



Minutes of Cobham Parish Council Meeting

Monday 5th July at 7.30pm

Meeting took place at the Meadow Rooms

Present

Cllr Mike Booth (Chairman), Cllr Steve Dyer (Vice Chair), Cllr Rosemary Dymond,

Cllr Robert Pryor, Cllr Matt Mason

Present

Cllr Tony Rice (GBC), PCSO Ellie Middleton, PCSO Kirsty Ward, Charles Amis (Clerk)

9 Parishioners

1. Apologies for absence – Cllr Bennett Smith, Cllr Gabriella Gabbitas, Cllr Mat Peterson-Pearce, Cllr Margaret Haig, Cllr Bryan Sweetland (KCC).

2. Minutes - The minutes for the Parish Council Meeting held on 7th June were confirmed and proposed as a true record by Cllr Dyer and seconded by Cllr Dymond.

3. Declarations of Interest – None

4. Village Crime Group – PCSOs – Ellie Middleton and Kirsty Lowe – Kirsty Lowe spoke about Operation Gurkha which is a long term operation to deal with off road motorbikes. There have been two success stories so far where a motorbike was seized because it was uninsured and two warnings (Section 59s) were issued which means if they are caught within a 12 month period then the bike or car is seized and the warning goes on the rider and the motorbike. Cllr Rice said he appreciated that the police had stepped up their presence over the past two years.

The PCSOs were working closely with Tim Harris at GBC investigating fly tipping which includes looking for any contact details within the rubbish.

The PCSOs do not currently have any contact with the Neighbourhood Watch Initiative. They had been in touch with a central contact who was not prepared to give contact details for the Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinators and it seemed that the details may be out of date. Cllr Booth asked why the PCSOs did not have contact with Neighbourhood Watch.

Action: Cllr Dymond to take this up at the KALC meeting with the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner.

Action: Cllr Dymond said the Crime Working Group would be meeting with the PCSOs and the local Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator and would arrange to have further meetings on a monthly basis.

Cllr Mason commented to the PCSOs that victims of crime rarely get any feedback after a crime had been committed. It seems difficult to find information once a crime had been fed into the system

and only a crime number was issued. Often the police response is insufficient evidence and no further action would be taken.

Action: Clerk to arrange for Chief Inspector Dann and Inspector Beautridge to attend the parish council meetings on a six monthly basis.

Action: Cllr Rice to speak to Chief Inspector Dann regarding the lack of feedback following crimes.

Action: Clerk to organise putting the newsletter on to the website, the notice board and village shop. The PCSOs left some copies of the June newsletter and left the meeting at 8pm.

5. Matters arising from the 7th June meeting

Village sign – Cllr Booth suggested the councillors need to decide exactly on the design and location before it can be properly priced. A parishioner said that Sole Street needed its own village sign for its own identity. Cobham and Sole Street are unique in not having their own village signs.

Welcome Back Fund – Nothing to report.

Cobham Community Store – Asset of Community Value – Nothing to report.

Sole Street Notice Board – Nothing to report.

Youth Club – Cllr Rice said KCC and GBC had not been able to help but had spoken to Jackie Cooper at The Grand. The Grand can provide leaders at £18 per hour and helpers at £12 per hour but had asked to avoid holding the youth club on Friday evenings. They had asked if Cobham, Sole Street & Luddesdown Youth Club wanted to separate into different age groups.

The Clerk had contacted Vigo Youth Club who said this had closed due to no young people attending. The Clerk had also contacted Meopham Parish Council and Higham Parish Council who said that The Grand had agreed to provide them with youth workers. The Clerk had contacted The Grand who have said they can provide youth workers.

Action: Clerk to arrange meeting with The Grand and the current volunteer leaders.

Action: Cllr Mason said he would speak to his wife who was involved in the previous youth club.

Best Kept Village/Britain in Bloom – Cllr Dymond thanked Cllr Rice for arranging GBC to sweep the roads and Cllr Dymond said she was grateful for GBC's help. The inspector toured around Cobham and Sole Street last Thursday afternoon for two hours. The National Trust had tidied the gardens at Owletts Cottages and the Yeoman's House. The inspector was keen to see the part the local community had played in the scheme. Rob Wemyss and Sacha Dyer each gave a 15 minute interview to the inspector at the War Memorial. The inspector was shown the walled garden by the church as well as the allotments and the newly designed garden in the quadrangle at Cobham College. The inspector also saw the 26 locally made flower troughs. Cllr Dymond said she could not say how well the parish had done but everyone had worked hard.

