



Minutes of Cobham Parish Council Meeting

Tuesday 7th March 2023 at 7.30pm

Meeting took place at the St Mary's Church Rooms

Present

Cllr Steve Dyer (Vice Chair), Cllr Rosemary Dymond, Cllr Ben Smith

Cllr Robert Pryor, Cllr Gabriella Gabbitas, Cllr Matt Mason

Present

Cllr Tony Rice (GBC), Charles Amis (Clerk), 9 Parishioners

1. Apologies for Absence – Cllr Mike Booth (Chair), Cllr Matt Peterson-Pearce, Cllr Margaret Haig, Cllr Bryan Sweetland (KCC)

2. Minutes - The minutes for the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 7th February 2023 were confirmed and proposed as a true record of that meeting by Cllr Ben Smith and seconded by Cllr Robert Pryor.

3. Declarations of Interest – None

4. KCC Matters – Cllr Sweetland

- **Round Street Bus Stop** – A parishioner said the Bus had stopped picking up and dropping off passengers at the junction with Round Street and Sole Street. KCC had told Redroute Buses and Brian Jones Coaches not to pick up passengers there as it is not an official bus stop. Residents have said that it is not safe to walk along Sole Street with children. CPC had previously approached residents to offer some of their front garden to install a footpath. KCC had suggested that the existing bus route could be diverted via Manor road, Sallows Shaw, White Post Lane and Round Street although it was agreed that some of these roads are unsuitable for a bus route. KCC have said that the junction of Round Street and Sole Street plus the opposite side of Sole Street by Sweeps Hole Pond would not be a safe position for a bus stop.
Action: Residents to provide feedback to clerk if their children were using the unofficial bus stop and are now using the official bus stops or providing lifts to the school.
- **Cobham Church Bus Stop** - The moving of the bus stop by Cobham Church had been suggested by the residents of Cobham College as the current bus stop is next to a steep slope. The steep slope allows maintenance vehicles to access the church. KCC have said

that the pavement opposite the Leather Bottle PH is not wide enough for the bus stop to be moved to. CPC to discuss the changes with the bus companies.

- **Bollard – outside 46, The Street** – CPC have asked KCC if they will take this on.
- **Village Gateways Features** – Halfpence Lane gateway is still there but needs to be made more visible to motorists. CPC are still waiting for KCC to provide the revised prices for the village gateways.
- **Weight Restrictions for Halfpence Lane** – There is a painted weight restriction sign on the surface at Brewers Road. The sign at Cobhambury Road is hidden in the hedge and the sign by Owletts needs to be replaced. **Action:** Clerk to ask KCC to cut back the vegetation at Cobhambury Road and replace the sign by Owletts.

5. GBC Matters – The new Cascades Leisure Centre was approved by GBC last week and the work is due to start within the next three months. The new leisure centre will be built on the existing car park and is estimated to take two years to complete. The existing leisure centre will remain open until the new leisure centre is completed.

GBC has recently agreed a new budget for 2023/24 and council tax bills will be increased up to 3%.

Each local authority must have a local design code to provide guidance on how new developments should look. GBC are currently running a consultation and there are three events running this week at 4pm to 8pm on Wednesday at the St George's Hall, Gravesend, Veteran Hall, Northfleet and Friday at Higham Village Club. It was noted that there are no planned design code events taking place to the south of the A2. Cllr Rice had taken Tom Reynolds, Assistant Director at Strategic Regeneration at GBC, on a tour around Cobham Parish. An online consultation can be found on the GBC website. Levitt Bernstein have been appointed as landscape architects to work on a design code for GBC. It was felt that climate change was a large part of the Design Code.

GBC have set up a local authority trading company, Rosherville Ltd which operates as a business offering commercial services to local people around Gravesham. Rosherville Ltd has developed a new apartment block at Ham Square with properties charged at market rents and with local residents seen as a priority.

Action: Invite Tom Reynolds to a future parish council meeting or to a community coffee morning at the St Mary's Church Rooms.

6. KALC/NALC – Cllr Dymond is attending the Climate Change Conference run by KALC on 17th March.

7. Planning – Cllr Dyer

- **Norbond Site** – GBC issued an enforcement notice and the site owners have appealed. This is now with the Planning Inspectorate. The appeal is likely to last two years.
- **White Post Farm** – The Planning Inspectorate have dismissed the site owner's appeal and this case is back with GBC Planning Enforcement. Cllr Rice has written to GBC Planning Enforcement asking for a timeline for the enforcement and when the owner will vacate the land.
- **Cranbourne Farm, Round Street** – There are currently six newly created entrances on to Round Street from the plots of land. The owner has been pushing back the screening of the barn. The caravan has been on site since 18th February 2023. The caravan is allowed to be on site for 28 days.

