



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

**Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at 7.30pm**

**Meeting took place at the St Mary's Church Rooms**

### **Present**

Cllr Mike Booth (Chair), Cllr Steve Dyer (Vice Chair), Cllr Rosemary Dymond,  
Cllr Robert Pryor, Cllr Mat Peterson-Pearce, Cllr Bennet Smith

### **Present**

Cllr Dakota Dibben (GBC), Charles Amis (Clerk), 13 Parishioners

**1. Apologies for Absence** – Cllr Zoe Gee, Cllr Matt Mason, Cllr Russ Nichols, Cllr Bryan Sweetland (KCC), Cllr Samir Jassel (GBC)

**2. Minutes** - The minutes for the Parish Council Budget Meeting held on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023 were confirmed and proposed as a true record of that meeting by Cllr Dyer and seconded by Cllr Dymond. The minutes for the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024 were confirmed and proposed as a true record of that meeting by Cllr Dyer and seconded by Cllr Pryor.

**3. Declarations of Interest** – None

### **4. Parishioners Open Session**

**Future of the Public Toilets** – A parishioner asked if the toilets could be kept open despite the costs involved. GBC had wanted to close the toilets and had given CPC the option to be responsible for the toilets. There had been discussions within CPC on whether toilets should be kept open.

The public houses in Cobham are part of the Community Toilet Scheme. The public houses do not open until 12pm. Visitors tend to use the public house toilets and then leave straight away.

Parishioners are paying for the toilets to stay open through the precept and the largest cost is using a cleaning company to open and clean the toilets. A local resident closes the toilets at dusk. It was suggested that the toilets be cleaned by a local resident and the role could be combined with litter picking and the cleaning of the pavilion.

There are up to 14 football teams playing at each weekend and there is not enough toilets in the pavilion for all of the players plus their families so the toilets are well used on match days. It was suggested that the visiting teams could contribute towards the cost of the public toilets. The Sports Association could also make a contribution towards the costs of the toilets. GBC had asked if a play scheme could be run at the sports ground during the summer months.

The CPC Face Book page had received 50 comments and 21 emails from residents and other users of the toilets.

A parishioner suggested a card payment system could be installed that is linked with the doors to the toilets which would allow people to access the toilets for up to £1. There was a considerable cost installing these particular doors and it would take a while to recoup the costs.

It was suggested that local tradesman could be asked to carry out repairs to the toilets as and when they are needed. This had been tried in the past with other projects and no tradesman had turned up.

**5. GBC Matters – Cllr Dibben** – There was no further news on the future of the Gravesend Tilbury Ferry.

**6. KALC/NALC – Cllr Dymond** – Nothing further to report.

**7. Planning – Cllr Dyer** –

**Eden Cottage, Round Street** – The owner wishes to convert the garage into a bedroom and dressing area. With CPC Planning Group.

**Land to the East and West of Gold Street - Vineyard** – GBC had approved the construction of the barn as a permitted development and have made the planning constraints as strong as possible. The barn will be sited close to existing residential properties. It was suggested that the barn be sited beside the railway but there were Network Rail rules regarding siting the barn too close to the railway cutting. There were concerns that the barn will be not be screened as well as noise from the proposed bottling plant.

Residents said they had not been consulted by GBC although GBC did not have to carry out a consultation. CPC had been consulted and had raised their concerns. GBC Planning Department said there were several technicalities and were seeking advice from other local authorities who face similar situations.

There were concerns about HGVs accessing the site. The signage at the junction with Gold Street and Sole Street restricts HGVs except for access only. The owner would need to make a planning application for a new access road.

The owner owns a further 24 acres of land along Batts Road. The owner is planning to install new access points by the junction with Batts Road and Gold Street. It was asked if the hedge row rule applied where if a hedgerow is 60 feet long and 20 years old it should not be removed. The local residents are meeting the owners tomorrow.

**Update from GBC Planning Department** – Cllr Dyer and Cllr Mason had a meeting with Nick Brown at GBC in October. GBC Planning Department had taken several actions from the meeting that needed resolving.

The main points of discussion with GBC were:

Cranbourne Farm and recent sale of plots in Round Street

Norbond site by Sole Street Station

GBC and their enforcement strategy in general

White Post Farm

There will be a follow up meeting in two weeks with Nick Brown, Deputy CEO at GBC, and Shazad Ghani, Head of Planning.

**8. Traffic Group – Cllr Nichols**

**Review of current traffic numbers and speeds** – The tubes were placed on the 40 mph section of Sole Street. Up to 60% of motorists were exceeding the speed limit. Larger vehicles are the greatest offenders. CPC would need to fund the installation of a 20 mph zone. Cllr Nichols was getting the costs from KCC Highways.

**9. Lower Thames Crossing** – The LTC Team will be running a series of community drop-in events at several locations nearby which will give an opportunity for them to share the details of the pre-planned areas.

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2024 10am – 8.30pm  
Bluewater Shopping Centre (Moon Court)

Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024 10am – 6.30pm  
Hempstead Valley Shopping Centre (outside M&S)

Friday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2024 10am – 5pm  
Orchards Shopping Centre (Centre Concourse), High Street, Dartford

Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2024 10am – 5pm  
Thamesgate Shopping Centre (outside Superdrug), Gravesend

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024 3pm – 8pm  
Chalk Parish Hall, Pirrip Close, Chalk, Gravesend,

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024 3pm – 8pm  
Cascades Leisure Centre, Thong Lane, Gravesend,

The hearings are now being conducted by the Planning Inspectorate and a decision on the Development Consent Order will be announced in July 2024. **Action:** Clerk to add the roadshow dates to the CPC website. Cllr Dyer to add the details to the CPC Face Book page.

