



Minutes of Cobham Parish Council Meeting,

Monday 7 June 2021 at 7.30pm

Meeting took place at the Meadow Rooms

Present

Cllr Steve Dyer (Vice Chairman), Cllr Matt Mason, Cllr Rosemary Dymond,

Cllr Gabriella Gabbitas, Cllr Margaret Haig, Cllr Bennett Smith,

Cllr Mat Peterson-Pearce, Cllr Robert Pryor

Present

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

3 Parishioners

1. Apologies for absence: Cllr Mike Booth (Chairman), Cllr Bryan Sweetland (KCC)

2. Minutes: The minutes for the Annual Parish Meeting held on 4th May were confirmed and proposed as a true record by Cllr Dymond and seconded by Cllr Peterson-Pearce

3. Declarations of Interest: None

4. Approve the Annual Governance Statement (AGAR): The clerk said the internal auditor had checked CPC's accounts and had completed their part of the form. The Vice Chairman and the Clerk signed the Annual Governance Statement.

5. Approve and Chairman signs the Accounting Statement (AGAR): The clerk went through the figures and the Vice Chairman signed the Accounting Statement. The clerk had signed the Accounting Statement prior to the meeting.

6. Matters Arising from the Annual Parish Meeting of 4th May

- Sports Association Lease/Buildings Insurance: Cllr Mason had drafted a letter which had been sent to Cllr Booth and Cllr Dyer. The letter confirms that although CPC own the buildings the Sports Association are responsible for the buildings insurance formalising the situation where the sports association are already paying for this. **Action:** Cllr Mason to circulate letter to the all parish councillors.

- **Review of Standing Orders re Social Media:** Clerk had circulated the standing order prior to the meeting. All of the parish councillors agreed that the Standing Order should be added.

- **Village Sign:** Cllr Smith had not spoken to Rod for some time. **Action:** Cllr Smith to speak to Rod regarding the new village signs.

- **Road Fatalities – KCC Website/Data Retrieval Team:** Cllr Peterson-Pearce had run a search but his had not shown anything. **Action:** Cllr Dymond will contact Terry Martin at KALC.

- **Welcome Back Fund:** Cllr Dyer said this had been mentioned at the Gravesham Chairman's Meeting. The government have given funding to local authorities to give at the local authority's discretion to local businesses and community organisations who have suffered financially due to Covid 19 and not yet received any funding. The clerk has asked GBC to confirm the criteria for the funding and is still waiting response. GBC have been given £94,000. The funding would be to make town centres and larger parades of shops more attractive to visit. The closing date is not imminent. **Action:** Cllr Peterson-Pearce to check with GBC on CPC's eligibility for the Welcome Back Fund.

- **Parking at the Playing Fields:** Cllr Smith had spoken to Jim Jackson regarding the parking issues when morning football and afternoon cricket are taking place.

Mr Jackson was not keen on putting up a temporary signboard at the entrance to The Landway to say that the playing field car park was full. As a result some visitors are parking in Lawrence Drive. There were two marshals directing the traffic on some Sundays but not sure if this will be for every weekend. Drivers could also be abusive towards the marshalls. It was suggested to add this to the parking proposals. **Action:** Cllr Smith to have an ongoing conversation with the Sports Association regarding the temporary signboard at weekends

7. KCC – Cllr Sweetland was not at the meeting but had agreed to take forward any subsequent KCC matters.

8. GBC – Cllr Dyer had attended the GBC Chairman's Meeting.

Fly Tipping - Tim Harris at GBC has recruited 3 street scene officers to deal with fly tipping and were recruiting two more officers including an investigating officer. Covert cameras with batteries that last three weeks would be installed at known hotspots. The public have been asked not to touch the fly tipping as this could contaminate any evidence. It was suggested putting the PowerPoint presentation on CPC's website. **Action:** Clerk to check with Tim Harris if the content needs to be cleared before going on social media. A link to the fly tipping section Gravesham website could be added to CPC's website. Cllr Rice said it was better to report the fly tipping through the GBC website rather than Country Eye as the information is sent directly to Tim Harris who delegates to the appropriate officers. Since Tim Harris has joined GBC all fly tipping is investigated and followed up. Also cameras can be deployed to the known hotspots.

