine. This

motion was seconded by Cllr J Sams. Both motions received 4 votes and the Chairman used his casting vote to proceed with advertising in the Downs Mail, as proposed.

ACTION: Clerk

14. Christmas Lights

Cllr Roots reported that, in the lead up to Christmas, he had been aware of residents complaining that the village did not have any Christmas lights. Cllr Dean reported that, several years ago, Cllrs T & J Sams had arranged for a Christmas tree to be placed on the green and she had personally purchased lights, which had subsequently been vandalized. The RFO added that there had previously been 4 sets of lights in the trees on the Green and these had been vandalised (and repaired) 3 times over the years. Finally, the lights had been cut at every single access point through the branches and the Parish Council had had to pay for them to be removed, as they were hazardous. It was agreed to defer this item to the May meeting, for further discussion.

ACTION: Clerk

15. MBC Sports & Leisure Consultation

The Clerk had circulated an email and supporting document on this agenda item. MBC have requested a meeting with the Parish Council and representatives from sport's groups in the village to better understand the measures that could be taken to improve lives in the village. They would like to hold this after the May elections and it was agreed to work with MBC on this. Cllr J Sams confirmed that MBC should pay for the hall hire for the meeting, which should last around 2 hours and the Clerk added that she would respond, giving the Booking Clerk's email address.

ACTION: Clerk

16. Future Events

Community Litter Pick - 2nd April (9am - 11am meeting on the Village Green)
Ploughman's Lunch Saturday - 9th April (St John the Baptist Church 12 - 2pm) Craft items will be on sale.
HIB Quiz - 23rd April (Village Hall 7.30pm)
Harrietsham School May Fair - 14th May (12 - 3pm)
HIB Plant Sale - 21st May (Michael Geer's garden)
Lighting of the Beacon - 2nd June 9.45pm (preceded by the Invicta Jazz Orchestra in St John the Baptist Church)
Afternoon Tea watching the Queens' Coronation - 3rd June (Village Hall - arranged by the History Society)
The Platinum Jubilee Big Lunch - 5th June (Glebe Field 12 - 4pm)

The Clerk reported that Harrietsham Primary School has invited members of the Parish Council to attend an open afternoon on Friday 6th May. It was confirmed that Cllrs Stanley, Dean, T & J Sams, Powell, Luck & Griffiths would attend.

ACTION: Clerk

17. Items for Future Consideration

Twinning - Cllr J Sams

Christmas Lights - Cllr Roots (May agenda)
Santa's Grotto - Cllr Griffiths (September agenda)

Cllr J Sams informed all present of a group called 'Ukraines United' which has been set up to assist refugees in both Harrietsham and Lenham. Residents in the village will be hosting and donations are being collected. These were originally being sent to a central location for transporting, however the donations are now being kept for the refugees arriving locally. It is hoped that welcome packs can be made up to assist them and it would be good if the hall could be booked, every so often, to give them the opportunity to meet up.

18. Date of Next Meeting - Wednesday 27th April 2022 at 7.00pm (shorter meeting) in St John the Baptist Church, followed by the Annual Parish Meeting at 8.00pm

With no further matters to discuss the main meeting was closed at 10.20pm.

Minutes of Confidential Agenda Items 19 (Staffing Matters) will be filed with a signed copy of these minutes.