



Minutes of Cobham Parish Council's Meeting,

Monday 8 February 2021 at 7.30pm

Meeting took place on Zoom

Present

Cllr Mike Booth (Chairman), Cllr Steve Dyer (Vice Chairman),

Cllr Ben Smith, Cllr Rosemary Dymond, Cllr Matt Mason

Cllr Gabriella Gabbitas, Cllr Mat Peterson-Pierce, Cllr Margaret Haig

Present

Cllr Bryan Sweetland (KCC), Cllr Tony Rice (GBC), Acting Insp James Beautridge, Sgt Paul Diddams, Russ Nicholls (Local Traffic Group), Charles Amis (Clerk)

2 Parishioners

1. Apologies for absence – Cllr Robert Pryor
2. Declarations of Interest – None raised
3. Minutes: Cllr Dymond made an amendment to the previous meeting minutes. In section 4 (i) planting in the village. New bulbs had been planted near the roundabout by Rose Cottage and by the Exchange and post box. The meeting minutes of 11th January 2021 were then confirmed, proposed as a true record by Cllr Dyer and seconded by Cllr Dymond.
4. Insp Beautridge said Ellie Middleton will be the new PCSO for Cobham and had previously been at Northfleet. The other PCSO who covers Cobham Parish is Rob Meader and between them they both cover Higham, Shorne, Vigo and Luddesdown.
Cllr Booth asked what the new PCSO's remit was. They will not provide 24hours cover but will work a day shift and a late shift and provide a high visible presence in the area. They review the reported crimes from the 101 call logs when they come on duty or from earlier that day from.
Cllr Booth said there was not enough detail in the PCSO newsletter and it was light on information. Insp Beautridge agreed that the newsletter was light on information but this was due to GDPR issues. Kent police currently use twitter to publicise the crimes they are currently fighting and are considering using Facebook and other social media.
Cllr Peterson-Pearce said that older people tend not to use social media and suggested a total number of crimes per month review showing trends and where the problems were.
Sgt Diddams said they had been working with GBC in dealing with fly tipping.

Cllr Booth asked how closely they worked with neighbourhood watch. There had been 13 reported crimes over the past 6 weeks including a significant burglary at a house in Round Street. CPC could help the police if they knew what was going on and there needed to be a closer working relationship. Insp Beautridge said when crimes were reported to 101 the local police were not always involved.

Cllr Booth said he had a quad bike and other tools stolen and had reported that to 101. There was evidence including CCTV images but the Investigative Management Unit (IMU) had said there was insufficient evidence and had closed the case within 12 hours of it being reported. Sgt Diddams said that should not have happened and the IMU should have passed that on to local community unit officers to investigate.

Cllr Mason said it never feels anything is investigated after receiving a crime number and forensics have visited the crime scene. Insp Beautridge said that every crime reported to 101 goes to the Investigate Management Unit. If a parishioner is unhappy with the response received in IMU they can make a complaint to Kent Police.

The local police officers had been spending a lot of time dealing with anti-social motorbikes, parking issues with GBC and encouraging landowners to secure boundaries.

Cllr Peterson-Pearce asked if there was anything CPC could help the local police with. Insp Beautridge suggested sharing their contact details with the community such as on the parish notice boards and CPC website so they were more accessible to the community. **Action:** Insp Beautridge and Sgt Diddams to provide their mobile numbers and Clerk will circulate to the Councillors.

Sgt Diddams said the police wanted to liaise with CPC to find out the policing priorities for Cobham and the parishioners' needs. What did the parishioners want the PCSOs to be doing? Cllr Booth thanked the police for giving up their time for the meeting.

Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

5(a). Parking

Cllr Peterson-Pearce talked through the parking survey that he had produced.

Matt suggested the options for reducing nuisance parking were

Option 1 Windscreen notification,

Option 2 CPC signage on the verge and alongside the road,

Option 3 Install temporary or permanent obstructions,

Option 4 Controlled Parking Zones,

Option 5 implement road markings,

Option 6 implement pay and display parking,

Option 7 temporary payment areas,

Option 8 CPC could create Byelaws,

Option 9 Use Current acts such as Section 86 of County of Kent Act 1981 and Section 10 KCC and Police Enforcement.

CPC would need to work with the Forestry Commission, National Trust, Woodland Trust as well as GBC, KCC and Kent Police.

Cllr Mason said that Options 1, 2 and 3 were quick fixes and required co-ordination. Cllr Peterson-Pearce said Option 1 may be interpreted as aggressive and vigilante

Cllr Peterson-Pearce said the only controlled parking zones were at Sole Street and he had only seen traffic wardens on 3 occasions in the past 10 years.

