

WEST FARLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE WEST FARLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 16th JANUARY 2023 IN BRAMLEY BARN, WEST FARLEIGH

PRESENT: Cllrs M Moy (Chair), J Morgan, H Swan, B Scott, C Wilson and Mrs A Broadhurst, Clerk
4 members of public

Public Discussion

A resident raised further concerns regarding the ongoing flooding in Smiths Hill and the damage being caused to the carriageway. The Clerk reported that she had further information to share regarding this under Agenda Item 5.1.

The Clerk read out a report from the village litter pickers to update Councillors on their efforts.

The Clerk reported that she had received an email from a resident who has offered to refurbish the wooden posts of the interpretation board close to the cricket ground, as it was noted that they are rotting close to the base. He has offered to complete this at his own cost. After brief discussion Councillors asked the Clerk to thank him for his kind offer, but requested he provides an invoice for the work, for the Parish Council to cover the cost, as he should not be left out of pocket.

ACTION: Clerk

It was noted that there is constant flooding on Lower Road close to the junction with Charlton Lane and this is resulting in pothole issues, which are hidden by the volume of water on the road.

ACTION: Clerk

Cllr Morgan reported that there is a pothole on Charlton Lane close to no. 3. (Approximately 1ft x 8" x 3") **ACTION: Clerk**

1. **Apologies**

Borough Cllr Parfitt-Reid

2. **Councillor Declarations**

Cllr H Swan declared an interest in Agenda Item 4.5 (Donations) as she is a member of the PCC and Leader of The Evergreens.

Cllr J Morgan declared an interest in Agenda Item 4.5 (Donations) as she is the Treasurer of The Evergreens

3. **Minutes of the Meeting held on 21st November 2022**

The Minutes of the meeting had been previously distributed and Cllr Scott proposed that they were a true record. This was seconded by Cllr Swan, with all in favour. The Chairman signed off the official copy.

4. **FINANCE**

4.1. **To note Budget Monitoring Report to 31st December 2022**

The Budget Monitoring Report was **Noted**.

4.2 **To Note the Income received**

(No income received)

4.3 **To Approve the Expenditure since the November Meeting**

It was proposed by Cllr Moy to approve the following transactions, this was seconded by Cllr Wilson; with all in favour.

Cheques

101325 – Dandelion Time – Hall Hire £ 25.00

Internet Banking Payments

Mrs A Broadhurst – Dec. Expenses (Office 365 & McAfee – 2yrs business) £300.00

HMRC – PAYE £921.29

KALC – Clerk in Action Training Course £ 60.00

Standing Order

Mrs A Broadhurst – December Salary (£98.49 owed) £760.00

Mrs A Broadhurst – January Salary (£106.11 owed) £760.00

Direct Debits:

People's Pension – Monthly Payment (December) £ 55.00

People's Pension – Monthly Payment (January) £ 55.00

Waveney IT Support Services – Email Accounts & Remote Support (Dec)	£ 91.08
Waveney IT Support Services – Email Accounts & Remote Support (Jan)	£ 91.08

The Clerk stated that, before Councillors discussed the budget and precept requirements for 2023/24, agenda Item 5.1 (Highways Improvement Plan) should be discussed.

(5. HIGHWAY MATTERS)

5.1 Highways Improvement Plan (HIP)

Kent Highways had arranged a virtual meeting (instead of a site visit) to discuss the content of the updated Highways Improvement Plan, however this had had to be cancelled due to technical reasons. The Officer had offered to still hold a meeting with the Clerk, to at least discuss the items.

Smiths Hill

The flooding and subsequent issues were discussed in depth, noting the silt build up in a resident's pond, damage to the front garden/driveways of residents on Smiths Hill and the damage that is being caused to cars due to the very deep potholes left from the flooding.

