

**MINUTES OF A FULL MEETING OF BRENCHLEY PARISH COUNCIL ON MONDAY  
5th DECEMBER 2011 IN BRENCHLEY MEMORIAL HALL IN THE REAR OF THE  
SPORTS CLUB AT 7.30pm.**

**Present**

Chairman M Mackenzie presided, Vice Chairman P Randall Cllrs R Carter, B Stanley, I McEwen, C Woodley, R Dafter, J Barsley. Mrs A Downes, Clerk M. Powell. Approximately 40 members of the public attended.

**Apologies for absence**

Borough Cllr Mrs March for attending another meeting and Borough Cllr A McDermott for family commitments

**Declaration of Interests**

Members were reminded that if a member has a *prejudicial* interest in an agenda item, this should be declared at the start of the meeting.

*Personal* interests may be declared at this point or, alternatively, can be declared at the time a specific item is being discussed if that member wishes to speak on the item in which s/he has a personal interest. In case of doubt about such an interest Councillors are advised to contact the Monitoring Officer before the meeting or declare the interest anyway.

All Councillors declared that they had been lobbied regarding Affordable Housing in Brenchley

**Public Question Time**

A wide range of questions were asked and comments made on the subject of the proposed Affordable Housing. The Chairman answered all questions without debate in accordance with the Fact sheet, minuted as the attached addendum.

- Will the PC support residents or alternatively that which is demanded by TWBC?
- Why has the PC known of the proposals for three years and not informed residents?
- Will we end up with council houses rather than affordable housing with tenants having local connections if TCHA relax the rules?
- What consideration has been given to safety of residents/ pedestrians in light of the development?
- Has the PC and TCHG considered the impact on the AONB with many of the local houses Victorian or older and that the proposals in design were not in keeping with the area?
- If in answer to a previous question the TCHA is not allowed to sell of their housing stock, how was it possible they could sell the Old Palace?
- Hearing derogatory comments about tenants in rented accommodation there is ample proof that groups in communities provide support and do not many of the existing residents consider their attitude in opposing this proposal to be very selfish?
- It was noted that an application for houses behind the Cherry Trees in Matfield had been refused but could not affordable housing have been built there?
- Is there any possibility the TCHA could opt out of the arrangement and sell the land if a shortage of tenants occurred?
- Had the residents and the PC considered that housing for locals had been tried for for 25years and that Affordable Housing was desperately needed for people to contribute to the community?
- Would a local connection be established if people from other villages had their children in the local school?
- Why has the Market Heath site been selected when other sites could be possible such as the Pixot Hill proposal could have been selected?
- Could the PC clarify the definition of "local" connections? Cllr Barsley answered this by saying that 27 families applied for the recently built houses in Matfield and

6 were successful but qualified not just on one single connection but several. They were all nice people and the local community was very pleased to have them there.

- The PC were asked if they could all introduce themselves which they did.

### **Minutes**

Approve Minutes of the full meeting of 7<sup>th</sup> November

The minutes were agreed as accurate and duly signed by the Chairman

### **Planning Applications.**

**11/03455/LBC/CLC** Town Farm Oast High Street Brenchley  
Replacement of all windows for double glazed units. Replacement of all external doors  
*Recommendation-Approval*  
Noted that the proposal would be improved if the windows had more detail by way of glazing bars.

**11/03426/House/CP3** 1 The White House High St Brenchley  
Single storey extension with catslide roof over and conservation roof lights  
*Recommendation-Approval*

**11/03438/LBC/TA1** Little Portebello Windmill Hill Brenchley  
Repair works to inglenook, removing ceiling and replacing lintel  
*Recommendation-Approval*

**11/03345/FUL/TA1** Gate House Farm Fairmans Lane Brenchley  
Stables for mixed residential and commercial use  
*Recommendation-Neutral*  
Concern was expressed that the access is restricted; horses need care at least twice a day necessitating regular visits and the lack of security

### **Decisions taken by TWBC**

**11/02744/House/SE2** Winchmore Brenchley Road Matfield  
Removal of half built double garage and replacement with timber framed 3 bay garage and log store  
*Recommendation-Approval Decision-Approval*

**11/02894/House/CW1** Shenley Maidstone Road Matfield  
Revised porch, relocation of garage and two storey extension  
*Recommendation-Approval Decision-Approval*

**11/02919/LBC/GM2** Mill Cottage Windmill Hill Brenchley  
Alterations, veranda and subterranean extension  
*Recommendation-Approval Decision-Approval*

**11/02935/House/SE2** Summerfield Cottage Chantlers Hill Paddock Wood  
Two storey side extension  
*Recommendation-Approval Decision-Refusal*

**11/03045/House/CW1** East Court The Green Matfield  
Extensions and alterations- amended drawings  
*Recommendation-Approval Decision-Approval*

### **Meetings Attended**

#### **Report of the Finance Sub-Committee**

Cllr Carter reported that the Finance sub-committee had met on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> December and had reviewed the accounts which were all satisfactory with no cause for concern.

