

MINUTES A REMOTE MEETING OF BRENCHLEY AND MATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

HELD ON MONDAY 7th DECEMBER 2020 AT 7.30pm via Zoom

Present: Councillors G. Warner (Chair) presided, G. Stevenson (Vice Chair), L. Butler, A. de Guingand, K. Sparkhall, C. Brooks (Clerk),

In attendance: Cllr S. Hamilton (KCC), Cllr A. McDermott (TWBC), R. Mitchell (Non-Voting Member), A. Wells (Non-Voting Member), E. Izzard (Non-Voting Member), J. Buttery (Non-Voting Member), 5 members of the public

1. To accept apologies for absence

None.

2. To approve the Minutes of the last meeting

The Minutes of the meeting of 7th November were approved and would be signed by the Chair at the next opportunity.

3. To record declarations of interest in any item on the Agenda

None.

4. To adjourn to allow public participation

Simon Mackay introduced himself as the agent for the application at Brenchley garage who was there to answer questions on the application.

Mr and Mrs Farley advised that, further to their attendance at the last meeting regarding Cooksfield, they had not made an offer for the land and the figure stated in their correspondence was indicative only.

5. Borough and County Councillors – to receive information

Cllr Hamilton (KCC) advised that a scheme has been designed to address the drainage problems at Kippings Cross, to fully cleanse the existing drainage system and repair broken pipes. This will be undertaken in the Spring.

Cllr Stevenson expressed frustration that the contents of Highways Improvement Plans were not taken into consideration when KCC set their budget, and therefore funding was unlikely to be forthcoming from KCC.

Cllr McDermott (TWBC) outlined that there is a large increase in cases of Covid 19, particularly in Maidstone and that due to various issues during the pandemic, it is possible that some TWBC amenities may be cut in order to balance their budget.

6. Non-Voting Members – to receive project updates

Reports were discussed as follows:

6.1 - Matfield Pond.

Cllr Warner thanked Rory Mitchell and his team for the tremendous work on looking into this project.

Various options for the long term management of the pond were discussed including digging a borehole, de-silting and re-puddling the pond, and the removal of vegetation.

It was agreed that the budget would contain an amount of £10,000 towards a future project on the pond, that might require the accumulation of funds over several years.

It was agreed that a meeting of the Policy and Management Committee would take place in the New Year to consider the outcomes of the pond project again.

6.2 - Allotment Tenancy Agreements and Plot Survey

The Council thanked Ellie Izzard for her work on this project and discussed a new draft tenancy agreement, which had not previously been required of tenants, as well as the survey of plot size measurements.

Water charges would also need to be considered as a confirmed meter reading was not taken for the last 2 years, this was imminent. A further review of plot fees would be considered in due course as the rod fee was still considered too low and the amended fees would not increase the total income of the site. It was noted that whilst a profit was not sought there were more costs being incurred by the PC on small tasks such as mowing.

The Clerk had requested sight of a tree survey undertaken in the course of a planning application at the adjacent property at Thorn Barn and this would assist in determining the scale of work required on the mature trees on that boundary, which may have a significant cost.

RESOLVED that signed Tenancy Agreements would be required of all tenants for the allotment year commencing 1st April 2021.

RESOLVED that the allotment fees would be amended in line with plot size and that tenants would be advised of this by January to allow for 3 months' consultation.

6.3 - Community Engagement and Communications

The Council discussed ways that it might improve engagement with the community and how best to promote the work of the Council generally, this was particularly important given the Council elections in May 2021. A Facebook page, dedicated to the PC, was discussed, to run alongside the statutory information and archives to be held on the website. The Clerk raised the issue of the extra time this would take, though was in agreement with the principle, and requested that a Councillor be nominated to work with her on content, postings and moderating.

Non-Voting Member Amanda Wells was nominated to assist the Clerk in creating and moderating the site.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council would create its own Facebook page.

Proposals for a Sustainability Policy and a Community Forum/Volunteer Action Group to consider issues such as rural broadband, were noted. It was anticipated that a new Council would take these issues forwards.

7. Donations – to consider requests received

Requests for donations had been received from Tunbridge Wells Citizens' Advice, West Kent Mediation and The Counselling Centre.

Cllr Warner advised that she is a Trustee and Chair of Grants Committee at Kent Community Foundation.

The Council agreed that these bodies would be directed to the Kent Community Foundation for funding requests and that the PC would not be able to provide a donation.

