

## BIDDENDEN PARISH COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of Biddenden Parish Council held on Tuesday 13 April 2010 at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall, Biddenden

Present: Cllr T Lupton (Chair) Cllr C Friend  
Cllr D Boulding Cllr H Richards  
Cllr Mrs E Cansdale Cllr H Ruse  
Cllr M Conway  
Cllr V Evason  
  
Cllr N Bell  
Mrs A Swannick (Clerk)

4 Parishioners attended

#### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs J Ashcroft, Cllr Barfoot and Cllr Daly.

#### 2. Parishioners questions

A parishioner raised the issue of the footpath at the bottom of Mansion House Close as dog faeces was being put into bags after dogs deposited it but then thrown into the trees. This was to be looked into.

The parishioner also questioned the practice of not putting unapproved minutes on the notice boards as it then meant that parishioners were not seeing minutes until over a month after the meeting had taken place. The Chairman stated that this issue had only recently been considered and the Council had agreed that only approved minutes be published and, therefore, the subject would not be reconsidered in the near future.

A parishioner asked if it would be possible for parishioners to be given a short amount of time at the end of meetings in order to comment upon issues raised in order to make contributions.

#### 3. Any Declarations of Interest in items on the agenda

The following interests were declared:

Cllr Mrs E Cansdale	Prejudicial interest – Drs Surgery
Cllr M Conway	Drs Surgery
Cllr C Friend	Planning application in Cheeselands
Cllr H Richards	Allotments

4. **Any changes to the Register of Members Interests**

There were no changes to the Register of Members Interests.

5. **Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2010**

There were no changes received to the minutes and **it was agreed** that the minutes were a true and proper record of the meeting. The minutes were proposed by Cllr Boulding and seconded by Cllr Ruse.

6. **Matters for information not on the agenda**

The Chairman stated that two items would be taken in closed session: Item 15 Finance - an update on the Audit Commission query, and item 19, Staffing, which was to consider the Clerk's annual salary review.

7. **Report by Cllr Bell, Ashford Borough Council**

Cllr Bell stated that Ashford Borough Council had been named as the twelfth most efficient council in England in terms of turnover and council tax.

He spoke about the consultation on Gypsy and Traveller sites. Ashford Borough Council will be required to provide pitches for gypsy families. More pitches encourage more people to come forward to take advantage of these pitches. The question is that if Ashford Borough Council has to provide pitches, where should they be?

There is a very real possibility that they will be outside those villages that have a history of gypsy occupation. Concern was also expressed regarding the possibility of people leaving residential homes in order to take pitches in the countryside. Cllr Bell believed that pitches should be put near land which is to be developed outside Ashford. Therefore, residents moving into these new homes would be well aware of these gypsy pitches when they move in.

Cllr Bell addressed the issue local housing needs and the proposed development in Cheeslands. The architect has visited today and was very sympathetic to concerns raised by residents.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Bell.

8. **Re-adoption of Standing Orders**

Copies of the new standing orders had been circulated to all councillors. The Chairman stated that the Code of Conduct is referred to in the standing orders so

by re-approving the standing order, the Code of Conduct was also covered.

The Chairman explained that a new, revised version of standing orders was published in 2010. He asked if any councillors had any points that they wished to raise. No points were raised. The Chairman drew the council's attention to clause 33b which stated that the chairman's application of standing orders at meetings should be final.

Some clauses were mandatory and these were in bold type. Others were not, and the version presented for consideration had been adapted for Biddenden by inserting relevant numbers and information.

The standing orders would need to be re-adopted again at the Annual Statutory meeting of the Parish Council. Therefore, the re-adoption of the standing orders this evening would be for one month only and they would require re-adoption on 11 May. This would give councillors time to read and consider any issues they might want to raise. **It was agreed** to re-adopt the Standing Orders presented to the meeting. Proposed by Cllr M Conway and seconded by Cllr H Richards. A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed to accept the revised standing orders.

## 9. **Parish Plan feedback**

Copies of the revised Parish Plan had been sent out to groups in the village. Feedback had been received back and the Chairman felt that it would be useful to review the feedback received from Biddenden Boys Football club, WI, the Biddenden Local History Society and Village Halls Management Committee.