Lower Thames Crossing - The LTC was also covered at the meeting. Highways England is planning to carry out a consultation starting in mid-July. This will focus on construction and waste issues that had been highlighted by the Planning Inspectorate plus some detailed changes to the development boundary. Highways England intend to submit a Development Consent Order in the late autumn and the formal Examination will start in March/April 2022. It is unlikely to be any major changes to the overall scheme as last seen at the Design Refinement Consultation in July/August 2020. Highways England intend to hold public events subject to Covid although all of the information will be available on line. Shorne Parish Council had also been meeting with the LTC engagement team. Wendy Lane had said the GBC planning portal is often going down. Cllr Mason said that this may be caused by companies writing to offer their services.

Boundary Commission – Local Government Review - Cllr Rice said there were two boundary reviews. The Parliamentary Boundary Review will be starting soon. The local government boundary review is for council wards and councillors. There are currently 44 councillors in GBC but following the review this will reduce to 39 councillors. Previous reviews have usually reduced the number of councillors and increased the number of constituents. Every ward in GBC is being reviewed. Shorne,

Cobham and Luddesdown may or may not change. It was asked if Cobham and Sole Street shared an affinity with other nearby places in Gravesham. Individuals can submit their comments and the Boundary Commission make the final decision. This will be before the local government elections in May 2023. **Action:** Cllr Rice to supply details of a contact at the Boundary Commission who could offer advice. **Action:** Cllr Dyer to submit CPC's comments to the boundary commission survey.

9. KALC/NALC – Cllr Dymond said the fast food vehicle registration packaging scheme was going through parliament. The next Gravesham KALC meeting is 28th July. KALC has set up a Climate Change Advisory Group and Cllr Dymond asked if GBC had a similar group. Cllr Rice said GBC had a cross party group that was focused on how to achieve net zero by 2030 and £500,000 has been ring fenced for that. Cllr Peterson-Pearce mentioned that building standards were exceeding current minimum standards. **Action:** Cllr Dymond said she would take the feedback to the KALC committee. Cllr Dymond was attending a meeting about the lessons learned from Covid 19 in the next two days. National Thank You Day is on 4th July.

10. Planning –

New Cottages, Church Road – planning application is currently with planning committee to review.

Norbond – Cllr Peterson-Pearce was unable to source a diary of events and he will start to keep a diary. There is more noise coming from the site as the evenings are lighter. Cllr Rice has continued to ask the case officer responsible for making the decision. The decision was due on 1st June but the planning officers are proceeding with caution. Cllr Peterson-Pearce asked if CPC could escalate.

Action: Clerk to arrange a letter to go to Director of planning at GBC, Nick Brown. Cllr Dymond said local residents could write as well.

White Post Farm – Still with Planning Inspectorate.

11. Traffic Group Report

- **Parking and Verges Meeting with KCC and GBC** – Cllr Booth, Cllr Dymond and the clerk attended a meeting with Claire Venner from KCC and Nick May from GBC. Cllr Sweetland and Cllr Rice were also there. Cllr Dyer thanked the clerk for the minutes. KCC and GBC are listening to CPC's concerns about parking. The Woodland Trust need to help CPC with the parking issues along Halfpence Lane. CPC are currently waiting for feedback from Claire Venner and Nick May. **Action:** Clerk to contact Earl Bournier about flooding on Halfpence Lane. **Action:** Cllr Booth to contact Nick May (GBC) and Claire Venner (KCC) for updates.

- **Traffic Calming in The Street – Feedback** - A parishioner said the bollards were not slowing down the traffic along The Street. The Darnley Arms had been shaking with the speed of the traffic and The Street had become noisier. There needed to be bollards on the opposite side of The Street as traffic was still mounting the pavement. Cllr Rice said the bollards were only a trial and may not be a long term solution. KCC have agreed to fund a larger scheme for The Street which should take place at the end of 2021/2022. The same parishioner complained about the loss of the parking bay outside the church which had led to cars speeding because the sight lines had improved. There are no suitable places along The Street for the SID to be located. The SID loses its effectiveness if it is left in the same location and needs to be moved around as motorists become familiar to that particular location. Between 7pm and 9pm on every Wednesday a group of motorcyclists ride along The Street which has been reported to the PCSOs. It was asked if a zebra crossing could be installed in The Street and if wooden posts could be used. **Action:** Cllr Rice agreed to forward the parishioners concerns to Claire Venner for extra protection to the Darnley Arms. **Action:** Cllr Rice to investigate the Installation of traffic monitoring tubes on The Street.