Russ Nicholls suggested implementing residents parking zones.

The public houses could open their car parks for a fee and customers would get a refund if they spent money in the public house.

Legal help would be needed to draft the parking byelaws.

Cllr Rice said he had written letters and emails to GBC about parking enforcement.

Cllr Mason said Vigo Parish Council had installed signs all the way along Waterlow Road asking motorists nicely not to park there and to use the car park in Trosley Country Park. Cllr Sweetland said visitors had parked on both sides of Waterlow Road before the signs were set up. The signs had been paid for by a Combined Member Grant Scheme payment of £5000.

Cllr Booth suggested getting The Traffic Group of together to decide where the signs should be placed and that Nick May from GBC Parking Services should` be invited to the meeting.

Action: Cllr Mason, Cllr Dymond, Cllr Gabbitas, Cllr Sweetland and Russ Nicholls agreed to work with Cllr Peterson-Pearce in taking the proposals forward.

5(b). Cllr Peterson-Pearce had suggested a monthly newsletter with up to four subjects. The newsletter could be placed on the noticeboards, in the shops, church hall, on twitter, Facebook and the website. Cllr Booth said that the newsletter should be kept close to the parish council and the views expressed should be agreed collectively by the parish council. The newsletter could be reviewed at each parish council meeting. Discussed but not agreed.

Action: Cllr Peterson-Pearce said he would take action before the next meeting and come back with some suggestions

5(d). The Clerk asked all the parish councillors to submit their nominations for areas of improvement. **Action:** All Councillors.

5(e). The Matt PP has completed the CPC Community Grants Forms and they are ready for use.

5(g). Cllr Mason said he had received six neighbourhood plans and would draft a plan to circulate to parish councillors. Cllr Booth suggested putting together some headings and circulating amongst parish councillors to add their own comments. Cllr Dymond said that KALC had suggested looking at Debenham in Suffolk's neighbourhood plan but Cllr Booth said it was a much larger village than Cobham. **Action:** Cllr Mason to circulate to councillors.

5(h) Sports Association Lease. Cllr Dymond had spoken to the solicitors Hatten Wyatt but they only kept papers for seven years and the last communication was in 2009. Cllr Dymond had asked the Land Registry to provide a copy of the lease.

5(i) Cllr Smith had spoken to the Denise Bird at Forestry England, Jeskyns regarding the rubbish along Henhurst Road and Church Road. The staff at Jeskyns are directing motorists at the entrance to Jeskyns to park along the nearby roads when the car park is full and they do not appear to know the local area. The car park was extended last year but it is still not large enough. Cllr Dyer said the car parks were often full and visitors would be unable to social distance.

Cllr Dymond had spoken to the Woodland Trust regarding the parking along Halfpence Lane. Cllr Smith said the car park held 20 cars and visitors were parking along Park Pale which was as bad as Church Road.

5(j) Cllr Dyer said he would speak to the staff at Sole Street Station regarding the tidying up of the triangle of land by the railway.

5(k) The amended risk register was proposed by Cllr Dyer and seconded by Cllr Dymond.

6. Working Group Reports

Planning

Batts Road – Cllr Rice said the applicant had not done enough research to find a suitable site for an AONB but only enough for the optimum coverage. If GBC approve the planning application Cllr Rice will call the application in. Cllr Booth said CPC would be willing to help.

43 Scratton Fields – No objection

Critholm – No objections to the main property but objected to the proposed location of the hobby room.

Rosebank – Objected due to visibility issues

9 Manor Road – No objection

Land at Battle Street – Objected building out of keeping with the conservation area.

7 Scratton Fields – The extension is fine but not happy with the cladding of the extension.

1 New Street Cottages – No objection

Norbond – Cllr Rice said the Norbond site had not gone to appeal and is still being determined by GBC. The average time taken at appeal is 21 weeks

White Post Farm – A local resident had noticed some trees had been cut back. The additional mobile home has not been installed as the applicant is still awaiting the results of his appeal to the Planning Inspectorate. No visits were planned until the determination which takes place in another month.

Playing Fields

Cllr Booth said the dog poo bins were now in the correct place following the meeting with GBC. Cllr Haig said one of the bins by the cricket pavilion was in the wrong place as it was next to a bench where people would be watching the cricket.

The playground had been inspected by GBC. There was moss on the matting and the matting was also torn around the swings and had sunk around the slide. **Action:** The clerk was getting three quotes.

Cllr Booth had obtained a quote for £650 + VAT for a new fence alongside the footpath.