The anticipated spend to year end had been established which gave rise to consideration of the budget and thence the calculation of the precept for the following year. It was considered that the funds of £24,000 accumulated over the last three years to pay for the public conveniences would not be required in their entirety and it was therefore agreed that it would only be necessary to increase the budget by £2,000 to £26000. However if agreeable contracts could be drawn up by TWBC the PC hoped the payments could start from the beginning of the next financial year. £2000 had been budgeted for the CAB with the caveat it would be used locally. With careful controls over spending and budgeting this year it was possible to maintain the precept at this year's level of £55,000 and still maintain a contingency fund of £16000. This recommendation was agreed unanimously.

#### **Report of the Matfield Pavilion Sub-Committee**

Cllr Woodley reported that the group was still talking to various architects and a fourth was going to be met shortly. It was hoped the group would be in a position to make a proposal to the PC at the January meeting.

**Cllr Woodley reported he had attended the following four meetings.**

#### **Standards Committee 10<sup>th</sup> November**

The area committee questioned whether that the Standards Committee was providing value for money and still proving to be effective.

#### **Chairmen's meeting 15<sup>th</sup> November**

The principal subject was Neighbourhood plans which TWBC was still trying to get up to speed with. Robert Atwood was preparing a ½ day meeting to present to PCs. It was noted that if a local authority had a plan in place it would be harder to override it and TWBC has a core strategy. It was also encouraging PCs to create their own Parish Plans. These are mainly about land management and without one the PC could lay itself open to potential difficulties. It was proposed to invite Jane March in February to give us the benefit of her experience

#### **Area Committee 29<sup>th</sup> November**

As with the Chairmen's' meeting planning and housing issues predominated the meeting.

#### **Remembrance Day Ceremony 13<sup>th</sup> November.**

#### **TWTCAPP**

Cllr Randall reported he had attended a meeting of Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Action Plan Panel. The idea was to encourage thought processes on the re-energisation of all aspects of Tunbridge Wells. There was a degree of uneasiness with the partnership between the Borough and John Laing. The next meeting was to discuss plans for the town centre with further public consultations planned.

#### **Matfield Village Hall**

Cllr Barsley reported the MVH committee had considered the complaints of loud music but it was only one instance and not a continual problem. The committee was also quite happy that the Youth Group could use the hall but they needed to book it through the normal channels.

#### **Brenchley School**

The Chairman reported the Brenchley School had received an Ofsted inspection and it had improved to being satisfactory overall. However teaching and learning had been categorised as good with some activities excellent. Overall it was a significant improvement.

#### **Paddock Wood Car Parking**

The Chairman had been asked to comment on a proposal to remove the two hours free car-parking. The Clerk was asked to write to TWBC objecting to the proposal.

#### **Decisions by Clerk**

#### **Brenchley Playground**

The fence has been damaged again by a truck reversing into the fence. The driver has rung and admitted the problem and the Clerk is preparing a quotation for its repair.

**Matters Arising****Income**

Options regarding the allocation of the legal charge recently received were briefly discussed, including the Pavilion and Petteridge Playing ground. Cllrs agreed to reserve a decision until a later date.

**Matfield Interactive speed sign**

KCC have been advised of the issue that the sign does not activate until some 37mph. The Chairman reported that some action to recalibrate had been done and the sign seemed to be performing as expected.

**Correspondence****Came & Co- Matfield Pavilion**

Advice had been received that the report has been sent by the loss adjusters to our insurers, Aviva, that a replacement will cost more than the sum insured and that they should settle to the full amount at circa £125,000. It is expected a cheque should be received within the next 10 days or so.

**Residents**

Numerous letters regarding Brenchley Affordable Housing both in favour and objecting to the proposal had been received in almost equal numbers in favour and against the proposals.

**Greg Clarke**

Advice that the Localism Bill has received Royal Assent and that Greg Clarke will present its contents in Matfield Hall. However the original date in February had been cancelled and a new date was awaited.

