

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, VESTRY HALL
ON THURSDAY 8th DECEMBER 2016**

The Chairman read out the following statement:

Members are required to declare any interests, dispensations, predetermination or lobbying on items on this agenda. Members are reminded that changes to the Register of Interests should be notified to the Clerk.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Meeting. She reminded members of the public that this is a Meeting to which the public are invited, but it is not a public meeting. She would close the meeting at the end of the main agenda to allow them to speak briefly if they choose. She reserved the right to ask for significant questions to be submitted in writing. The Chairman reminded members of the public not to disrupt the meeting and if they continued to do so after a request from herself as Chairman to desist, she had the power to ask them to leave. Having said that; she welcomed the interest from the members of public in our proceedings.

Dr. Joy Temple notified the Clerk that she would be recording the meeting.

PRESENT: Cllrs. Bunyan, Cook, Goodchild, Fairweather, Fermor, Hall, Hartley, Holmes, Rook, Smith, Swann, Veitch & Warne. Borough Cllrs. Dawlings & Hannam, KCC/Borough Cllr. Holden.

APOLOGIES: Cllrs. Clifford & Kemp.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING:

166: The Chairman, Cllr. B. Veitch proposed that the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 10th November be adopted as a true record. The proposal was seconded by Cllr. Fermor and agreed.

SELECTION OF NDP CONSULTANT:

167: Cllr. Veitch thanked Cllr. Warne for all her hard work on this project which was reiterated by all Members. Cllr. Warne referred to the Minutes of the Steering Group held on the 28th November when two new consultants made presentations Alison Eardley from the Troy Navigus Partnership and Jim Boot who was helping Goudhurst with their NDP. Angela Koch from Imagine Places also made a presentation. A further meeting took place on the 7th December when a Skype call was put into Richard Eastman from FERIA. There was a challenge that this meeting was not legal as it was held in her home but the Clerks took legal advice from the KALC locum solicitor and it was entirely legal as this was for technical reasons and it was not a Council meeting but a Steering Group meeting. At the first meeting a shortlist of two consultants was voted on to put to the next meeting on the 7th December. Then the Steering Group voted unanimously for Richard Eastman and FERIA. She invited questions.

Cllr. Swann asked whether the opportunity had been taken to discuss knocking down any of the costs with Imagine Places. Cllr. Warne confirmed that Angela Koch had sent back a proposal to get to a draft plan within the process. Her daily fee of £575 was in excess of the limit on consultants fees with the first proposal.

Cllr. Swann asked whether we were going to be within the £49,000 estimated sum. Cllr. Warne stated that it could be less. Cllr. Swann informed Members that a budget estimate had been looked at, there was already £7,500 set aside, there is a grant for £9,000 which leaves £32,500 still to be found.

Cllr. Hall stated that she was disappointed that Feria had been chosen. At Hawkhurst there were more chiefs than braves present and the same happened at Paddock Wood. Feria do not undertake a resident's survey, a business survey, traffic or transport. Plans can fail if there is not public engagement. The Clerk had provided us all with the Interim Reports from Hawkhurst, Headcorn and Staplehurst and it was quite clear that the ones from Feria were highly repetitious with whole sentences being cut and pasted. Cllr. Veitch stated that she had also attended a meeting at Hawkhurst with Feria and it was very well attended by parishioners. Cllr. Warne stated that this was also the case when she attended Paddock Wood. Cllr. Smith stated that he had an opposite view to Cllr. Hall's. The Steering Group had gone through a thorough process, had listened to several presentations and the Group had made their recommendation which was unanimous. TWBC are fully comfortable with the process gone through and hopefully this will stimulate people to come forward. He was very comfortable with the recommendation made.

Cllr. Warne informed Members that she had asked Richard Eastman why he uses his type of methodology and not surveys. He likes to go to the community groups and ask them what they like and do not like. A survey on such a dry subject as a NDP is not a very successful tool to use.

Cllr. Veitch then proposed that the unanimous recommendation of the Steering Group to appoint Feria as our preferred consultant to assist with the Cranbrook and Sissinghurst NDP be ratified. This was seconded by Cllr. Cook and agreed, the motion was carried with 12 votes for and one vote against.

