

**COBHAM PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the meeting held on**  
**Monday 20 November 7.30pm**  
**in the Meadow Rooms**  
**Cobham**

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:**

CLLR R DYMOND (CHAIRMAN)  
CLLR S DYER (DEPUTY CHAIRMAN)  
CLLR M HAIG  
CLLR J BLACKETT  
CLLR GABRIELLA BJÖRK GABBITAS  
CLLR BEN SMITH  
CLLR MIKE BOOTH

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillor Samir Jassal, Community Warden Steve Gray, Mrs T Sampson (Clerk) and 11 parishioners.

**1 Apologies for absence:** Cllr Sue Arnott

**GBC**

The Chairman introduced Cllr Samir Jassal, from Gravesham Borough Council. Councillor Jassal spoke about a recent article in the local press about the building on local greenbelt land. He said the report was misleading because the Council had yet to make any decision. He referred to the Borough's local plan and the need to increase the number of houses being built in the area. The Councillor has asked for a consultation to be undertaken in the new year so that residents are able to share their concerns and ideas. He spoke positively about the recent development of local brownfield sites and specifically mentioned Cold Harbour Road and the new development at Springhead. Councillor Jassal would like to see much of the development take place in the brown field sites and will be working to make this happen, but he recognised that there may need to be some greenbelt land built on, which is why he wants to make sure everyone takes part in the consultation so that we can take control of where the development happens rather than the decision being made elsewhere.

In 2014 the GBC Local Plan identified that 4000 houses needed to be built in the borough to keep up with growth requirements this was then revised to 6000 and is now expected to be set at 8,000. The Borough is currently short of meeting its target (if all the brown sites are utilised) by approx. 1,300 houses.

Cllr Booth asked how many houses had actually been built so far. Cllr Jassal referred back to the 1,300 houses that need to be built if all the brown site building takes place.

Councillor Jassal was asked whether he was saying there wouldn't be any greenbelt building, he answered that he didn't want to see building expand across greenbelt, but there was a need to be realistic.

Cllr Dyer asked what the deadline was for the consultation, Councillor Jassal referred to the fact it would take place in January but was unable to give a deadline date.

The Chairman asked when Parish Council Chairs would be invited to contribute to the consultation. Councillor Jassal explained that there would be a meeting before Christmas.

Mr Parker asked for the actual numbers, how many houses are they looking to build, how many have been built? Cllr Jassal didn't have the number of houses already built. The target is now 8,000 new houses, but he said he will come back with an actual figure.

Councillor Jassal passed around a plan of the parish indicating land that had been highlighted for development. He said he would provide more detail of exactly where this information had come from and also provide the council with a copy – he took the plan away with him as there was only one copy and he needed it for his next meeting.

A parishioner referred to a previous consultation where people were asked if they wished to live in Sole Street; only 15 people responded positively and then there were too many houses built. Following recent appeals the Parish Council was told that White Post lane was never to be built on.

Councillor Jassal used Coventry as example of how neighbouring boroughs were working together to meet their house building targets.

Councillor Haig referred to local Children not being able to attend the local school as it stands now so there would be a need for more schools and more general infrastructure.

When asked about staff shortages in the planning office, Councillor Jassal referred to cuts and having to find finance for many projects and services and that they have been quite successful so far, but the way forward is sharing with other boroughs. Councillor Booth suggested the way forward was to employ more staff in the planning office to process the applications more quickly

Mrs Holland asked about tourism in the Borough. Councillor Jassal spoke about the work the borough is doing to encourage a better night time economy and facilities for the cruise liners etc.

Councillor Jassal left the meeting at 8. 15 pm

**2 Minutes:** The Chairman asked the Parish Councillors to confirm and sign the minutes of Monday 11<sup>th</sup> October 17 the minutes were agreed -

**3 Declaration of Interests** - none

#### **4 Lower Thames Crossing**

Parish Councillors had met with Highways England(HE) representatives prior to the Parish Council Meeting; the Chairman confirmed that the old varnish factory is not going to be used by HE as a base for the Lower Thames Crossing work.

A roundabout at the A226 had now been discounted, there will be more cutting through at Riverview park, a change of roadways at Henhurst and Halfpence Lane has been proposed and the A2 will be increased to 5 lanes with 3 lanes in the tunnel.

Cllr Booth feels that the Village will benefit from the most recent changes to the plans and that a local traffic road to Nell's Café is an improvement.

#### **5 Parishioners Comments and Budget suggestions.**

A member of the Rights of Way Group from Luddesdowne asked for £200 from CPC towards the general up keep of the new strimmer – fuel etc. They have cleared around 30 paths in Cobham and the volunteers put in some new 'way marker' signs. They clear 37 paths in Luddesdowne who gave them £75.

There are 3 volunteers to clear 75 paths, KCC insure them and they are looking for more volunteers. The Chairman thanked them for the work they do and their request.