Two responses expressed concern at speeding in the village. Biddenden Boys expressed concern about having more easily accessible footpaths around the village. This had been covered in the parish plan. They also suggested that there was a need for a skip based refuse/household waste recycling centre near the village.

The History Society was concerned at development on the Woolpack Corner site. The Council were not aware of any development at Woolpack Corner. They were also in favour of the renovation of the south side pavement, and also felt that there was a need for a plastics bin and possibly an additional paper bin at the recycling area. However, it was noted Ashford Borough Council was not providing additional recycling facilities.

VMHC were concerned about the need to improve the entrance to the playing fields and supporting any emerging youth club.

The W.I. expressed support for the community police officer and for the completion of a doctor's surgery.

## 10. Agendas

The Chairman explained that the item had been added to the agenda in order to allow councillors to raise any points on how to run the Annual Parish Meeting and the Statutory Annual Meeting.

### a) Annual Parish Meeting

There were no concerns expressed and **it was agreed** that the agenda stand as circulated.

### b) Statutory Annual Meeting of Biddenden Parish Council

The Chairman stated that the draft agenda had been changed to reflect the new Standing Orders up to item 22, and then reverted to the normal layout for a Council meeting. The following was noted:

Cllr Mrs Cansdale was to be added to the Gordon Jones Playing Field Group and Cllr Mrs Ashcroft removed.

Millennium Field and Jubilee Meadow Group. The following were added: Mr F Sampson, Mr A Copps, Mr D Philpott, Mr R Swain.

Item 25, Reports from Group Chairmen. Add the words “where necessary” to the title as this item is partially covered in a preceding item.

John Mayne Trustee and Consolidated Charity Trustees have been included.

Any papers required for the meeting will be circulated in advance wherever possible.

## 11. Proposed Allotments

The Clerk reported that the landowner’s agent, BTF, was asking £150 per annum rental for the allotment land. Councillors were asked if they were happy that this amount should be paid annually, and **it was agreed**. It was also noted that the Council would bear the cost of the drawing up of the agreement.

The Chairman was concerned that the matter was progressing slowly. It was hoped that a draft agreement document would be available prior to the next meeting.

The Chairman sought confirmation that the Council would be happy for the Clerk

to read through the draft agreement from BTF and, if happy with it, forward it to the Council's solicitors. **The Council agreed.**

Cllr Bell had speeded up the response from Ashford Borough Council regarding whether planning permission was needed to convert the farmland to allotments. ABC had confirmed that no planning permission was required. Cllr Bell had also confirmed that there were no spare funds available from ABC to help fund the allotments.

The issue of access to the field was still outstanding as it was thought that it may be possible for the existing access to be widened rather than having to seek planning permission to re-open an old access.

A water supply needed to be put into the field and the Clerk was currently speaking to South East Water to arrange a meeting.

#### 11. **Southside Pavement**

It was reported that no further information had been received since the last Parish Council meeting. Cllr Bell had chased Cllr Hill, who will address the issue at the Council's Annual Parish Meeting.

The order of the next item was changed to allow PCSO Peel to give a report in Cllr Daly's absence:

##### **Police Liaison report**

The PCSO stated that damage had occurred in the gent's toilet. She urged councillors to agree to CCTV being put in.

A street briefing had taken place in Cheeslands and house to house contact had been made.

A new youth group has been established and its first meeting is to take place on 18 May. The youth bus also visits Cheeslands on alternative Mondays.

Cllr Cansdale left the room due to a prejudicial interest in item 13.

#### 13. **Proposed Doctor's Surgery**

At the last Council meeting the Clerk had been requested to write to Headcorn Surgery asking them to clarify dispensing arrangements, and a reply has now been received:

*"The way in which we envisage the dispensary will work is this:*

**For repeat prescriptions:**

*patients will drop off their repeat medication requests at Biddenden. These will be taken down to Headcorn Surgery for dispensing and returned to Biddenden for collection. We usually say that patients should allow at least 2 working days before collecting their medication.*

**For acute prescriptions:**

*Patients who have an appointment with a GP or the Nurse Practitioner and are given a prescription and are acutely unwell ( ie cannot wait), we will have an agreed stock of medication at the branch surgery, such as antibiotics, pain killers etc that will be given to the patient there & then. For those patients that can wait the prescription will be dealt with at Headcorn and returned to Biddenden within the 2 working days. The patient may decide that they would like to take the prescription to Headcorn to be dispensed.*

*I trust this clarifies the situation but please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further details”*

Concern was expressed regarding dispensary facilities and discussion took place regarding information given at the time of the Parish Poll.