The results will be made known in September when a full report with feedback will be provided.

6. KCC – Cllr Sweetland was not at the meeting but had agreed to take any actions forward.

Boundary Commission/Local Government Review – GBC has currently 44 councillors but this will reduce to 39 councillors in three years. The deadline for response to the commission is the 2nd August and it is important that residents respond.

Most local authorities have had their councillors reduced. Urban borough councillors represent more electors and so the ward boundaries in the rural wards are likely to change the most. On average there are 2000 electors per councillor. Changing the ward boundaries could affect local politics. Cllr Booth thanked Cllr Rice for his good works representing Cobham.

Action: Clerk to print off the plan off the GBC website and send to Cllr Booth to be put up on the notice boards.

Halfpence Lane – Clerk had written to Earl Bourner regarding the flooding on Halfpence Lane beside Ashenbank Wood car park. **Action:** Clerk to follow up with Earl Bourner.

7. GBC – Cllr Rice had nothing to report.

8. KALC – Cllr Dymond reported there was a networking event for parish councillors on 10th July and that there is to be a training course on Zoom for parish councils dealing with the after effects of Covid.

NALC had set up a National Working Party to focus on guidance and best practice on dealing with intimidation and bullying of councillors, professional council workers and clerks and will be rolled across all parish and town councils. NALC have written up the guidelines and are lobbying parliament. Under these guidelines a parish councillor could be removed from the parish council for their term of office. NALC are expecting full parliamentary support.

Cllr Dymond had an executive meeting for KALC on 17th July.

9. Planning Group

Neighbourhood Plan – Cllr Mason had nothing to report. **Action:** Cllr Mason to prepare something for the September meeting.

Norbond – This is still being determined by GBC who had been asked to take enforcement action against the site owner. This planning enforcement had been with GBC for a year. Cllr Mason asked if this should go to the Planning Ombudsman. If CPC wrote to the Planning Ombudsman then GBC Planning Department will be put on special measures.

Action: Cllr Mason to find out if CPC need to write Adam Holloway MP first before writing to the Planning Ombudsman.

White Post Farm – Cllr Rice said this is already determined and site owner had appealed. This has been with the Planning Inspectorate for 9-10 months and there was still no determination date. Prior to Covid the Planning Inspectorate were turning around cases in 6-7 months on average.

Action: Cllr Rice to co-ordinate a meeting with Nick Brown and the planning group.

Cranbourne Farm – Two plots with frontages onto Round Street have been marketed and they are understood to have been sold subject to contract. Access has been created for each plot onto Round Street and this has been reported to GBC Planning. A parishioner said that the larger plot was sold for £250,000 and the smaller plot sold for £230,000 and one of the buyers is an architect.

Action: GBC Planning Department to site visit and report back.

Orchard Cottage – GBC Planning Department are already monitoring this site as it is they are contravening planning. GBC are waiting for a planning application to be lodged. A parishioner reported that the landowner had applied for planning permission convert the stables and that this is proceeding without planning permission. There is a large black gate shielding the activity from the road.

Action: GBC Planning Department to site visit and report back.

Bluebell Farm, Copthall Road/Church Road – The owner was keeping livestock and had put a caravan on the site. The barn is being converted to a house.

Action: CPC will follow up with GBC planning.

Kentish Wine Vault – Bush Farm, Cuxton – Cllr Dymond had attended the consultation. It is planned to be the biggest vineyard in the UK. The winery and visitor centre has been designed by Norman Foster and will be 85% underground and 15% above ground. The commercial and visitor traffic is a potential issue for Cobham and Luddesdown. The consultation estimates that there will be 250 visitors per day and the car park will have 150 spaces. Electric buses will pick up visitors from nearby stations and walking and cycling will be encouraged. The Kentish Wine Vault should be ready by 2024 if planning permission is granted.

Batts Road Telecoms Mast – The new position for the telecoms mast may be in the field to the north and west of Batts Road, which is 100 meters from the original position. It is thought that there are

still better places to site the mast although the applicant has not confirmed the siting of the mast. The previous application had been rejected by GBC after CPC and Luddesdown Parish Council had provided a reasoned response.

