



Minutes of Cobham Parish Council's Meeting,

Monday 11 January 2021 at 7.30pm

Meeting took place on Zoom

Present

Cllr Steve Dyer (Vice Chairman), Cllr Robert Pryor

Cllr Ben Smith, Cllr Rosemary Dymond, Cllr Matt Mason

Cllr Gabriella Gabbitas, Cllr Mat Peterson-Pierce

Present

Cllr Tony Rice (GBC), Charles Amis (Clerk)

3 Parishioners

1. Apologies for absence – Cllr Mike Booth, Cllr Margaret Haig
2. Declarations of Interest – None raised
3. Minutes: to confirm the budget meeting minutes of 7th December 2020, proposed as a true record by Cllr Smith and seconded by Cllr Dymond.
- 4(a). The Planning Inspectorate has recommended that Highways England retract their planning application for the Lower Thames Crossing. CPC are waiting for Highways England to confirm the issues that caused them to remove their application.
- 4(b). Clerk to invite the local area Inspector and Sergeant to February's meeting.
- 4(c). Cllr Peterson-Pearce said he would take action before the next meeting.
- 4(d). The clerk had asked the Parish Clerk at Vigo Parish Council about their no parking signs and had circulated the details with the parish councillors. Cllr Mason said the no parking signs could be installed in Church Road and Halfpence Lane but they would not be enforceable. Meopham Parish Council has installed 'think before you park' signs to encourage drivers to be more considerate. Cllr Dyer said that both of the Jeskyns car parks had been full and Cllr Mason said this had been a problem before Covid 19. Cllr Dymond said there had been parking issues in The Street. Cllr Pryor said a traffic warden had been issuing tickets to vehicles parked on the yellow lines and grass verges along Church Road. Cllr Dymond said that the parking along Halfpence Lane was destroying the bank which would lead to the pond leaking and flooding the road. Cllr Pryor asked if the bank could be rebuilt but Cllr Gabbitas said that would not remove the water from the road. Cllr Dymond said there was

banking on the east side of Halfpence Lane but it was up to the Woodland Trust to sort out their section. Cllr Peterson-Pearce suggested talking to the Woodland Trust and splitting the cost with them and Cllr Dymond said she was happy to talk to them. Cllr Smith had spoken to the Forestry Commission about the parking in Church Road. Cllr Peterson-Pearce asked if CPC could introduce parking bylaws but Cllr Dymond said the bylaws could only be introduced if CPC owned the land. Cllr Rice said there were three different scenarios with the parking situation. People will park where they can legally park and despite complaints there is nothing that can be done. If there are yellow lines, CPC need to lobby GBC to get more enforcement in place. CPC need to lobby KCC to install yellow lines where they don't already exist. **Action:** Cllr Peterson-Pearce said he was happy to work through the options and come up with a parking plan which will include all the parking hotspots. Cllr Rice, Cllr Dymond, and Cllr Smith offered to help. Cllr Rice said that the sports field car park should be included in the review as there is a prominent sign on The Street but residents are unhappy that visitors use the car park. A parishioner said that Lodge Lane should also be included. Cllr Dymond said there was also a parking problem in Church Road by Ifield Church.

4(e) Cllr Booth is meeting an officer from GBC regarding the siting of the dog waste bins in the playing field.

4(f) Cllr Peterson-Pearce said he didn't hold a copy of the community grant application form. The clerk has subsequently sent a copy to Cllr Peterson-Pearce. Cllr Dymond said the grant application forms should be in a hard copy format as well as online. Cllr Peterson-Pearce said instructions on how to access the forms including hard copies would be provided.

4(g) Cllr Peterson-Pearce said the parish council's achievements could be publicised on the CPC Facebook page or displayed in the village shop or a video could be produced where parish councillors could share CPC's achievements. Cllr Dymond suggested the annual meeting to advertise CPC's successes. Cllr Rice suggested a bimonthly or quarterly newsletter. Cllr Peterson-Pearce suggested a half page of the parish magazine but Cllr Dymond said this was not being produced at the moment due to Covid 19. Cllr Rice suggested a mailshot using email but there could be GDPR issues. Could use Mailchimp. Cllr Gabbitas offered to help.

4(h) Cllr Dyer said the toilets remain closed due to Covid 19. The water had been turned off at the end of December.

4(i) Cllr Dyer nominated the area around St Mary's Church Rooms as an area of improvement plus litter picking around the parish. Cllr Gabbitas suggested the triangle by the railway which has a lot of rubbish. Cllr Peterson-Pearce said this was privately owned land. **Action:** Cllr Dyer said he would speak to the station staff at Sole Street station. Cllr Peterson-Pearce said that in the past daffodils had been planted across the parish. Cllr Dymond said the WI had planted the daffodils 10 years ago. Cllr Pryor suggested the entrance to Lawrence Drive. Cllr Gabbitas said the gates at the orchard needed painting and the vegetation needed cutting back. Cllr Dymond said the gates were too far out of the village and the vegetation needed to be trimmed constantly. CPC had originally decided not to paint the gates white. Cllr Mason suggested moving the gates nearer to the village after the KCC improvement plan for The Street. Cllr Peterson-Pearce suggested that Councillors submit a list of ideas. Cllr Dymond said local residents should be asked to contribute their views. Cllr Peterson-Pearce suggested using survey monkey, social media and advertising in the village shops. **Action:** All councillors were asked to submit a list of areas that needed improvement. Cllr Peterson-Pearce and Cllr Dyer to take this forward.

