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BIDDENDEN PARISH COUNCIL

UNAPPROVED Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 18 April 2017 at 7.00 pm in the Village Hall, Biddenden

Present: Cllr C Friend (Chairman)
Cllr E Cansdale
Cllr A Lidgett
Cllr S Parks
Cllr E Stevenson-Rouse
Cllr J Tydeman

Mrs A Swannick (Clerk)
County Councillor Mike Hill OBE
Borough Councillor Neil Bell

0 parishioners attended.

1. Apologies for absence

Cllr D Boulding due to personal commitments
Cllr T Bizley due to work commitments
Cllr P Harris due to work commitments
Cllr R Wayre due to work commitments

2. Approval of the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 26 April 2016

There being no comments or amendments the minutes were deemed to be a true and proper record of the meeting. Proposed by: Cllr E Stevenson-Rouse
Seconded by: Cllr S Parks. **Unanimous.**

3. Chairman's Report by Cllr Chris Friend

See the attached report.

4. KCC report by Cllr Michael Hill

KCC has had a very hard few years. £514 m has been saved since 2010 and the budget this year will be more difficult due to adult social care. The council has had to find £28m from other budgets within the council in order to fund it and there will be an increase in Council Tax to help finance adult social care. £2billion has been put into the government budget for adult social care. It will make a big difference but will not solve all problems.

Roads: £2.5 million has been put aside for a 'pothole blitz'. The third Thames crossing has been announced by the government and is badly needed with unacceptable traffic jams at the Dartford Crossing and pollution.

Broadband: KCC is working hard with BT to improve broadband provision. 120,000 homes and businesses ie 91% across Kent and Medway, can access superfast broadband. Coverage of 95% could be achieved by the end of 2017 and 95.7% by the end of 2018.

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Unaccompanied children and asylum seekers: In 2015 there were over 29 and in 2016 over 57. There are difficult issues with social care of young people and fostering. Last year there were no foster carers available for Kent's own children.

Community Services: Many services are being squeezed. There is financial support for the hiring of Community Wardens. Golf is coming back to Sandwich in 2020.

Schools: The Multi Academy Trust in Tenterden consists of Homewood School and three primary schools. The Trust is hoping to expand to 9-10 schools in a year or two.

Elections: The County Council elections will take place on 4 May as planned.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hill.

5. **Ashford Borough Council report by Cllr Neil Bell**

Cllr Bell thanked Cllr Hill, councillors and parishioners. Cllr Bell outlined the issue regarding the Eurostar stopping at Ashford.

Junction 10A is back in the government plan.

Ashford College should be opening in September. Skills are targeted to the local market.

Ashford Borough Council (ABC) is starting up a commercial quarter to allow more modern business start-up in the centre of Ashford.

The work on Chilmington Green has started and will be going into Ashford's five year housing supply and will alleviate housing elsewhere.

ABC had been looking at merging with Canterbury, Dover and Shepway. However it would not support it if Council Tax had to increase substantially. ABC has the lowest borough council charge in Kent. If it merged with other authorities the council tax would have to go up. However, ABC is looking to share services and some may merge.

The North Street development is progressing. It is expected that the report will be in favour of 45 houses. ABC is working hard to get a five year housing land supply fulfilled. The borough council also has to supply a five year supply of gypsy sites.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Bell.

6. **Any other reports received**

Broadband: A survey was set up using Survey Monkey regarding broadband provision. Ninety-two responses were received regarding the poor broadband situation in Biddenden. The information was sent to BT and they have only picked out 10 replies of the 92 and stated that eight out of ten could take advantage of the fibre to cabinet. Some residents are currently only getting ¼ - 2 MB.

Speedwatch: There have been problems recently following replacement of the speedwatch leader with Kent Police. It seems that a number of volunteers have been trained and they have to have completed the online training in order to operate the equipment. However very few Biddenden Volunteers received notification of this. Cllr Lidgett will be attending a meeting for Community Speedwatch and it seems that

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training of volunteers will not be this summer so all activity has been stopped until the issue is sorted out.