CHAIRMANS REPORT:

168: The Chairman reported that she had recently attended the KALC Annual General Meeting and the KALC local chairmans meeting. Last week she attended the Parish Chairmans meeting in TWBC. The items she had noted were Local Plan Report – the Economic Needs Study should be on the Borough website within the week and the Retail Needs Study where the report should be out by the end of the year but is primarily focussed on Tunbridge Wells and “key” local centres, this could be Paddock Wood but she was unsure about Cranbrook. It was suggested that 640 new homes were needed per year plus 11 – 15 hectares of new business space, but no increase in retail space. With regard to the Settlement Role and Function Study, the importance of checking this pack of data was emphasised and she noted that this had been discussed in a recent Parish Planning Committee. There will be a further call for sites from February 2017. The current 270 submissions are on the Borough website. The Draft will be out for consultation in spring 2017, with an aim for the plan to be agreed and out in autumn 2018. Councillors did question the justification for the number of houses and were told that the Government sets the guidance for the calculation of the numbers, and if TWBC does not follow the guidance exactly, then the government inspectors would challenge plans that do not include the required numbers. With regard to street lighting – after KCC have converted the lights to LEDs, these will be left on all night again. Business rates were discussed and these will increase as the result of the Government autumn budget. Early indications are that the rate for the Assembly Hall complex will be up by 240%, and the Crescent Road car park up by 30%.

With regard to the Community Centre Project, Carole Wanless is in the process of finalising her report. She had been delayed by the difficulty in making appointments with some people. She was also not available to attend this evening to present her report. Cllr. Veitch stated that she intended to have an Extraordinary Parish Council meeting in late January with the Fundraising Report as a single item agenda. The progress in achieving the Co-operative Group's permission for the rights of access to Wilkes Field is slow. We are now trying to schedule a meeting with them, to include our MP Helen Grant, herself and a TWBC representative, probably Ian Gifford. Hopefully this will happen in early January. There is no point in doing anything else until this is resolved.

The Chairman stated that it was with regret that she had to report that Carrie Beech is leaving the High Weald Academy management team, probably in January.

Cllr. Veitch reminded Members that Coral Kirkaldie has been our valued and essential Clerk for 14 years and was with the TWBC Planning Department for many years before joining the Parish Council. Her combined service record is 47 years. All chairmen, councillors and members of the community have valued her sound advice, expertise, common sense and impartiality. She knew of no one who has as much knowledge of the community of Cranbrook and Sissinghurst. Cllr. Veitch thanked Coral for everything that she has done for our community, she will be sorely missed. She was sure that Lori Ham will be very successful in the role of Clerk and we had a good selection of candidates for the Deputy Clerk role.

The Chairman wished everyone a Happy Christmas and good wishes for 2017.

Cllr. Hall referred to the housing numbers given, and mentioned that consultants had been appointed by Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells to look at numbers. Tunbridge Wells accepted but Sevenoaks opposed. Cllr. Veitch stated that they had been told at the Chairmans meeting at Tunbridge Wells that any appeal by TWBC would cost £100,000s so they have no choice on the numbers.

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE:

169: Cllr. Goodchild referred to the report of the meeting held on the 6th December and mentioned specifically that HSBC had already closed in Cranbrook and was now closing their branch in Tenterden. We agreed to remain with HSBC and use our account at Lloyds for our daily banking. The new Deputy Clerk is Laura Larkin. The interviews were transparent and Laura came out top on the point scoring system used. We are all delighted with her appointment, Lori included, and with a good relationship in the office, then business will fly. He thanked Cllr. Swann for preparing the Budget, he has a great ability in making something complicated appear simple. He invited questions. In response to Cllr. Cook, he confirmed that the nearest branch of HSBC is Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells or Hastings. Cllr. Goodchild then proposed adoption of the report; this was seconded by Cllr. Holmes and agreed. Cllr. Veitch stated that by adopting the report the appointment of Laura Larkin has been ratified by Full Council.

PLANNING & PRESERVATION COMMITTEE:

170: Cllr. Bunyan stated that two meetings had been held and the Minutes circulated. Cllr. Cook will update Members on the Settlement Role and Function Study.

She stated that the Committee recommended approval in principle on the application for the Woodstove site, but had concerns on the height and impact on neighbouring properties and also the very small area of outside space. We have received a letter from a neighbour who was disgusted about our recommendation. However, the design was much better than a previous proposal.