The Cobham Youth Club has asked for some funding, £1000. They have undertaken some fundraising themselves so far £385. The youth club charges its members £3 per session. The year's membership is £10. They are working with Kent Medway youth group. They need to fundraise about £600. It is important to keep 11 to 14-year olds attending the club as it helps them keep in touch with friends from Primary School. The Chairman suggested the group contact Councillor Jassal and appeal to him for some funding.

A Parishioner referred to a recent planning application for a property on White Post Lane and said she was surprised the planning had been refused. Cllr Haig and the Chairman explained that there were some serious concerns about access and parking.

Mr Parker and members of the former Cobham Speed Watch Group feel that more still needs to be done about the traffic/speed in the Village and do not feel that a new speed watch group is the way to go. They would like a black box to collect data to speed up the process of getting a consultant etc. The Black box will cost £2000 and could be moved around the village; it will need to be checked whether KCC will accept the data. They believe that the reliance on volunteers and good weather makes the speed watch process difficult to manage. The Chairman explained that the new speed watch equipment is different to the old equipment and means that it is not so time consuming. Mr Parker said they would look to raise some money themselves. Additionally, he said that 4 more Peacocks will be arriving.

Steve Gray, the Community Warden, has been outside the School and there is a problem with people parking on double yellow lines, he will try to get the traffic enforcement officers out, but this may prove difficult. He will also mention to the police. Steve mentioned that he is retiring from the Warden service on the 20<sup>th</sup> December- he has enjoyed working here. He is not aware of who his replacement will be, but he hopes to be able to introduce them to the School etc. he will let the clerk know as soon as he hears of his replacement.

Steve told the meeting about a community exhibition taking place from 4<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> Dec in St Georges Centre Gravesend opposite Sports Direct open 10-4pm; other agencies including the Police and Ambulance service will be represented there.

## **6 Matters Arising from previous minutes**

- a. **Membership of the Parish Council** (Cllr Dymond) –The Chairman explained that she was still waiting for CVs to be submitted and the interviews to take place. There is still a year and quarter left for a co-opted councillor to participate in Council business.
- b. **Brown sign for Owletts, Cobham Wood and Mausoleum** (Cllr Gabbitas)  
Unfortunately, there has been a decision made which means the National Trust are no longer able to provide the anticipated Brown signs.
- c. **Sole Street footway** Cllr Dymond is to meet with KCC in December to move this forward. Officials from KCC were shocked by the number of children negotiating such a busy road on their way to and from School.

An inhabitant of Cobham told of her own experience of walking along Sole Street last December and being hit by a vehicle. She had been walking home from the station and was hit by a vehicle which appears to have been travelling at approx. 50 MPH (Sole Street is a 30 MPH zone). She was knocked unconscious and has been left with some long-term effects of the brain injury she sustained, which has and continues to affect her life.

She feels she is incredibly lucky to have survived but she was off work for a couple of months. Witnesses have commented on the high speed of the vehicle.

Additionally, the victim's hospital notes suggested she was hit at high speed. However, the victim received a letter from Kent Police stating that it has not been possible to gather sufficient evidence to support prosecution or other police action.

The meeting was shocked by the parishioner's experience and felt it gave even more impetus for something to be done about traffic speeding in Sole Street and the proposed new footway.

Also surprising was that at the meeting held at Aylesford in August with KCC Highways and a Police representative did not mention this accident. Councillor Dymond said she would follow this up.

- d. **Cobham Public toilets**- Work is currently being carried out on the toilets before their handover to the Parish Council. Maintenance plans and insurance cover is already in place for the Parish Council to take them over.
- e. **Traffic management/ Speed-watch**. The meeting received feed-back from previous volunteers of the speed watch scheme who felt that it was not the best way forward. Please see earlier item in parishioner's comments. Clerk to check with KCC about the data from the black box. KCC have had rubber traffic counting strips across Sole Street and the Chairman will receive the data back from them in December.
- g. **Correspondence** – The Clerk had received 2 emails from Mr Brierley regarding foot-paths and overgrown vegetation.
  - Gully cleaning to Manor Road
  - Pavement repairs to Manor Road.
  - There is a substantial build- up of soil/debris in the gutter opposite the Pub and on the bend at the junction of Camer Park and the Weald Way.
  - Just past the bend at the junction of the Weald Way and the Camer Park entrance there is a double manhole cover that has partially sunk leaving about a 75mm jump in the road.

All items have been reported and reference numbers obtained and passed to Mr Brierley.

h. **Playground refurb** - Cllr Dyer explained that three quotes had been obtained. The Council has gone with the quote providing best value for money and the work has now started. Mr Parker will be fitting two additional pieces of playground equipment at no additional cost. The playground is currently closed to the children.