Action: Cllr Booth was getting a second quote for the fence.

Cllr Booth said the new fence would be post and rail. Cllr Haig said she would like to see the new post and rail fence extended further.

Local Traffic Working Group

New traffic bollards - Cllr Mason said KCC will be installing bollards along The Street to stop vehicles from mounting the kerb. This is the first response to the problem of discouraging traffic from using The Street and Sole Street. It was hoped that this would discourage drivers from using The Street as vehicles will need to give way to oncoming traffic. There are restrictions to residents parking and stopping outside their properties. Cllr Booth said it was a trial and the effect on traffic The Street would be monitored and at least KCC Highways are not engaged and accept that there is a problem.

Double Yellow lines will be installed outside the church which is not ideal as this is used by funeral cars and local residents. KCC said this space is needed as a passing bay. A parishioner asked if the current bollards would be replaced by metal or wooden bollards. Residents could park in Stonehouse Yard and the public houses could be asked to open their car parks for residents parking. Cllr Booth said the public houses had not been forthcoming regarding the use of their car parks. Cllr Mason said the Darnley Arms had opened up an outside area for seating which had removed up to five parking spaces.

Another parishioner asked about a residents permit scheme and said it was frustrating not being able to park outside their house. The bollards will be an eyesore outside their house. Some motorists are speeding along The Street. Cllr Sweetland said that he had used his Combined Member Grant Scheme funding to install the temporary bollards quickly. The bollards can pop in and pop out if they are hit by a vehicle whereas the wooden bollards would pull up the pavement if they were hit by a vehicle. If the bollards were not right they can be removed following the trial.

Cllr Booth said the bollards were being installed on 19th February.

Speed Indicator Device (SID) – Cllr Mason planned to move the SID at the weekend to The Street to capture the traffic data 5 days before the bollards were installed.

Lower Thames Crossing

Cllr Booth & Cllr Dyer have been speaking to the Community Engagement Manager from LTC who are sending DCO information by memory stick. We need this information before work on the Statement of Common Ground can be completed. The legacy funding is still a long way off.

Village & Other Matters

The existing fence by the war memorial is falling over. We have a quote for a new cleft and rail fence cost £1535 although CPC have only budgeted £1,000. **Action:** Cllr Booth will get a second quote for the replacement fence.

Cllr Dymond thanked Cllr Gabbitas for sending some information about the war memorial and the Baker Family. It was asked if Lord Darnley would be invited to attend the centenary celebration. The Darnley's and the Baker's were significant in the original siting and design of the memorial 100 years ago.

Cllr Dymond asked if Lord Darnley is the president of the cricket club or golf club. Cllr Booth replied that the Rt. Hon Earl of Darnley is Patron of Cobham Cricket Club and President of the Rochester & Cobham Park Golf Club.

Cllr Booth said the reservoir is listed as it is within the curtilage of Meadow House which is listed. Cllr Mason agreed that if the reservoir is in the curtilage it doesn't need listing but it needs confirming.

Action: Cllr Mason

Churchyard Path; The clerk had written to Rev Angela Walker offering help to resolve the unfinished work on the churchyard path and also reminding that the churchyard path is a public right of way.

Angela Walker had written back thanking CPC for the offer of help and she would let us know when they do need our help. **Action:** Clerk to speak to David Palmer.

Cllr Smith suggested installing cast iron village signs in Cobham, Sole Street and Ifield. Luddesdown, Meopham and Harvel already had similar village signs. Cllr Dymond said this had been discussed in the past but parish councillors were unable to come to a decision.

Action: Cllr Smith to investigate and circulate the details.

Action: Clerk to look through the previous minutes on the discussion and to circulate papers.

Social Media

Cllr Booth was concerned that the information on the CPC Facebook page had not been agreed by all the parish councillors before being circulated. The content on the Facebook page needs to be agreed collectively.

Action: Cllr Smith offered to add Cllr Haig to the Cobham Parish Council WhatsApp group.

7. Other Reports

KCC – Cllr Sweetland said the KCC budget would be agreed on Thursday 11th February and 5% would be added to council tax of which 3% would be for adult social care. Senior directors will not receive a pay rise but social care staff will receive a decent pay increase. The capital budget is £3million. KCC has launched a press release for a £10million fund to help businesses and individuals during Covid 19 pandemic. Kent has gone from the worst affected by Covid 19 to one of the better although the figures are still quite high to fairly average. Woodville Halls in Gravesend has opened as a mass vaccination centre with a throughput of 600 people per day and 10 vaccinators. Cllr Mason asked about the impact of Brexit on the Channel crossings. Cllr Sweetland said the government had provided funding and Manston Airport had been opened in preparation. There was a general lack of queues and not many lorry movements. Cllr Sweetland said the flooding on Halfpence Lane should be reported to Earl Bournier who is responsible for drainage at KCC. The flooding could also be reported on the KCC portal and copy to Cllr Sweetland. Cllr Dymond had spoken to the Woodland Trust regarding the flooding in Halfpence Lane.

