



Minutes of Cobham Parish Council's Meeting,

Monday 8 March 2021 at 7.30pm

Meeting took place on Zoom

Present

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

Cllr Rosemary Dymond, Cllr Matt Mason, Cllr Robert Pryor

Cllr Gabriella Gabbitas, Cllr Margaret Haig

Present

Cllr Tony Rice (GBC), Russ Nicholls (Local Traffic Group), Charles Amis (Clerk)

3 Parishioners

1. **Apologies for absence** – Cllr Mat Peterson-Pearce, Cllr Ben Smith
2. **Declarations of Interest** – None raised
3. **Minutes** - The minutes from the previous meeting were still being checked but would be proposed and seconded at the next meeting.
4. **Bonham Hayes Trust Distribution** - GBC had sent an email asking parish councillors to nominate individuals currently living in the parish of Cobham. **Action:** The clerk will circulate an email received from GBC and the parish councillors should put forward their nominations.
5. **Cobham Hall** -Cllr Booth, Cllr Dyer and the Clerk had a meeting on Zoom with Wendy Barrett, Headmistress of Cobham Hall School. Historically girls from the school had been involved with Cobham College, the Village Shop, Cobham Church and they always attend the annual Remembrance Day service at the War Memorial but over the years due to safe-guarding issues a lot of these connections have been curtailed. Mrs Barrett has recently taken over the headship of Cobham Hall School and is keen to re-establish better links with the village.
6. **Matters arising from the previous meeting**
 - (a) *Parking Plan*
 - (b) *CPC Achievements – promoting and publicising*
 - (c). *Community Assets Register – process and implications*

Cllr Peterson-Pearce was not at the meeting and as it was he who had promoted the above items they were not discussed and will be re-visited at the next meeting

(d) *Areas of the parish for improvement.* The clerk had not received any nominations from the parish councillors for areas of improvement.

(e & f) *Neighbourhood Plan.* Cllr Mason had received examples of neighbourhood plans to circulate and plans to have a draft neighbourhood plan ready by the middle of April.

(g) *Sole Street Station* Cllr Dyer had spoken to the Station Manager to express our concern about the condition of the triangular piece of land by the entrance to the station.

(h) *Childrens Corner at Cobham Playing Fields* The clerk is organising 3 quotes for the repair work at the playground. GBC Councillor Rice added that he had spoken to Stuart Alford at GBC regarding the lack of playground facilities in Sole Street.

(i) *Footpath NS 178 Fencing* Cllr Booth had spoken to a fencing contractor and the Chairman of Cobham Football Club about removing and replacing the old fence for around £2500

(j) *War Memorial Fence* **Action:** Cllr Booth to organise quote from Hoist & Co.

(k) *Village Sign* Cllr Smith to arrange examples and quotes. It was noted that the parish council had in the past spent some time discussing this subject without reaching a conclusion.

(l) *Wooden Posts that support the bank near Parsonage Farm* – damage reported to KCC

7. Working Group Reports

Planning

Yeomans House – Listed building – no objections

Attlee House, Chapelwood Place – no objection but commented on the white rendering

27 Manor Road – no objection

Burleigh, Sole Street – no objection

Wychwood, 13 Manor Road – no objection

Brymore, Sole Street – currently reviewing

Batts Road Telecom Mast – Cllr Rice said he expected the planning permission to be refused. Cllr Booth thanked Cllr Rice for his hard work and lobbying support.

Norbond Site – The application has been with GBC for 6 months and the occupiers have been trading there for nearly a year. A decision is expected imminently.

White Post Farm – The appeal process was still with the Planning Inspectorate and again a decision should be imminent.

Land at Battle Street – The application has been refused. The design was not appropriate, it was in an area that is designated green belt as well as an area of special character.

Playing Fields

Member councillors had sought confirmation of the terms of the lease to the Sports Association with particular reference to the buildings insurance.

We can confirm that the lease, which expires in 2028 and covers all the land known as Cobham Playing Fields, including buildings and tennis courts, is owned by Cobham Parish Council. The Sports Association insure the buildings on behalf of CPC as an interested party and there should be a side letter with the lease to confirm this.