- i. **Youth Club** fundraising -Cllr Dymond. See earlier item within Parishioners Cllr Dymond once again suggested contacting Councillor Jassal additionally speak to the Cobham Sports Association for funding.

## **7 Committee feed-back –**

- a. Planning Committee Report Cllr Dyer explained that the planning committee had reviewed recent applications and had no objections to the following:

- A single storey extension to the side and rear together with a dormer extension in rear roof slope on 24 Scratton Field – not objection.
- Proposed development of a single storey rear extension to 27 Manor Road – no objection.
- Application for the conversion of the existing barn at Parsonage Farm into two separate dwellings- a three bedroom and a one bedroom. - no objection
- Application for a lawful development certificate for the proposed garage conversion of 18 Greenlands - no objection

**b. Footpaths Committee Report**

The Chairman attended a meeting with the Gravesham Rights of Way Group, where they discussed the issue of rubbish being dumped which Parishioners are clearing. The meeting then discussed the clearing of the footpath near the church. The Chairman mentioned the new Coastal Path Grain to Greenwich which will connect London and Kent paths; this work is currently in progress.

- c. Transport Committee Report** – Cllr Booth had nothing to report. Cllr Dyer fed back on the meeting he and Nicola Carter had with Adam Holloway MP and a member of SE Trains. He referred to the consultation that took place without the knowledge of Sole Street commuters which led to trains being cut in the evening and the morning. The footfall for Sole Street Station is the smallest in the region which doesn't help when train stops are being cut back. The Rochester timetable is the difficulty and they needed to look at the congestion on the lines at certain times of the day. However, with all of Nicola's hard work one change has been made and the 17.12 train from Victoria will now stop at Meopham and Sole Street. There is still an issue with the cutting of the 7.41 morning train which the School Children use, however there is hope that this train will be re-introduced as there had been surprise when SE visited the station on the 7<sup>th</sup> November and saw how many children were affected. Some progress is being made.

- d. Meadow Room Report** -nothing to report.

- e. Playing Fields Report** - All tidy, the seedlings cut back the fencing has been repaired. Cllr Gabbitas referred to the ramp to the lower playing field is a steep gradient and very slippery. Cllr Smith suggested that some sand could be put down.

**8.GBC Matters** see earlier item about Councillor Jassal's attendance.

**9.KCC Matters** – No report as Councillor Sweetland not present.

**10.KALC Matters**- Cllr Dymond said that the membership covers 95% of Kent councils There is to be no change in charge of membership. There is a drive to instigate more parish and town councils to help with future devolvement of responsibilities. HGVs - Ashford is clamping HGVs parked on slip roads, but the Ashford lorry park has been cancelled by the Gov't. KALC is to support the majority of Parish Councils request to have a 20MPH limit for all rural villages and communities. The Clerk and the Chairman will be attending a KALC workshop in relation to changes to the Data Protection Act. KALC are organising an all-day Crime Prevention conference. Clerk to send out a reminder.

## 11. Matters Raised by Parish Councillors

Councillor Booth referred to the amount of litter along Watling Street, Clerk to report to GBC once again.

Signage had been requested for Scotland Lane, but this is still to be done. Clerk to request again.

The painting of the Cobham Post Box, this had been reported and the Sole Street and Meopham boxes have been painted. Clerk to check with whether the Cobham box had been missed.

The Street Bollards - it was suggested that the posters about the Peacocks were looking scruffy and it was agreed that they should come down.

Councillor Ben Smith had been asked to see if a light could be hung on the access road behind the School as it is very dark for the after-school clubs. A request should be made to KCC as it is their property. The Chairman commented that most villagers use torches.

Councillor Blackett mentioned that the drains in Sole Street still haven't been cleared. He spoke to a council worker who said that the job has been logged to be done. Clerk to send another reminder.

Councillor Haig asked for signage to show the access road to the playing field. Additionally, in front of Meadow House- smelly water appears to be gushing from the septic tank – a letter is to be sent to the owner of the house.

The Chairman said that Sweeps Hole had been cleared very well and is looking good. She also mentioned that an exhibition about Rochester Bridge is taking place in the Rochester Cathedral crypt.

## 12. Finance

### Cheques previously signed.

RBL Donation	£50.00
RBL Wreath	£17.00
Kent Playing Fields Association Subs	£20.00

### Cheques presented at PC meeting 20/11/17

Maintenance Man (Oct)	£150.00
Clerk Salary (Oct)	£213.00
Smooth & Rugged (war memorial)	£45.00
Bayliss Landscapes (Sweeps Hole)	£714.00
Gullands (registration of Lease)	£340.00
Total	£1,549.00

Payment transferred from Bowls Club - £290.00

Cllr Dyer proposed acceptance of the Finance report seconded by Cllr Haig. The next meeting will take place on 15<sup>th</sup> January in St Mary's Church Room.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.45pm.

Minutes agreed.....