- **Speed Watch Group** - Cllr Rice has restarted the Speed Watch initiative and has become the co-ordinator. Speed Watch is not a quick fix but is there to educate and enforce. The speeding

hotspots need to be identified and The Street has been included. Alan Watson, from the Community Speed Watch Association, will train volunteers to use the speed gun and high visibility jackets will be issued. Cllr Gabbitas and Duncan McKay have undertaken training but need at least six volunteers to help with the scheme. **Action:** Cllr Rice to email link for parish councillors to sign up for Speed watch training. The PCSOs will also be there to enforce and can send a warning letter to the offending motorist.

12. Crime Group Report – Cllr Pryor said there had been very little crime in Cobham parish. The new PCSO, Kirsty Lowe would like to attend the parish council meeting in July and has offered to meet the crime working group before. The police were still running Operation Gurkha most weekends. Patrick Wade, a PCSO at North Kent Police Station in Northfleet, had asked for volunteers to help act as spotters for Operation Gurkha for the afternoons of Saturday 19th and Sunday 20th June. Cllr Booth had offered to help but no other parish councillors had offered.

13. Playing Fields Report – Work started this week on moving the fence beside footpath NS178. **Action:** Cllr Peterson-Pearce was still looking for another quote for the playground.

14. Public Toilets – The public toilets reopened on 1st June. Cllr Dyer thanked the clerk for getting quotes from the cleaning companies. The gent's toilets were looking very clean. CPC were paying Medway Norse around £6,000 per annum for opening and cleaning the toilets. Cllr Mason said he had seen a public toilets in Dorset with an honesty box outside asking people to donate £2 each. **Action:** Clerk and Chairman to arrange signage and contribution box. **Action:** Clerk to ask Horsmonden Parish Council about how they manage their toilets. Volunteers were needed to lock the toilets at the end of each day. **Action:** Cllr Booth/Cllr Dyer to ask Bowls Club if they would lock the toilets in the evening. A camera could be located outside the cricket club to reduce any potential vandalism. **Action:** Clerk to find out with GBC about the business rates for the toilets. Cllr Rice had sent details about the Community Toilet Scheme that was run by GBC. **Action:** Clerk to follow up with Melanie Norris at GBC. GBC asked local pubs to offer their toilets for the scheme and are paid different rates according to the accessibility and the facilities offered. The landlady at the Darnley Arms was interested although they are closed on weekday afternoons.

15. Cobham Community Store – Cllr Peterson-Pearce had nominated the Cobham Community Store as Asset of Community Value and Cllr Rice had backed him up. Residents could add their support by writing to Jayne Pike, Local Land Charges Manager at GBC. **Action:** Cllr Peterson-Pearce to follow up with Jayne Pike at GBC.

16. St Mary's Church Rooms - The St Mary's Church Rooms are the main community asset for Sole Street although the building is not listed. CPC would be paying for half of the architect's fees and subject to planning permission the work on the building could be put out for tender. All of the parish councillors approved the grant £2450 in principle subject to knowing more details for the plans for the work.

17. Electric Vehicle Charging Points – KCC are running a free zoom training event on Tuesday 15th June for electric vehicle charging points. Cllr Booth has signed up to attend and Cllr Dyer asked if there was anyone else interested in attending.

18. Bus Shelters Grant – Cllr Dyer said there were three school bus pick up points in Sole Street which were at The Railway public house, by Scratton Fields and Round Street. The Round Street bus stop is dangerous due to the bends and lack of sight lines by Sweeps Hole Pond. In Cobham there are bus stops at the church, opposite The Ship public house and near the mini roundabout by the war memorial. A bus shelter would normally cost around £8,000 and another £1,000 for a base.

KCC have offered a grant capped at £3,500 and CPC would need to find the rest. There was a bus shelter outside Owletts but no buses stop there now. It was asked if bus shelters were needed as there are smart phone apps that show the actual bus arrival time. It was agreed that Cobham Parish did not currently need a new bus shelter.