Cllr. Cook informed Members that he had worked his way through the Settlement Role and Function Study. It was not a well organised document and not a great guide to services available. It did not list banks or ATMs. There were also many errors, one being that Cranbrook School is private. Responding to Cllr. Swann, he clarified that the document lists all the shops and some of their opening times. This is not helpful as this often changes. It is a document based on census information. The document does not specify its purpose. Cllr. Hall suggested that it is a document which will feed into the Local Plan and Planning Policy.

BURIAL GROUNDS & PROPERTIES COMMITTEE:

171: In the absence of Cllr. Clifford, Cllr. Bunyan stated that there had been no recent meeting.

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY COMMITTEE:

172: Cllr. Holmes stated that the meeting scheduled for the 15th November was cancelled. The Committee will meet again in February to look at the ongoing projects.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT:

173: Cllr. Rook referred to the report of the meeting held on the 20th November and mentioned specifically that £2,664 had been authorised for swing bearings and some new play equipment had been chosen for the Jubilee Field. He pointed out a typographical error under Crane Valley – should be slow worm and not “work”. A decision had been made to ask the Borough to remove the cardboard bank in the Regal. There is evidence that people as far away as Ashford are using the Bank. We have suffered litter from the Bank as well as arson. This is superfluous to requirements now that there is a doorstep collection of paper and cardboard. With regard to Speedwatch – damage had been caused which had not been accounted for and it was decided to draw up a new agreement. He gave a brief explanation of how the original scheme was set up. Since this time some parishes have purchased their own equipment. The Committee elected to continue with Speedwatch, there is a very active group in Sissinghurst. Electric vehicle charging points were discussed but there was a question as to who paid for the electricity. There was a schedule of street light repairs which might need attention and Cllrs. Swann and Smith were looking at this. We had received a letter of objection regarding the decision on the cardboard bank, but he felt that the parishioner had missed the point that he could leave his cardboard at his own property for recycling. With regard to the culvert grill in the Tanyard, the Clerk inspects this regularly but following her retirement he is looking for a volunteer. Cllr. Hartley offered to inspect this weekly and on an ad hoc basis during heavy rain. Cllr. Veitch clarified that we employ a contractor to clear debris once a month. Cllr. Rook invited questions.

Responding to Cllr. Cook, he suggested that it is unlikely that electricity for vehicle charging points would remain free. Cllr. Cook made the suggestion that perhaps CCTV might be needed. Cllr. Swann clarified that there was no suggestion that the Parish Council would be responsible for the cost. Cllr. Hall asked how Speedwatch works.

Mr. John Bancroft from Sissinghurst Speedwatch confirmed that it was an educational tool and gave a brief explanation of how it works stating that if a pedestrian got hit by a vehicle travelling at 30mph they would have an 80% chance of survival but if the vehicle was travelling at 40mph it would only be 10%. Cllr. Holden stated that he had sponsored a number of cameras and a Rural Speeding Group was set up with Helen Grant MP and the police are now using the data and backing up the Speedwatch groups with prosecutions. Mr. Bancroft went over the figures given in the Environmental Management Minutes. Cllr. Rook then proposed adoption of the Report. This was seconded by Cllr. Holmes and agreed.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN:

174: Cllr. Warne referred to the report of the meeting held on the 28th November and mentioned specifically that a meeting had been held with officers from TWBC and it appears that the NDP can contain our own policies specific to our Parish which will hook up with their policies. She had also attended a CCAAC meeting and can report that they are very much on board with the NDP. Cllr. Warne brought forward some amendments to the Minutes. With regard to the Terms of Reference 6g had a clause added, the wording had changed in 4a, 4b and 8b and an & had been added in 11b. Also in the Minutes with regard to Jeremy Boxall, this is amended to “is a current member” instead of “having worked at”, there was also a typographical error in the second paragraph, and should be “planning” instead of “planing”, plus the officer’s titles should be in capitals. She invited questions.

Cllr. Bunyan mentioned the CIS levy and that 25% is to be spent on community requirements. Cllr. Warne stated that she would endeavour to find out about this. Cllr. Hall stated that this is Borough wide. Cllr. Warne stated that this was not the case, with a NDP it could come to the Parish. Cllr. Warne then proposed that the report be adopted. This was seconded by Cllr. Cook and agreed.

Cllr. Warne then referred to the report of the meeting held on the 7th December which had already been discussed as a main agenda item with the selection of the consultant and she proposed adoption of the report. This was seconded by Cllr. Cook and agreed.