The notes that were created for County Cllr Webb have been forwarded to KHS, which date back to 2013, detailing every report and road closure, along with photos of the flooding and damage caused. This is to be discussed with the Drainage Team to try to find out what can be done long term. It was noted that no response had been received from County Cllr Webb regarding the document that the Clerk had produced.

Any residents wanting to report flooding or damage to their property/vehicles should contact Kent Highways on 03000 418181.

20mph speed limits

KHS reported that the data available at Lower Road suggests that it wouldn't meet the criteria for a 20mph limit, as speeds are above 30mph (needs to be around 28mph).

First steps would be to have new traffic surveys carried out in the 5 areas (Charlton Lane, Heath Road, Ewell Lane, Teston Lane, Lower Road towards the Tickled Trout). There may need to be two surveys in some of the roads and the Officer felt 7 in total would be required. KHS can pay for 3 or 4 of these so Councillors would need to approve the cost of the additional surveys at £95 each. These would be completed in March, as this is a month with no school or Bank Holidays, which could impact the results. Some of the costs relating to projects on the HIP were detailed as follows:

Surveys £95

Design Fee £1,006 (This has been introduced due to some Parishes not taking projects forward after many hours of design work has been completed, wasting KCC funds)

Legal Order £2-3k

Works £8-9k

The KCC Contractor has warned that their material costs could be rising as much as 80% for tarmac type works.

The Clerk added that she had made a point of reminding the Officer that KCC and MBC are to look favourably on all 20mph schemes now, as they are being rolled out across the country.

The Clerk suggested that Councillors may wish to consider carrying out additional surveys either side of the Teston Lane/Lower Road junction, as vehicles shouldn't be routinely managing to exceed 30mph in this area.

Thatched House area of Heath Road

The Clerk had explained some of the history of this area and the bollard issue (raised at the November meeting) was discussed. Having reported them on the portal, the following response had been received from the Highway's Steward:

"I have looked at the bollards you reported and they have clearly been like that for some time. To replace them would need a road closure but it is clear that they have been damaged by over run. There is no width to reinstate them as there needs to be 450mm from the edge of the carriageway – this space doesn't exist due to the over run. KCC are only completing safety critical works and this is not deemed to be safety critical, as they have been like this for at least 2-3 years. Nothing has changed, although the road is clearly used more over the years. I can't think of a way to reinstate and as it isn't safety critical, I will be closing the enquiry down. If there is a road closure in the future for something else, they could investigate it but no further action is required currently"

The Clerk had queried the possibility of using some of the verge to widen the carriageway to reinstate the bollards and the Officer stated that he would discuss this with the design team.

The Clerk had reminded the Officer that Cllr Webb had offered to help fund some new signage out of his 2023/24 budget, so this should be investigated further. An option was suggested of signs with yellow backgrounds, which are specifically used in crash site area and additional roundels or "SLOW" markings could be painted on the carriageway.

The Officer had suggested that, if there is a white line in the centre of the road, this could be removed as it makes the road feel narrower and naturally slows the traffic down. Councillors confirmed that there isn't a white line, as the road is not wide enough.

The Clerk added that KHS would hope to have some feedback in 28 days, although the Officer would like to be able to give some thoughts on a number of the items discussed before then.

Taking all of these points into consideration, the Clerk commented that she felt Councillors needed to consider including some additional funding in the budget for the forthcoming year, to cover the cost of some of the items mentioned.

Councillors agreed that the surveys should be completed and, even if reducing the speed limit to 20mph couldn't be achieved in all of the areas, any would improve the safety of pedestrians and residents in the long term. It was also agreed that starting a reserve fund for these projects would be advisable, as they could prove costly.

(4. FINANCE)

4.4 Budget and Precept for 2023/2024

The Clerk had circulated the budget for the next financial year and the Clerk spoke regarding the following points:

The tax base has decreased for the village (247.0 to 244.6) this means that, if Councillors chose to hold the precept at £26,232, residents will pay slightly more than their current annual charge per Band D property £107.24 up from £106.21 (increase of 0.96% which equates to £1.03 a year).

