



## **Minutes of Cobham Parish Council Meeting**

**Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2023 at 8pm**

**Meeting took place at the Meadow Rooms**

### **Present**

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

Cllr Zoe Gee, Cllr Russ Nichols, Cllr Matt Mason, Cllr Robert Pryor

### **Present**

Bernadette Gillow, Jonathan Ireland, National Trust, PC Jo Hammond, Charles Amis (Clerk)

5 Parishioners

**1. Apologies for Absence** – Cllr Mat Peterson-Pearce, Cllr Bennet Smith, Cllr Dakota Dibben (GBC), Cllr Bryan Sweetland (KCC)

**2. Minutes** - The minutes for the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2023 were confirmed and proposed as a true record of that meeting by Cllr Peterson-Pearce and seconded by Cllr Nichols.

**3. Declarations of Interest** – None

**4. National Trust – Update on Owletts and the Mausoleum** – The National Trust owns nine tenanted properties within Cobham Parish. The National Trust was reorganised into larger areas 14 years ago and cover several properties that are all managed from the regional office at Ightham Mote.

The NT has spent £1million refurbishing Owletts since Sir Herbert Baker gave the house to the NT. The NT have recently carried out some remedial work to tackle the damp and repaint parts of the house. A house sitter is living at Owletts and looking after the house. The Baker collection was given a deep clean by the property teams from across the London & South East area.

The NT have been advertising for new tenants and public access will remain part of the tenancy. The NT are not sure when Owletts would be opened in 2024 but all of the volunteers had been kept informed by the volunteer manager at Ightham Mote. The NT would need to liaise with the new tenants to see if refreshments would continue to be provided. The NT are open to suggestions for how the community can use Owletts and are willing to offer special group visits for local residents. The maintenance of the gardens form part of the tenancy and have been looked after by a team from Ightham Mote and Jonathan Ireland's team.

There around 2,000 visitors per year to Owletts compared with 170,000 visitors to Ightham Mote. The number of visitors to Owletts has not changed for the past 10 years.

The Mausoleum will continue to open on the first Sunday of every month from April to September. The South Barn has recently been refurbished and is well used by local groups. The National Trust will be carrying out work in Cobham Woods due to Ash Dieback following the warm summers of 2017 and 2018. The 5.5 hectares of chestnut coppice in the south west part of the woods will be cleared and replanting with broad leaf trees. This will improve accessibility and will make the woods more biodiverse. The NT will be putting up signage to warn visitors.

**5. PC Jo Hammond – Update** – PC Jo Hammond circulated a hard copy of the monthly crime report at the meeting. PC Jo Hammond will circulate the crime reports each month so that CPC are kept updated doing although there are currently difficulties in producing the reports electronically. PC Hammond covers the rural parts of Gravesham including from Higham to Vigo. Four new police officers have been recently recruited and will be replacing officers who had been seconded from other parts of the Kent Police.

The police have been focusing on the use of off road motorbikes which is an issue across Kent and particularly at the weekends. PC Hammond encouraged parishioners to report the motorbikes riding through Cobham on a Sunday. A particular problem area is the restricted byway off Church Road towards Cozendon Wood. A neighbourhood task force of four PCs and four PCSOs has been pulled together.

A flower trough had been stolen from The Street, Cobham and was not picked up on the CCTV. PC Jo Hammond encouraged everyone to report crimes as it helped to give the police an overall picture of criminal activity.

The police are running a Safe Action Business Week from 16<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> October for the benefit of shops and businesses to deter shoplifters and other potential offenders.

#### **6. GBC Matters – Cllr Jassel**

Cllr Jassel, Cllr Dyer and Cllr Mason are due to meet with Stuart Bobbie, Chief Executive at GBC and Nick Brown, Deputy Chief Executive on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> October to discuss planning enforcement.

#### **7. KALC/NALC – Cllr Dymond**

Cllr Dymond will be attending a meeting at KALC to discuss carbon emissions and traffic planning. CPC had previously applied for a grant for the installation of electric vehicle charging points. **Action:** Cllr Dymond agreed to raise the installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points at the meeting.