Neighbourhood Watch: Crime seems to have remained at about the same level. There is a slight increase in petty theft and break-ins. The membership of local NHW has increased to 70 this year.

7. Parishioners questions and discussion

There were none.

It was stated that a letter from Southern Water had been received stating that they could not cope with 40+ new houses in North Street. Cllr Bell will look into this

Cllr Hill has been a country councillor for 16 years and he was thanked for everything he had done on the council's behalf.

The meeting closed at 8pm.

Alison Swannick
Parish Clerk

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Biddenden Annual Parish Meeting **18th April 2017**

Parish Council Chairman's report

Welcome

I would firstly like to welcome Councillor Mike Hill who is the Cabinet member for Community Services for KCC and the member for Tenterden and Councillor Neil Bell who is Biddenden council member on ABC

Your Parish Council is made up of the following councillors:

John Tydeman (Vice Chairman)

Adrian Lidgett

Eileen Cansdale

Philippa Harris

Scott Parks

Edward Stevenson Rouse

David Boulding

Tim Bizley

And welcome to our latest councillor Richard Wayre.

And, of course, not forgetting our Clerk, Alison Swannick, who works tirelessly behind the scenes keeping the accounts, minutes and everything else up to date.

I would personally like to thank all our councillors and clerk for their time bearing in mind that whilst some members are retired, over 50% have full time jobs and they give up a lot of their valuable spare time in working for the good of this village.

Report.

First on the agenda for this report has to go to the event of 2016 which of course was the Tractor Fest which was again a major success raising over £16000 for good causes. An overwhelming thanks must go to the members of BEST without whom this event would not have happened. Once again they are putting on the show again this August so I hope the village, and friends and inhabitants of Kent will visit the show and make it the success it deserves.

Community Led Plan

Sadly nothing of significance has happened with regard to the items mentioned in last year's report in relation to the possible introduction of an interactive speed sign and variations to the traffic flow around the village green. Believe me this hasn't been for the want of trying and the subject is still ongoing with hopefully further meetings to be held with Highways during the summer.

Speeding

The speedwatch sessions have been ongoing during the past year and will be starting again soon. Cllr Adrian Lidgett will update you on results and also on Neighbourhood Watch.

ABC Local Plan to 2030 Site submissions for Biddenden

The possible development for the scheme previously known as BD8 was selected as the preferred site by ABC and a revised plane showing a development of 45 units was drawn up by the developers. This was despite the parish council objecting and instead requesting no more than 25 units.

With any development the developer has to allow a sum of money (known as S106 monies or planning gains) which go to ABC and are then distributed towards various projects which the parish have put forward. On top of this the land owner was prepared to offer a substantial amount of money to go towards a major community project. The parish council sent out a questionnaire

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which went to all households in the parish asking for ideas as to what would be a useful community facility. One idea that was suggested by the Parish Council was a new village hall but this was just a suggestion. Sadly, a very well organised section of the community was against such a proposal and orchestrated a well organised opposition group which led to a rejection of any plans for any forms of community gain. Whilst the turnout was pretty low, the result was noted and no further action has been taken to further the council's suggestion and the land owner has withdrawn his offer.

Going back to the development, we were surprised when a full planning application was submitted to ABC by the developer in advance of the surmised course of waiting for the local plan timetable. Once again, the PC objected to the development on the grounds that we felt that 25 houses would be sufficient. This application will be decided by ABC as per their normal timetable and so we will have to wait for the outcome.

Regarding other developments the erection of affordable houses on the Tapley Field, things are still ongoing but the legal side is taking longer than expected.

The 2 house / bungalow ABC development at the end of The Weavers should have started back in the Autumn of 2016 but has yet to start.