Action: Cllr Mason will look through the email chain from the insurers and draft a side letter which will be attached to the lease.

Local Traffic Working Group

Speed Indicator Device (SID) – Cllr Mason said the SID had been moved further along The Street and was now pointing towards the village.

New traffic bollards - Cllr Mason said the A2 was getting busier in the mornings and Cllr Pryor said the traffic in Cobham was flowing well although faster. The bollards are doing their job stopping the kerb mounting and increasing the safety but it is more difficult for residents to load and unload to their adjacent properties in The Street. The landlady of the Darnley Arms has installed a beer keg on the corner of her entrance because she is concerned her property will be struck by cars negotiating the narrowest part of the village. Some of the residents are not happy about the new double yellow lines and the resulting loss of parking outside the church although they are happy that vehicles are not mounting the pavement. Cllr Dymond said it has made a difference by the church although the bollards appear to have encouraged traffic to speed up as cars are accelerating to get through the narrow stretch of The Street before the traffic coming from the other direction.

The children have gone back to school and Cllr Gabbitas added that it felt considerably safer walking the children to school.

Action: Cllr Booth asked everyone to feedback their comments to the Clerk who will in turn feedback to KCC Highways.

Crime Working Group

GBC Cllr's Rice and Lane met the new District Commander for Dartford and Gravesham, Chief Inspector Junior Dann. The purpose was to introduce him to the local perspective on crime in our rural area and local perception on how the police are responding.

The main points were that we are inundated with low level crime ranging from nuisance bikers to burglaries and theft, however the local perception is that the police do not care enough to apply resources and take action.

We do not see any reports or metrics that enable us to see progress. I Dann said that his officers are reporting a lot of activity on these matters internally and perhaps it is not being communicated. He also said that Shorne, Cobham and Luddesdown ward is the lowest crime area in his district. Overall, he voiced a commitment to improving our experience of policing in our area. It was agreed that the lines of communication and reporting would be improved.

Kent Police have agreed to mount Operation Gurkha every weekend to provide counter measures against nuisance quad bikes and off road motorbikes. It was asked if Cobham parish could have a regular patrol at weekends but Cllr Rice said the police could not commit to this 24/7 and other parishes would suffer from lack of policing.

It is down to all of us to pick up the telephone and contact the police if we see any illegal or inappropriate activity. If these things are not reported and documented it appears as though there is no Crime in Cobham & Sole Street. If there is a lack of response then Cllr Rice will get back to Chief Insp Dann. Anybody on the parish council or connected to the parish council or a community leader should have the mobile numbers for the local police. Cllr Pryor reported that Kent Police had set up Operation Gurkha on the weekend of 28-29th February where some off road motorbikes had been seized and parked vehicles had been

moved on. Cllr Dymond said 14 cars had been ticketed on Church Road as a warning to where they had parked.

Cllr Mason said that Manor Road in Sole Street has a neighbourhood watch organised by Lindsey Kennett. Cllr Haig said there were small discrete signs in people's windows.

Action: Cllr Pryor will come back with suggestions and plans relating to Neighbourhood Watch

Lower Thames Crossing

Cllr Booth and Cllr Dyer had a Zoom meeting with the Lower Thames Crossing to update CPC on Utilities and Biodiversity included in the Statement of Common Ground relevant to the DCO application. Utility Me; Nick Clark, LTC Ecologist and Eva Simunovic, LTC Community Engagement attended the meeting.

LTC announced at this meeting that most of the plans included in the second consultation on the south side of the CTRL have now been scrapped and the majority of utility works will now be kept to the north of the CTRL. Apart from the raising of the power networks pylon in Jeskyns and a new gas main will be brought across Brewer Gate Bridge to the south side of the new road. There will also be a new mains sewer connection installed along Halfpence Lane.

Cllr Dyer suggested that CPC's and other parties lobbying and push back against the potential damage to Ashenbank Wood by the original utility works had been effective.

Village & Other Matters

Cllr Haig said there are signs of another sink hole in Halfpence Lane outside her house in the same place as it has been previously.