There had been no information from MBC regarding the Parish Scheme Payment, so the budget had been held at £700. The running costs will now include the monthly charge for the new email accounts, to be fully GDPR compliant, and has increased the overall running costs by approximately £1,500 a year. Whilst the Clerk's salary increases annually in line with the pay scales published by NALC, the pay rise for 2022/23 has only just been agreed and talks have not yet commenced for 2023/24. With this in mind, a 5% increase in staff costs has been included. The Audit heading has been increased slightly as PKF Littlejohn will no longer be the External Auditor and the costs may alter with the new Company (although this would not be expected to make a huge difference). The Parish Council is about to enter a new Grounds Maintenance Contract for 3 years (with the option to add a further 2 years) and the gifted land from development in Charlton Lane should be transferred to the Parish Council around May time. Work will be required, once a decision has been made how to maintain the open space going forward and additional fencing may be required. The Clerk added that this could be covered by the general funds pot, if necessary. The Play Area heading has been reduced slightly for the forthcoming year, but is still higher than seen historically, due to MBC no longer carrying out the monthly safety inspections from April. The training budget has been increased to cover any training that is required for the Civility & Respect Pledge. The contingency fund this year will be used towards the King's Coronation and to put some money aside for election costs. The Clerk asked that Councillors also now consider the information just shared regarding the possible future highway improvements around the village.

The Councillors felt that the proposed budget was acceptable however, taking into account the additional highway information, the Parish Council should look to increase the precept slightly. After brief discussion, Cllr Moy proposed **“that the annual cost to Band D properties be raised to £110.38 for the forthcoming year, which will generate a precept of £27,000.00.** This was seconded by Cllr Swan, with all in favour. (This equates to an additional annual charge of £4.17 per Band D property.)

ACTION: Clerk

4.5 Donations for 2022/2023

The Clerk reported that two requests had been received for this year:

- The Evergreens have asked whether the Parish Council could consider matching the last donation in 2019 for £750 towards the cost of a coach outing for the group.
- The Church asked for a donation towards the ground's maintenance in the churchyard.

It was noted that, last year, the Parish Council chose to make the following donations:

All Saints Church - £500.00 Pukka Ponies - £200.00

The Clerk reported that £1,500 had been set aside in this year's budget for donations.

Cllr Moy proposed that the Church be given £500 and this was seconded by Cllr Wilson; with 4 in favour and 1 abstention. (Bank transfer to be arranged.)

ACTION: Clerk

Cllr Moy proposed that The Evergreens be given £750 and this was seconded by Cllr Scott; with 3 in favour and 2 abstentions. (Bank transfer to be arranged.)

ACTION: Clerk

5. HIGHWAY MATTERS

5.1 Highways Improvement Plan (HIP)

This item had already been discussed.

5.2 Salt Bins for Charlton Lane

It was noted that residents had been unhappy with the highway situation along Charlton Lane in the snow and ice before Christmas and subsequently requested that salt bins be provided. Cllr Morgan stated that there are currently 3 or 4 salt bins in West Farleigh (on the verge by Kettle Lane, one by Oliver North, one by Goulston Bungalows and possibly one near to Elmscroft Farm) however they had not been filled up before the snow arrived. The Clerk offered to report this to KHS in the first instance to arrange for them to be filled. **ACTION: Clerk**

It was noted that, if further salt bins are requested, they may need to be purchased by the Parish Council and it is unclear who would pay for the subsequent salt refills.

The Clerk added that she had been made aware that a local farmer had cleared Kettle Lane and this was currently being investigated further. Cllr Scott reported that this had been cleared by the residents not a farmer.

6. RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

6.1 Grounds Maintenance Contract 2023-2026

The Clerk reminded all present that, at the November meeting, Councillors proposed to discuss a new contract with the current contractor, as he offers exceptionally good value for money. These discussions have now taken place and he has confirmed he would accept a further 3-year contract, with the option of extending for a further 2 (if everything is still satisfactory for both parties).