5. Cllr Dyer thanked Cllr Peterson-Pearce for preparing the consultation guide to the GBC local plan particularly that the local plan was such a large document. Cllr Peterson-Pearce said CPRE had provided significant help and it was important for parish councillors to read the response. Cllr Dyer said GBC had made the local plan complicated. Cllr Rice had contacted the officer responsible for the GBC Local Plan and told them it was too complex. GBC had been expecting protests from the greenbelt areas. GBC were not willing to share the response rate to the consultation and many councillors were not briefed on the local plan before it was circulated. The Statement of Community Involvement had not been followed. Small parcels of land had been identified for development. The current consultation (Regulation 18 stage 2), which just closed on 31st December 2020, is the first process and GBC will take the information away and process it. GBC will carry out a second consultation, potentially in a few months (Regulation 19) and this will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for approval. The Planning Inspectorate listens to all the interested parties and then approves or rejects the local plan. If adopted, it would then be the policies and legal basis for all development in Gravesham until 2036. Cllr Pryor said that at a KALC meeting 80,000 housing units were planned to be built in GBC by 2030 and it looked as if there would be no greenbelt left. Cllr Peterson Pearce suggested the calculator used could have been flawed.

Cllr Dyer said that a neighbourhood plan had previously been produced for Cobham parish by a former parish councillor. Cllr Rice said no town area or parish council in GBC had a neighbourhood plan. CPC could develop an informal neighbourhood plan which would help CPC decide its response to support or object to planning applications. It would not have any influence that GBC or any developer would have to recognise. A formal Neighbourhood Plan must be developed in partnership with GBC and the local community has to be consulted. It does have certain enforceable policies such as a mandatory increase in housing in the parish plus other aspects including community facilities. A proportion of the levy applied by GBC to a developer as contributions to the local community infrastructure would be made to CPC to use for community purposes.

Action: Cllr Mason to source a neighbourhood plan from another parish council and to amend for CPC. **Action:** Cllr Peterson-Pearce, Cllr Mason, Cllr Dyer and Cllr Rice would investigate the setting up of a neighbourhood plan.

6. Clerk to add the new defibrillator in Round Street to the risk register.

7. Planning

Batts Road – Rejected – Out of keeping with the area. The concrete base beside the railway would be a better position.

Knights Place – No Objection

Norbond – Cllr Rice had spoken to the GBC Planning Case Officer. KCC Highways Department had asked the applicant to demonstrate whether a 7.5m panel van can safely turn within the site. There are visibility issues at the junction with the site entrance, Green Lane and Sole Street.

White Post Farm – Still waiting.

Cllr Dymond asked if the planning permission for 44 Scratton Fields two storey extension had come up at the planning meeting. The extension will block the light and overlook the neighbour's garden. The neighbour had raised their concerns to Cllr Rice. Action Cllr Rice to speak to the residents of 42 Scratton Fields.

Playing Fields

KCC had told CPC to move fence by the footpath but the ground is too wet and muddy at the moment and the work will take place in the spring when the weather has improved. Cllr Dymond had gone through the archive at a former chairman's home and had found an unsigned draft lease for the cricket club. The lease started from 2009 and ran until 2028 and had been sent to the current chairman in 2009. Cllr Peterson-Pearce said the lease needed to be scanned and circulated. A lot of time is spent searching for documents when they could be scanned and kept in a centralised location. **Action:** Cllr Dymond agreed to drop off the lease to Cllr Mason to scan and circulate. Cllr Mason had not yet approached the Land Registry for the Sports Association Lease yet as he was waiting for Cllr Booth to get back to him.

Traffic

CPC have sent a draft Highways Improvement Plan and RGA report to KCC but have not had a response. At this stage CPC want to put in additional bollards along The Street to stop vehicles mounting the pavement. Traffic lights could be installed or ANPR cameras to keep traffic away from The Street. Cllr Booth had asked for the double yellow lines to be removed from Sole Street as this would help slow traffic down. It had also been suggested that a 20mph speed limited be introduced throughout the parish but KCC were not interested in implementing either of the schemes. Cllr Dymond was surprised as other villages are pushing these schemes through and the police were reviewing their regulations. Cllr Mason said there had been technical issues with the SID. There was no difference in vehicle speed since the resurfacing. The post that used to support the SID on Henhurst Road had been removed. It was agreed that a new post would be put in Henhurst Road.