Cllr Gabbitas said a new notice board for the Meadow Rooms had been ordered.

Cllr Booth said the CPC Notice Board at the top of Lawrence Drive was not fit for purpose and the Sole Street Notice Board is falling apart.

Cllr Dymond said an event to celebrate the Cobham War Memorial centenary would take place before 8th November 2021. The event would include an afternoon tea at Cobham Hall or the Meadow Rooms. Cllr Gabbitas was speaking to the Baker family and Cllr Dymond was speaking to the Bligh and Darnley families. It was suggested that Sacha Dyer and Rob Wemyss should be included in the celebration organisation. Sacha & Rob are now also looking after the daffodil patch at the war memorial.

Cllr Booth said the Churchyard Path should be reinstated by 25th March. Cllr Booth had spoken to a director at Moody's contractors who had said they had been busy but would make sure work would be completed by the agreed date. Cllr Dymond thanked Cllr Booth for his efforts.

Social Media

Cllr Booth said the control of the CPC Social Media should be added to the standing orders.

Cllr Dymond said it was important the clerk had access to update the Cobham Parish website.

Action: Clerk to review the Standing Orders in relation to Social Media and speak to Cllr Peterson-Pearce about access to the web site.

8. Other Reports

KCC – Cllr Sweetland was not at the meeting.

GBC- Parking in Church Road, and Jeskyns Road.

Cllr Rice said GBC were sending traffic wardens to issue tickets to illegally parked vehicles in Church Road every weekend. At least 31 parking tickets had been issued over the past few weeks. Local residents were unhappy about the nuisance road side parking on the verges, footways and parking on yellow lines.

Cllr Rice had spoken to Denise Bird who felt some responsibility for the problems and would be happy to attend a parish council meeting. Cllr Dymond thanked Cllr Rice for his work.

It was asked if GBC should extend the double yellow lines further along Church Road as well as placing logs alongside the kerbs. On some mornings Jeskyns Car Park is only a third full but vehicles are still parked along Church Road.

Action: Clerk to write to Denise Bird regarding the rubbish and illegal parking in Church Road and to organise a meeting with interested parties.

KALC – Cllr Dymond was trying to arrange a KALC area meeting with the six Gravesham parishes. As part of the Zero Road Safety across Kent NALC and KALC are pursuing the installation of a 20mph speed limit in every village and rural areas in Kent which would include all the roads in the village. Kent Police seem happy to support the scheme.

Footpaths – Cllr Haig said people are walking across the fields to avoid walking through the mud and the farmer's crops were being damaged.

Meadow Rooms –The Management Committee are working with regular hirers on their plans for returning to using the Meadow Rooms over the next quarter. There has been a rise in enquiries and bookings for the latter half of 2021 and into 2022. The Meadow Rooms have remained closed except for the use by the Preschool. Hartbeeps (baby and toddler activity sessions) will restart in April. The car park remains open.

Church – Cllr Haig said there had been a service last Sunday at Luddesdowne Church and the Mothering Sunday service would be taking place at Cobham Church.

St Marys Church Rooms - Cllr Booth reported that he and the clerk had had a meeting with Su Rowe from the Sole Street Local Funding Group to discuss the recent grant application form received by the council for £1500 towards the renovation of the Church Rooms. Su Rowe gave a history of the building, its use by the local community and the efforts of the Local Funding Group to restore and improve the facilities.

Cllr Booth also had a meeting with Rev Walker and David Palmer, the Treasurer of the PCC. The PCC does not have any funds to contribute to the renovations although Rev Walker was keen that the restoration work should be done. Rev Walker said the Building Regulations had not been applied for but they had received planning permission. There seems to be an impasse between the Sole Street Local Funding Group, Rev Walker and the Architect. Cllr Booth confirmed that the Church Rooms are registered as an Asset of Community Value and as such warranted support from the CPC. Cllr Dymond asked if CPC could help with the impasse.

Cllr Booth replied that the next stage is to establish the detail and the cost involved in achieving Building Regulations and Tender Documents. It is possible that the CPC could then help further by getting involved in supporting the fund raising and grant applications.