8. Budget and Precept for 2021-22 – to consider draft proposals

Cllr de Guingand outlined some further issues that had been considered in drafting the budget, and Councillors recognised that an increased precept was unfortunate but necessary so that reserves would be protected and activities could be undertaken by the new Council.

RESOLVED that the 2021-2022 budget of £138,243 and precept requirement of £125,000, be approved and submitted to TWBC by the Clerk.

9. Cooksfield - update

The Council discussed the use or disposal of the land at Cooksfield. Independent, informal, advice had been sought and a tree survey would be advantageous to consider what land would be available for development prior to a pre-application Planning Meeting with TWBC to discuss the potential for social housing.

RESOLVED that The Clerk would obtain a full tree survey of the land at Cooksfield and subsequently arrange a pre-application Planning meeting with TWBC.

10. Highways – update

Cllr Stevenson advised that residents of Windmill Hill had provided some requests for road safety measures, including a 20mph limit and chicanes. These would be discussed at the Road Safety Initiative meeting in the New Year with the option of adding them to the Highways Improvement Plan

Cllr Stevenson will hold a meeting with the Police and a resident on 10th December to discuss a road traffic incident where a dog was killed on Brenchley Road.

11. Covid Tier 3 – to discuss impact

The Council briefly discussed the impact of restrictions in place and agreed that it was not in a place to take any action.

12. Planning and Development

12.1 Neighbourhood Development Plan

Cllr Sparkhall advised that the Steering Group had discussed actively engaging with developers on details and to press for the site specific policies to be considered in discussions.

It was agreed that an approach from Fernham regarding the Island Site development would be progressed and that TWBC would be asked to ensure that the NDP policies are incorporated in their own deliberations.

12.2 Results of the Housing Needs Survey

Cllr Butler commented that the survey had only a 21% response rate but demonstrated a need mainly for downsizers.

It was agreed that the Survey would be published on the Parish Website, without the comments section for data protection/confidentiality reasons.

12.3 Gatehouse Farm

The Council discussed the exchange of correspondence on the history of planning matters at the above location.

It was agreed that a further letter would be sent to Stephen Baughen at TWBC to contest his assertion of contact with the PC on this matter and to state the PC's discontent.

12.4 Planning Applications

20/03076 Primrose Hill , Brenchley Road, Brenchley, Tonbridge, TN12 7NS	Replace current two unit garage with a single three bay garage, with landscaping RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: APPROVE
20/03306 OS Plot 2912, Maidstone Road, Matfield, Tonbridge, Kent (Island Site)	Approval of Reserved Matters (Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale) following Outline Permission for 19/01099/OUT refers - Development of the site to provide up to 45 dwellings, including affordable housing and new access and off-site highway works RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: REFUSE Full text of comments submitted available from the Clerk
20/02583 Walnut Tree Farm Crittenden Road Matfield Tonbridge TN12 7EN	Removal of Condition 7 (Occupancy) of 89/01696/OUT RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: REFUSE The PC notes Richard Lloyd Hughes's (Agricultural Planning Consultant) letter dated 23rd October '20 in reply to the planning officer's request of advice dated 13th October '20. Richard L-H highlights there has been no attempt to market the property to find any other potential agricultural occupier.

	Richard L-H ends his letter "I consider it would be premature to conclude that the AOC on this dwelling has outlived its usefulness".
20/03180 Black Path Cottage , Brenchley Road, Matfield, Tonbridge, TN12 7PE	Relocation of farm track away from junction RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: REFUSE This track has become a retrospective driveway. The PC request there is a condition that this barn is only used for the agriculture purposes – to store/sort apples and store associated machinery equipment and tools.
20/03340 Brenchley Garage, Brenchley Road, Brenchley, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 7NZ	Demolition of existing garage buildings, erection of 5 x four bedroom dwellings, 3 x one bedroom flats and 50 sqm office space (B1), associated landscaping and parking with access from Brenchley Road. RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: REFUSE Full text of comments submitted available from the Clerk
20/03329/LBC Thorn House, Maidstone Road, Matfield, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 7JH	Listed Building Consent - Erection of a 1.6 metre high fence with associated landscaping RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: APPROVE

13. Clerk's Report

13.1 Minor works update

- Molehills have been addressed on Matfield Green and the Dry Ground, further checks have demonstrated that moles are no longer present.
- Defibrillators are being checked for batteries
- The water heater at the Pavilion has leaked and is being replaced.
- 2 Parking signs at the back of the parking area have been knocked over have been reinstated
- Clearup under the limes along the Avenue is complete

13.2 Christmas

Lights are up and working in Brenchley High Street more work being done to replace lights in the Brenchley Oak. There is a need to ask KCC to prune this Oak next spring so that extensive work on the lights can be done. Also required is a review of the licence for the lights (no reply previously from KCC).