Crime

Cllr Pryor said there had been four incidents in The Street. Youths were throwing eggs at the beginning of November and the PCSOs had attended. There was also an incident with quad bikes at Lodge Lane. Cllr Pryor said his house had been a target for egg throwing and taken a video of the vehicle showing the registration but the police did not take any action. Cllr Pryor said it had taken twenty minutes to speak to someone when using 101. Cllr Peterson-Pearce said the Cobham Parish Facebook page and website had a button for reporting crime which went directly to the Clerk. Cllr Dymond suggested Ewatch which was set up by the police but Cllr Pryor said that initially Ewatch seemed to be East Kent based but now includes Gravesham. Cllr Dymond said that Sole Street had a Neighbourhood Watch and Cllr Pryor said he was trying to set that up in Cobham. Cllr Peterson-Pearce suggested adding a link to Ewatch from the Facebook page and website. Cllr Pryor suggested producing flyers and delivering them around the parish but Cllr Dyer said they were not Covid 19 friendly. **Action:** Cllr Peterson-Pearce said it would be added to the Communications Strategy.

8. KCC – Cllr Sweetland had recently circulated an email about Kent Highways, Public Transport and Transportation.

GBC- Cllr Tony Rice said GBC planning committee had approved the redevelopment of the Uralite site in Higham.

KALC – Nothing to report.

Footpaths – The footpaths have been reinstated and were being well used.

Meadow Rooms – Remain closed.

Church & Church Rooms – Cllr Haig was unable to attend the meeting but had sent a report. Both Cobham and Luddesdowne Churches had only recently reopened for worship but had following the recent lockdown had needed to close. The architect of St Mary's Church Room has returned to work and the plan for the drainage are being submitted to the planning office.

9. A parishioner spoke about Jeskyns being busy and said that the Forestry Commission needed to respond to the issues regarding the park's popularity and the limitation of the parking plus the parking issues in Church Road and around Cobham. The FC had litter picked Henhurst Road. Some of the land at Jeskyns could be taken by the Lower Thames Crossing as a maintenance yard if the scheme is approved. Another parishioner said the war memorial was 100 years old and the fence needed replacing. **Action:** Clerk to check with Cllr Booth regarding the war memorial fence repairs.

10. Correspondence

Southern Water had sent a response about the sink holes in Halfpence Lane that said how many sink holes had appeared over the last 3 years. Southern Water do not appear to have a more robust repairs plan.

KALC had sent Sacha Dyer a certificate for his voluntary work. Rob Wemyss had initiated the volunteering and Sacha had offered to help him. However CPC were only allowed one nomination per year so Rob Wemyss will receive a certificate this year.

The previous clerk had received an email from the resident of Meadow House regarding a dog walker allowing their dog to foul their garden. The dog walker had parked in the Meadow Rooms car park. It was suggested that the Meadow Rooms car park be closed at weekends.

Items raised by Councillors

Cllr Gabbitas asked if GBC would consider collecting bottles for recycling. It was unlikely that GBC would start collecting glass as there are several bottle banks located around the parish. Cllr Dymond said that the centenary of the base of the war memorial had passed (24th December 1920) but as the cross had been added a year later (1921), CPC could organise a celebration for this year.

Cllr Pryor asked about the burnt out car left in Batts Road that had been stolen from Sevenoaks.

Cllr Smith said the SID needed a new bracket which had previously cost £85 to replace.

There was a great deal of rubbish by the Network Rail site in Church Road and along Henhurst Road. **Action:** Cllr Smith said he would speak to the Forestry Commission.

Cllr Peterson-Pearce had launched a survey on Facebook of eight questions that parishioners might want to focus on. **Action:** Please publicise this to parishioners

Cllr Mason asked about the listing of the Cobham reservoir. **Action:** Cllr Booth to speak to owners of Meadow House about potentially listing the reservoir. There didn't appear to be a Whats App group for CPC but Cllr Dyer said that he already set up a Whats App group for all the councillors to join.

Cllr Dyer spoke about Cllr Booths absence. Cllr Booth was considering stepping down as Chairman.

Cllr Peterson-Pearce said the parish council meetings were taking too long and councillors did not appear to be prepared for the meeting. Each councillor could update on what they had done or not done.

Finance

Cllr Dyer said the precept had remained the same from 2010 to 2015. Last year the precept was £25,000 and this year it is proposed to increase to £30,000. CPC needs to spend money this year on Lower Thames Crossing, traffic plans for The Street, match funding for the playground, neighbourhood plan. Cllr Dymond said that GBC may ask why there is around £50,000 in reserve. GBC were putting up the Council Tax by 3%.

Cllr Dyer said CPC needed to decide on the precept figure for 2021/22. Cllr Dymond proposed the precept for 2021/22 to be £30,000 and Cllr Dyer seconded. 5 councillors voted in favour and 2 councillors voted against. Cllr Dyer thanked the clerk for contacting GBC to get an extension in submitting the precept.

Next Meeting

Monday 8th February 2021 and will take place on Zoom

11. Meeting closed at 9.36pm