A price has now been submitted for the 3-year period of £1,507 per annum (amounting to £4,521 over the initial 3-year period); equating to a rise of £137 a year on the annual cost for the past 3 years. Cllr Morgan suggested that, as the rise was so small (and with the sharp increase in the cost of living over the past year), the Council should consider checking with the contractor to ensure that he is still able to continue at this rate for the whole 3-year period. All Councillors agreed that the Clerk should speak with the contractor at the end of the 2nd year of the contract. **ACTION: Clerk**

It was then proposed by Cllr Morgan to enter a new contract with Geoff Underdown, as previously discussed. This was seconded by Cllr Swan, with all in favour.

6.2 Play Area Inspections

The Clerk reminded all present that MBC have notified Parish Councils of their intention to stop carrying out the monthly play inspections at the end of March 2023. County Cllr Webb had suggested that this was not agreed, but no further information has been supplied. With this in mind, the Clerk has obtained quotes for continuing with the checks from April.

Company 1 had quoted for 12 inspections - £630.00 (obligation free quote for any repairs)

Company 2 had quoted for 11 inspections - £825.00 (can undertake minor repairs)

The Clerk added that she had not obtained a 3rd quote, due to the prices offered by the two companies detailed. Contact would have been made with the Company who provides the annual (larger) safety inspection; however, it would be beneficial for this to be undertaken by an independent company.

It was proposed by Cllr Moy to ask Company 1 to carry out the monthly safety inspections from April 2023. This was seconded by Cllr Morgan, with all in favour. **ACTION: Clerk**

The Clerk reported that Company 1 was Safe Play.

6.3 King's Coronation

Cllr Swan spoke regarding the recently formed Farleigh's Event group and asked whether Councillors would like them to oversee any celebration for the Coronation. After brief discussion it was agreed that this would be helpful and the Parish Council could make a donation towards the cost, instead of the Parish Council trying to oversee the event. **ACTION: Cllr Swan**

The Clerk asked whether Councillors wished to purchase a commemorative item for the children in the village and, having looked at various options, Councillors asked the Clerk to investigate a coin which is being produced for schools to give out to students. This are likely to cost in the region of £2.40 (+vat) each. Councillors felt that 150 coins would be sufficient. **ACTION: Clerk**

6.4 Policies Supporting the Civility & Respect Pledge

The Clerk reminded all present that two policies have been circulated (Dignity at Work and Equality & Diversity policies) that support the Civility & Respect Pledge, which Councillors agreed to sign up to at the November meeting. It was proposed by Cllr Scott to approve both policies. This was seconded by Cllr Morgan, with all in favour.

The Clerk gave each Councillor a questionnaire to be completed to identify any training that is required (or that Councillors are interested in) to support them in the role. This needs to be completed and given back to the Clerk at the March meeting.

6.5 Tree Survey for the Green

The Clerk informed all present that the quantitative tree survey is now due again and Treeventures had been asked to only quote for the green (not Lower Road), as KCC do not want the Parish Council overseeing the trees on Lower Road (in the lay-by); even though the work identified during the last survey has still not been completed. The cost for surveying the trees on the green in Charlton Lane will be £300. It was proposed by Cllr Moy to ask Treeventures to carry out the survey as quoted. This was seconded by Cllr Morgan, with all in favour. **ACTION: Clerk**

6. PLANNING MATTERS

6.1 Any applications received before the meeting

(No applications received)

6.2 Planning Decisions

6.2.1 Decisions Outstanding with MBC

The outstanding applications were noted.

6.2.2 Applications Approved by MBC

The approved planning applications were noted.

6.2.3 Applications Refused by MBC

The refused planning applications were noted.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Monday 20th March 2023 at 7.30pm

With no further matters to discuss, the meeting was closed at 9.07pm.