Attlee House, Chapelwood Place – The owner had made revisions to the previous application. No objections.

10. Traffic Group

Parking and Verges Meeting – Nothing to report.

Action: Cllr Booth to follow up with Claire Venner and Nick May.

Traffic calming in The Street – Cllr Booth suggested CPC should do a survey of resident's opinions of the current traffic calming measures, bollards and double yellow lines etc.

The Darnley Arms urgently needed bollards following a vehicle hitting the building and Claire Venner had been chased last week but the landlady had still not heard anything.

Claire Venner had said that traffic monitoring tubes would be installed in The Street by September to count the traffic.

Action: Cllr Booth to follow up with Claire Venner.

Speed - A parishioner raised the issue of traffic speed in the narrow part of The Street since the double yellow lines had been removed and bollards had been installed. He said motorists now have a clear line of site and tended to speed through the narrow stretch to beat the oncoming traffic making their way through.

Parking in Cobham - A parishioner asked if the double yellow lines could be removed as there was minimal parking in the village. **Action:** Residents should complete the KCC Double Yellow Line Consultation which ends at 12pm on 13th September.

Lower Thames Crossing – Cllr Booth and Cllr Dyer had a meeting with KCC which focused on mitigation issues for the LTC. KCC had not taken into account the extra traffic in Sole Street with their traffic modelling following the proposed closure of the Cobham and Shorne slip roads from the A2. LTC will be running a new consultation from 14th July to the end of September.

Speedwatch Group – Cllr Rice said the Cobham Speedwatch had restarted and he was the new co-ordinator. The PCSOs, Ellie Middleton and Rob Meader had been helping with the Speedwatch initiative. All the new volunteers had received their theory training. The scheme is not about enforcement but educating drivers. Volunteers can use the speed gun at risk assessed sites on a regular basis so that drivers are aware of the presence and modify their behaviour.

The Police/PCSOs cannot be in Cobham and Sole Street all the time and it is up to the whole community to support this Speedwatch initiative.

Cllr Booth asked how the data from the speed gun was collected and how often and how long the speed gun was used at the location. Ellie Middleton said that drivers became aware of the location of the speed watch so it was carried out randomly and for up to 15-20 minutes. A repeat offender could be fed into the Central Kent Speed watch centre and dealt with accordingly. Like the Speed Indicator device it needs to be moved around otherwise drivers become familiar with the location. A recent speed gun session took place outside the Darnley Arms where two speeding motorists had received written warnings. A driver cannot be prosecuted unless there is a warranted police officer in attendance.

A Parishioner said they couldn't see cars coming over the railway bridge in Sole Street when crossing from Manor Road to The Little Shop and another parishioner asked if a speed camera could be installed by the railway bridge in Sole Street.

A parishioner said there was a lot of noise from speeding traffic in The Street during the night and Cllr Dymond said every Wednesday evening a group of motorcyclists rode through Sole Street and Cobham which caused a lot of noise.

Village Gateways for Cobham – Cllr Booth said the current village gateway in Halfpence Lane was old and needed replacing and asked if CPC should pay for the replacement gateways. KCC had quoted £2500 for two new village gateway signs at Halfpence Lane and below Owletts. **Action:** Cllr Booth to speak to Barbara Westmacott at KCC to get a confirmed design.

Batts Road – one way street – KCC redirect traffic along Batts Road whenever The Street is closed to traffic. It was agreed that making Batts Road a one way street would encourage speeding and maybe dangerous for pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists.

Action: Clerk to contact KCC about directing traffic along a more appropriate route.

11. Playing Fields

Fence along NS178 – The fence had been completed. Cllr Booth had received a quote for £1000 to replace the industrial gate with a wooden gate more in keeping with the surroundings. Agreed to proceed.

Sports Association – Insurance Letter – Cllr Mason said the letter was in draft and the dates needed to be added.

12. Public Toilets – The opening and cleaning of Cobham toilets was going well but still needed someone to close the toilets which was being carried out by Terry Ralph. It was suggested that the Land Sheriffs who check the fences for the CTRL railway could make use of the toilets and could close them after use in the evening.

Action: Cllr Dyer to obtain Land Sheriff's contact details.

The clerk said that Horsmonden have timed locks that have the timings pre-programmed.