**10. Village Crime Group – Cllr Dymond** – There has been no recent contact from PC Jo Hammond, our rural beat officer. PC Hammond is trying to restart the Speed Watch group and two volunteers had offered their help. More volunteers would be welcome to the join in.

#### **11. Playing Fields Group – Cllr Booth**

**Pavilion Improvements** – Work continues to improve the pavilion, largely self-funded by the various clubs and grants. The Sports Association has spent £3000 on improving the kitchen facilities and the back storage area will be upgraded to store the archives and provide a lockable and fireproof cupboard.

There are plans to extend the patio and improving the disabled access. The changing facilities are being upgraded, particularly for ladies and young children. Work has started on the football pitch drainage following a grant from the Football Association. CPC have budgeted to replace the concrete benches as these are beyond repair.

**Children's Corner** – An all-weather pathway will be created from the Sports Association Car Park to the Children's Corner. The fencing beside the Children's Corner and the playing field will also be replaced.

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

**Southern Water** – Southern Water have been double charging for the water supply to the public toilets, cricket pavilion and bowls club. CPC have agreed to pay £2625.92 as a part payment in good faith, but Business Stream account is still being disputed because Southern Water are so far refusing to check the meters for the supply and to discuss the problem.

**Survey on keeping the toilets open** – Cllr Peterson-Pearce is working on the wording of the questions. It will be online but there will be a hard copy for parishioners to complete. It will be advertised in the Easter edition of the parish magazine.

**13. St Mary's Church Rooms** – The Parochial Church Council appointed Lisa Brook in January to project manage the refurbishment of the St Mary's Church Rooms. The PCC are waiting for the architect who was previously employed to provide some of the documents. The building works must start before 5<sup>th</sup> May 2024 before the current planning application expires. Lisa Brook has asked the existing contractors if they can update their quotes. The Local Funding Group continue to apply for grants and are currently fund raising for a new kitchen. A company who fits kitchens has been found.

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

#### **15. Other Village Matters**

**Defibrillators** – The St Mary's Church Rooms defibrillator has stopped working due to a faulty battery. The defibrillator that was at Round Street has been temporarily moved to the St Mary's Church Rooms. The Clerk has spoken to Primary Care Supplies who supplied the battery and it is hoped will supply a free replacement. South Eastern Railway are dealing with the defibrillator at Sole Street Station.

**Youth Club** – The Grand has found sufficient funding from other sources to keep providing youth workers after 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. There had been 20 new young people from year 6 at the last session. Cobham Primary School had helped to promote the youth club. The grand had requested new sports equipment. The volunteer leaders of the old Cobham Youth club had kindly passed on the money for the subs and tuck to CPC.

**Footpaths** – The footpath from Gold Street which crosses the proposed vineyard had disappeared. Since then, the landowner had since restored the footpath and had created a new path beside the hedge. KCC Rights of Way Team had said it would not be possible to convert Scotland Lane from a Byway to a Public Bridleway.

**Village Sign** – Cllr Peterson-Pearce was looking for someone to finalise the village sign designs using Computer Aided Design. **Action:** Cllr Dyer to advise Cllr Peterson-Pearce.

**Meadow Rooms** – There were no private bookings in January. The Gardeners Club and the WI meet once per month as do a circle dancing club.

**Village Pump – Repairs to the flint wall** – CPC has received two quotes and another company is meeting with Cllr Booth and Cllr Smith to provide a quote for the repair work.

**Wooden Posts around the War Memorial** – A company had supplied a quote to replace the posts and two more quotes are needed. **Action:** Clerk to get two more quotes for the work.

**Meeting continues in Private**

**16. Correspondence & Announcements** – The Clerk had received several emails regarding the potential closure of the public toilets.

**17. Finance** – All of the parish councillors had received a copy of the Cash Flow Spreadsheet prior to the meeting and the payment report.

**Payments made since the 9th January meeting**

Date of Invoice	Company	Reason	Amount
	Business Stream	Water rates for toilets, Sports Association and Bowls Club	£2625.92
16/1/2024	Primary Care Trust	Replacement battery for Meadow Rooms defibrillator	£192
29/1/2024	Medway Norse Ltd	Opening and cleaning toilets December	£675.22
31/1/2024	Clerk	Salary for 1 <sup>st</sup> – 30 <sup>th</sup> November	£845.10
31/1/2024	Clerk	Pension	£23.71
January 2023	Campaign for the Protection of Rural England	Subscription for 2024	£36

**Payments to be made after the 5<sup>th</sup> February Meeting**

Date of Invoice	Company	Reason	Amount
2/2/2024	Society of Local Council Clerks Enter	Clerk attending online training course How to engage everyone in your community	£78
6/2/2024	Clerk	Mileage	£11.97

Cobham Parish Council received £524.83 from the float left over from the subs and tuck shop for the previous Cobham Youth Club. Cllr Dyer kindly banked the money.

Cllr Dyer proposed the payment report and Cllr Booth seconded.

**Precept** – The budget had been circulated to all of the parish councillors prior to the meeting. It was suggested that the precept for 2024/25 should be £85,000. This would include the repairs to the flint wall, benches around the playing field, the village signs for Sole Street and Cobham, village gateways and other landscape issues. The precept for the current financial year was £65,000 and was £45,000 for 2022/23.

**18. Items from Councillors**

Cllr Dymond said that the pupils at Cobham Hall School were holding a community service day. It was suggested that the edge of the playing field could be litter picked. **Action:** Cllrs to feedback their suggestions to Cllr Dymond.

Jonathan Pye had cut the hedge by Cobham Church.

**19. Next Meeting – Parish Council Meeting at 7.30pm on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> March at the Meadow Rooms**