- **Bluebell Barn, Copthall Road** – A touring caravan is still on site and half of the stables were relocated and were now out of sight from the road. The other half of the stable block is still in the original position. The temporary residence order expires in July 2023.
- **Land at Warren Road, Cobham** – With planning committee.

8. Traffic Group – Cllr Mason

- **Action:** The clerk to ask KCC Highways when the air tube counter will be installed at The Street.
- **Speed Indicator Device** – There is a perception of speeding traffic through the parish but the data from the SID does not back this up. The battery has been changed.
Action: Cllr Smith or Cllr Mason to speak to James Blackett regarding the software not downloading properly.
- **Highways Improvement Plan** – KCC highways have circulated a HIP document to the members of the traffic group with their comments. Cllr Booth had responded to most of the points raised by KCC. There have been two accidents at Sole Street beside Sweeps Hole Pond and a local resident was seriously injured with life changing injuries.
Action: Organise a meeting for the Traffic Group. CPC to discuss the points raised by KCC Highways at a future meeting.

9. Lower Thames Crossing – The Development Consent Order had been completed and this is with the Planning Inspectorate who will make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport. CPC had submitted their comments on the consultation which closed two weeks ago. There are still 15 items that have not been agreed between CPC and the LTC group. Cllr Dyer is working on a Principle Areas of Disagreement form which needs to be submitted by the end of the week. It is estimated that the LTC will be opened by 2029. CPC are working with the LTC team on funding from LTC for traffic calming and improvements. As mitigation Sole Street may get some funding towards a new footpath from Round Street to Scratton Fields or other traffic calming measures.

10. Village Crime Group – Cllr Dymond was attending a meeting with the Police & Crime Commissioner for Kent and asked everyone present to pass on their views. Kent Police have been replacing PCSOs with Police Constables. The Police and Crime Commissioner has said that more police officers have been added to pre austerity levels. It was mentioned there appears to be less police in the rural areas and where the new officers are being allocated and how this affects the crime statistics in Gravesham.

11. Playing Fields

- **Children's Corner Refurbishment** – CPC had been working with GBC. The total estimated cost for replacing the current playground is £60,000. The following grants had been given towards the new playground equipment: The National Lottery Fund had given £10,000, Tesco £1000, Applications has been made to Greene King Breweries and the Lower Thames Crossing Legacy Fund. The work on the playground may need to start before the end of March. The current playground equipment is 20 years old.
- **Electric Vehicles Charging Points** – There is no longer any funding from KCC to take this forward. To be removed from the agenda.
- **Sports Association** – The Sports Association are raising money to refurbish the toilets in the cricket pavilion.
- The cricket pavilion will be added to Cobham Parish Council's insurance policy and the Sports Association will pay CPC for this.

- **Car Park Resurfacing** – The Sports Association, Bowls Club, Cobham Primary School and Primary School PTA have been approached for contributions.

12. Public Toilets

- **Opening and cleaning the toilets** – The toilets were costing CPC up to £10,000 per year. During the past week the people counters at Cobham Toilets counted 150 visits to the gentlemen's toilet and 130 visits to the ladies. The toilets are well used during sports matches, school children and walkers. The judges of the South & South East in Bloom had said that the public toilets had contributed towards Cobham winning the competition as they provide an important service to the community.
- **Southern Water** – There were no further updates on the billing issues. The Chairman is working with Business Stream
- **General Maintenance** – It was decided to accept the quote from London Roofing for the repairs to the roof, gutters and floor.
Action: Clerk to ask the roofing company to start the work as per the quote.

13. St Mary's Church Rooms – The Local Funding Group are running a community coffee morning at 10.30am on Thursday 9th March. CPC have been invited to run a coffee morning on Thursday 13th April.

Action: Put the details of the coffee morning on Facebook and website.

The planning application for the refurbishment of the St Mary's Church Rooms had just been renewed. The Local Funding Group have recently applied for two grants for £60,000 and £10,000.