Action: Clerk to get more details

Action: Clerk to check who closes Meopham, Cliffe and Cooling Toilets.

Non-Domestic Rating (Public Lavatories) Bill had received royal assent by parliament and so Cobham's toilets were no longer subject to GBC business rates.

The clerk had sent the contact details for the Community Toilet Scheme to the landlady of the Darnley Arms.

Action: Clerk to send the details of the Community Toilet Scheme to the landlords of The Leatherbottle and The Ship.

13. St Mary's Church Rooms

The clerk had received details of the building regulations application but the tender documents have still not been completed.

14. Installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points

The parish council had declared an interest with KCC and now agreed to take forward.

Action: Clerk to follow up.

15. Social Media – use of – Cllr Booth said the parish council website and facebook page is not updated enough and the news section of the website is too hidden away. It would be useful know how often the website is visited.

Action: Clerk to follow up.

Action: Clerk to investigate alternative means of getting information to residents that do not have computers.

16. Other Village Matters

Meadow Rooms – The Clerk read an email from the Chairman of the Meadow Rooms. The management committee are continuing to work with regular hirers on their plans to return to using the Meadow Rooms over the coming months. Enquiries and bookings have continued at a steady pace.

The facility is open for use in line with government advice and the Preschool is operating as normal with other children's classes returning. Currently the Meadow Room has limited weekend availability up to October. Cash reserves remain healthy and sufficient to cover operational costs.

Church & St Mary's Church Rooms – there was an event for every month and £620 had been collected from the strawberry tea. The Fund Raising Group had made an application for a grant from the Kent Churches Trust and were being interviewed next week.

Footpaths – nothing to report.

War Memorial – Lady Darnley had unveiled the War Memorial on Christmas Eve 1921. A re-enactment to celebrate the centenary of the War Memorial would take place over the weekend of 16-17 October. A member of the Baker Family would be giving talks over the two days in the Meadow Rooms and there will be a special service on the Saturday. Lord Darnley had been sent a special invitation and Hetty Bligh had also been sent an invitation.

Litter pick – follow up – 12 people had attended the recent litter pick. Cobham and Sole Street were generally litter free although the bins were overflowing around the cricket pitch. Cllr Smith had cleared litter from Church Road. The Clerk suggested another litter pick for September.

Action: Clerk to ask Matthew Lisney to empty the litter bins around the playing field and cricket pitch.

Cllr Dymond had met with Balfour Beatty at their office at Marling Cross. They had previously helped Shorne Parish Council with their litter picking and following the meeting they agreed to litter pick Watling Street, Halfpence Lane and Henhurst Road.

17. Correspondence & Announcements

The Clerk and Cllr Booth had received an email from a parent whose children attended Cobham Primary School. The parent had applied to Meopham Academy who said there was no places available. The parent had appealed but Meopham had still said no and the children had been offered places in schools that were much further away and were difficult to access by public transport. In the past children from Cobham Primary School would normally move on to Meopham School but this had become more difficult since Meopham School had joined Swale Academies Trust. Children from Meopham Primary and Istead Rise Primary plus children who already had an older sibling were guaranteed a place. It was asked if there were plans to extend Meopham Academy as it was very popular after receiving an outstanding report from Ofsted. **Action:** Cllr Dymond to investigate further and to speak to the Head teacher at Cobham Primary School.

18. Parishioners Comments

A parishioner said that his wife, who is a dance teacher, had wanted to start dance classes for children in the Meadow Rooms on Saturday mornings. They had sent emails to the Meadow Rooms and Cobham Primary School before Covid but had not heard anything. The Clerk passed on the contact details for the bookings secretary at the Meadow Rooms.

Meeting continues in private

19. Finance – cheque report

Cllr Dyer proposed and Cllr Dymond seconded the cheque report.

20. AOB –items from Councillors

The Meadow Rooms were not available on Mondays from September to November when CADS had there booking for rehearsals. CADS were also using the Meadow Rooms on Mondays from March to May 2022 although the Meadow Rooms would be available for the Annual Parish Assembly. There appeared to be not many other suitable places in Cobham and Sole Street. It was agreed that the meetings could be moved to Tuesdays.

Action: Clerk to check Cllr Rice's availability on a Tuesday evening.

21. Date of next meeting – Tuesday 7th September at the Meadow Rooms