

These minutes are subject to approval at the Council meeting on April 10th 2007

Biddenden Parish Council

Minutes of the Council meeting held in the Old Village Hall on March 13th 2007

Present

Cllr Mrs J Ashcroft

Cllr Mrs E Cansdale

Cllr M Conway

Cllr C Friend – **Vice Chairman**

Cllr B Gaertner

Apology for absence – Cllr R Brown

Also present – Cllr N Bell, Ashford BC and 17 parishioners

Cllr H Richards

Cllr J Rymer Jones - **Chairman**

Cllr Mrs G Scott

Cllr P Whapham

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

2 **Items raised by parishioners present.**

Sports Clubs CCTV installation

It was reported that the equipment was working well and the images were of high quality. Some tree trimming was necessary to improve surveillance of the Millennium Field car park area.

Post Office Liaison Group/Committee

A parishioner claimed he (and others) had been willing to join this Committee, in the past, but had been refused. Cllr Mrs Scott said she would check on correspondence exchanged at the time.

Post Office electricity charges

The Clerk explained the September – December 2006 charges were the responsibility of the Parish Council (apart from £40) but that all future charges would be the responsibility of the Postmistress.

Parking in Cheeselands

Concern was voiced about parking problems and associated vandalism. The Chairman said if the residents presented some ideas for solving the problem then they could be progressed. (The Weavers residents had already undertaken something similar.)

3 **Minutes of the meeting held on February 13th 2007**

These were approved and signed by the Chairman.

4 **Matters for information.**

CCTV (See also 2 above)

The Clerk reported the work was complete apart from the tennis courts which were too wet to access at present.

Youth matters

The Chairman said this vital issue must be a priority for the new post May council. Cllr Mrs Cansdale reported the new Karate Club was looking for grants. The Chairman said we (and/or KCC) could help if details were presented.

Litter bins

The Clerk said he would follow up (again!) with Ashford BC.

Recycling

Cllr Rymer Jones proposed, and Cllr Whapham seconded, that a £200 “recycling grant” be given to the Bowls Club. All agreed.

It was suggested that we lobby Ashford BC for door to door collection of recyclable materials to help meet national recycling targets.

5 Post Office/toilets/car park.

Cllr Mrs Scott said the toilets should be complete by Easter.

The BT communications cable into the Post Office had been incorrectly installed by BT (or their contractors) and BT would rectify at their expense.

The lease between the Postmistress and the parish council is being finalised by the respective solicitors.

The disabled access (ie slope) to the Post Office will be discussed on site by the architect/builder/Ashford BC/parish council in the next 10 days.

Cllr Mrs Scott reported that our architect was checking the final bills from the builder to confirm any extras claimed were “legitimate”. Cllr Conway asked to be advised what these “extras” were – assuming there were some.

The Clerk reported that the independent “back check” of all expenditure and receipts associated with the project was in hand and would be available by the April meeting.

Cllr Whapham said the chosen contractor was ready to resurface the car park as soon as building work was complete. The Clerk was asked to check that this was acceptable to Ashford BC.

Cllr Gaertner reported that two toilet cleaning contractors he had approached had declined the work but one Cllr Whapham had approached was very interested.

The Clerk was asked to check whether there was a “legal” cleaning specification or whether we could set our own standards.

6 Millennium Field and Jubilee Meadow

Cllr Richards had little to report at this time apart from the installation of some additional bird boxes.

Following a request from the Squash Club it was agreed that one car parking space next to the Club (in the Gordon Jones car park) could be marked as “Reserved”. The contractor resurfacing/remarking the main car park would be asked to do this as an “add on”.

7 Traffic and Pedestrians

Cllr Friend had nothing to report apart from the fact that the “Speedwatch” trials were expected shortly.

The Chairman said the issue of “smoothing” the south side pavement had been referred to the Disability Rights Commission for advice.

Cllrs Conway and Richards said there were still problems with road drainage and sewerage although KCC Highways had been working to clear blocked drains. It was essential that affected householders kept up pressure on KCC (road drains) and Southern Water (sewerage).

8 Ashford Borough Council report – Cllr N Bell

South side pavement

Cllr Bell said he thought Ashford BC would support the “smooth strip” solution.

Recycling

Ashford BC had a target of 40% of refuse being recycled by 2012. The Council’s budget for recycling had risen by 800% in the last 8 years! Ashford was responding positively to national guidelines and targets.

Weavers parking. This would be progressed but results would be slow in view of the considerable cost involved. KCC must be part of the solution as they are responsible for all highway matters.

Sandeman Way housing

It appears two applicants had been challenged and Southern Housing are examining with the Borough Council.

The Chairman said Col. Sandemans daughter had agreed to unveil the Sandeman Way road sign at a ceremony at 12 noon on April 12th. All are welcome to attend. As a result of moves into the new Sandeman Way homes 3 two bedroom properties will become vacant in Cheeselands.

Doctors surgery

Ashford BC Planning were informally considering the site behind the Old Mill Corner development.

9 Reports from other councillors

Cllr Mrs Cansdale had attended a Police meeting. Biddenden is now part of a reorganised Ashford District. Operation "Excalibar", over Christmas, had resulted in a 24% reduction in local crime. There were 29 reported crimes in Biddenden over the period 1.11.06 to 25.02.07.

Cllr Mrs Cansdale agreed to follow up the offer of a graffiti cleaning team.

The Clerk was asked to check the latest position regarding the promised Police Community Support Officer.

10 Planning (see attached)

Cllr Mrs Scott abstained from comment on all the applications as she had not arrived in time to study them.

On the subject of the proposed strategic water main from Bewl Bridge to Ashford the Clerk had checked (on March 12th) and no firm plans were yet available for the route to the south of Biddenden.

The Chairman said that the possibility of a doctors surgery on a small portion of the Jubilee Meadow behind Old Mill Corner would be aired at the Annual Parish Meeting on April 24th. Cllr Richards said he would like it recorded that he was totally opposed to the scheme as the Jubilee Meadow had been bought to protect it from development.

11 Finance (see attached)

The Council agreed to the extension of the current mowing contract for 2007.

12 Correspondence (see attached)

The Chairman drew attention to the correspondence with the Audit Commission, as a result of various complaints to them, and said the Commissions charges for investigating the complaints would be passed onto the parish, ultimately through the precept. A minimum of £1000 was likely but it could rise considerably.

13 Freedom of Information request from Cllr Gaertner.

As an alternative to the Clerk and the PO Committee trawling (and copying) their various papers the Chairman suggested the files be made available to Cllr Gaertner (and any other councillors) for scrutiny at an agreed date in the Village Hall. Cllr Gaertner agreed this was acceptable to him.

14 Next meetings

March 31st – 10 to noon, in the Village Hall for prospective new councillors

April 10th – next, and last, meeting of this Council

April 24th – Annual Parish Meeting

May 3rd – election of the new Parish Council