14. Social Media – CPC agreed to provide a grant of £608 towards the cost of the free editions of the Parish Magazine for Easter and Christmas to go out to all of the households in Cobham Parish..

15. Local Elections – Thursday 4th May – KALC are running a free training courses on Zoom for prospective parish council candidates from 7pm for one hour on Tuesday 21st March.

16. Other Village Matters

- **Defibrillators** – The defibrillator at The St Mary's Church Rooms has had the pads and batteries replaced. The clips that hold the box closed are no longer working and the box may need to be replaced.
- Cllr Mason said he would let CPC know when their existing garage will be demolished and the defibrillator on Round Street will need to move.
Action: Clerk to check through papers when the defibrillators were purchased. Clerk to find grants for the defibrillators.
- **Youth Club** – It had been difficult to find a bank account for multiple signatories that doesn't charge.
Action: Cllr Booth and Cllr Dyer to sign a new Service Level Agreement.
- **Footpaths** – CPC were pleased with the resurfacing work on Footpath NS191 which is opposite The Railway PH at Sole Street.
Action: Clerk to write a thank you letter to KCC Rights of Way Team.
- **Sweeps Hole Ponds** – KCC have said they will replace the fence at Sweeps Hole Pond on Monday 13th March.
- **Owletts and other National Trust Properties** – The National Trust had written a letter to CPC and this was read out by the clerk. The letter has been included with the minutes. The

National Trust had been unhappy with the content of the previous minutes. It was noted that Owletts had been removed from the 2022 handbook but was now in the 2023 handbook. Owletts will be opening on the first Sunday of the month and the mausoleum will be open on the first and third Sundays. The National Trust are carrying out work on the mausoleum to stop the damp issues.

Action: Invite National Trust staff to a future meeting.

- **Village Sign** – The proposed village signs for Cobham, Sole Street and Ifield were similar in design to the Istead Rise Village Sign. There are ongoing discussions on designs and costings for the village proposed village sign. The cost of each village sign will be around £8,000.
- **Meadow Rooms** – There will be a Munchies on the Meadow on 2nd June.
- **King's Coronation** –
- On Saturday there will be a ticketed black tie ball at the Gilt Hall, Cobham Hall, from 7pm until 12pm. Round Street is due to be closed for a street party on Saturday.
- On Sunday there will be a church service and a children's party from 2pm to 4pm. Owletts will be open and the garden will be open for picnics as part of the Big Sunday Lunch. There will also be a Garden Safari organised by the SMCR Funding Group from 1pm to 6pm and an event from 7pm to 9pm.
- Monday will be the Big Help day. There will be litter picking and sweep in Cobham and Sole Street. The bell ringers will be ringing the bells. Cobham Church will be open and the WI will be providing teas for the volunteers. There will be an opportunity to clean the church. The details will be in the next parish magazine.

Action: Put details of the events on to Facebook and the website.

- **Nominations for the Bonham Hayes Trust**

Action: Clerk to circulate the deadline for nominations amongst the parish councillors.

17. Parishioners Comments –

A parishioner had spoken regarding the changes to the local bus service and this had already been covered by the bus stop agenda item.

Cllr Smith said they had seen a gentleman litter picking around Church Road and Henhurst Road.

Action: The clerk to write a thank you letter to the individual.

Jeskyns will be increasing their car parking charges. This could encourage visitors to park along Church Road and at Tollingtrough Green. A local farmer has installed a fence to prevent motorists from parking on the side of the field beside Church Road.

Action: Cllr Smith offered to speak to Oliver Wilton, the new Community Ranger.

Meeting continues in Private

18. Correspondence & Announcements –

- The clerk had spoken to Apex Pest Control regarding a dead mole which had been reported and swiftly removed. Apex Pest Control had said that the mole traps had been tampered with.
- The clerk had received a telephone call from an individual who said there was an unsafe tree at Ifield Church. The Clerk had written to the KCC Highways who checked the tree but found there were no problems.
- The National Trust had organised a speaker from Forestry England to share information about the rising deer population and the proposed methods of manage their numbers.

- The National Trust had notified CPC about deer poaching in Cobham Park.
Action: Clerk to put the details of the deer poaching on to the website.

19. Finance – Cllr Smith proposed the cheque report and Cllr Dyer seconded.

20. AOB – None

21. Next Meeting – Annual Parish Assembly at 7.30pm on Tuesday 18th April at the Meadow Rooms