

These minutes are subject to approval at the Council meeting on May 8th 2007

Biddenden Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting held in the Old Village Hall on April 10th 2007

Present

Cllr Mrs J Ashcroft
Cllr Mrs E Cansdale
Cllr M Conway
Cllr B Gaertner

Cllr H Richards
Cllr J Rymer Jones - **Chairman**
Cllr Mrs G Scott
Cllr P Whapham

Apologies for absence - Cllr R Brown, Cllr C Friend and Cllr N Bell, Ashford BC
13 parishioners were present.

Cllr Richards reported that our previous councillor, Mrs Brenda Swain, was now recuperating locally after her serious illness. Councillors wished her well.

1 There were no alterations to the members **Register of Interests**

2 **Items raised by parishioners present**

Garden rubbish

Some dumping in Hog Lane was reported (*since removed*)

Freedom of Information

Concern was expressed at the apparent difficulty in obtaining information relating to the Post Office project. The Clerk explained the advice he had received and said specific questions would be answered but that “trawling” the council files was not permissible.

BEST (Biddenden Blaze)

The BEST group had been considering whether to continue with the bonfire event in view of the excessive rubbish sometimes illegally dumped in the hope of it being burnt. It was suggested a height barrier leading to the Millennium Field car park may solve the problem. Councillors agreed they would hope that the event continues and would look again at the barrier proposal.

It was confirmed that the new toilets had an outside lockable socket and outside lockable tap for power and water for appropriate village use.

On behalf of the Council the Chairman thanked BEST for their valuable contribution to village life.

3 **Matters arising from previous minutes**

CCTV scheme

It was not known whether the Tennis Court part of the project was now complete.

Cllr Richards said he would look at any trees that needed trimming to improve camera sight lines and recommend action.

Litter bins

Still awaited (Clerk to speak to Ashford BC again)

Karate Club

Some grants would be available if they made a request. (Cllrs Mrs Cansdale and Conway would liaise on this)

Recycling

Cllr Gaertner suggested we should lobby Ashford BC to be part of the “blue box” scheme and thus increase the percentage of recycling in the Borough.

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4 **Post office/toilets/car park**

Although about a month late the toilet is nearly complete. The lateness was partly as a result of the wrong positioning (by BT) of a phone cable under the new building and the need to remove it. Cllr Gaertner was in touch with BT and was confident some or all of the cost of repositioning the cable would be refunded to the Council.

Cllr Mrs Scott agreed to establish whether the builder would be subject to any penalties as a result of the delayed completion.

The location of the disabled ramp to the PO had now been agreed by all parties but in view of the cost quoted other estimates would be obtained.

Resurfacing of the car park could start as soon as the builders left the site.

The Lease with the Postmistress should be finalised by the respective solicitors very soon. Councillors would be consulted, via an extraordinary meeting.

The independent accountant's clear summary of the Post Office projects income and expenditure to date was welcomed by councillors and it was agreed that it should be updated once the whole job is complete. In view of these figures Cllr Bell would be asked to update the PO website.

It was noted that the Post Office could be a base (mail box and chair) for the Police Community Support Officer when appointed later this year.

5 **Millennium Field and Jubilee Meadow**

Some rolling had taken place and a new gate was awaiting fitment. Further bird boxes had been installed.

Cllr Richards said some (very) tall posts had become available and they could be suitable (with mesh) for protecting the tennis courts from stray footballs. Councillors agreed Cllr Richards should follow up the possibility.

Cllr Richards also reported that British Gates would sponsor a new fence around the resurfaced car park and he would present details at the May meeting. Councillors were very appreciative of this gesture by British Gates.

6 **Traffic and Pedestrians**

In the absence of Cllr Friend there was no report. The Chairman proposed, and Cllr Conway seconded, that the Council should apply to Ashford BC for planning permission to relay, and provide a smooth strip, in the south side pavement. The Clerk had contacted English Heritage in view of the "listing" of the pavement and they would organise a meeting with Ashford BC and KCC Highways to establish the best way forward.

7 **Planning** – See attached

Cllr Gaertner urged the council to seek early involvement in any application to develop housing on the Rose Cottage Farm (North Street) site. The Chairman and councillors agreed to keep a close "watching brief". The Chairman said a meeting with Ashford BC to examine the need for more affordable housing should be a priority for the new council.

8 **Finance** – See attached

The Clerk advised that the Audit Commission investigation, triggered by Mr Linnett and Ms Clarke, was ongoing and no response was expected for two to three weeks. The Chairman reminded all present that the cost to parishioners had already exceeded £1000.

9 **Correspondence** – See attached

The payments ref items 12 (£15) and 16 (£30) were agreed unanimously.

10 **Election for new council – May 3rd**

It was noted there were 13 candidates for the 11 vacancies. 8 of the existing councillors were standing again.

11 **Next meetings**

Annual Parish Meeting **7pm April 24th** First meeting of the new Council **May 8th**