The Clerk reported that the procedural checklist had been sent to the Headcorn Practice, their solicitor and the architect. Responses had been received from the practice and architect,

The Clerk had also been requested to send a letter accompanying the procedural checklist asking if the Headcorn practice had funds in place for the Biddenden project and reply had been received to say that it had.

The Clerk had also contacted the Council solicitor to ask whether the Headcorn practice would be able, after a period of time, to force the sale of the freehold. The solicitor had replied that this was not the case as this would be a business lease and not a residential one.

The Chairman asked councillors if they felt that the Council should appoint its own chartered surveyor. **It was agreed** that some research should be done into chartered surveyors who had experience of such projects, and the findings discussed once this information was available.

The Chairman closed the meeting for a short break for coffee

## 14. **Reports by Group Chairmen**

### *Car Park, Toilets and Post Office:*

#### **Car Park and Toilets**

The Clerk reported:

1. The electrical socket has now been moved to a position under the eaves.
2. The tiles on the toilet roof have now been replaced.
3. A locksmith is going to repair the door on the men's toilets. The lock has been broken and the strike removed. The now obsolete strike on the disabled toilet will be refitted to the men's toilet door. The lock needs to be rewired as it would appear that the wiring in the loft has been cut.
4. Given the problems caused in the toilets, the time at which the toilets now shut has been moved back to 5.30 pm.
5. The problem in the men's toilet with regard to excess water on the floor is now hopefully solved. The urinal blockages have been cleared. However water was still appearing on the floor. A dye test has been carried out and a new pedestal toilet installed due to a hairline crack.
6. Work has also been carried out on the concealed pipe which feeds the cistern in the disabled toilet as this backs onto the men's toilet and would appear to have been contributing to the leak.
7. A blockage in the ladies' toilet has also been cleared.

The Clerk was asked to check the deeds to the car park access to see who owned it as work needed to be done.

#### **Post Office**

The Clerk reported she had written to the tenant concerning the rent review process. A reply is expected shortly.

The Council's insurers have again been contacted. They will not separate out the toilet and PO into a separate policy as they do a set Parish Council policy, but they will, free of charge put the names of ABC and the Post Mistress against the PO/toilet block for material damage only. The other two insurance companies specializing in parish council insurance who have been approached have not, despite being chased, been helpful.

The sum that the building is insured for in the forthcoming renewal has been index linked and will be insured for £119,786, the cost to the PC being £289.28. However, sums insured and costs will need to be double-checked once the renewal has been received due to a change in administration arrangements between the broker and the insurer to ensure they are as detailed by the insurer as at 8 April.

As a councillor raised the question of insurance regarding the Parish Office at the last meeting, this issued has been queried. The Clerk is covered for people coming to the office at the Clerk's home on PC business. For instance, should an accident occur and the individual trips over a filing cabinet this is covered but the individual will not be covered for any other place in the house. There is an excess of £125 on the policy so if a filing cabinet is damaged etc then it will be as cheap to just buy a new one. There is a Hewlett Packard computer named on the policy that needs to be removed before the renewal, but the PC laptop is not covered. It is also not covered for being outside of the house, eg if I brought it to a meeting with me for some reason, so they suggested that it would be a good idea to add UK roaming to the policy to cover this at a cost of approx £25. **It was agreed** that the Clerk should add this to the policy.

***Millennium Field and Jubilee Meadow:*** It was reported that the hedge planting and the school had gone extremely well and those that attended and helped were thanked.

Planning permission has now been granted for the Information Shelter but it may need to be re-sited due to the revised position of the proposed doctor's surgery.

Quotes are to be sought for the removal of the duck shed.

It was reported that the hedge needed laying but this work would be carried forward into 2011. It was hoped that perhaps a youth training scheme could supply people to help and that perhaps financial assistance could be sought.