13.3 Mowing contract Matfield Green

CGC/LS quotes were discussed for the work on Matfield Green which is not currently part of the parish-wide contract and is done separately by LS due to their lower quote last year. This is currently an annual contract.

RESOLVED that the mowing contract for Matfield Green for 2021 be awarded to Capel GroundCare

13.4 Correspondence

A request from John Barsley for the Parish Council to endorse MVH's application for funding from KCC to improve the Halls insulation and electrical lighting efficiency using the scheme below was discussed.

RESOLVED to send letter of support for an application by Matfield Village Hall to KCC for a grant towards insulation and lighting.

14. RFO's Report

14.1 Accounts payable in December for November 2020 Invoices

1783 C. Brooks	Part Salary November 2020	£869.27
1784 HMRC	Tax and NI November 2020	£602.40
1785 P. Horn	Salary November 2020	499.62
1786 Microshade	Payment for September and October invoices Standing orders failed to apply.	£248.30
1787 Weald Tree Services	Removal of Plum Tree at allotments	£80.00
1788 Fence Guru	Replacement of posts on Green	£205.00
1789 Castle Water	Pond water. Meter read after 2 years.	£578.29
1790 ACRK	Housing Needs Survey for NDP	£3087.60
1791 Katalin Twyman	October Cleaning of Pavilion	£56.00
1792 Pete Bamford	Removal of playground Bench and installation of new base	£420.00
Capel Ground Care		
1793 Lynne Butler	Reimbursement for NDP Domain March 2020 – March 2022 and Premium plan April 2020 – April 2021	£114.03
1794 Scouts	Balance of S106 money due for blinds for Scouts HQ	£2159.00
1795 Landscape Services	Grounds maintenance for Matfield Green (July-Sept 2020)	£1147.25
1796 JP Miles	Reinstatement of car park signs on Mat. Gr	£48.00
1797 Kentec	Hire of Articulated Boom for Christmas lights	£516.00
1798 Roundabout Mag	Half page PC Advert for 2021	£265.00
1799 D. Izzard	Maintenance at Jack.Verral Gardens	£37.50
1810 L.Butler	Reimbursement of Land Registry plans	£153.00
1812 KALC	2019 Councillor course for Cllr Stevenson	£60.00
1813 Capel Groundcare	Pond clear up	£432.00

Credit Card Payments made

1800 Hillside	10lts Hand sanitizer	£59.98
1801 Lights 4 Fun	Christmas Lights	£128.50
1811 Lights 4 Fun	Christmas Lights	£134.50

Standing Orders and Direct Debits

1802 SO C Brooks	Part Salary November 2020	£1000.00
1803 SO Capel GC	Mowing Contract Jan 2019-Dec 2021	£796.00
1804 DD Smart Pension	Pension November 2020	£317.59
1805 DD EDF Energy	Pavilion Electricity	£77.00
1806 DD Castle Water	Pavilion Water	£4.00
1807 DD Castle Water	Pond Water	£4.00
1808 DD Castle Water	Allotment water	£6.00
1809 SO Microshade	Monthly data and application service	£124.30

The RFO having provided invoices for scrutiny these accounts were approved and would be authorised by Cllr Warner and Cllr Stevenson.

14.2 John Downer

The RFO had advised that a meeting was held to appoint Helen Brown of Ready Call as a Trustee in place of the Clerk. The RFO has commenced the process of changing the signatories on the account from Chris Woodley and Chantal Brooks to Lynne Butler and Panetta Horn. The RFO has issued letters to the benefactors of the charity requesting funds for this year. It was confirmed that 12 beneficiaries remain for the Charity to distribute to.

14.3 Rateable Value

The RFO had advised that during the process of attempting to gain grants for the Pavilion during the first Covid Lockdown, it became apparent that the Pavilion had never been assessed for rateable value. The RFO instigated this process and the Pavilion has been assessed and now has a rateable value and rates due are reduced to £0 due to the nature of our business. This means that we also now have an official postcode and will appear on address search engines and we can get the mail coming with the incorrect address adjusted.

15. Meetings attended, and reports by Councillors

Cllr Warner had attended the KALC AGM on 28th November (via Zoom) and found it to be well attended and useful.

16. To be advised of urgent Business as may be previously notified

None.

- 17. Date of next meeting**
Full Council Meeting, via Zoom, 7.30pm, Monday 4 January 2021