#### **8. Planning – Cllr Dyer –**

**Norbond** – With the Planning Inspectorate

**Cranborne Farm** – With GBC Planning Enforcement

**Bluebell Barn** – With GBC Planning Enforcement

**White Post Farm** – With GBC Planning Enforcement

**The Barn, Parsonage Farm, The Street, Cobham** – Permitted by GBC

**Land north of Wildacre** – With Planning Inspectorate

**36-38 The Street, Cobham** – The owner is replacing the current UPVC windows with wooden windows. No objections.

**Owletts** – The National Trust are investigating the damp. No objections

**Mulberry House, Gold Street** – Still with the Planning Group

#### **9. Traffic Group – Cllr Nichols**

**Review of current traffic numbers and speeds** – The Traffic Group had recently met with the LTC Team. There were still lots of outstanding points. Cllr Booth and Cllr Nichols will be meeting with Michelle Norris at KCC Highways on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October. Michelle Norris had produced a report on the highway issues in Cobham and Sole Street.

The Traffic Group would like to see chicanes installed along Sole Street to slow the traffic. Cllr Sweetland suggested the installation of average speed cameras but this may not slow the traffic.

Kent Police had set up a mobile speed van over two days along Sole Street. Four motorists were fined for speeding on the first day and 12 motorists on the second day. A resident raised the issue of speeding traffic coming over the railway bridge.

The Traffic Group continue to lobby the GBC Joint Transport Board, LTC Team and KCC Highways for traffic safety improvements at Sole Street. Prior to the narrowing of The Street, Cobham residents had provided photographic and video evidence of motorists narrowly missing pedestrians.

**Action:** Cllr Dymond to send PC Jo Hammond details of the accident where a resident was hit by a passing vehicle and sustained life changing injuries.

**20mph Speed Signs** – These have been removed from the bollards in The Street. The clerk has reported the missing repeater signs to KCC who have replaced some of the repeater signs but there are less signs than before the previous signs were stolen. **Action:** Clerk to follow up with KCC.

**Bus Stop by Round Street** – KCC have recently identified that in their view it is not a safe location for a permanent bus stop and had asked the bus companies, Red Route Buses and Brian Jones Coaches not to pick up from there.

KCC have offered alternative solutions which CPC do not favour such as routing the buses via Manor Road, Sallows Shaw, White Post Lane and Round Street or for school children to use Footpath NS192 which misses some of the walk along Sole Street or for children to walk via Sallows Shaw and Manor Road which is considerable longer. Only one parent had written to the clerk regarding buses stopping to pick up school children.

The traffic group were asking how the Round Street and Sole Street junction could be made safer for a bus stop. A walking bus protest along Sole Street was suggested but it would be difficult to get the teenagers involved.

It was suggested that a risk assessment should be carried out if it is safer for the bus to pick up children from the corner of Round Street or for children to walk along the side of the road Sole Street. It was also suggested that the bus companies test the alternative route via Manor Road and Sallows Shaw.

**Action:** Cllr Nichols to speak to Redroute Buses and Brian Jones Coaches about the rerouting of the bus routes via Manor Road and Sallows Shaw.

**Speed Indicator Device** – Nothing to report

**Speed Watch** – PC Jo Hammond offered to stand with a speed gun by the railway bridge.

**Village Gateways Features – Halfpence Lane** – The village gateway signs will be raised at the meeting with Michelle Norris on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October.

**7.5t Weight Restriction for Halfpence Lane** – CPC would like KCC to install a sign by Marling Cross and Henhurst Road to say that this not a suitable route for HGVs. In the past HGVs have tried to access Lodge Farm from The Street in Cobham because the driver sees the weight restriction sign at Halfpence Lane. **Action:** Clerk to write to Southfleet Parish Council on how the lorries that access Prep World. Cllr Pryor to review all of the signs around the parish.

**Sole Street – Traffic Feasibility Study** – Nothing to report.

**Vehicles parking on the grass verge on Sole Street** – A local resident had complained about vehicles parking on the grass verge opposite Cherry Orchard and were restricting the sight lines along the road. The vans are owned by workman who are carrying out refurbishment to a house beside Cherry Orchard and the issue is likely to be temporary.

**10. Lower Thames Crossing** – Cllr Dyer and Cllr Booth had met with the LTC team to discuss the Statement of Common Ground. The principle areas of disagreement are controlling speed of vehicles, volume of traffic, HGVs, Safety of Pedestrians and Cyclists and the closure of Brewers Road Bridge during the works.

LTC has said that the traffic should be improved after the LTC has been built. There has been very little communication between KCC and the LTC Team. CPC has been trying to convince KCC that there are still outstanding issues with the current proposals. KCC has said they are monitoring the situation. The Planning Inspectorate can tell the LTC Team and KCC that the mitigating issues need to be addressed. **Action:** Need to add more information to the Points of Disagreement.