***Traffic and Pedestrians:*** The lines outside the school had now been completed. A report had been received from Kent Highways detailing the pothole situation. A survey had been conducted of the streets of Biddenden and a colour coded table produced detailing the urgency of each pothole. Concern was expressed about works done to Cot Lane.

Concern was expressed regarding the bus stop outside Woodlands Caravan Park. The curb needed to be raised to aid the elderly getting on and off buses. The Traffic & Pedestrian group agreed to approach Kent Highways to see if they could do anything about the situation.

***Gordon Jones Playing Field:***

The specifications for the front and rear car parks had been sent out for quotations. Quotes were awaited. It was noted that there was a problem with drainage on the tarmac, but that this could be discussed later.

A letter had been received from the Bowls Club asking the Council to let them off paying for the £125 contribution towards the water bill. After discussion, **it was agreed** to reply asking them to pay.

**Police Liaison:** The next meeting is to be held on 21/4 and Cllr Cansdale may be able to attend. Concerns regarding the PCSO had been expressed to Cllr Hill and it is expected that he will cover this issue at the Annual Parish Meeting.

**KALC and Parish Forum:** There have been no meetings and the next is due to take place in May.

**Youth:** The PCSO, Christine Peel, has been very active with helping form a youth group and has signed up three mothers to create a new club, henceforth to be called "Biddenden Youth Club". A lady from KCC has supplied the mothers with CRB check forms to complete and it is anticipated that the club will meet twice a month on Tuesdays at the Village Hall.

They would like to request that the BPC pays the cost of hall rental. It is further understood that there are some monies sitting in a bank account (£800 or so?) from a previous youth club and it is presumed that once the group is formed it will be possible to make the new supervisors signatories to the account. The Council requested that the bank account should be sorted out and suggested that rental for the hall be taken out of this money in the first instance.

PCSO Peel has also made enquiries to see if any funds are available from Police Authorities.

It was noted that it also needs to be established what equipment is actually available to the new club from the old youth club.

**Housing:** One of the older person's flats had been allocated to a local person. Nothing further to report.

**Recycling Fund:** Nothing to report

**Information Group:** The Information Group has not met since the last Council meeting. There has been an issue involving historic minutes raised by a parishioner. The concern related to minutes that were signed but did not include amendments agreed at the time of approval, with the amendments being recorded in the minutes of the following meeting. IT was noted that advice has been obtained from KALC but the Monitoring Officer was too busy with elections to look at the matter at the moment and would look at it some time in May.

It had taken some time and effort to explain the situation and for the third parties to understand it, but it was now felt that the situation was fully understood.

A reply to the parishioner had been held back in the hope that advice would have been received and that the Information Group would have then considered the matter and would be in a position to report back to the Council.

The letter from the Parishioner had included a request for Information, which should have been dealt with in under 20 working days. This had now been sent but the Council had missed the 20 day deadline by one day. The Parishioner had requested that the Council hold an Internal Review as required by the Freedom of Information Act. It was noted that this would be arranged. It was also suggested that be the Internal Review policy be amended to deal with minor issues.

**Webmaster:** It was reported that everything up-to-date.

**Village Hall Management Committee:** There was an issue regarding the bank behind the squash club sliding down. The bowling green was also subsiding on the north side. Both issues are under investigation.

#### 15. Finance

The payment schedule was presented for approval of cheques. Payments were agreed. Proposed by: Cllr Ruse and seconded by Cllr Boulding.

#### 16. Planning – to note decisions and any plans tabled

Application No.	Location and Description	Decision
1. 10/00148/AS and 10/00383/AS	Little Monks Cottage, Monks Hill, Smarden, Ashford, TN27 8QJ. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Move existing 5 bar gate at entrance forward by 3 metres, erection of 1.2 metre high post and wire fence and erection of new pedestrian gate and kissing gate.</li> <li>2. Listed Building Consent for gate. Full Planning Permission</li> </ol>	Support
2. 10/00232/AS	20 Townland Close, Biddenden, Ashford, Kent, TN2 8AR. Erection of lean to the rear aspect of the property. Full Planning Permission	Support
3. 10/00281/AS	Land South of 78-83 Cheeslands, Biddenden, Kent. Construction of 8 dwellings, consisting of 3x2 bed bungalows, 2x2 bed flats and 3x1 bed flats. The application includes extending the existing parking arrangement and formalising the parking arrangement	Site Visit to take place Tuesday 20 April.
4. 10/00365/AS and 10/00366/AS	Roberts Farm, Smarden Road, Biddenden, Ashford, TN27 8QJ.	Support