**Love Matfield Society**

A request has been received for a donation to assist funding a marquee for the Jubilee in June as the pavilion is not going to be available. It was thought that a grant was going to be available from TW for this occasion and that this would be sufficient to fund the hire.

**P/Wood TC.**

Copy of a letter to CAB from PWTC objecting to the proposed closure of the Paddock Wood Branch was distributed.

**Other Matters as maybe previously notified****Village of the Year**

Cllr Mrs Downes advised that she was in the process of looking at the practicalities of applying again for the following year and had been in touch with Mrs Cornford who had provided much valuable advice.

**Meeting Dates**

A list of meeting dates was circulated which were agreed as acceptable.

**CAB**

The possible closure of the Paddock Wood branch of CAB was discussed and it was agreed that it would be a severe loss to the community.

**Accounts for Payment**

|             |                                   |          |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|----------|
| M Powell    | Salary and expenses               | £1662.34 |
| Post Office | Tax & NI                          | £442.71  |
| E.On        | Electricity                       | £24.97   |
| Barsleys    | Refreshments for architects visit | £33.90   |
| B Stanley   | Repayment of cherry picker hire   | £298.80  |
| SE Water    | Pond Water                        | £103.16  |
| SE Water    | Allotment water                   | £108.38  |

**Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> December in Brenchley Memorial Hall at 7.30pm.

## **ADDENDUM**

### **Facts relating to the proposed Markets Heath Affordable housing development**

It is important to stress that the PC has not seen a planning application yet and until we do we will not be in possession of ALL the facts and opinions, both for and against a development. We will consider all the information at that time and reach a consensus. This summary is not promoting a decision one way or the other but simply answering questions and pointing out facts from speculation or inaccurate surmise. Please remember your PC only makes recommendations, not decisions on planning applications.

### **Differentiation between Affordable housing needs and Social housing**

A survey in 2001 showed a min/max need of 25/37 and in 2006/7 showed a minimum of 25. It should be noted that Affordable housing is **not** the same as Social Housing. The latter is in the specific control of the HA and the former is available only to locally connected people with demonstrated need, although administered by TWBC together with TCHA. Applicants form part of the general housing needs register and are highlighted if they have local connection. The normal rules are applied to select tenants in order of categorisation.

The charity "Action within Rural Kent" carried out both surveys – this charity does all surveys in Kent and charities all around the country carry out similar work—all arms length from councils. ALL homes in the parish (1100) were written to on both occasions plus additionally the people that were already on the list in 2001, who were specifically contacted again. This was not an opinion poll but a survey to know needs within the parish. A recommendation (based on the national norm of the time which is still used) was to build approx half (13) of the demonstrated need, to avoid over stocking of housing\*

There are currently 31 families (needing 13 x 1 bed, 11 x 2 bed 4 x 3 bed and 3 x 4 bed properties) all with local connection on the list registered with TWBC and this despite allocating 6 homes in January/February this year in Matfield. 9 people put their names down at the meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> November, although their connections have not been tested as yet.

**Attendance at Nov 5<sup>th</sup> and ongoing Consultation** – Over 100 people attended the meeting although only 50/60 stayed until the Q&A. The comment book had 23 entries. Three were definitely negative, seven were positive and 12 were merely questions/suggestions but expressed no view. Nine people added their name to the register of interest. There was a split of opinion in the room, a vociferous group against the proposal and a less vocal group that did respond to the claim from one attendee that there was no support for the homes. The council received 7 letters of objection (albeit one very personally abusive) to the plan and 2 in favour following this meeting.

**Motive to increase affordable housing** – This PC has continued with the "Local Housing for Local People" campaign that was started 25 years ago by the then Vicar and supported then as now by the PC. Indeed members of the PC of the time sat on that group's committee. Matfield's Wish Court (2011) was the first success and this (Market Heath) is a continuation of the same campaign. There have been many other attempts over the years, one close to Matfield Village Hall, another on the corner of Coppers Lane, one on Pixot Hill, a further attempt in the field adjacent to the Memorial Hall in Brenchley. These all failed. Some were due to local pressure and one (Pixot Hill) failed a planning application, although was supported by the PC – it was considered by the PC as not ideal as it was big at 12 homes but better than nothing. This **new** development is **not** as a result of political interference or impositions but has been made partly possible because of funding obtained from the Housing Corporation. We have had no dealings with, or pressure from the South East Development Agency as has been suggested or, for that matter, any other outside body. The impetus to develop has been entirely from the PC in the last 5/6 years since the Old Palace and Old Workhouse were sold.