Post office , Toilets and Car Park

Post Office

The subject of closure of the post office or change in circumstances is still in the air and nothing has changed since the last report. However, it should be noted that with the closures of some of the High Street banks in Tenterden notably HSBC and now Lloyds, it is possible to use the post office to carry out most banking activities such as the paying in of cheques and cash and drawing out of money. A thanks to Rona and Wendy for their sterling work and always being there to help and assist.

Toilets

Apart from minor vandalism which we always seem to get, we have had a reasonably untroubled year with the exception of a couple of problems which have been fixed.

Car Park

No problems except I would like to remind people that it is a public car park rather than a permanent parking area. It does get busy at times and cars that are parked longer than they should be stopping others from parking legitimately.

Gordon Jones fields, Millennium Fields and Jubilee Meadow.

Gordon Jones. Thankfully owing to a relatively dry winter we haven't had the problems that were suffered last year with waterlogged pitches. At the beginning of the season, all pitches were slit and were going to be mole trenched later on but this has yet to be carried out as the ground is still too hard.

Millennium Field

We have removed the ducking platforms as they were becoming a hazard and were not used as originally intended. Otherwise the field is being used to its full potential by walkers with or without dogs. We would, however, stress to all dog walkers - please pick up after your dog has done its business. To not do so is frankly extremely selfish and anyone caught not picking up will be reported to the relevant authorities.

Play Area

Well, after some couple of years in discussions and planning the new play area is now up and running and was officially opened by Councillor Hill in August. From the times I have been in the area, and especially in good weather and school holidays, the play area would seem to be a great success and hopefully will be for some time to come. We will always keep in mind any additional

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facilities that we feel may be of interest to the kids and if any parent has some ideas please let us know and we can always look into the matter.

Community Fund (formally the re-cycling fund)

We are still paying out to Biddenden clubs and organisations as and when requests are made and anyone of those groups that wish to partake, the funding committee meets twice a year so if you require some funding please make sure your request is received by us on the due dates.

Policing

We as a Parish Council have been extremely disappointed with the policing in our parish and I am aware that we are not the only ones. The level of cover is, in our opinion, totally inadequate and we have voiced our concerns to councillor Hill who assures us that more PCSO are being recruited so we hope to hear what the latest cover will be as soon as possible. As soon as the situation improves we will try and get the surgeries back up and running as before.

Finances

These figures are provisional as the accounts have yet to go to the internal auditor

The Council's accounts for 2016/17 have now been completed and are being prepared for the internal and external auditors. The following is a brief overview.

During the year the Council spent £65028 and received £97041 with an operating surplus of £32013. There was an exception expenditure of £55026 being the new play area which resulted in a reduction of cash balances to £103364 (£126,377.69 2015/2016)

The Council has changed the level of precept payable by parishioners for 2017/18 due the reduction in grants

John Mayne School

The new Head teacher Sharon Lewis has I am told settled and with the new heating system in place all should be good for the years to come.

Communications

Broadband has been on the minds of all councillors these past few months and especially Councillor Edward Stevenson-Rouse who has been doing his utmost in attempting to get BT and Openreach to come up with some idea of a timescale as to when a faster broadband service to all parishioners will be available. I think it is fair to say that its been like banging ones head against a brick wall . We have passed on all correspondence we have received so far to Councillor Mike Hill to see if he can apply any pressure as KCC have been given a government grant of £11.5m to go towards faster broadband for all.

Defibrillator

As you may be aware, the defibrillator has been fixed to the wall at the back of the post office. So far, thankfully, it has not been needed but please, make use of it in the case of an emergency.

Allotments

I believe we have a few names on the waiting list which is a good thing as plots seem to come up fairly regularly so it's good that any spare plots do not get left to go to seed. If you need any information regarding the allotments please get in touch with Richard Harris.

Reports were given on the following clubs where submitted:

Squash Club
Tennis Club
Bowls Club

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Football clubs

Finally

I will finish as always with thanks to all in our community, being the Pubs, Restaurants, Tea rooms, shops Post office and all businesses, and all other volunteers who go out and make Biddenden a wonderful and worthwhile village to live in.

Thanks to you one and all.