19. Other Village Matters

- **Meadow Rooms** – Cllr Gabbitas said the new notice board was ready to go up. Chris Antrobus had sent an email update. The Meadow Rooms are continuing to work with regular hirers on their plans in returning to use the Meadow Room over the coming months. The rise in enquiries and bookings has continued. The facility is open for use in line with government advice regarding the numbers of people and households that can meet either indoors or outdoors. The Preschool are operating as normal, with other classes starting to return. Currently the Meadow Room is fully booked at weekends until mid-September. We are following the government announcements and will continue to offer a full no quibble refund to any public hirers as needed. The Meadow Room car park continues to see high usage at school drop off and pick up times, but general usage has reduced following the easing of restrictions.

- **Church** – The fortnightly services are still continuing at Cobham and Luddesdown. There is a time of private prayer on Wednesday mornings.

- **Footpaths** – Cllr Dymond said there was nothing to report. The Luddesdown Rights of Way Group continue to look after the rights of way. Cllr Haig said the Japanese Knotweed had not regrown beside the path from the playing field to The Ship PH.

- **War Memorial** – A date around the weekend of 16/17 October had been fixed for the 100th Anniversary for the war memorial's centenary. We are still awaiting confirmation from Cobham Hall and the Bakers are available but we are still waiting to hear back from Ivo Bligh if he can actually attend. Cllr Haig said new fencing was going up around the war memorial. Cllr Dymond said the gates for the Lime Avenue will be installed in June.

- **Sole Street Notice Board** – Cllr Peterson-Pearce is working on this.

- **Youth Club** – The youth club was fortnightly on Friday evenings but has now stopped completely. CPC used to pay by a small grant towards the cost of professional youth workers from The Grand but they are no longer able to help. There is no problem getting volunteers but it has been very difficult to recruit professional youth workers. **Action:** Cllr Rice to ask if GBC or KCC could provide professional youth workers. **Action:** Clerk to ask Chair of Vigo Parish Council on how they run their youth club. **Action:** Cllr Gabbitas said she could check if the Meadow Rooms were available on other nights.

20. Correspondence & Announcements – The clerk had organised a litter picking day for 10am on Saturday 12th June. Cllr Booth had kindly put up the notices. **Action:** Cllr Peterson-Pearce to put on facebook.

Clerk read an email from Eva Simunovic at the Lower Thames Crossing Engagement Team regarding some overnight closures on the coast bound A2 carriageway on Monday 7th June and Thursday 10th June. Henhurst Road needs to be closed to prevent diverted traffic using The Street instead of the authorised diversion route. Cllr Mason sent the Clerk a contact at Highways England. **Action:** Clerk to contact Eva Simunovic about closing Henhurst Road when the A2 coast bound is closed. **Action:** Cllr Dyer to put A2 closure on facebook.

21. Parishioners Comments – A parishioner asked who owned the land beside the railway bridge and Station Approach which had recently been cleared of rubbish. Cllr Dymond said that wildflower seeds would be sown there in autumn.

Meeting continued in Private

22. Finance – Cllr Dyer had purchased two storage crates for storing papers and folders that were handed over by the previous clerk.

Cllr Gabbitas proposed the May and June cheque reports and Cllr Haig seconded.

23. AOB – items from Councillors - Cllr Haig said two dog waste bins are in the wrong place. This is the bin beside the bench by the cricket pavilion and the bin halfway down the footpath from Ashenbank Wood and Jeskyns. **Action:** Cllr Haig to speak to Cllr Booth regarding the siting of the dog waste bins.

Cllr Dymond said it was the Queen’s Platinum (70) Jubilee in 2022 on the spring bank holiday weekend which will be a four day public holiday. Cllr Peterson-Pearce offered to help Cllr Dymond to organise events for the village for 2nd June. Jim Buttress who is a Chelsea Flower Show judge will be judging the Best Kept Village/Britain in Bloom on the afternoon of 1st July. **Action:** Cllr Rice to write to the National Trust to ask them to tidy up the front gardens of 1-2 Owletts Cottages and Yeoman’s House.

24. Next meeting is at 7.30pm on Monday 5th July at the Meadow Rooms