**Design** – aimed at blending in with local vernacular – suggestions have been taken on board re colour of boarding/ i.e. from dark wood to white. Many different types of style exist in the village from 16<sup>th</sup> century to modern 50's 60's 70's 90's and onwards. This reflects changing times. The houses will be screened from the road and neighbouring properties by an existing hedge and more planting all around. Different configurations of one, two three and four bedroom houses and maisonettes have been conceived. Latest plan is available and confirms proposed layout. The EDF substation will be completely screened as is the one on junction of High Street and Back Lane.

**Age profile of prospective tenants** – There are all ages on the list and in the new development in Matfield there is a good mix of age.

**Safety** -KCC consider plans to be adequate to satisfy them plus the new footpath proposed. Clearly local fears have to be taken into account. The Police/KCC state that serious/fatal

accidents have not occurred in the area within the 30mph limit existing currently. The PC has been discussing possibilities of increasing parking spaces by the school.

**Locally connected tenants in perpetuity** – Section 106 rules apply (first included in planning act 1990) – it would be an offence for a housing association administering S106 property to let to a person unconnected. The right to develop sites under S106 is a very strict requirement and is treated seriously by Housing Associations and affects green field sites that are in close proximity to centres of communities. All S106 properties are flagged by the HA—there will be no random tenancies. The properties will not be sold or part-sold but remain available to rent at lower than normal costs due to the lower cost of development, primarily because of land cost.

**Expansion** – There are no plans to expand more than the 13 (6 already built) homes that were agreed to be built **see \* above**. The Housing Association is constrained by law in speculative land acquisition.

**Doctors' facilities** – have had informal indications that 7 more homes are unlikely to rock the boat. In fact when Horsmonden was planning an increase it was felt that the resources of the three resident doctors in the two surgeries were fine to manage the proposed increase there. I emphasise though – this is an informal and unconfirmed.

**Shopping & facilities in Brenchley and local amenity** – The shops in Brenchley (and Matfield) have struggled in recent years due to under use – more people in the village can only mean more chance that they may use the existing facilities. In the immediate area there is a school, and two pre-schools, an active village hall complex with many sports including, tennis, football, cricket, bowls, squash, Tai Chi, and much more besides. There are dozens of young members of the tennis club and as well as football and cricket. We have a pharmacy, a Doctors surgery and a dentist, there are numerous clubs and societies, history, horticultural, WI, over 60s, Women's Union and others. There is a post office and general store, a food deli and tea shop with dining facilities, 4 pubs plus the sports bar in Brenchley, a butchers and a blacksmith. There are two youth groups in the parish plus two churches with interests with youth. There are scouts and cubs and guides in the parish as well.

There has never been a secondary school but there is a primary school with about 100 less children than had previously been. (mostly being driven to it). The school is a centre pin of the community and is currently on track to resume its previous high standards. Pupil numbers are targeted at 210 from a current 180 over the next couple of years. The previous school population was around 280 plus.

**Local people's views/Council agreement** – The PC will and does listen to all views and will ultimately reach its CONSENSUS decision based on ALL the facts and will consider the needs /concerns of all its residents.

**Control of choice of tenants** – The PC exercises no control or has any direct input on selection of tenants. However, it has been instrumental in the past of ensuring that connected prospective tenants come to the notice of TWBC and the HA and are on the lists as necessary. However, when the Local Housing for Local people was started 25 years ago by the then Vicar and members of the community, the PC did indeed ensure that all applicants at the time had clear connection to the parish.

**Suitability of the TCHA** – There can be no doubt that the TCHA works to the current Government required national standard and there are no known reasons why we should think differently. They were formed when TWBC sold off its social housing stock some 20 years ago. They have developed their housing and increased their residents to include other areas since then. They ring-fenced £1m plus after the sale of the Old Palace and the Old Work House to build affordable housing as part of the concessions they made at the time. They have lived up to their promise and demonstrate integrity by so doing.

**Secrecy** – The PC have been discreet about the siting of the development until a deal was struck between the landowner and the HA. The landowner was asked to sell his land at a less than market price rate for this development and there were many obstacles between the start and the end of the negotiation. Indeed, there was a failed attempt elsewhere that used a year of negotiation time. Had that been public in advance there would have been much speculation and objection all before a tentative deal was done. The PC and the HA made the plan public knowledge as soon as the deal was concluded. This whole process took more than a year.