GBC- Cllr Rice said he was working with GBC on playgrounds. Sole Street residents do not have a playground within a 10 minute walk. Cllr Rice was taking this up with the CEO of GBC. Cllr Rice will be meeting the Chief Inspector for North Kent on 18th February and will take forward all that had been discussed at this meeting.

GBC has failed to meet its housing building targets and now falls under measures imposed by the government where new build developments are given greater weighting for approval. GBC will be increasing the Council Tax by 2% which will see a band D property increase by £85 per year.

KALC – Cllr Dymond was due to meet the police committee including the police commissioner for Kent.

Cllr Dymond thanked the clerk for circulating KALC training courses.

Action: Clerk to send Cllr Dymond a list of Councillors who have attended KALC training courses since April 2020.

Footpaths – Walkers were walking along the side of the fields to avoid the parked cars along Lodge Lane and trampling over the crops. The farmer wanted to stop this happening and has closed the parking area near the Lodge.

Meadow Rooms – Cllr Gabbitas said a report had been sent by the Chairman. The Meadow Rooms remained closed except for the use by the preschool. Following the burglary of the preschool shed in November, the Meadow Rooms CCTV had been upgraded in December. The bookings secretary had recently stepped down and the Chairman's wife has taken on the role. The car park remains open and is used by a reasonable number of walkers and other visitors to the village.

Church & Church Rooms – Cllr Haig said the churches remained closed.

Cllr Booth said he had received a grant application form for £1500 from the Sole Street Funding Group towards the renovation of the Church Rooms. Cllr Haig said this needed to go through the PCC and the Diocese of Rochester. The grant was probably towards the new kitchen. The foundations of the Church Rooms were sound but there was some rot on the timbers. Someone in the past had used barn paint for the outside.

Cllr Dymond said the work needed to be done as the Church Rooms were the only meeting place in Sole Street. The Sole Street Funding Group had paid the architect's fees. There was £27,000 in their bank account.

Cllr Dyer said we need to know what the grant is for. The grant should go to the parish rooms only.

Cllr Haig said the Church Rooms were a parish amenity although owned by the Diocese of Rochester. Cllr Dymond said the income from bookings went to Cobham Church.

Cllr Mason said we need assurance that the grant would be spent on the building. Cllr Haig suggested waiting until the architect supplies the figures.

8. Meeting continues in Private

Items raised by Councillors

Cllr Gabbitas said that several of the posts that hold up the bank along The Street between Owletts and Parsonage Farm were rotten. Cllr Dyer asked Cllr Gabbitas to take a photo.

Action: Clerk to report issue to KCC

Cllr Dymond said she and Russ Nicholls were attending the Zero Road Safety Course.

Cllr Mason said CPC needed to be careful how the minutes were written up and approved. It appeared that the owner of the White Post Farm site was using the parish council minutes to avoid enforcement action. It was disappointing that GBC Planning Department were not enforcing the situation.

Cllr Dyer had attended the Parish Chairman's meeting. There was going to be a change of ownership of the lamp posts and there was some debate around regarding the Uralite site at Higham.

The landowner of the small paddock in Round Street had installed some large gates. Cllr Dymond said the paddock used to belong to the house that was white washed. Cllr Mason said the house was sold but the paddock had been kept. The stable had been restored and there was a green caravan on the site.

The clerk raised a proposed change to the standard complaints procedure that was circulated by the Deputy Monitoring Officer for GBC and Medway Council in relation to the formal standard complaints procedure about the conduct of a parish councillor and the clerk. The clerk had circulated the email amongst the parish councillors. This was the formal standard complaints procedure about the conduct of a parish councillor towards a clerk. Recently an email had been circulated amongst the Gravesham parish clerks where it was suggested that the clerk should make a complaint to the parish council instead of taking the complaint to the Monitoring Officer.

Most of the Cobham parish councillors agreed that the clerk should be able to make a complaint direct to the Monitoring Officer although some parish councillors felt the clerk should talk to the chairman in the first place.

Finance

Cllr Dyer proposed the cheque reports for December, January and February and Cllr Dymond seconded.

9. Next Meeting

Monday 8th March 2021 and will take place on Zoom

10. Meeting closed at 10.30pm