**11. Village Crime Group – Cllr Dymond** – Already discussed on item 5.

## **12. Playing Fields – Cllr Booth**

**Pavilion Improvements** – Nothing to report.

**Football Pitch Maintenance** – Cllr Dyer had signed a National Football Association document on behalf of CPC indicating that the Sports Association Lease will be extended in just under ten years time. The National Football Association had provisionally agreed to support financially but required that the Sports Association Lease be reviewed because it has less than ten years left to run.

## **13. Cobham Public Toilets – Cllr Booth**

**Opening and cleaning the toilets – Recent Vandalism** – The toilets had been vandalised on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> September and the footfall counters had been removed. **Action:** Clerk to order two replacement footfall counters.

**Southern Water** – Cllr Booth had sent a letter to Business Stream and had spoken to their customer services. Cllr Booth intends to raise an official complaint. **Action:** Clerk to send Business Stream invoices from January 2018 to present day.

**14. St Mary's Church Rooms** – A task group has been set up. The funding is in place. The funding group are looking for an experienced project manager to take on the restoration work.

**15. Social Media** – Nothing to report.

## **16. Other Village Matters**

**Defibrillators** – The Round Street defibrillator has been recovered from Kent Police after it had been used for an emergency but had not been returned after the incident. There are no immediate plans to move the defibrillator to another location. **Action:** Clerk to order new pads and battery for the defibrillator.

**Youth Club** – KCC had circulated the survey that included the future of the youth clubs across Kent. KCC are proposing to save £11million per year by cutting funding to youth services across the county. KCC are likely to stop funding The Grand after 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. **Action:** Clerk to check the cost of hiring youth workers for the Cobham Youth Club before the budget meeting in December.

**Footpaths** – KCC had cleared the hedgerows along Footpath NS192 after this had been raised by CPC.

**Village Sign** – There was no further update.

**Meadow Rooms** – The bookings have remained steady. The Gardener’s Society held their Summer and Autumn Shows which were well attended. CADS had a successful show in May and are rehearsing for their November performance. Cash reserves continue to be at a solid level and are sufficient to maintain the operations, including the increased operational costs for the short to medium term, with bookings and enquiries continuing to be healthy.

**Village Pump – Repairs to the flint wall - Action:** Clerk to send Cllr Booth the details of another company to quote for the work.

**Beams** – CPC had given a grant of £500 to Beams.

**17. Parishioners Comments –**

A parishioner asked about the installation of a footpath beside Sole Street from Scratton Fields to Round Street. The footpath had not been installed because some of the owners did not want to sell their land.

**Meeting continues in Private**

**18. Correspondence & Announcements – None**

**19. Finance** – All of the parish councillors had received a copy of the Cash Flow Spreadsheet prior to the meeting.

Cllr Dyer proposed the cheque report and Cllr Dymond seconded. Cllr Dyer had received a letter from HMRC regarding the enrolment of the clerk to the pension plan.

It was agreed that Cobham Parish Council would use Zurich Insurance Company to provide insurance cover for CPC for the next three years.

**Cheques to be signed at the meeting**

Date of Invoice	Company	Reason	Amount
7/9/2023	Gravesham Network Development CIC	Provision of Youth Workers for the Cobham Youth Club	£1,428
22/9/2023	We are Beams	Grant application	£500
13/9/2023	MI Payroll & Bookkeeping Services Ltd	Payroll for July to September 2023	£60
23/9/2023	Clerk	Salary 1 <sup>st</sup> -30 <sup>th</sup> September 2023	£845.10
29/9/2023	Medway Norse Ltd	Opening and cleaning the toilets in September.	£675.22
29/9/2023	Clerk	Mileage	£12.87
2/10/2023	Kent County Playing Fields Association	2023 Subscription	£20
2/10/2023	Clerk	HMRC Tax & National Insurance Contributions	£27.78
3/10/2023	Clerk	Reimburse Clerk for half the cost of mobile phone use since 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2022	£200

**20. Items from Councillors**

Cllr Booth said the white posts beside the War Memorial and Lodge Lane were falling over and needed to be replaced. **Action:** Cllr Booth/Clerk to obtain quotes for replacement posts.

**Action:** Clerk to draft a letter Cllr Smith's solicitor in support of Cllr Smith

**Action:** Clerk to ask Cllr Smith to remove the metal post from Henhurst Road that was used for the Speed Indicator Device.

**Action:** Clerk to check that Cllr Samir is still a member of the Planning Committee.

**21. Next Meeting – Parish Council Meeting at 8pm on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> November at the St Mary's Church Rooms**