9. Meeting suspended for Parishioners comments

10. Meeting continues in Private

Correspondence

The Clerk received an email from the co-owner of the land to the south side of Ashenbank Wood regarding the clearing of rubbish by the gate on Halfpence Lane and also referring to them having applied for an eviction order to be served on the homeless man who is living in the wood.

The Clerk had received an email from a parishioner whose friend had their car damaged by the large potholes in Henhurst Road.

The Clerk had received an email from a parishioner who had a near miss with an HGV which was travelling at great speed at Green Lane in Meopham. The parishioner had asked about the weight restrictions through Sole Street and Cobham as they felt the road was unsuitable for HGVs. There is a 7.5 tonne weight limit along The Street. The clerk had referred to Cllr Sweetland and Cllr Rice as well as Meopham Parish Council as the incident was in their parish.

Items raised by Councillors

Cllr Dymond asked if Cllr Booth and Cllr Dyer had voting rights at the Joint Transportation Board. Cllr Booth said CPC had voting rights at the meeting and he or Cllr Dyer normally represented CPC. The parish councils within Maidstone Borough Council had voting rights.

Action: Cllr Dyer agreed to attend the next meeting.

Cllr Dymond had paid for an application for Britain in Bloom. An Extra 13 flower troughs plus flowers, compost and water proof lining. Cllr Dymond asked to use the grant application form but Cllr Booth said put to put it through expenses. **Action:** Cllr Dymond to submit an expenses claim to the clerk

Cllr Dyer had reported to Southern Water a leaking manhole cover in a field near the junction of Church Road and Copt Hall Road that was flooding the field. Cllr Dyer had gone past recently and the gurgling had stopped and the manhole had been replaced.

Cllr Gabbitas said the fire hydrant by Parsonage Farm was leaking. Cllr Gabbitas had asked PCSO Ellie Middleton to check the fly tipping in Ashenbank Woods beside the bridle way.

Action: Cllr Gabbitas would chase it up with Stuart Alford.

Cllr Pryor said there was some fly tipping at the junction of Jeskyns Road and Dabbs Place. It was mostly straw, bedding and fencing.

The council are looking at re-opening the public toilets at Cobham Playing Fields and Cllr Booth said he would be asking about financial support from GBC for reopening the public toilets at the GBC Chairman's meeting. We have had a number of complaints from visitors to the parish and also parents from the primary school.

Action: The clerk asked Cllr Booth to raise the Community Toilet Scheme for the village pubs at the parish chairman's meeting because despite the clerk's best efforts he not been able to get a response from any BCO officers.

Action: The clerk will send Cllr Booth an email with details of what had taken place so far before and after the closure

Cllr Booth said it was not appropriate for volunteers to be servicing the public toilets when they reopen. Contractors will need to be employed by the CPC which will cost about £7,500 per annum.

Cllr Dyer said the public toilets in the Medway Council area were still open and had remained open all through the lockdown.

Cllr Booth asked Cllr Dymond if there was any news from Cobham Hall regarding replacing the gate at the end of the Lime Avenue.

Cllr Booth said Maidstone Borough Council had introduced litter cameras which can identify litter that is thrown out of a vehicle

Cllr Booth asked if CPC was registered with the Information Commissioners Office. The clerk confirmed that the subscription to the ICO had been renewed last December.

Cllr Booth said following the recent CPC parking meeting Cllr Mason would be installing no parking signs at the parking hotspots.

Action: Clerk to recirculate the pictures of the no parking signs used by Vigo Parish Council. All of the parish councillors agreed that CPC would fund the clerk's attendance at the training course for Annual Governance Statement and Statement of Accounts of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

Action: Cllr Booth asked the clerk to contact KALC to ask if the Annual Parish Assembly could take place later in the year, is it something CPC need to do to share the detail of their finances to the parish and parishioners are able to ask questions.

Finance

Cllr Dyer proposed the cheque report for March and Cllr Dymond seconded.

Next Meeting

Monday 12th April 2021 which will be the Annual Parish Assembly and will take place on Zoom

10. Meeting closed at 9.45pm