1. Proposed demolition of 5 existing outhouses and replacement with new garage and swimming pool enclosure.
  2. Listed Building Consent for same.  
Full Planning Permission
5. 10/00371/AS Orchardene, Frittenden Road, Biddenden, Ashford, Kent, TN27 8LF. Erection of two storey rear extension and insertion of dormer window to rear elevation. Full Planning Permission Support
6. 10/00338/AS Building rear of 10 High Street Biddenden, Kent. Conservation area Consent for demolition of outbuilding. Conservation Area Consent. Site visit to take place on Tuesday 20 April.

The Chairman reported that a letter had been received from ABC requesting feedback on the ABC Consultation on Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show People Development Plan Document.

Following discussion with Cllr Mrs Cansdale and Cllr Bell, it was recommended that the Council respond as follows:

Biddenden Parish Council is of the view that the Parish already has its share of travellers.

The current planning regulations relating to travellers have the unfortunate affect of it being perceived that they are not treated in the same way as other parishioners.

Locating permanent pitches risks encouraging travellers already living in residential houses to move out.

Any new permanent pitches within the Ashford Borough Council should be incorporated into the new Development areas proposed for Ashford at the planning stage. This would avoid community misunderstandings at a later date.

This was agreed.

## 17. Correspondence

The list of correspondence was presented.

There were several items of correspondence for action:

1. Request for financial support from the Caldecott Foundation. **It was**

**agreed** to make a £20 donation.

2. A letter had been received from Tenterden Tigers asking the Council to reconsider its decision. Clerk to write back saying that should there be spare capacity they would be able to use the field. This will not be known until closer to the start of the new season.
3. Letter from Biddenden Bowls Club. Item covered above.
4. Email from the Programme officer at ABC regarding the Tenterden & Rural Sites DPD asking any representors attending the Pre-Hearing meeting on 29 April to fill in a questionnaire. No Councillor was able to attend and the Clerk was instructed to write back stating that the Council's position had been made clear and had already been sent in.
5. Letter from a parishioner regarding historical minutes. This has already been covered under a previous item.

**18. Items for future consideration**

It was noted that advice from the Monitoring Officer was private & confidential and was privileged. Any advice was not subject to the Freedom of Information Act. It was also noted that councillors could obtain advice from the Monitoring Officer but that only the Clerk could approach KALC.

The Chairman closed the meeting to allow parishioners to make further comment. The Chairman then formally closed the meeting asking parishioners, press and media to leave in order that the confidential items could be discussed.

20. Next meeting: Annual Parish Meeting, Wednesday 28 April at 7.30 pm in the New Hall  
Statutory Annual meeting of Biddenden Parish Council, Tuesday 11 May at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 10.30 pm

19. **Staffing**

The Clerk was asked to leave the room.

The Chairman reported that the Clerk's Annual Salary Review was due on 1st April 2010. A paper had been circulated under confidential cover detailing the provisions of the Clerk's contract of employment, and the related pay increase.

**It was agreed that** the Clerk's salary be increased with effect from 1st April 2010 in line with the Contract of Employment. Proposed Cllr Friend, seconded Cllr Mrs Cansdale.

The Chairman reported that the Contract of Employment sets out the requirement to carry out an annual Appraisal, and that this would be carried out in the next month. A brief discussion was held on points which Councillors asked the Chairman to consider when setting targets for the next year.

The Clerk returned to the meeting.

15. **Finance**

**Letter from the Audit Commission and Biddenden Accounts**

The Chairman reported that he had spoken to the Audit Commission with regard to their letter of 15<sup>th</sup> January 2010. The Audit Commission has asked the Council to consider whether it had access to the information and if not is the Council likely to be able to get it. If the Council is unable to move on any further it can then consider if it is in the public interest to pursue the matter further and inform the Audit Commission accordingly.

The Chairman asked councillors if they wished to pursue the matter and it was felt that an effort should be made to trace the former Treasurer to confirm that there was no money in the BPLOG/C bank account. It was believed that the money left over had been used for shelving and the chair in the post office.