CRANBROOK CONSERVATION AREA ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

175: Cllr. Bunyan referred to the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 23rd November. She mentioned that the works to the Crown Inn had commenced. Cllr. Warne had attended the meeting to talk about the NDP. It was felt that the recent Landscape presentation by the Borough had been useful and should be opened up to all the parishes. Cllr. Hall agreed, stating it was good to educate as many people as possible, the David Scully workshop was useful. CCAAC would like the Parish Council to try to organise something. The Clerk reminded Members that someone from the Planning Department had asked to come to the February meeting so perhaps the opportunity could be taken to speak to them at the meeting, Cllr. Bunyan stated that the Clerk had forwarded a letter to CCAAC from a parishioner who had concerns regarding Rowan Cottage which is in a very sorry state. Mark Stephenson, the Conservation Architect has taken this issue on board.

KENT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS:

176: Cllr. Veitch stated that she had attended the AGM and she gave an update on the resolutions put forward. She had taken the opportunity to speak to a representative from Kent Fire & Rescue following up our fire hydrant survey which we undertook about four years ago. Apparently they expected us to undertake this annually.

Cllr. Veitch stated that she had also attended the Tunbridge Wells Area Committee. These meetings are proving to be very useful. The main points of discussion were the housing numbers, highways – dirty signs and verges. KCC are trying to deny that they own the verges and have responsibility for them. They are losing £0.75m from their budget next year. A discussion took place on the possibility of a lengthsman being shared by all the parishes.

Cllr. Bunyan referred to the Parish News – the article regarding support for our armed services which is interesting. Cllr. Holmes suggested that this is something for government rather than local town or parish councils but he would be happy to put this item on the next agenda for Economic & Community. Cllr. Cook suggested that Major Riddick would be a good contact to provide information.

ACTION WITH COMMUNITIES IN RURAL KENT:

177: There was nothing to report.

CLERKS REPORT:

178: The Clerk reported that she had received an email from TWBC regarding the public conveniences which are still closed due to vandalism. A quote had been obtained for repairs and this had come in at around £7k. Their view is that they cannot pursue these works this financial year. They have exhausted their budget and the proposal is that this is reviewed again in the next financial year. Cllr. Holmes asked whether the Borough were insured for the damage. The Clerk stated that she had no knowledge of the Borough insurance. It is also unknown whether the Borough reported the incidents and obtained crime numbers. Members were sympathetic to the situation the Borough finds themselves in. Cllr. Cook asked whether the Borough should be finding monies to support businesses who were prepared to open their toilets to the public. The Clerk suggested that this was something that might happen if toilets are permanently closed and taken out of action which is not the case with the Cranbrook public conveniences.

The Clerk informed Members that TWBC are introducing CCTV signage, covert and overt cameras within areas which are fly tipping hot spots. She had noted that Tilsden Lane had the camera signs already erected.

CORRESPONDENCE:

179: There was no correspondence which needed reporting this month.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION:

180: Cllr. Rook informed Members that he had reported drug dealing outside the public conveniences in Cranbrook to the Police.

181: Cllr. Fermor mentioned the sorry state of the former Windmill Public House. The Clerk agreed to contact the believed owner to get an update on their plans for the property.

182: Cllr. Fermor mentioned that a seat on the left hand side of the Jubilee Field was broken. The Clerk stated that she would ask the Parish Warden to inspect.

183: Cllr. Cook stated that the Remembrance Day Service and Parade was well attended and the weather again had been kind.

184: Cllr. Smith mentioned littering on The Street, Sissinghurst – he would email the Clerk the details.

185: Cllr. Fairweather mentioned that he had received an email from a parishioner regarding the Wilsley Green junction which he had forwarded onto Cllr. Holden. He noted that the Courier newspaper had been contacted and he reminded Members that should the newspaper contact them they should be referred to the Chair or the Clerks.

186: Cllr. Fairweather reminded everyone that tomorrow evening and Saturday is the Cranbrook Christmas goes Crackers event. Cllr. Fermor stated that there was going to be a pop up bookshop in Harpers & Hurlingham. Cllr. Cook stated that there was a pop up craft shop in Oxfam.

187: Cllr. Holmes referred to the Hop Picker's Line Project. The launch had gone ahead with the first stage of waymarkers between Paddock Wood and Old Hay. He thanked the Chairman for attending the launch.

188: Cllr. Hall stated that Tunbridge Wells Conservative Group had raised objections in that the neighbour notification letters sent out by the Planning Dept were going to be stopped. Cllr. Bunyan stated that the decision had already been taken to stop them. Cllr. Hall informed Members that the decision had been taken unilaterally by the Officers but this had now been rescinded. Planning and waste collection are the only two statutory duties which have to be undertaken by the Borough. The rest is fluff.

189: Cllr. Hall stated that she is on the CCAAC Local Listing Sub Committee and she was very excited to find a building of historic importance with 15C beams which had been missed off the local list. The property is the previous Calcutt McClean Estate Office.

190: Cllr. Hannam stated that there was an active discussion at the Conservative Group Meeting regarding the neighbour letters as mentioned by Cllr. Hall. It transpired that the cost of sending these out is £45,000. The decision had now been delayed until April. He informed Members that the Borough had obtained £4.5m from their asset disposal programme with a lot of funding being put towards the Civic Centre Project yet half of this income had come from Cranbrook and its environs. Borough Members have asked how much money is allocated to the parishes. The politicians would like to see more grant applications from the parishes, he urged parishes to inform their Borough Member. He mentioned the St. George's Institute, exception site housing at Frittenden and the Crane Valley Land Trust. He mentioned the former Council Office site and the S106 agreement where a sum of money was set aside for affordable housing. Because there were no plans ongoing for Cranbrook the monies were diverted to elsewhere in the Borough. Finally he mentioned that a new planning application was in for the Rifle Range at Golford which he would be monitoring. He was hopeful that this time it might be approved.

191. Cllr. Dawlings agreed with Cllr. Cook's comment on the Settlement Role & Function Study. Anything based on census figures is jaundiced. It came out in Benenden that they had the highest percentage of young people. It would do as it has Benenden School, so no surprise. He is attending a meeting next week on S106 issues.

He agreed with comments made by Cllr. Hannam with regard to the former Council Offices 106, there were no schemes in Cranbrook so the funding was diverted to Paddock Wood. There is still S106 from the new hospital at Pembury so we will not lose out. He confirmed to Cllr. Veitch that with regard to the Local Plan that Cranbrook is a key local centre. Cllr. Dawlings stated that he would endeavour to find out whether the Borough obtained crime numbers for the damage to the public toilets. Cllr. Veitch stated that there had been a spate of vandalism and we have been told that the PCSO is also now covering Paddock Wood. Cllr. Dawlings stated that he would have a word with Dave Pate. Responding to a question from Cllr. Cook regarding Benenden public conveniences, Cllr. Dawlings reminded Members that Benenden Parish Council took these over from the Borough. A further discussion took place on the S106 funding for affordable housing and it was clarified that the funding can only be for affordable housing if it is specified in that particular agreement.

192: Cllr. Holden stated that he had received an email from a parishioner and had clarified that the road layout had changed, the small build out had been removed as there was evidence of skidding and this probably not being able to be seen by all drivers and it had now been replaced with hatching. He urged Members to keep reporting pot holes. There had been an extra £3m allocated. The speed limit reduction is about to take place, but it had cost £8,500 just to the signage which had to be theft proof. He was pleased to report that Goudhurst will be included in the area for the next KCC election and he had visited their meeting and met Susan Newsam who had organised the Memory Lane Café which he was delighted to be able to support with funding of £3,500. He mentioned that the £67m Cultural Centre Project is for Tunbridge Wells, we do not get any part of the funding and the Ice Rink is £130,000 in deficit. He informed Members that in the call for sites for waste area, he is looking for a recycling tip for our area.

The Chairman then closed the meeting to enable members of the public to speak.

A parishioner pointed out that at the last meeting the meeting was closed for a confidential item but this was not mentioned on the main minutes. After discussion, the Clerk suggested it would not be difficult just to add “a discussion was had” onto the main minutes. This was accepted.

A gentleman suggested that TWBC spends money on Tunbridge Wells, put the repair of the Cranbrook toilets at the top of the agenda. He asked whether the Parish had made any contribution to Christmas goes Crackers and it was confirmed that we had. He then asked the Borough Council to take up the issue of the delays on the A21 which apparently was down to the removal of contaminated soil.

A presentation was then made to the Clerk, Coral Kirkaldie, to mark her retirement from Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Parish Council.